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A

VINDICATION

OF THE

Rev. Mr. WESLEY's Last Minutes :

OCCASIONED BY

A circular, printed Letter,

Inviting principal Persons,

Both Clergy and Laity,

AS WELL OF THE

Dissenters as of the established Church,

Who disapprove of those Minutes,

To oppose them in a Body, as a dreadful Heresy :

AND DESIGNED

To remove Prejudice, check Rashness, promote
Forbearance, defend the Character of an eminent
Minister of Christ, and prevent some important
scriptural Truths from being hastily branded as he-
retical.

IN FIVE LETTERS,

To the Hon. and Rev. Author of the Circular
Letter.

By a Lover of Quietness and Liberty of Conscience.

“ If God is not partial in the Distribution of His
pardoning Grace to any particular Church, Sect,
or Opinion, why doth the narrow Heart of Man
pursue with” or without “ malice those who pre-
sume to differ from him?” *Serm. of the Hon. and
Rev. Mr. Shirley.*

B R I S T O L :

Printed by W. PINE, in Wine-Street, 1771.



A Copy of the circular, printed Letter, which has given occasion to this Vindication; to which is annexed a copy of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Minutes.

S I R,

Whereas Mr. Wesley's Conference is to be held at Bristol, on Tuesday the 6. August next, it is proposed by LADY HUNTINGDON and many other Christian Friends (real Protestants) to have a Meeting at Bristol, at the same time, of such principal Persons both Clergy & Laity who disapprove of the underwritten Minutes; and as the same are thought injurious to the very Fundamental Principles of Christianity, it is further proposed, that they go in a body to the said conference, and insist upon a formal Recantation of the said Minutes; and in case of a refusal, that they sign and publish their Protest against them. Your presence, SIR, on this occasion is particularly requested: But if it should not suit your convenience to be there, it is desired that you will transmit your sentiments on the subject to such person as you think proper to produce them. It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right, in the opposition to be made to such a dreadful Heresy, to recommend it to as many of your Christian Friends, as well of the Dissenters, as of the established Church, as you can prevail on to be there, the cause being of so public a nature.

I am S I R,

Your obedient Servant,

WALTER SHIRLEY.

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P. S. Your

P. S. Your answer is desired, directed to the Countess of Huntingdon, or the Rev. Mr. Shirley, or John LLOYD Esq; in BATH; or Mr. James Ireland Merchant BRISTOL; or to Thomas Powis Esq; at Berwick near SHREWSBURY; or to Richard Hill Esq; at Hawkstone near Whitchurch Shropshire. Lodgings will be provided. Enquire at Mr. Ireland's Bristol.

EXTRACT from the MINUTES of some late CONVERSATIONS, between the Rev. Mr. Wesley, and others, at a public Conference, held in London, August 7, 1770, and printed by W. PINE, BRISTOL.

Take heed to your Doctrine.

We said in 1744, "We have leaned too much toward Calvinism." Wherein?

1. With regard to *Man's Faithfulness*. Our Lord himself taught us to use the expression. And we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on his authority, that if a man is not *faithful in the unrighteous mammon*, God will not *give him the true riches*.

2. With regard to *working for life*. This also our Lord has expressly commanded us. *Labour ERGAZESTHE*, literally *work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life*. And in fact every Believer, till he comes to glory, works for as well as *from* life.

3. We have received it as a maxim, that "a man is to do nothing, *in order to justification*:" Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to *find favor with God*, should *cease from evil and learn to do well*. Whoever repents, should
do

do works meet for repentance. And if this is not in order to find favor, what does he do them for?

Review the whole affair.

1. Who of us is *now* accepted of God?

He that now believes in Christ, with a loving, obedient heart.

2. But who among those that never heard of Christ?

He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness according to the light he has.

3. Is this the same with, "He that is sincere"? Nearly, if not quite.

4. Is not this "Salvation by Works"?

Not by the *Merit* of works, but by works, as a *Condition*.

5. What have we then been disputing about for these thirty years?

I am afraid *about words*.

6. As to *Merit* itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: We are rewarded, *according to our works, yea because of our works*. How does this differ from *for the sake of our works*? And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*? As our works *deserve*? Can you split this hair? I doubt, I cannot.

7. The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions, is drawn from matter of fact. God does in fact justify those, who by their own confession, neither feared God nor wrought right-

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eousness.

teousness. Is this an exception to the general rule?

It is a doubt, if God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure, that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness? His own saying so is not proof: For we know, how all that are convinced of sin, undervalue themselves in every respect.

8. Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified *State*, tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust, in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, *according to our works*? According to the whole of our inward tempers, and our outward behaviour.

FIRST



A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE date of the following Letters shews, that they were wrote before the late Conference: being designed to be publicly read at that time. But not being sent soon enough to the Printer, they were not finished till the Conference was ended. It was then doubted, Whether it would not be needless to publish them? But it seemed to be needful still, 1. To remove the ill impressions which had been made by the Circular Letter, both in England, Scotland and Ireland: And 2. To give some check to the Antinomianism, which is still spreading throughout the three kingdoms.



FIRST LETTER.

Hon. and Rev. Sir,

BEFORE a Judge passes sentence upon a person accused of theft, he hears what his neighbours have to say for his character. Mr. Wesley, I grant, is accused of what is worse than theft, *dreadful heresy*; and I know that whosoever maintains a dreadful heresy is a *dreadful heretic*, and that the church of Rome shews no mercy to such: but may not *real Protestants* indulge with the privilege of a felon one whom they so lately respected as a brother? And may not I, an old friend and acquaintance of his, be permitted to speak a word in his favour, before he is branded in the forehead, as he has already been in the back?

This step, I fear, will cost me my reputation (if I have any) and involve me in the same condemnation with him whose cause, together with that of truth, I design to plead: but when humanity prompts, when gratitude calls, when friendship excites, when reason invites, when justice demands, when truth requires and conscience summons; he does not deserve the name of a *Christian friend*, who, for any consideration, hesitates to vindicate what he esteems truth, and to stand by an aggrieved friend, brother, and father. Were I not, Sir, on such an occasion as this, to step out of my beloved obscurity, you might deservedly reproach me as a *dastardly wretch*: nay, you have already done it in general terms in your excellent sermon on the fear of man. “How often, say you, do men sneakingly forsake their friends, instead of gloriously supporting them
against

“ against a powerful adversary, even when their
 “ cause is just, for reasons nastily prudential, for
 “ fear of giving umbrage to a superior party or in-
 “ terest.”

These generous words of your's, Rev. Sir, together with the leave you give both church-men and dissenters, to direct to you their answers to your circular letter, are my excuse for intruding upon you by this epistle, and my apology for begging your candid attention, while I attempt to convince you that my friend's principles and minutes are not heretical: in order to this I shall lay before you, and the principal persons both clergy and laity, whom you have from all parts of England and Wales convened at Bristol by printed letters,

I. A general view of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's doctrine:

II. An account of the commendable design of his minutes:

III. A vindication of the propositions which they contain, by arguments taken from scripture, reason, and experience; and by quotations from eminent calvinist divines who have said the same things in different words.

And suppose you, yourself, Sir, in particular should appear to be a strong assertor of the doctrines which you call a *dreadful heresy* in Mr. W. I hope you will not refuse me leave to conclude by expostulating with you upon your conduct in this affair, and recommending to you, and our other Christian friends, the forbearance which you recommend to others in the words of my motto. *Why doth the narrow heart of man pursue with malice, or rashness, those who presume to differ from him? Yea, and what is most extraordinary, those who agree with him in all essential points?*

I. When, in an intricate case, a prudent Judge is afraid to pass an unjust sentence, he inquires, as observed, into the general conduct of the person accused, and by that means frequently finds out the truth which he investigates. As that method may
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be of service in the present case; permit me, Sir, to lay before you a general view of Mr. W.'s doctrine.

(1.) For above these sixteen years I have heard him frequently in his chapels, and sometimes in my church; I have familiarly conversed and corresponded with him, and have often perused his numerous works in verse and prose: and I can truly say, that during all that time I have heard him, upon every proper occasion, steadily maintain the total fall of man in Adam, and his utter inability to recover himself, or take any one step towards his recovery, *without the grace of God preventing him that he may have a good will, and working with him when he has that good will.*

The deepest expressions that ever struck my ears; on the melancholy subject of our natural depravity and helplessness, are those which dropped from his lips: and I have ever observed that he constantly ascribes to divine grace, not only the good works and holy tempers of believers, but all the good thoughts of upright Heathens, and the good desires of those professors whom he sees *begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh*; when, to my great surprise, some of those who accuse him of "robbing God of the glory of his grace, and ascribing too much to man's power," directly or indirectly maintain, that Demas and his fellow apostates never had any grace; and that if once they went on far in the ways of God, it was merely by the force of fallen nature; a sentiment which Mr. W. looks upon as diametrically opposite to the humbling assertion of our Lord, *Without me ye can do nothing*, and which he can no more admit than the rankest pelagianism.

(2.) I must likewise testify that he faithfully points out Christ as the only way of salvation; and strongly recommends faith as the only means of receiving him, and all the benefits of his righteous life and meritorious death: and truth obliges me to declare, that he frequently expresses his detestation
of

of the errors of modern Pharisees, who laugh at original sin, set up the powers of fallen man, cry down the operations of God's Spirit, deny the absolute necessity of the blood and righteousness of Christ, and refuse him the glory of all the good that may be found in Jew or Gentile. And you will not without difficulty, Sir, find in England, and perhaps in all the world, a minister who hath borne more frequent testimonies, either from the pulpit or the press, against those dangerous errors. All his works confirm my assertion, especially his sermons on original sin, and salvation by faith, and his masterly refutation of Dr. Taylor, the wisest Arian, Pelagian, and Socinian of our age. Nor am I afraid to have this testimony confronted with his minutes, being fully persuaded that, when they are candidly explained, they rather confirm than overthrow it.

His preaching of the fall and the recovery is attended with a peculiar advantage, it is close and experimental: he not only points out the truth of those doctrines, but presses his hearers to cry to God that they may feel their weight upon their heart. Some open those great truths very clearly, but let their congregations rest, like the stony ground hearers, in the first emotions of sorrow and joy which the word frequently excites. Not so Mr. Wesley; he will have true penitents *feel the plague of their own hearts, travel, be heavy laden, and receive the sentence of death in themselves according to the glorious ministration of condemnation: and according to the ministration of the spirit which exceeds in glory, he insists upon true believers knowing for themselves, that Jesus hath power on earth to forgive sins, and asserts that they taste the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and that they are made partakers of the Holy Ghost and the divine nature; the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God.*

(3.) The next fundamental doctrine in Christianity, is that of holiness of heart and life; and no one can accuse here Mr. W. of leaning to the Anti-

nomian;

nomian delusion, which *makes void the law through a speculative and barren faith*: on the contrary, he appears to be peculiarly set for the defence of practical religion: for, instead of representing Christ as the minister of sin with ranters, to the great grief and offence of many, he sets him forth as a compleat Saviour from sin. Not satisfied to preach holiness begun, he preaches finished holiness, and calls believers to such a degree of heart-purifying faith, as may enable them continually to *triumph in Christ*, as being made to them of God sanctification as well as righteousness.

It is, I grant, his misfortune (if indeed it is one) to preach a fuller salvation than most professors expect to enjoy here; for he asserts that Jesus can *make clean the inside, as well as the outside, of his vessels* unto honour; that *he hath power on earth to save his people from their sins*, and that *his blood cleanses from all sin*, from the guilt and defilement both of original and actual corruption. He is bold enough to declare with St. John, that *if we say we have no sin, either by nature or practice, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. He is legal enough not to be ashamed of these words of Moses, *The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live*. And he dares to believe that the Lord can perform the words which he spoke by Ezekiel: *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from ALL your filthiness, and from ALL your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give an heart of flesh: and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. I will also save you from ALL your uncleanness*. Hence it is that he constantly exhorts his hearers to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Saviour; till by a strong and lively faith, they

they can continually reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord: he tells them that he who committeth sin is the servant of sin.—That our old man is crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.—That if the Son shall make them free they shall be free indeed.—And that, although the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus will not deliver them from the innocent infirmities incident to flesh and blood, it will nevertheless make them free from the law of sin and death, and enable them to say with holy triumph, *How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?* In a word, he thinks that God can so shed abroad his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, as to sanctify us wholly, soul, body and spirit; and enable us to rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks. And he is persuaded that he who can do far exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, is able to fill us with the perfect love which casts out fear; that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, may have the mind that was in Christ, be righteous as the MAN Jesus was righteous, walk as he also walked; and be in our measure as he was in the world, he as the stock of the tree of righteousness and we as the branches, having our fruit from him unto holiness, and serving God without fear in true righteousness all the days of our life.

This he sometimes calls full sanctification, the state of fathers in Christ, or the glorious liberty of the children of God; sometimes a being strengthened, stablished, and settled; or being rooted and grounded in love: but most commonly he calls it Christian perfection; a word which, though used by the apostles in the same sense, cannot be used by him without raising the pity or indignation of one half of the religious world; some making it the subject of their pious sneers, and godly lampoons; while others tell you roundly "they abhor it above every thing in the creation."

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Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ !

On account of this doctrine it is that he is traduced as a Pharisee, a Papist, an Anti-christ; some of his opposers taking it for granted that he makes void the priestly office of Christ, by affirming that his blood can so compleatly wash us here from our sins, that at death we shall be *found of him in peace, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing*; while others, to colour their opposition to the many scriptures which he brings to support this unfashionable doctrine, give it out that he only wants the old man so refined in all his tempers, and regulated in all his outward behaviour as to appear *perfect in the flesh*: or, in other terms, that he sets up pharisaic self, instead of Christ compleatly *formed in us as the full hope of glory*. But I must (for one) do him the justice to say he is misapprehended, and that what he calls perfection, is nothing but the rich cluster of all the spiritual blessings promised to believers in the gospel; and, among the rest, a continual sense of the virtue of Christ's atoning and purifying blood, preventing both old guilt from returning, and new guilt from fastening, upon the conscience; together with the deepest consciousness of our helplessness and nothingness in our best estate, the most indearing discoveries of the Redeemer's love, and the most humbling and yet ravishing views of his glorious fullness; witness these lines which conclude one of his favourite hymns on that subject.

Confound o'er-power me with thy grace;

I would be by myself abhor'd:

(All might, all majesty, all praise,
All glory be to Christ my Lord.)

O let me gain perfections height,

O let me into nothing fall,

Be less than nothing in my sight,

And feel that Christ is all in all.

(4.) But this is not all, he holds also general redemption, and its necessary consequences, which

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some account *dreadful heresies*. He asserts with St. Paul, that *Christ, by the GRACE of God, tasted death for every man*; and this grace he calls *free*; as extending itself *freely* to all. Nor can he help expressing his surprise at those pious ministers, who maintain that the Saviour keeps his grace, as they suppose he kept his blood, from the greatest part of mankind, and yet engross to themselves the title of *preachers of free grace*.

He frequently observes with the same Apostle, that *Christ is the Saviour of ALL men, but especially of them that believe*; and that *God will have ALL men to be saved*, consistently with their moral agency, and the tenor of his gospel.

With St. John he maintains that *God is love*, and that *Christ is the propitiation not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the WHOLE world*: with David he affirms that *God's mercy is over all his works*, and with St. Peter, that *the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance*; yea, that *God, without hypocrisy, commandeth ALL men EVERY WHERE to repent*. Accordingly he says with the Son of God, *Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely*; and after his blessed example, as well as by his gracious command, he *preaches the gospel TO every creature*, which he apprehends would be inconsistent with common honesty, if there was not a *gospel FOR every creature*. Nor can he doubt of it in the least, when he considers that *Christ is a king as well as a priest*, that *we are under a law to Him*, that *those men who will not have him reign over them, shall be brought and slain before him*, yea, that *he shall judge the secrets of men according to St. Paul's Gospel, take vengeance of all them that obey not his own gospel, and be the author of eternal salvation to none but them that obey him*. With this principle, as with a key given us by God himself, he opens those things which are hard to be understood in the *epistles of St. Paul*, and which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do some other scriptures, if not to their own destruction,

at least to the overthrowing of the faith of some weak Christians, and the hardening of many, very many infidels.

As a true Son of the Church of England he believes that *Christ redeemed him and ALL mankind*; that for us MEN, and not merely for the elect, he came down from heaven, and made upon the cross, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the WHOLE world. Like an honest man, and yet a man of sense, he so subscribed the 17th Article as not to reject the 31st, which he thinks of equal force and much more explicit; and therefore, as the 17th Article authorises him, he receives God's promises in such wise as they are generally set forth in holy scripture; rejecting, after the example of our Governors in church and state, the Lambeth Articles, in which the doctrine of absolute, unconditional election and reprobation was maintained, and which some Calvinist Divines in the days of Queen Elizabeth, vainly attempted to impole upon these kingdoms by adding them to the 39 Articles. Far therefore from thinking he does not act a fair part, in rejecting the doctrine of particular redemption; he cannot conceive by what salvo the consciences of those ministers who embrace it, can permit them to say to each of their communicants, *The blood of Christ was shed for THEE*; and to baptize promiscuously ALL children within their respective parishes, in the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, when all that are unredeemed have no more right to the blood, name, and Spirit of Christ than Lucifer himself.

Thus far Mr. W. agrees with Arminius, because he thinks that illustrious Divine agreed thus far with the scriptures, and all the early Fathers of the church. But if Arminius (as the Author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* affirms in his letter to Dr. Adams) "deny'd that man's nature is totally corrupt, and "asserted that he hath still a freedom of will to "turn to God, but not without the assistance of "grace," Mr. W. is no Arminian, for he strongly

asserts the *total* fall of man, and constantly maintains that by nature man's will is only free to evil, and that divine grace must first prevent, and then continually further him, to make him willing and able to turn to God.

I must however confess that he does not, as some *real Protestants*, continually harp upon the words *free* grace, and *free* will, but he gives reasons of considerable weight for it. (1.) Christ and his Apostles never did so: (2.) He knows the word *grace* necessarily implies the *freeness* of a favour, and the word *will* the *freedom* of our choice: and he has too much sense to delight in perpetual tautology. (3.) He finds by blessed experience that when the will is touched by divine grace, and yields to the touch, it is as free to good, as it was before to evil. He dares not therefore make the maintaining of *free will*, any more than of *free breath*, the criterium of an unconverted man. On the contrary, he believes none are converted but those who have a *free will* to follow Jesus; and far from being ashamed to be called a *free-willer*, he affirms it is as essential to all men to be *free-willing creatures*, as to be *rational animals*; and he supposes he can as soon find a diamond or a flint without gravity, as a good or bad man without *free-will*.

Nor will I conceal that I never heard him use that favourite expression of some good men, *Why me? Why me?* Though he is not at all against their using it, if they can do it to edification. But as he does not see that any of the saints, either of the old or new Testament, ever used it, he is afraid to be humble and *wise above what is written*, lest *voluntary humility* should introduce refined pride before he is aware. Doubting therefore whether he can say, *Why me? Why me?* Without the self-pleasing idea of his being preferred to thousands, or without a touch of the secret self-applause that tickles the Pharisee's heart when he *thanks God he is not as other men*, he leaves the fashionable exclamation to others, with all the refinements of modern divinity; and
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chuses to keep to St. Paul's expression, *He loved me*, which implies no exclusion of his poor fellow sinners: or to that of the royal Psalmist, *Lord, what is MAN that thou art mindful of him; and the SON OF MAN that thou visitest him!*

(5.) As a consequence of the doctrine of general redemption, Mr. W. lays down two axioms of which he never loses sight in his preaching. The first is, that ALL OUR SALVATION IS OF GOD IN CHRIST, and therefore OF GRACE; all opportunities, invitations, inclination, and power to believe being bestowed upon us of mere grace—grace most absolutely free: and so far I hope all who are called gospel-ministers agree with him: but he proceeds farther, for secondly, he asserts with equal confidence, that according to the gospel dispensation, ALL OUR DAMNATION IS OF OURSELVES, by our obstinate unbelief, and avoidable unfaithfulness; as we may neglect so great salvation, desire to be excused from coming to the feast of the Lamb, make light of God's gracious offers, refuse to occupy, bury our talent, and act the part of the slothful servant; or in other words, resist, grieve, do despite to, and quench the Spirit of grace, BY OUR MORAL AGENCY.

The first of these evangelical axioms he builds upon such scriptures as these: *In me is thy help—Look unto me and be saved—No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him—What hast thou that thou hast not received?—We are not sufficient to think aright of ourselves, all our sufficiency is of God—Christ is exalted to give repentance—Faith is the gift of God—Without me ye can do nothing, &c. &c.*

And the second he founds upon such passages as these, *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light—Ye always resist the Holy Ghost—They rejected the counsel of God towards themselves—Grieve not the Spirit—Quench not the Spirit—My Spirit shall not always strive with man—Turn, why will ye die? Kiss the Son lest ye perish—I gave Jezebel time to repent and she repented not—The goodness of God leads, N. B. not drags, thee to re-*

penitance, who after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up wrath unto thyself—Their eyes have they closed lest they should see and be converted, and I should heal them—See that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven—I set before you life and death, chuse life! Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.—I WOULD have gathered you, and ye WOULD NOT, &c. &c.

As to the MORAL AGENCY of man, Mr. W. thinks it cannot be denied upon the principles of common sense, and civil government: much less upon those of natural and revealed religion: as nothing would be more absurd than to bind us by laws of a civil or spiritual nature; nothing more foolish than to propose to us punishments and rewards; and nothing more capricious than to inflict the one or bestow the other upon us; if we were not MORAL AGENTS.

He is therefore persuaded the most complete system of divinity is that in which neither of those two axioms is superseded: it is bold and unscriptural to set up the one at the expence of the other: the Prophets, the Apostles, and Jesus Christ left us no such precedent: and to avoid what is termed *legality*, we must not run into refinements which they knew nothing of, and make them perpetually contradict themselves: nor can we without an open violation of the laws of candour and criticism, lay a greater stress upon a few obscure and controverted passages, than upon an hundred plain and irrefragable scripture proofs. He therefore supposes that those persons are under a capital mistake, who maintain only the first gospel-axiom, and under pretence of securing to God *all* the glory of the salvation of *one* elect, give to perhaps *twenty* reprobates full room to lay *all* the blame of their damnation, either upon their first parents or their Creator. This way of making *twenty* *real* holes, in order to stop a *supposed* one, he cannot see consistent either with wisdom or scripture.

Thinking it therefore safest *not* to put *asunder* the *scathes* which God has joined together, he makes all ex-
tremes

tremes meet in one blessed scriptural medium. With the Antinomian he preaches, *God worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*; and with the legalist he cries, *Work out therefore your own salvation with fear and trembling*: and thus he has all St. Paul's doctrine. With the ranter he says, *God has chosen you, you are elect*: but as it is thro' sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; with the disciple of Moses he infers, *Make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall never fall*. Thus he presents his hearers with all St. Peter's system of truth, which the others had rent in pieces.

Again, according to the first axiom he says with the perfect Preacher, *All things are now ready*; but with him he adds also according to the second, *Come, lest you never taste the gospel feast*. Thinking it extremely dangerous not to divide the word of God aright, he endeavours to give to every one the portion of it that suits him, cutting according to times, persons, and circumstances either with the soft or the rough edge of his *two-edged sword*. Therefore when he addresses those that are steady, and partakers of the gospel grace from the first day until now, as the Philippians, he makes use of his first principle, and testifies his confidence that *he who hath begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Christ*. But when he expostulates with persons that *ren well, and do not now obey the truth*, according to his second axiom, he says to them, as St. Paul did to the Galatians, *I stand in doubt of you; ye are fallen from grace*.

In short, he would think that he mangled the gospel, and forgot part of his awful commission, if when he has declared that *he who believeth shall be saved*, he did not also add, that *he who believeth not shall be damned*; or, which is the same, that none perish merely for Adam's sin, but for their own unbelief, and wilful rejection of the Saviour's grace. Thus he advances God's glory every way, intirely ascribing to his mercy and grace all the salvation of

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of the elect; and compleatly freeing him from the blame of directly or indirectly hanging the millstone of damnation about the neck of the reprobate. And this he effectually does by shewing that the former owe all they are, and all they have to creating, preserving, and redeeming love, whose innumerable bounties they freely and continually receive; and that the rejection of the latter has absolutely no cause but their obstinate rejecting of that astonishing mercy which *wept over Jerusalem*; and prayed, and bled even for those that shed the atoning blood—the blood that expiated all sin but that of final unbelief.

I have now finished my sketch of Mr. W.'s doctrine, so far as it has fallen under my observation during above sixteen years particular acquaintance with him and his works: it is not my design Sir, to inquire into the truth of his sentiments, much less shall I attempt to prove them orthodox, according to the ideas that some *real protestants* entertain of orthodoxy. This only I beg leave to observe, suppose he is mistaken in all the scriptures on which he founds his doctrines of Christian perfection, and general redemption, yet his mistakes seem rather to arise from a regard for Christ's glory, than from enmity to his offices: and all together do not amount to any heresy at all; the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, namely, the fall of man, justification by the merits of Christ, sanctification by the agency of the Holy Ghost, and the worship of the one true God in the mysterious distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as it is maintained in the three creeds, not being at all affected by any of his peculiar sentiments.

But you possibly imagine, Sir, that he has lately changed his doctrine, and adopted a new system. If you do, you are under a very great mistake, and to convince you of it, permit me to conclude this letter by a paragraph of one which I received from him last spring.

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I always did (for between these thirty and forty years) clearly assert the total fall of man, and his utter inability to do any good of himself: the absolute necessity of the grace and Spirit of God to raise even a good thought or desire in our hearts: the Lord's rewarding no work, and accepting of none, but so far as they proceed from his preventing, convincing and converting grace thro' the Beloved. The blood and righteousness of Christ being the sole meritorious cause of our salvation. And who is there in England that has asserted these things more strongly and steadily than I have done? Leaving you to answer this question, I remain with due respect,

Hon. and Rev. Sir,

Your obedient servant, in the bond of a
peaceful gospel,

J. F.

MADELY,
July 29, 1771.

SECOND

SECOND LETTER.

Hon. and Rev. Sir,

HAVING proved that Mr. W.'s doctrine is not heretical, permit me to consider the propositions which close the minutes of his last conference, on which, it seems, your charge of *dreadful heresy* is founded.

They wear, I confess a new aspect, and such is the force of prejudice and attachment to particular modes of expression, that at first they appeared to me very unguarded, if not altogether erroneous. But when the din of the severe epithets, bestowed upon them by some warm friends, was out of my ears; when I had prayed to the Father of lights for meekness of wisdom, and given place to calm reflection, I saw them in quite a different light. Our Lord commands us *not to judge according to the appearance, but to judge righteous judgment*; appearances therefore did not seem to me sufficient to condemn any man, much less an elder, and such an elder as Mr. W. I considered besides, that the circumstances in which a minister sometimes finds himself with respect to his hearers, and particular errors spreading among them, may oblige him to do or say things, which tho' very right according to the time, place, persons, and junctures, may yet appear very wrong to those who do not stand just where he does. I saw for example, that if St. Paul had been in St. James's circumstances, he would have preached justification in as guarded a manner as St. James; and that if St. James had been in St. Paul's place, he would have preached it

it as freely as St. Paul: and I recollected that in some places St. Paul himself seems even more legal than St. James. See Rom. ii. 7, 10, 14. Gal. vi. 7, &c. and 1 Tim. vi. 19.

These reflections made me not only suspend my judgment concerning Mr. W.'s propositions, but consider what we may candidly suppose was his design in writing them for, and recommending them to, the preachers in connection with him. And I could not help seeing, that it was only to guard them and their hearers against Antinomian principles and practices, which spread like wild-fire in some of his societies; where persons who spoke in the most glorious manner of Christ, and their interest in his compleat salvation, have been found living in the greatest immoralities, or indulging the most unchristian tempers. Nor need I go far for a proof of this sad assertion. In one of his societies not many miles from my parish, a married man, who professed being in a *state of justification and sanctification*, growing wise above what is written, despised his brethren as legalists, and his teachers as persons not clear in the gospel. He instilled his principles into a serious young woman: and what was the consequence? Why, they talked about "finished salvation in Christ," and "the absurdity of perfection in the flesh," till a perfect child was conceived and born; and to save appearances the mother swore it to a travelling man that cannot be heard of. Thus to avoid legality, they plunged into hypocrisy, adultery, perjury, and the depth of rancorism. Is it not hard that a minister should be traduced as guilty of *dreadful heresy* for trying to put a stop to such dreadful practices? And is it not high time that he should cry to all that regard his warnings, *Take heed to your doctrine*. As if he had said,

"Avoid all extremes. While on the one hand you keep clear of the pharisaic delusion that slight Christ, and makes the pretended merit of an imperfect obedience the procuring cause of eternal life;

life; see that on the other hand you do not lean to the Antinomian error, which under pretence of exalting Christ, speaks contemptuously of obedience, and *makes void the law thro' a faith that does not work by love.* As there is but a step between high Arminianism and self-righteousness, so there is but one between high Calvinism and Antinomianism. I charge you to shun both, especially the latter."

" You know by sad experience that at this time we stand particularly in danger of splitting upon the Antinomian rock. Many smatterers in Christian experience talk of finished salvation in Christ, or boast of being in a state of justification and sanctification, while they know little of themselves and less of Christ. Their whole behaviour testifies, that their heart is void of humble love, and full of carnal confidence. They cry *Lord, Lord,* with as much assurance, and as little right as the foolish virgins. They pass for sweet Christians, dear children of God, and good believers; but their secret reserves evidence them to be only such believers as Simon Magus, Ananias, and Saphira."

" Some with *Diotrephes* love to have the pre-eminence and prate malicious words, and not content therewith, they do not themselves receive the brethren, and forbid them that would, and even cast them out of the church as heretics. Some have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of *Balaam*, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; they are wells without water, clouds without rain, and trees without fruit: with Judas they try to load themselves with *stitch* clay, endeavour to lay up treasures on earth, and make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Some, with the incestuous Corinthian, are led captive by *flesh's* lusts, and fall into the greatest enormities. Others with the language of the awakened publican in their mouths, are fast asleep in their spirits; you hear them speak of the corruptions of their hearts, in as unaffected and airy a manner, as if they talked of freckles upon their faces: it seems they run down
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their sinful nature, only to apologize for their sinful practices; or to appear great proficient in self-knowledge, and court the praise due to genuine humility."

"Others, quietly settled on the lees of the Laodicean state, by the whole tenor of their life say they are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing: utter strangers to hunger and thirst after righteousness, they never importunately beg, never wrestle hard for the hidden manna: on the contrary they sing a requiem to their poor dead souls, and say, "*Soul take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up in Christ for many years, yea for ever and ever;*" and thus, like Demas, they go on talking of Christ and heaven, but loving their ease, and enjoying this present world."

"Yet many of these, like Herod, hear and entertain us gladly; but like him also they keep their beloved sin, pleading for it as a right eye, and saving it as a right hand. To this day their bosom corruption is not only alive but indulged; their treacherous Delilah is hugged; and their spiritual Agag walks delicately and boasts that the bitterness of death is past, and he shall never be hewed in pieces before the Lord; nay, to dare so much as to talk of his dying before the body, becomes an almost unpardonable crime."

"Forms and fair shows of godliness deceive us: many, whom our Lord might well compare to whitened sepulchres, look like angels of light when they are abroad, and prove tormenting fiends at home. We see them weep under sermons, we hear them pray and sing with the tongues of men and angels; they even profess the faith that removes mountains; and yet by and by we discover they stumble at every mole-hill; every trifling temptation throws them into peevishness, fretfulness, impatience, ill humour, discontent, anger, and sometimes into loud passion."

"Relative duties are by many grossly neglected: husbands slight their wives, or wives neglect

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and plague their husbands; children are spoiled, parents disregarded and masters disobeyed; yea, so many are the complaints against servants professing godliness on account of their unfaithfulness, indolence, pert answering again, forgetfulness of their mental condition, or insolent expectations, that some serious persons prefer those who have no knowledge of the truth, to those who make an high profession of it."

"*Knowledge is certainly increased; many run to and fro after it, but it is seldom experimental; the power of God is frequently talked of, but rarely felt, and too often cried down under the despicable name of frames and feelings. Numbers seek by hearing a variety of gospel ministers, reading all the religious books that are published, learning the best tunes to our hymns, disputing on controverted points of doctrine, telling or hearing church-news, and listening to or retailing spiritual scandal. But alas! few strive in pangs of heart-felt convictions, few deny themselves and take up their cross daily; few take the kingdom of heaven by the holy violence of wrestling faith, and agonizing prayer; few see, and fewer live in, the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. In a word many say, Lo! Christ is here; and lo! he is there; but few can consistently witness that the kingdom of heaven is within them.*

Many assert that the *clothing of the king's daughter is of wrought gold*, but few, very few experience that *she is all glorious within*; and it is well, if many are not bold enough to maintain that she is "all full of corruptions." With more truth than ever we may say,

Ye different sects, who all declare
Lo! here is Christ, or Christ is there;
Your stronger proofs divinely give
And shew us where *the Christians* live.

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Your claim, alas ! Ye cannot prove,
Ye want the genuine mark of *love*.

“ The consequences of this high, and yet
useless profession, are as evident as they are
deplorable. Selfish views, sinister designs, in-
veterate prejudice, pitiful bigotry, party spirit,
self-sufficiency, contempt of others, envy, jea-
lously, *making men offenders for a word*—possibly a
scriptural word too, taking advantage of each
other’s infirmities, magnifying innocent mistakes,
putting the worst construction upon each other’s
words, and actions, false accusations, back-biting,
malice; revenge, persecution, and a hundred such
evils prevail among religious people, to the great
astonishment of the children of the world, and the
unspeakable grief of the true Israelites that yet re-
main among us.”

“ But this is not all. Some of our hearers do
not even keep to the great outlines of Heathen mo-
rality: not satisfied practically to reject Christ’s de-
claration, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*,
they proceed to that pitch of covetousness and dar-
ing injustice, as not to pay their just debts; yea
and to cheat and extort, whenever they have a
fair opportunity. How few of our societies are
there where this, or some other evil has not broken
out, and given such shakes to the ark of the gos-
pel, that had not the Lord wonderfully interposed,
it must long ago have been overfet? And you know
how to this day *the name and truth of God are openly
blasphemed among the baptized Heathens thro’ the An-
tinomian lives of many, who say they are Jews when
they are not, but by their works declare they are of
the Synagogue of Satan*. At your peril therefore my
Brethren, countenance them not: I know you
would not do it designedly, but you may do it una-
wares; therefore take heed—more than ever take
heed to your doctrine. Let it be scripturally evan-
gelical: give not the children’s bread unto dogs :
comfort not people that do not mourn. When

you should give emetics do not administer cordials, and by that mean strengthen the hands of the slothful and unprofitable servant. I repeat it once more, warp not to Antinomianism, and in order to this, *Take heed, O! Take heed to your doctrine.*"

Surely, Sir, there is no harm in this word of exhortation; it is scriptural, and Mr. W.'s pen cannot make it heretical. *Take we then heed to the design of the directions which follow.*

It is evident that, in order to keep his fellow-labourers clear from Antinomianism, he directs them first not to *lean too much toward Calvinism*; and secondly not to *talk of a justified and sanctified STATE* so unguardedly as some, even Arminians, do; which *tends to mislead men*, and relax their watchful attention to their internal and external works, that is, *to the whole of their inward tempers and outward behaviour.* See No. 8.

He produces three particulars, wherein he thinks that both he and his assistants in the Lord's vineyard, have leaned too much towards Calvinism, each of which has a natural and strong tendency to countenance the Antinomian delusion. The first, being afraid or ashamed to maintain that every man is *faithfully* to employ his every talent, tho' our Lord himself goes so far in maintaining this doctrine as to declare, that *if a man is not faithful in the unrighteous mammon God will not give him the true riches.*—The second, being afraid to use the expression *working for life*: altho' our Lord who must be allowed perfectly to understand his own gospel, uses it himself.—And the third, granting without proper distinction, that a man *is to do nothing in order to justification, than which, says he, nothing can be more false*; as common sense dictates that a rebel must lay down his arms before he can receive a pardon from his prince.

This being premised, Mr. W. invites his fellow-labourers to *review the whole affair*; and while he does it he saps the foundations of the babels built by those who call Christ Lord! Lord! without de-
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parting from iniquity. *Who among Christians, says he, is now accepted of God?* Not he that like Hy-
meneus formerly believed, and concerning faith hath
now made shipwreck—Nor he that, like Simon Ma-
gus, actually believes with a speculative, Antino-
mian faith; but “*he that now believes in Christ with
a loving and obedient heart,*” or as our Lord and St.
Paul expresses it, he whose *faith works by love*, and
whose *love keeps God's commandments*. This must at
once overthrow the pretensions of those whose feign-
ed faith, instead of producing a change in their
hearts, only adds positiveness to their self-conceit,
bitterness to their bad tempers, and perhaps li-
centiousness to their worldly lives.

Still carrying on his point he observes next, to
the shame of loose Christians, that none are accept-
ed of God even among the Heathens, but those that fear
him and work righteousness. Nor is his observation
improper (you Sir being judge) for you tell us in your
fifth sermon, † page 84, that *Cornelius was a man of
singular probity, humanity, and morality, and that a
view of his character may perhaps convince some who
consider themselves as Christians, how far short they are
even of his imperfect righteousness.*

This leads him, No 4, to touch upon an impor-
tant objection, that will naturally occur to the mind
of a Protestant, and he answers it by standing for
the necessity of works as firmly as he does against their
merit in point of salvation; thus cutting down with
one truly evangelical stroke, the arrogance of self-
righteous Papists, and the delusion of licentious
Protestants. And lest Antinomians should, from the
Protestant doctrine that good works have absolute-
ly no merit in point of salvation, take occasion to
slight them and live in sin, he very properly ob-
serves, No. 6, that believers shall be rewarded in
heaven, and are even often rewarded on earth be-
cause of their works, and according to their works,
which he apprehends does not so widely differ
from *secundum merita operum*, as Protestants, in the

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† London re-printed for J. Johnson, 1762.

heat of their contentions with the Papists, have been apt to conclude. No. 7. he starts another objection which Antinomians will naturally make to St. Peter's declaration, that God accepts those who *fear him and work righteousness.*

And now, Hon. Sir, reserving for another place the consideration of his answer, let me appeal to your candor. From the general tenor of these propositions, is it not evident, that Mr. W. (who is now among gospel-ministers what St. James formerly was among the disciples, and Mr. Baxter among the puritan divines, that is, the person peculiarly commissioned by the Bishop of souls, to defend the gospel against the incroachments of Antinomians) aims at stemming the torrent of their delusions, and not at all at *injuring the very fundamental principles of Christianity*, or bringing "a dreadful heresy into the church?"

You may reply, that you do not so much consider what he *aims* at doing, as what he has actually done. Nay, Sir, the intention is what a candid judge (much more a loving brother) should particularly consider. If aiming to kill a wild beast that attacks my friend, I unfortunately stab him, it is a "melancholy accident;" but he wrongs me much, who represents it as a "dreadful barbarity." In like manner, if Mr. W. has unhappily wounded the truth, in attempting to give the wolf in sheep's cloathing a killing stroke, his mistake should rather be called "well-meant legality" than *dreadful heresy.*

You possibly reply: "Let any one look at these minutes, and say whether all the unawakened clergy in the land would not approve and receive them." And what if they did? Would the propositions be the worse barely for this? Is nothing gospel but what directly shocks common sense? And is the apostles creed dreadfully heretical, because all the carnal clergy of the church of England, yea and of the church of Rome receive it? At this strange rate we must give up the bible itself, for all
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the Socinians receive it. Ashamed of taking farther notice of an argument by which every Papist might attack the reasonable simplicity of our communion service, and defend the gross absurdity of transubstantiation, I come to an objection of greater weight.

“ Mr. W. contradicts himself. He has hitherto preached salvation by faith, and now he talks of *salvation by works, as a condition*: he has a thousand times offered a *free pardon* to the worst of sinners, and now he has the assurance to declare, that *a man is to do something in order to justification*. Where will you find such inconsistencies?” Where! In the old and new Testament, and especially in the epistles of the great preacher of free justification, and salvation by faith. There you will see many such *seeming inconsistencies* as these.—*Eternal life is the gift of God thro’ our Lord Jesus Christ*. Charge the rich to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation, that they may lay hold on eternal life; we are temperate, to obtain an incorruptible crown.—*By grace ye are saved thro’ faith*. In so DOING thou shalt save thyself. Work out your own salvation.—*We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves*. The Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law.—*God justifieth the ungodly and him that worketh not*. He shall render to every man according to his works, even eternal life to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory.—*God forbid that I should glory in any thing save in the cross of Christ*. As the truth of God is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying that I have kept myself from being burthensome.—*I am the chief of sinners*. I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.—*We rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh*. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.—*Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us: Not of works lest any man should boast*;

doest; for if it is of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. I keep under my body lest I myself should be a cast away. Be not deceived, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; he that soweth little shall reap little; he that soweth to the spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.—I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, neither things present nor things to come, &c. shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Those that fall away crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame: for the earth which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is tigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. Some of the branches were broken off by unbelief, thou standest by faith; be not high-minded but fear: continue in God's goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Now, Sir, permit me to beg you would lay your hand upon your heart, and say whether malicious infidels have not a fairer show of reason to raise wicked men against St. Paul, than you have to raise good men against Mr. W.? And whether a grain of the candor with which you would reconcile the † *seeming* contradictions of the great apostle, would not be more than sufficient to reconcile the *seeming* inconsistencies of the great minister whom you have so warmly attacked?

Some persons, indeed complain aloud that “Mr. W. in his new scheme of salvation by works as a condition, fairly renounces Christ's blood and righteousness.” I grant that the words “blood and righteousness” are not found in the minutes, but *acceptance by believing in Christ* is found there, and he must be a caviller indeed who asserts that he means a Christ without blood, or a Christ without righteousness.

† Most of those *seeming* inconsistencies of St. Paul, and those which are charged upon Mr. W. will be reconciled with the greatest ease, by considering the two axioms mentioned in my first letter. In the former part of the imaginary contradictions, those servants of God make use of the first gospel-axiom, in the latter part they employ the second, and thus declare the whole counsel of God.

eousness. Besides, when he cuts off *the merit of works* from having any share in our salvation, far from forgetting the meritorious life and death of the Redeemer, he effectually guards them, and the Protestant ark, sprinkled with the atoning blood, from the rash touches of all † merit-mongers. Add to this that Mr. W. hath sufficiently declared his faith in the atonement, in thousands of sermons and hymns, some of which are continually sung both by him and the *real Protestants*, so that out of their own mouth the groundless charge may be refuted.

Again, the doctrine of the atonement had been fully discussed in former conferences and minutes, and Mr. W. is too methodical to bring the same thing over and over again, nor is it reasonable to expect it should be peculiarly insisted upon in a charge against Antinomians, who rather abuse than deny it. Once more, Mr. W.'s extract of the minutes is a memorandum of what was said in the latter part of a conference or conversation, and no unprejudiced person will maintain, that those who do not expressly mention the atonement in every conversation do actually renounce it.

To conclude, if the author of the minutes had advanced the following propositions which you have dropped in your second sermon, you might have had some reason to suspect his not doing the atonement justice. Page 36. *Christ only did that to the human nature which Adam (had he stood upright) would have done.* What! Sir, would Adam have died for his posterity, or did not Christ die for them? You add, *See the true reason of his death; that he might subdue the earthly life in every sense—*And Page 45, *He certainly died for no other end, but that we might receive the Spirit of holiness.* Mr. W. is of a very different sentiment, Sir; for poor heretic! he believes with the Papists that *Christ died to make an atonement for us*, and with St. John that *he is the propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world.* Nevertheless he will not cry out “dreadful heresy”
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† The name that bishop Latimer gives to the Papists.

tho' he will probably think that you was once a little too deeply in Mr. Law's sentiments. Leaving you to think with how much justice I might descant here upon this line of the fatyrie poet,

Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas.

I remain,

Rev. and dear, Sir,

Your's, &c.

THIRD

THIRD LETTER.

Hon. and Rev. Sir,

WE have seen how exceedingly commendable was Mr. W.'s design in writing what you have extracted from his last minutes; and how far from being unanswerable are the *general* objections, which some have moved against them. Let us now proceed to a candid inquiry into the true meaning of the propositions. They are thus prefaced :

We said in 1744, " We have leaned too much toward Calvinism," Wherein?

This single sentence is enough, I grant, to make some persons account Mr. W. an heretic. He is no Calvinist! And what is still more *dreadful*, he has the assurance to say that he has *leaned too much toward Calvinism!* This will sound like a double heresy in their ears, but not in *your's*, Sir, who seem to carry your anti-calvinistical notions farther than Mr. W. himself. He never spoke more clearly to the point of *free grace* than you do, page 85, of your sermons; *God, say you, never left himself without witness, not only from the visible things of the creation, but likewise from the inward witness, a spiritual seed of light sown in the soul of every son of man, Jew, Turk, or Pagan, as well as Christian, whose kindly suscitations whoever follows, will gradually perceive increasing gleams still leading farther on to nearer and far brighter advances, till at length a full and perfect day bursts forth upon his ravished eyes.*" In this single sentence, Sir, you bear the noblest testimony to all the doctrines, in which Mr. W. differs from the Calvinists: you begin with *general redemption*, and end with *perfection*,

tion, or to use your own expression you follow him from the spiritual seed of light in a Turk, quite to the full and PERFECT day, bursting forth upon the ravished eyes of the Pagan who follows the kindly suscitations of divine grace.

And far from making man a mere machine, you tell us, page 140, *It is true, faith is the gift of God, but the exertion of that faith, when once given, lieth in OURSELVES.* Mr. W. grants it, Sir; but permit me to tell you, that the word *ourselves* being printed in italics, seems to convey rather more anti-calvinism than he holds; for he is persuaded that we cannot exert faith without a continual influence of the same divine power that produced it, it being evident upon the gospel plan, that *without Christ we can do nothing.* From these and the like passages in your sermons, I conclude, Sir, that your charge of *dreadful heresy* does not rest upon these words, *We have leaned too much towards Calvinism.* Pass we then to the next, in which Mr. W. begins to shew wherein he has consented too much to the Calvinists.

I. *With regard to MAN'S FAITHFULNESS. Our Lord himself taught us to use the expression. And we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on his authority, that if a man is not FAITHFUL IN THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAMMON, God will not GIVE HIM THE TRUE RICHES.*

Now, where does the heresy lie here? Is it in the word *man's faithfulness*? Is there so much *faithfulness* to God and man among professors, that he must be *opposed* by all good men, who dares to use the bare word? Do *real Protestants* account *man's faithfulness* a grace of supererogation, and quoting scripture, an heresy? Or do they slight what our Lord recommends in the plainest terms, and will one day reward in the most glorious manner? If not, why are they going to enter a protest against Mr. W. because he is not *ashamed of Christ and his words before an evil and adulterous generation, and will*
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not keep back from his immense flock, any part of the counsel of God,—much less a part that so many professors overlook, while some are daring enough to lampoon it, and others wicked enough to trample it under foot.

O Sir, if Mr. W. is to be cast out of your synagogue unless he *formally recants* the passage he has quoted, and which he says *we are not to be ashamed of*, what will you do to the Son of God, who spoke it? What to St. Luke who wrote it? And what to good Mr. Henry, who thus comments upon it? ‘ If we do not make a right use of the gifts of God’s providence, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are the gifts of his spiritual grace? Our Saviour here compares these; and shews, that tho’ our faithful use of the things of this world cannot be thought to merit any favour at the hand of God, yet our unfaithfulness in the use of them may be justly reckoned a FORFEITURE of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory. And that is it which our Saviour shews, *Luke xvi. 10, 11, 12.* He that is unjust, *unfaithful* in the LEAST; is unjust, *unfaithful* also in MUCH. The riches of this world are the LESS; grace and glory are the GREATER. Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things of this world to other purposes than those for which they were given us, it may justly be feared we shall be so in the gifts of God’s grace, that we will receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. He that serves God and does good with his money, will serve God and do good with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom, and grace, and spiritual gifts, and the earnest of heaven; but he that buries the one talent of this world’s wealth, will never improve the five talents of spiritual riches.’

Thus speaks the honest commentator: and whoever charges him with legality or heresy herein,

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I must express my intire approbation by a shout of applause. Hail Henry! Hail Wesley! Ye faithful servants of the most high God: stand it out against an Antinomian world. Hail, ye followers of the despised Galilean: you *confess him and his words before a perverse generation, he will confess you before his Father and his angels.* Let not the scoffs, let not the accusations, even of good people, led by the tempter, appearing as an angel of light, make you give up one jot or tittle of your Lord's gospel. Tho' thousands should combine to brand you as legalists, papists, heretics, and antichrists, stand it out: scripture, conscience, and Jesus are on your side; *be not afraid of their terror, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.* And when you shall have occupied a little longer, and been a little more abused by your mistaken companions, your Master will come and find you employed in serving his family, and not in *beating your fellow-servants.* And while the unprofitable, unfaithful, quarrelsome servant is cast out, he will address you with a "*Well done good and faithful servants. Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you rulers over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.*"

Excuse the length of this address; it dropped from me before I was aware, and is the fruit of the joy I feel to see "the John Goodwin of the age," and the oracle of the Calvinists, so fully agree to maintain the Christian *heresy* against the Antinomian orthodoxy. Nay, and you, yourself, are of the very same way of thinking. For you tell us (page 89) that *God so far approved of the advances Cornelius had made towards him (by praying and giving, as you had observed before, much alms to the people) under the slender light offered him; of his earnest desire of a still nearer and more intimate acquaintance with him, and of the improvements he had made of the small talent he had committed to him, that he was now about to entrust him with greater and far better treasures.*

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In the mouth of two such witnesses as Mr. Henry and yourself, Mr. W.'s doctrine might be established; but as I fear that some of our friends, will soon look upon you both as tainted with his heresy; I shall produce some plain scripture-instances, to prove by the strongest of all arguments, *matter of fact*, that man's *unfaithfulness in the mammon of unrighteousness* is attended with the worst of consequences.

You know, Sir, what destruction this sin brought upon Achan, and by his means upon Israel: and you remember how Saul's avarice, and his *flying upon the spoil* of the Amalekites, cost him his kingdom, together with the divine blessing. You will perhaps object that "they forfeited only temporal mercies:" true, if they repented; but if their sin sealed up the hardness of their heart, then they lost all.

I can however mention two who indisputably forfeited both spiritual and eternal blessings: the one is, the moral young man, whose fatal attachment to wealth is mentioned in the gospel. Go, said our Lord to him, *sell all thou hast, give to the poor, come, follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* He was *unfaithful in the mammon of unrighteousness*; he would not comply with the proposal, and tho' *Jesus loved him*, yet he stood firm to his word, he did not *give him the true riches*: the unhappy wretch chose to *have his good things in this world*, and so lost them in the next.

The other instance is that of Judas; *he left all*, at first, *to follow Jesus*; but when the devil placed him upon the high mountain of temptation, and shewed him the horrors of poverty and the alluring wealth of this world, covetousness his besetting sin prevailed again; and as he carried the bag, he turned thief, and made a private purse. You know, Sir, that *the love of money proved to him the root of all evil*, and that on account of his *unfaithfulness in the mammon of unrighteousness*, our Lord not only *did not give him the true riches*, but took his

every talent from him, his apostleship on earth, and one of the twelve thrones which he had promised him in common with the other disciples.

Some, I know, will excuse Judas by fathering his crime and damnation upon the decrees of God. But we who are not numbered among *real Protestants* think that sinners are reprobated as they are elected, that is, says St. Peter, *according to the fore-knowledge of God*: we are persuaded, that because God's knowledge is *infinite*, he fore-knows future contingencies; and we think, we should insult both his holiness and omniscience, if we did not believe that he could both foresee and foretell that Judas would be unfaithful, without necessitating him to be so, that the scriptures might be fulfilled: we assert then, that as Jesus loved the poor covetous young man, so he loved his poor covetous disciple: for had he hated him he must have acted the base part of a dissembler, by shewing him for years as much love as he did the other apostles; an idea too horrid for a Christian to entertain, I shall not say of God made flesh, but even of a man that has any sincerity or truth! Judas's damnation therefore, and the ruin of the young man, according to the second axiom in the gospel, were merely of themselves, by their unbelief and *unfaithfulness in the mammon of unrighteousness*; for how could they believe, seeing they reposed their trust in *uncertain riches*!

Thus, Sir, both the express declaration of our Lord, and the plain histories of the scripture, agree to confirm this fundamental principle in Christianity, that when God works upon man, he expects faithfulness from man; and that when man, as a moral agent, grieves and quenches the spirit that strives to make him faithful, temporal and eternal ruin are the inevitable consequence.

Thus far then the minutes, contain a great, evangelical truth, and not a shadow of heresy. Let us see

see whether the dreadful snake lurks under the second proposition.

II. *We have leaned too much towards Calvinism,*
 2. *With regard to WORKING FOR LIFE. This also our Lord has expressly commanded us. Labour (ERGAZESTHE, literally WORK) FOR THE MEAT THAT ENDURETH TO EVERLASTING LIFE. And in fact every believer, till he comes to glory, works FOR as well as FROM life.*

Here Mr. W. strikes at a fatal mistake of all Antinomians, many honest Calvinists, and not a few who are Arminians in sentiment and Calvinists in practice. All these, when they see that man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, lie easy in the mire of iniquity, idly waiting till by an irresistible act of omnipotence, God pulls them out without any striving on their part. Multitudes uncomfortably stick here, and will probably continue to do so, till they receive and heartily embrace that part of the gospel which is now alas! called *heresy*. Then shall these poor prisoners in giant Despair's castle, find the key of their dungeon about them, and perceive that *the word is nigh them, yea, in their mouth and in their heart: stirring up the gift of God within them, and in hope believing against hope, they will happily lay hold of eternal life, and apprehend by the confidence of faith, him that has apprehended them by convictions of sin.*

But now, instead of imitating Lazarus, who when the Lord had called him, and restored life to his putrifying body, *came forth* out of his grave, though he was *bound hand and foot*; these mistaken men indolently wait till the Lord drags them out, not considering that it is more than he has promised to do. On the contrary, he reproves by his prophet those that *do not stir themselves up to lay hold on him*; and deciding the point himself, says, *Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you; because I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hands unto you*

and no man regarded, I will mock when your fear cometh.

Should you object, that the case is not similar, because the Lord gave life to the dead body of Lazarus, whereas our souls are *dead in sin by nature*. True, Sir, *by nature*; but does not *grace* reign to controul nature? And *as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, is not the free gift come upon all men to justification of life?* According to the promise made to our first parents, and of course to all men then contained in their loins, is not *the seed of the woman* always *nigh*, both to reveal and *bruise the serpent's head*? Is not *Christ the light of men—the light of the world* come into the world? *Shineth he not in the darkness of our nature, even when the darkness comprehends him not?* And is not this *light the life, the spiritual life of men*? Can this be denied, if the *light is Christ, and if Christ is the resurrection and the life, who came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly?*

In this scriptural view of *free grace*, what room is there for the ridiculous cavil, that “*Mr. W. wants the dead to work for life?*” God of his infinite mercy in Jesus Christ, gives to poor sinners naturally dead in sin, *a talent of free, preventing, quickening grace, which reproveth them of sin; and when it is followed, of righteousness and judgment.* This, which some Calvinists call *common grace*, is granted to all, without any respect of persons; so that even the poor Jew Herod, if he had not preferred the smiles of his Herodias to the convincing light of Christ, which shone in his conscience, would have been saved as well as John the Baptist; and that poor Heathen Felix, if he had not *hardened his heart in the day of his visitation*, would have sweetly experienced that Christ had as much *tasted death* for him as he did for St. Paul. The living light visited them; but they not *working while it was day*, or refusing to *cut off the right hand* which the Lord called for, fell at last into that *night wherein no man*

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can work: their candlestick was removed, their lamp went out. They quenched their smoking flax, or in other words their talent unimproved was justly taken from them. Thus, tho' once thro' grace they could work, they died while they lived; and so were, as says St. Jude, *twice dead*, dead in Adam by that sentence, *in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*; and dead in themselves, by personally renouncing Christ the life, or rejecting the light of his convincing Spirit.

This being premised, I ask, Where is the heresy in this paragraph of the minutes? Does it consist in quoting a plain passage out of one of our Lord's sermons? Or in daring to produce in the original, under the horrible form of the decagrammaton *ergazesthe*, that dreadful tetragrammaton *work*? Surely, Sir, you have too much piety to maintain the former, and too much good sense to assert the latter. Does it consist in saying that *believers work from life*? (for of such only Mr. W. here speaks) Do not all grant, that *he who believeth hath life, yea, everlasting life*, and therefore can work? And have not I proved from scripture, that the very Heathens are not without some light and grace to work suitably to their dispensation?

The heresy, say you, does not consist in asserting that the believer works *from*, but *for* life. Does it indeed? Then the Lord Jesus is the *heretic*; for Mr. W. only repeats what he spoke above 1700 years ago: Labour, says he, (*Ergazesthe*,) *WORK FOR the meat that endureth to everlasting LIFE*. Enter therefore your protest against St. John's gospel, if Christ will not *formally recant* it; and not against the minutes of his servant, who dares not take away from his Lord's words, for fear God should take away his part out of the book of life.

But if the Son of God is an heretic for putting the unbelieving Jews upon *working* by that dreadful word *ergazesthe*, St. Paul is undoubtedly an arch heretic, for corroborating it by a strong preposition: *Katergazesthe*, says he to the Philippians,

WORK

WORK OUT—and what is most astonishing *work out YOUR OWN SALVATION. Your own salvation!* Why, Paul, this is even worse than working for life; for *salvation* implies a deliverance from all guilt, sin, and misery; together with obtaining the life of grace here, and the life of glory hereafter. Ah! poor legal apostle, what a pity is it, thou didst not live in our evangelical age! Some by explaining to thee the mystery of *finished salvation*, or by *protesting in a body against thy dreadful heresy*, might have saved the *fundamental doctrines of Christianity*: and the John Goodwin of the age would not have had thee to bear him out in his pharisaical, and papistical delusions.

Here you reply, that “ St. Paul gives God all the glory by maintaining that *it is he who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” And does not Mr. W. do the same? Hath he not for near forty years steadily asserted, that all power to think a good thought, much more to will or do a good work is from God, by mere grace, thro’ the merits of Jesus Christ, and the agency of the holy Spirit? If any dares to deny it, myriads of witnesses who have heard him preach, and thousands of printed sermons, hymns, and tracts dispersed thro’ the three kingdoms, will prove it.

But let us come closer to the point. Is not Christ *the bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world?*—Is he not *the meat that endureth to everlasting life?* *The meat which he directs even the poor Capernaïtes to work for?* Must we not come to him for that meat? Is not *coming to Christ*, a *work of the heart?* Yea *the work of God?* The work that God peculiarly calls for? John vi. 28, 29. Does not our Lord complain of those who will not work for life? That is, *come unto him that they might have life, or that they might have it more abundantly?* And must not every believer *do this work*—come to Christ for life, yea and live upon him every day and every hour?

Again,

Again, Sir, consider these scriptures, *He that believeth hath everlasting life, He that hath the Son hath life*; Compare them with the following complaint, *None stirreth up himself to lay hold on God*: and with the charge of St. Paul to Timothy, *Lay hold on eternal life*: and let us know, whether *stirring up oneself to lay hold on the God of our life*, and actually *laying hold on eternal life* are not works, and works *for*, as well as *from life*? And whether believers are dispensed from these works till they come to glory?

Once more: please to tell us, if praying, using ordinances, running a race, taking up the cross, keeping under the body, wrestling, fighting a good fight, are not works; and if all believers are not to do them, till death brings them a discharge? If you say, that "they do them *from life* and not *for life*," you still point blank oppose our Lord's express declaration.

A similar instance will make you sensible of it. Lot flies out of Sodom. How many works does he do at once! He hearkens to God's messengers, obeys their voice, sacrifices his property, forsakes all, prays, runs, and *escapes for his life*. No, says one, wiser than seven men who can render a reason; "You should not say, that he escapes *for life*, but *from life*: Do not hint, that he runs "to preserve his life;" you should say that he does it "because he is alive." What an admirable distinction is this!

Again; my friend is consumptive. I send for a Physician who prescribes "he must ride out every day *for his life*." Some other Physicians see the prescription and by printed letters raise all the gentlemen of the faculty, to insist in a body on a formal recantation of this dreadful prescription: declaring the health of thousands is at stake, if we say that consumptive people are to ride *for life*, as well as *from life*. *Risum teneatis amici?*

But they who protest, against Mr. W. for maintaining that we ought to work *for* as well as *from* life, must protest also against a body of puritan Divines

vines, who in the last century being shocked at Dr. Crisp's doctrine, thus bore their testimony against it. ' To say salvation is not the end of any good work we do, or, we are to act FROM life and not FOR life were to abandon the human nature: it were to teach us to violate the great precepts of the gospel; it supposes one bound to do more for the salvation of others, than our own; 'twere to make all the threatnings of eternal death, and promises of eternal life in the gospel, useless, as motives to shun the one, or obtain the other: and it makes the scripture-characters and commendation of the most eminent saints, a fault:' for they all escaped out of Sodom or Babylon for their lives; they all wrestled for, and *laid hold on eternal life*. Preface to Mr. Flavel's book against *Antinomianism*. Thus, Sir, the very Calvinists were ashamed a hundred years ago, of the grand Crispian tenet that we ought not to work *for life*.

And I am glad to find, you are as far from this error as they were; for you tell us in your sermons, page 69, that ' The gracious end of Christ's coming into the world was to give eternal LIFE to those who were DEAD in sins, and that eternal life does consist in knowing the true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent:' you assure us next that this life begins by " an exploring desire," and that God by giving it " only means to be earnestly sought, that he may be more successfully and more happily found."

Perhaps some suppose the expression of working *for life*, implies the working in order to merit or purchase life. But as our Lord's words convey no such idea, so Mr. W. takes care positively to exclude it, by those words, *Not by the merit of works*: for he knows that *eternal life is the gift of God*; and yet with St. Paul he says, *Labour to enter into rest, lest ye fall after the example of Israel's unbelief*: and with the great anticrispian Divine Jesus Christ, he cries aloud, *Strive to walk in the narrow*

narrow way—agonize to enter in at the strait gate that leads to LIFE.

I pass to the third instance which he produces of his having leaned too much towards Calvinism.

III. 3. *We have received it as a maxim that "a man is to do nothing IN ORDER to justification:" nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God should CEASE FROM EVIL AND LEARN TO DO WELL. Whoever repents, should do WORKS MEET FOR REPENTANCE. And if this is not IN ORDER to find favour, what does he do them for?*

To do Mr. W. justice, it is necessary to consider what he means by justification. And first, he does not mean, that general benevolence of our merciful God towards sinful mankind, whereby, thro' the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, he casts a propitious look upon them, and freely makes them partakers of *the light that enlightens every man that cometh into the world.* This general loving-kindness is certainly previous to any thing we can do to find it; for it always prevents us, saying to us, in our very infancy, *live:* and when we turn from the paths of life, still crying, *Why will ye die?* In consequence of this general mercy our Lord says, *Let little children come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.* Much less does Mr. W. understand what Dr. Crisp calls *eternal justification*, which because I do not see in the scripture I shall say nothing of.

But the justification he speaks of as something that we must find, and in order to which something must be done, is either that public and final justification which our Lord mentions in the gospel, *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;* and in this sense no man in his wits will find fault with Mr. W.'s assertion; as it is evident that we must absolutely *do something*, that is, speak good words, in order to be *justified by our words.* Or he means forgiveness, and the witness
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of it; that wonderful transaction of the Spirit of God, in a returning prodigal's conscience, by which the forgiveness of his sins is proclaimed to him thro' the blood of sprinkling.—This is what Mr. W. and St. Paul generally mean. It is thus, that *Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And now do not scripture, common sense, and experience shew, that *something must be done in order to attain or find, tho' not to merit and purchase this justification?*

Please to answer the following questions founded upon the express declarations of God's word. *To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.* Is ordering our conversation a-right doing nothing?—*Repent ye and be converted that your sins may be blotted out.* Are repentance and conversion nothing? *Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, I will justify you.* Is coming doing nothing? *Cease to do evil, learn to do well.* Come now, let us reason together, and tho' your sins be red as crimson they shall be white as snow, you shall be justified. Is ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well, doing nothing?—*Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the righteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Is seeking, calling, forsaking one's way and returning to the Lord a mere nothing?—*Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.* Yea, take the kingdom of heaven by force. Is seeking, asking, knocking and taking by force doing absolutely nothing? Please to answer these questions, and when you have done, I'll throw one or two hundred more of the like-kind in your way.

Let us now see whether Reason is not for Mr. W. as well as scripture. Do you not maintain that "*believing is necessary in order to our justification?*" If you do, you subscribe Mr. W.'s heresy; for *be-*
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believing is not only doing *something*, but necessarily supposes a *variety of things*. *Faith cometh by hearing*, and sometimes by reading, which implies attending the ministry of the word, and searching the scriptures as the Bereans did. It likewise pre-supposes at least the attention of the mind, and consent of the heart, to a revealed truth, or the consideration, approbation and receiving of an object proposed to us: nay, it implies renouncing worldly and seeking divine honor; for, says our Lord, *How can you believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only*. And if none can believe in Christ unto salvation, but those who give up seeking worldly honors, by a parity of reason they must give up following fleshly lusts, and putting their trust in uncertain riches: in a word, they must own themselves sick, and renounce their physicians of no value, before they can make one true application to the invaluable physician. What a variety of things is therefore implied in *believing*, which we cannot but acknowledge previous to justification! Who can then consistently with reason, blame Mr. W. for saying *something* must be done in order to justification?

Again, if nothing is required of us in order to justification, who can find fault with those that die in a state of condemnation? They were *born in sin and children of wrath*, and nothing was required of them in order to find favour: it remains therefore, that they are—damned, thro' an absolute decree, made thousands of years before they had any existence! If some can swallow this camel with the greatest ease, I doubt, Sir, it will not go down with *you*, without bearing very hard upon the knowledge you have of the God of love, and the gospel of Jesus.

Once more: Mr. W. concludes his proposition by a very pertinent question: “*When a man that is not justified, does works meet for repentance, what does he do them for?*” Permit me to answer it according to scripture and common sense. If he does them in

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order to *purchase* the divine favour, he is under a self-righteous delusion; but if he does them, as Mr. W. says, *in order to FIND* what Christ hath purchased for him, he acts the part of a wise Protestant.

Should you say that such a penitent does works meet for repentance, from a sense of gratitude for redeeming love: I answer, this is impossible; for that love must be shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him, in consequence of his justification, before he can act from the sense of that love and the gratitude which it excites. I hope, it is no heresy to maintain, that the cause must go before the effect. I conclude then that those who have not yet found the pardoning love of God, do works meet for repentance *in order to find it*. They abstain from those outward evils which once they pursued; they do the outward good which the convincing spirit prompts them to: they use the means of grace, confess their sins, and ask pardon for them: in short they *seek* the Lord, encouraged by that promise, *They that seek me early shall find me*. And Mr. W. suppose, they seek *in order to find*; in the name of candor where is the harm, of that supposition?

When the poor woman has lost her *piece of silver* she lights a candle, says our Lord, she *sweeps the house and searches diligently till she finds it*. Mr. W. asks, *If she does not do all this in order to find it*, what does she do it for? At this the alarm is taken, and the post carries through various provinces printed letters against old Mordecai, and a synod is called together, to *protest* against the dreadful error.

This reminds me of a little anecdote. Some centuries ago, one Virgilius (I think) a German bishop, was bold enough to look over the walls of ignorance and superstition, which then inclosed all Europe. And he saw, that if the earth was round, there must be antipodes. Some minutes of his observations were sent to the Pope. His Holiness who understood geography as much as divinity,
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took fright. Fancying the unheard-of assertion was injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity. He directly called together the cardinals, as wise as himself, and by their advice issued out a Bull condemning the heretical doctrine, and the poor bishop was obliged to make a formal recantation of it under pain of excommunication. Which are we to admire most? The zeal of the conclave, or that of the *real Protestants*? In the mean time let me observe, that as all the Roman Catholics do now acknowledge, that there are antipodes, so all real Protestants will one day acknowledge, that penitents seek the favour of God *in order to find it*; unless some rare genius should be able to demonstrate, that it is, *in order to loose it*.

Having defended Mr. W.'s third proposition from scripture and common sense, permit me to do it also from experience. And here I might appeal to the most established persons in Mr. W.'s societies; but as their testimony may have little weight with you, I wave it, and appeal to all the accounts of *sound conversions* that have been published since Calvin's days. Shew me one, Sir, wherein it appears that a mourner in Sion found the above described justification, without *doing some previous works meet for repentance*. If you cannot produce one such instance, Mr. W.'s doctrine is supported by the *printed experiences* of all the converted Calvinists, as well as of all the believers in his own societies. Nor am I afraid to appeal even to the experience of your own friends. If any one of these can say with a good conscience that he found the above-described justification without first stopping in the career of outward sin, without praying, seeking, and confessing his guilt and misery, I promise to give up the minutes. But if none can make such a declaration you must grant, Sir, that experience is on Mr. W.'s side, as much as reason, revelation, the best Calvinists, and yourself. I say yourself.

Give me leave to produce but one instance. Page 76 of your sermons, you address those *who see*

themselves destitute of that knowledge of God which is eternal life, the very same thing that Mr. W. calls justification; and which you define, a home-felt knowledge of God by the experience of his love, being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. The Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and you recommend to them to SEEK and PRESS after it." Now Sir, seeking and pressing after it, is certainly doing something in order to find it.

I must not conclude my vindication of the third proposition, without answering a specious objection. "If we must do something in order to justification, farewell free justification: it is no more of grace, but of works, and consequently of debt. The middle wall of partition between the church of Rome, and the church of England, is pulled down, and the two sticks in the hands of that heretical juggler, J. W. are become one."

I reply (1.) that some who think they are real pillars in the Protestant church may be nearer the church of Rome than they are aware of: for Rome is far more remarkable for lording it over God's heritage, and calling the most faithful servants of God heretics, than even for her pharisaic exalting of good works. — (2.) If the church of Rome had not insisted upon the necessity of *unrequired unprofitable, and foolish* works; and if she had not arrogantly ascribed *saving merit* to works, yea to merely external performances, and by that means clouded the merits of Christ; no reasonable Protestant would have separated from her on account of her regard for works. (3.) Nothing can be more absurd than to affirm that when *something is required to be done in order to receive a favour, the favour loses the name of a free gift, and directly becomes a debt.* Long, too long, persons who have more honesty than wisdom, have been frightened from the plain path of duty by a phantom of their own making. O may the snare break at last! And why should not it break now? Have not sophisms been wire-drawn

drawn, till they break of themselves in the sight of every attentive spectator?

I say to two beggars, Hold out your hand: here is an alms for you. The one complies and the other refuses. Who in the world will dare to say, that my charity is no more a *free-gift*, because I bestow it only upon the man that held out his hand? Will nothing make it *free* but my wrenching his hand open, or forcing my bounty down his throat? Again, the king says to four rebels, throw down your arms; surrender, and you shall have a place, both in my favour and at court. One of them obeys and becomes a great man; the others upon refusal are caught and hanged. What sophister will face me down, that the pardon and place of the former, are not *freely* bestowed upon him, because he did something in order to obtain them? Once more,

The God of providence says, If you plow, sow, harrow, fence, and weed your fields, I will give the increase, and you shall have a crop. Farmers obey: and are they to believe, that because they do so many things towards their harvest, it is *not the free gift* of heaven? Do not all those who fear God, know that their ground, seed, cattle, strength, yea, and their very life, are the gifts of God? Does not this prevent their claiming a crop as a *debt*? And make them confess, that tho' it was suspended on their plowing, &c. it is the unmerited bounty of heaven?

Apply this Sir, to the present case, and you will see that our *doing something in order to justification*, does not in the least hinder it from being a *free gift*; because whatever we do in order to it, we do it *by the grace of God* preventing us that we may have a good-will, and working with us when we have that good-will; all being of free, most absolutely free grace, through the merits of Christ. And nevertheless so sure as a farmer, in the appointed ways of providence, shall have no harvest if he does nothing towards it; a pro-

fessor in the appointed ways of grace (let him talk of finished salvation all the year round) shall go without justification and salvation, unless he does something towards them. *He that now goeth on his way weeping, says the Psalmist, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him. Be not deceived, says the Apostle, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; and he only that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.* David therefore and St. Paul must be proved enemies to free grace, before Mr. W. can be represented as such; for they both sowed in tears before they reaped in joy: their doctrine and experience went hand in hand together.

Having now vindicated the three first propositions of the minutes, levelled at three dangerous tenets of Dr. Crisp, and shewn, that not only yourself, Sir, but moderate Calvinists are (so far) intirely of Mr. W.'s sentiment. I remain,

Hon. and Rev. Sir,

Your obedient servant,

In the bond of a free and peaceful gospel,

J. F.

FOURTH

F O U R T H L E T T E R.

Hon. and Rev. Sir,

IF the three first propositions of the minutes are scriptural, Mr. W. may well begin the remaining part, by desiring the preachers in his connection to emerge along with him from under the noisy billows of prejudice, and to struggle quite out of the muddy streams of Antinomian delusions, which have so long gone over our heads, and carried so many souls down the channels of vice, into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Well may he intreat them to

Review the whole affair.

And why should this modest request, alarm any one? Tho' error dreads a revival, truth, you know, cannot but gain by it.

I.

Mr. W. says in this review,

1. *Who is now accepted of God? He that now believes in Christ with a loving obedient heart.*

Excellent answer! Worthy of St. Paul and St. James; for it sums up in one line the Epistles of both. In the first part of it, (*He that now believes in Christ*) you see St. Paul's gospel calculated for lost sinners, who now fly from the babel of self-righteousness and sin, and find *all things* in Christ ready for their reception. And in the second part, (*with a loving and obedient heart*) you see the strong bulwark raised by St. James, to guard the truth of the gospel against the attacks of Antinomian and Laodicean professors. Had he said, "he that shall believe

believe the next hour, is *now* accepted," he would have bestowed upon present unbelief the blessing that is promised to present faith. Had he said "he that believed a year ago, is now accepted of God," he would have opened the kingdom of heaven to apostates, contrary to St. Paul's declarations to the Hebrews. He therefore very properly says *he that now believes*; for it is written, *he that believeth*, (not he that *shall* believe, or he that *did* believe) *hath everlasting life*.

What fault can you then find with Mr. W. here? Surely you cannot blame him for proposing Christ as the object of the Christian's faith, or for saying that the *believer* hath a loving and obedient heart; for he speaks of the *accepted* man, and not of him who *comes for acceptance*. Multitudes alas! rest satisfied with an *unloving, disobedient* faith,—a faith that engages only the head, but has nothing to do with the *heart*—a faith that works by malice, instead of *working by love*—a faith that pleads for sin in the heart, instead of purifying the heart from sin—a faith that St. Paul explodes, 1 Cor. xiii. 2; and that St. James compares to a carcass, Chap ii. 26. There is no need that Mr. W. should countenance such a faith by his minutes. Too many alas! do it by their lives; and God grant none may do it by their sermons. Whoever does, Sir, it is not you; for you tell us in your's, page 150, that *Christ is to be found only by living faith; even a faith that worketh by love; even a faith that layeth hold of Christ by the feet, and worshippeth him*—the very faith of Mary Magdalen, who certainly had a *loving and obedient heart*, for our Lord testified that *she loved much*, and ardent love cannot but be *zealously obedient*. There is not then the least shadow of heresy, but the very marrow of the gospel in this article. Let us see whether the second is equally defensible.

II.

2. *But who among those that never heard of Christ? He that seareth God, and worketh righteousness, according to the light he has.* And

And where is the error here? Did not St. Peter begin his evangelical sermon to Cornelius by these very words, prefaced by some others that make them remarkably emphatical? *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.* Surely, Sir, you will never insist upon a formal recantation of a plain scripture!

But perhaps you object to those words which Mr. W. has added to St. Peter's declaration, *according to the light he hath.* What should it be "according to the light he has not?" Are not there people enough among us, who follow the wicked servant that intimated *his Lord was an hard and austere man reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not straw'd?* Must Mr. W. increase the number? Or would you have him insinuate that God is more cruel than Pharaoh, who granted the poor Israelites *day-light*, if he allowed them *no straw* to make bricks---that he requires an Heathen to work without any degree of *light*, without a *day* of visitation, in the Egyptian darkness of a merely natural state?---And that he will then damn and torment him everlastingly, either for not doing or for marring his work? O Sir, like yourself, Mr. W. is too evangelical to entertain such notions of *the God of love.*

"At this rate, say some, an Heathen may be saved without a Saviour; his *fearing God and working righteousness* will go for the blood and righteousness of Christ." Mr. W. has no such thought: whenever an Heathen is accepted, it is merely through the merits of Christ: altho' it is in consequence of his *fearing God and working righteousness.*" "But how comes he to see that *God is to be feared*, and that *righteousness is his delight?*" Because a beam of our Sun of righteousness shines in his darkness. All is therefore of grace, the light, the works of righteousness done by that light, and acceptance in consequence of them. How much more evangelical is this doctrine of St. Peter, than that

that of some Divines, who consign all the Heathens by millions to hell torments, because they cannot explicitly believe in a Saviour whose name they never heard? Nay, and in whom it would be the greatest arrogancy to believe, if he never died for them? Is it not possible that Heathens should by grace, reap some blessings thro' Adam the second, tho' they know nothing of his name and obedience unto death; when they, by nature, reap so many curses thro' Adam the first, to whose name and disobedience they are equally strangers? If this is an *heresy*, it is such an one as does honor to Jesus and humanity.

2d. Obj. "Mr. W. by allowing the possibility of a righteous Heathen's salvation goes point blank against the 18th article of our Church which he has solemnly subscribed."

Ans. This assertion is groundless. Mr. W. far from presuming to say that an Heathen *can be saved by the law or sect that he professes, if he frames his life according to the light of nature*, cordially believes that all the Heathens who are saved, are so thro' the name, that is, thro' the merit and Spirit of Christ; by framing their life, not according to I know not what light naturally received from fallen Adam, but according to the supernatural light, which Christ graciously affords them, in the dispensation they are under.

3d. Obj. "However if he does not impugn the 18th article, he does the 19th, which says, that *Works done before justification, or before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, for as much as they proceed not from faith in Christ, are not pleasant to God, yea have the nature of sin.*"

Nay, this article does not affect Mr. W.'s doctrine; for he constantly maintains, that if the works of a Melchisedec, a Job, a Plato, a Cornelius are accepted, it is only because they follow the *gener.!* justification above-mentioned; (which is possibly what St. Paul calls the free gift that came upon ALL men to justification of life, Rom. v.

18.) and because they proceed from the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit: they are not therefore done before that grace and inspiration, as are the works which the article condemns.

4th Obj. "But all that is not of faith is sin, and without faith it is impossible to please God."

Ans. True; therefore he that cometh to God must BELIEVE that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Cornelius had undoubtedly this faith, and a degree of it is found in all sincere Heathens. For Christ the light of men visits all, tho' in a variety of degrees and dispensations. He said to the carnal Jews that believed not on him: Yet a little while the light is with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: While ye have the light, BELIEVE IN THE LIGHT, that ye may be the children of the light. All the Heathens that are saved, are then saved, by an explicit faith in Jesus the light of the world; or, to use our Lord's own words, by believing in the light of their dispensation, before the day of their visitation is past, before total darkness comes upon them, even the night when no man can work.

5. Obj. "But if Heathens can be saved without the gospel, what need is there of the Christian dispensation?"

Ans. (1.) None of them was ever saved without a beam of the internal light of the gospel, which is preached in (11) every creature under heaven, Col. i. 23.

(2.) The argument may be retorted: if sinners could be saved under the patriarchal dispensation, what need was there of the Mosaic? If under the Mosaic, what need of John's baptism? If under the baptism of John, what need of Christianity? Or to answer by a comparison; if we can see our way by star-light, what need is there of moon-shine? If by moon-shine, what need of the dawn of day? If by the dawn of day, what need of the rising-sun?

The brightness of divine dispensations, like the light of the righteous, shines more and more unto the perfect

fall day: And tho' an Heathen may be saved in his low dispensation, and attain unto a low degree of glory, which the Apostle compares to the shining of a star, (for in *my Father's house*, says Christ, *there are many mansions*) yet it is an unspeakable advantage to be saved from the darkness attending his uncomfortable dispensation, into the full enjoyment of the *life and immortality brought to light by the external gospel*. Well might then the angel say to Cornelius, who was already accepted according to his dispensation, that Peter should tell him words whereby he should be saved—saved from the weakness, darkness, bondage, and tormenting fears attending his present state, into that blessed state of light, comfort, liberty, power, and glorious joy, where *he that is feeble is as David, and the house of David as God, or as the angel of the Lord*.

Having thus briefly answered the objections that are advanced against St. Peter's and Mr. W.'s doctrine, proceed we to the 3d query, in the review of the whole affair.

III.

3. *Is this the same with he that is sincere? Nearly, if not quite.*

In the name of charity where is the error of this answer? Where the shadow of heresy? Do you suppose, by he that is *sincere* Mr. W. means a carnal unawakened wretch, who boasts of his imaginary sincerity? No, Sir, he means one who in God's account, and not barely in his own, *sincerely* and *uprightly* follows the light of his dispensation. Now, if you expose Mr. W. as guilty of *heresy*, for using this word once, what *protests* will you enter against St. Paul, for using it over and over? How will you blame him for desiring the Ephesians (according to the fine reading of our margin) to be *sincere in love!* ἀληθινούς, ἐν ἀγάπῃ — Or for wishing nothing greater to his dear Philippians, than that they might be *sincere in the day of Christ!* Oh Sir, to fear, and much more to love, the Lord in sincerity

is a great and rare thing, Eph. vi. 24. We find every where too much of the *old leaven of malice*, and too little of the *unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*, 1 Cor. v. 8. Think not therefore that Mr. W. betrays the cause of God, because he thinks that *to be sincere*, and *to fear God and work righteousness*, are expressions nearly, if not quite, synonymous.

But you do not perhaps find fault with Mr. W. for setting accepted Heathens too low, but too high, by giving them the character of being *sincere*. For you know that our translators render the Hebrew word (Thmim) sometimes *sincere*, at other times *upright*, *undefiled*, and most commonly *perfect*. As in these sentences, *Noah was a perfect man*, *Job was a perfect man*, &c. May not then Mr. W. secretly bring in his abominable doctrine of *perfection*, under the less frightful expression of *sincerity*? Of this more by and by.

In the mean time I shall close my vindication of the 2d. and 3d. query, by the sentiments of two unquestionable Protestants on the present subject. The one is Mr. Henry in his comment on St. Peter's words. 'God, says he, never did, nor ever will reject an honest Gentile, who fears God and worships him, and works righteousness, i. e. is just and charitable towards all men, who lives up to the light he has in a SINCERE devotion, and regular conversation.—Wherever God finds an UPRIGHT man he will be found an upright God, Ps. 18. 25.—And those that have not the knowledge of Christ, and therefore cannot have an explicit regard to him, may yet receive grace for his sake, to fear God, and work righteousness; and wherever God gives grace to do so, as he did to Cornelius, he will thro' Christ accept the work of his own hands.' Here, Sir, you have the very doctrine of Mr. W. quite down to the heretical word *sincere*.

The other divine, Sir, is yourself. You tell us in your sermon on the same text, that 'We cannot but admire, and adore God's universal tenderness, and pity for every people and nation un-

‘ der heaven, in that he willeth not the death of
 ‘ any single sinner, but accepteth every one into
 ‘ gospel-covenant with him, who feareth him and
 ‘ worketh righteousness according to the light im-
 ‘ parted to him.’

Now, Sir, where is the difference between your orthodoxy and Mr. W.’s heresy? He asserts God accepts ‘ him that fears God and works righteousness according to the light he has.’ Mr. Henry says, ‘ him that lives up to the light he has:’ and you, Sir, ‘ him who feareth God and worketh righteousness according to the light imparted to him.’ If Mr. W. must share the fate of Shadrach for his heresy, I doubt Mr. Henry will have that of Meshech, and you, of Abednego; for you are all three in the same honorable condemnation.

But Mr. W. foreseeing that some will be offended at St. Peter’s evangelical declaration, concerning the acceptance of sincere Heathens who work righteousness, proposes and answers the following objection.

IV.

4. *Is not this salvation by works?*

Not by the MERIT of works, but by works as a CONDITION. In the former part of this answer, Mr. W. freely grants all you can require, to guard the gospel, against the Popish doctrine of making satisfaction for sin, and meriting salvation by works: for he maintains that tho’ God accepts the Heathen that works righteousness, yet it is not through the merit of his works, but solely thro’ that of Christ. Is not this the very doctrine of our church in her 11th article which treats of justification? *We are accounted righteous before God only for the MERIT of our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or DESERVINGS.* Does not the opposition of the two sentences, and the explanatory word *deservings*, evidently shew that works meet for repentance are not excluded from being in the sinner that comes to be justified, but from

from having any merit or worth to purchase his justification?

Our church expresses herself more fully on this head in the homily on salvation, to which the article refers. *St. Paul, says she, declares nothing (necessary) on the behalf of man concerning his justification, but only a true and lively faith, and yet (N. B.) that faith does not shut out repentance, hope, love, (of desire when we are coming, love of delight when we are come) dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with it in every man that is justified; but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying; tho' they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not all together.*" This is agreeable to St. Peter's doctrine, maintained by Mr. W. Only faith in Christ for Christians, and faith in the light of their dispensation for Heathens, is necessary in order to acceptance: but tho' faith only justifies, yet it is never alone; for repentance, hope, love of desire, and the fear of God necessarily accompany this faith if it is living. Our church therefore is not at all against works proceeding from, or accompanying faith in all its stages. She grants that whether faith seeks or finds its object, whether it longs for or embraces it, it is still a lively, active, and working grace. She is only against the vain conceit that works have any hand in meriting justification or purchasing salvation, which is what Mr. W. likewise opposes.

If you say, that his heresy does not consist in exploding the merit of works in point of salvation, but in using that legal expression *salvation by works, as a condition*. I answer, that as I would not contend for the word *trinity*, because it is not in the bible, no nor yet for the word *perfection* tho' it is there, neither would I contend for the expression, *salvation by works, as a condition*. But the thing Mr. W. means by it, is, there in a hundred different turns and modes of expression. Therefore it is highly worth contending for: and so much the more as it is, next to the doctrine

of the atonement, the most important part of the faith once delivered unto the saints.

Any candid person acquainted with Mr. W.'s principles, (and for such only the minutes were written) cannot but see that he meant absolutely nothing, but what our Saviour means in these and the like scriptures, namely, that salvation, is suspended on a variety of things which Divines call by various names, and which Mr. W. with a majority of them chuses to call **CONDITIONS**. *Except ye repent ye shall all perish—Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*—Here repentance, and conversion are conditions of eternal salvation.—*If ye believe not ye shall die in your sins :* for this is the work of God, the work that God requires and approves, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.—Here the work of faith is the condition.—*I am alpha and omega, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have RIGHT to the tree of life, and may enter in thro' the gates into the city. And here it is, doing God's commandments.*

St. Paul, evangelical Paul, says the same thing in a variety of expressions. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema.* If love the noblest work of the heart, does not take place, the fearful curse will.—*If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye thro' the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh ye shall live.* Spiritual mortification is here the condition.—*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Here holiness is the condition.—*Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor thieves, nor revilers shall inherit the kingdom of God.* Here ceasing from fornication, drunkenness, &c. is the same condition.

St. John is in the same condemnation as Mr. W. for he declares, *There shall in no wise enter into the new Jerusalem any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.* Here the condition is not working abomination, &c. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no*

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murderer hath eternal life. Here the condition is *ceasing from hatred, the murder of the heart.*

St. Peter is equally deep in the heresy. In a variety of expressions he describes the misery and fatal *latter end*, of those who escape the pollutions of the world thro' the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and are again *intanled therein*, thro' the non-performance of this condition, *If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.*

As for St. James, I need not quote him: you know, that when Luther was in his heat, he could have found it in his heart to tear his precious epistle from among the sacred books, and burn it as an *epistle of straw.* He thought the author of it was an enemy to *free grace*, an abetter of popish tenets, an antichrist. It is true, the scales of prejudice fell at last from his eyes, but alas! it was not till he had seen the Antinomian boar Jay waste the Lord's flourishing vineyard all over protestant Germany: then was he glad to draw aginst him St. James's despised sword; and I shall be happily mistaken, Sir, if you are not obliged one day to make use of the *heretical minutes*, as he did of the *epistle of straw.*

If any still urge, "I do not love the word *condition.*" I reply; It is no wonder; since thousands so hate the *thing*, that they even chuse to go to hell, rather than perform it. But let an old worthy divine, approved by all but Crisp's disciple's, tell you what we mean by *condition.* An antecedent condition, (says Mr. Flavel in his *discourse of errors*) signifies no more than an *act of ours*; which, tho' it be neither perfect in any degree, nor in the least meritorious of the benefit conferred, nor performed in our own natural strength; is yet, according to the constitution of the covenant, required of us, in order to the blessings consequent thereupon, by virtue of the promise: and consequently, benefits and mercies granted in this order, are and must be suspended by the donor till it be performed. Such a condition we affirm faith to be, with all that faith necessarily implies.

When Dr. Crisp, in the last century, represented all the sober puritan divines as *legal*, they answered,

' The covenant tho' conditional, is a dispensation of
 ' grace. There is grace in giving ability to perform
 ' the condition, as well as bestowing the benefits:
 ' God's enjoying the one in order to the other,
 ' makes not the benefit to be less of grace; but it is
 ' a display of God's wisdom, in conferring the be-
 ' nefit suitably to the nature and condition of men
 ' in this life, who are here in a state of trial; yea,
 ' the conditions are but a meetness to receive the
 ' blessings.'

' The reason, added they, why we use the word
 ' *condition*, is because it best suits with man's rela-
 ' tion to God, in his present dealings with us, as
 ' his subjects on trial for eternity. Christ as a priest
 ' has merited all; but as a priestly king he dis-
 ' penseth all: he enjoins the conditions in order to
 ' the benefits, and makes the benefits motives to
 ' our compliance with the conditions. He treats
 ' with men as his subjects, whom he will now *rule*
 ' and hereafter *judge*. Now what word is so proper
 ' to express the duties as *enjoyed means* of benefits,
 ' as the word *conditions*? The word *conditions* is of
 ' the same nature as *terms* of the gospel. There are
 ' few authors of note, even of any persuasion that
 ' scruple using this word in our sense, as Ames,
 ' Twiss, Rutherford, Hooker, Norton, Preston,
 ' Owen, synod of New-England, the assembly of
 ' divines, &c. And none have reason to scruple it
 ' except such as think we are justified before we are
 ' born.' See *Gospel Truth vindicated* by Williams
 against Dr. Crisp.

If all the protestant divines who have directly
 or indirectly represented repentance and faith as
conditions of present salvation; and holiness of heart
 and life as *conditions* of eternal glory, as things sine
 quibus non, without which salvation and glory nei-
 ther can nor will follow--if all those divines, I say,
 are guilty of heresy, 99 out of an hundred are here-
 tics; and none of them, deeper in the heresy than
 yourself.

In

In your sermons, page 39, clearing yourself of the slander that you *do not preach up, recommend, and insist on the necessity of good works*; you add, 'I not only preach this or that part of the moral law, but I preach the whole moral law; and I tell you plainly, that IF YOU DO NOT PERFORM THE WHOLE WILL OF GOD, YOU CANNOT BE FINALLY SAVED.' Then you add, 'Surely they who contend for the doctrine of good works will be satisfied with this, or they are very unreasonable.' Indeed, Sir, Mr. W. is quite satisfied with it; I only wonder what in the world can make you so dissatisfied with his minutes; for he never gave Antinomianism a more legal thrust.

And as you make *works* so absolutely necessary to eternal salvation, so do you make a *law-work* an universal prerequisite of present salvation. Speaking of the fear and dread that seize a sinner under convictions of sin, you say, page 111. 'This inward shock and perturbation must pass upon the soul of every RETURNING sinner more or less, before he can possibly be rendered a proper object of divine GRACE and mercy.' Hold, Sir, you go one step beyond Mr. W. for he steadily maintains, that if the sinner was not a *proper object of divine grace*, BEFORE he feels the inward shock you speak of, he would never be shocked and return.

Do not all unprejudiced persons see, that what Mr. W. calls *condition*, others call *way, means, or terms*? &c. And that you have as little reason to pick a quarrel with him, as to raise a *body* of men against a quiet traveller, for calling a certain sum; a *guinea*, whereas you think it more proper to call it *one pound one-twenty-one shillings—forty-two pence—* or *sixty-three groats*. Oh, Sir, what reason have we to be ashamed of our chicaneries; and to beseech the Lord, that they may not stumble the weak, and harden infidels!

Oh how

O how justly does Mr. W. ask next !

V.

5. *What have we then been disputing about for these thirty years ? I am afraid about words.*

Pardon me, Sir, if here also I cannot cry *heresy!* with you. Far from doing it. I admire the candor of an old man of God, who instead of stiffly holding, and obstinately maintaining an old mistake, comes down as a little child, and freely acknowledges it before a respectable body of preachers, whose esteem it is his interest to secure. O how many are there that look upon Mr. W. as a rotten threshold, and themselves as pillars in the temple of God, who would not own themselves mistaken for the world !

He says, *I am afraid we have disputed about words:* perhaps he might have said, *I am very sure of it.* How many disputes have been raised these 30 years among religious people, about those works of the heart, which St. Paul calls *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ?* Some, have called them the *only way* or *method* of receiving salvation ; others the *means* of salvation, others the *terms* of it. Some have named them *duties* or *graces* necessary to salvation, others *conditions* of salvation, others *parts* of salvation, or *privileges* annexed to it ; while others have gone far round about, and used I know not what, far fetched expressions, and ambiguous phrases to convey the same idea. I say the *same idea*, for if all maintain that altho' *repentance and works meet for it, and faith working by love* are not meritorious, they are nevertheless absolutely necessary, that they are a thing sine qua non, all are agreed ; and if they *dispute*, it must be, as Mr. W. justly intimates, *about words.*

A comparison will at once make you sensible of it. A physician tells me that *the way, the only way or method* in which we live, is abstaining from poison, and taking proper food : no, says another, you should say, that abstaining from poison ; and taking proper

proper food, are the *means*, by which our life is preserved. You are quite mistaken, says a third, rejecting poison and eating are the *terms*, God hath fixed upon for our preservation; no, says a fourth, they are *duties* without the performance, or *blessings* without the receiving of which, we must absolutely die: I believe for my part, says another, that providence hath engaged to preserve our life, on *condition* that we shall forbear taking poison, and eat proper food. You are all in the wrong, you know nothing at all of the matter; (says another who applauds himself much for his wonderful discovery) turning from poison, and receiving nourishment are the *exercises* of a living man; therefore they must absolutely be called *parts* of his life, or *privileges* annexed to it: you quite take away people's appetite, and clog their stomach, by calling them *duties, terms, conditions*. Only call them *privileges*, and you'll see no-body will touch poison, and all will eat most heartily.—While they are all neglecting their food, and taking the poison of this contention, he that had mentioned the word *condition* starts up and says, *Review the whole affair: take heed to your assertions: I am afraid we dispute about words. Upon this all rise against him, all accuse him of robbing the Preserver of men of his glory, or holding a tenet injurious to the very fundamental principles of our constitution.*

Let us leave them to the uneasy workings of their unaccountable panic, to consider the next article of the minutes.

VI.

6. *As to MERIT itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: we are rewarded ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS, yea, BECAUSE OF OUR WORKS. How does this differ from FOR THE SAKE OF OUR WORKS? And how differs this from secundum MERITA OPERUM? As our works DESERVE? Can you split this hair? I doubt, I cannot.*

If Mr. W. meant, that we are saved by the merit of works, and not entirely by that of Christ, you might

might exclaim against his proposition as erroneous; and I would echo back your exclamation. But as he flatly denies it No. 4. in those words, *Not by the merit of works*, and has constantly asserted the contrary for above 30 years, we cannot without monstrous injustice, fix that sense upon the word *merit* in this paragraph.

Divesting himself of bigotry and party-spirit, he generously acknowledges truth even when it is held forth by his adversaries. An instance of candour worthy of our imitation! He sees that God offers and gives his children here on earth, particular rewards for particular instances of obedience. He knows that when a man is saved meritoriously by Christ, and conditionally by (or if you please, upon the terms of) *the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love*, he shall particularly be rewarded in heaven for his works: and he observes, that the Scriptures steadily maintain, we are recompensed according to our works, yea, because of our works.

The former of these assertions is plain from the parable of the talents, and from these words of our Lord, Matt. xvi. 27. *The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, and reward every man according to his work*—Unbelievers according to the various degrees of demerit belonging to their evil works, (for some of them shall comparatively be beaten with few stripes :) and believers according to the various degrees of excellence found in their good works; for as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the righteous dead.

The latter assertion is not less evident from the repeated declarations of God; BECAUSE *thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world.* Rev. iii. 10.—BECAUSE *Phineas was zealous for his God, in killing Zimri and Cosbi, behold I give unto him my covenant of peace and he shall have it, and his seed after him even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood*—And again, BECAUSE *thou hast done this, and hast not withheld thy son, by myself have I sworn that in blessing*

blessing I will bless thee, BECAUSE thou hast obeyed my voice. Now says Mr. W. how differs this from, I will bless thee FOR THE SAKE OF thy obedience to my voice? And how differs this from secundum merita obedientiæ? As thy obedience deserves? And by comparing the difference of these expressions to the splitting of a hair, or to a metaphysical subtilty, he very justly insinuates that we have been too dreadfully afraid of the word merit. Surely, Sir, you will not divest yourself of the candor that belongs to a Christian, to put on the bitter zeal of a bigot. You will not run for fear of Popery into the very Spirit of it, by crying heresy! heresy! before you have maturely considered the question: or if you have done so once, you will do it no more. And if Mr. W. should ever propose again the splitting of a hair, I hope, you will remember that equity (to say nothing of brotherly love) requires you to split it first yourself, before you can with decency stir up people far and near against him for modestly doubting, whether he can do it or no?

But suppose some are determined to cry *heresy!* whenever they see the word *merit*: I hope others will candidly weigh what follows, in the balance of unprejudiced reason.

If we detach from the word *merit* the idea of "obligation on God's part to bestow any thing upon creatures who have a thousand times forfeited their comforts and existence;" If we take it in the sense we fix to it in an hundred cases; for instance this: "A master may reward his scholars according to the *merit* of their exercises, or he may not; for *merit* of the best exercise can never bind him to bestow a premium for it, unless he has promised it of his own accord:" if we take, I say, the word *merit* in this simple sense, it may be joined to the word *good works*, and bear an evangelical meaning.

To be convinced of it, candid Reader, consider, with Mr. W. that "God accepts and rewards no work but so far as it proceeds from his own grace thro'

thro' the Beloved." Forget not that Christ's Spirit is the favour of each believer's salt, and that he puts excellence into the *good* works of his people, or else they could not be *good*. Remember he is as much concerned in the good tempers, words, and actions of his living members, as a tree is concerned in the sap, leaves, and fruit of the branches it bears, Joh. xv. 5. Consider, I say, all this, and tell us, whether it can reflect dishonor upon Christ and his grace, to affirm that as his personal merit—the merit of his holy life and painful death, *opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers*, so the merit of those works which he enables his members to do, will determine the peculiar degrees of glory graciously allotted to each of them.

I own, I believe there is such a dignity in every thing in which the Son of God has an hand, that the Father, who is always well pleased with him and his works, cannot but look upon it with peculiar complacency. Even *a cup of water given in his dear name*, that is by the efficacy of his loving Spirit, hath that in it which *shall in no wise lose its reward*: for it has something of the love of God—man Jesus, which merits all the approbation and smiles of the Father.

In our well-meant zeal against Popery we have been driven to an extreme, and have not done good works justice. *I am the vine* says Jesus, *and ye are the branches, he that abideth in me bringeth forth much fruit. Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.* What! is the Father glorified in the fruit of believers; and shall this fruit be represented to us always grub-caten, and rotten at the core? Do we honor either *the vine* or *the husbandman*, while one hour we speak wonders of the fruit of the vine, and the next represent the branches and their fruit as full of deadly poison? O God of mercy and patience forgive us, for we know not what we do! we even think we do thee service: O give us genuine, and save from *voluntary, humility*.

Believer, let not the virtue of thy Saviour's righteousness,

countness, the only good thing that is in thee, be evil spoken of. Thou art *grafted upon the good olive-tree*; be not high-minded but fear; fear to be cut off like the branch that beareth not fruit; but be not afraid to suck the balmy sap, 'till the peaceful olive ripens in thy soul, and drops the oil of joy that makes a cheerful countenance. Thou art married to Christ that henceforth thou shouldst bring forth fruit unto God. O let not thy mistaken brethren discourage thee from doing all the good that thy heart and hand first to do, and that with all thy might.

I write these allusions as they occur to my mind, to raise thy thoughts above spiritual sloth and barrenness of heart, by showing thee, thro' a scriptural glass, something of thy husband's glory, and of the excellence of the *labour of love*, wherein thou hast the honour of being a worker together with him. Let not what I say puff thee up, but encourage thee to be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as thou knowest thy labour is not in vain in the Lord. Remember thou hast nothing to boast of, but much reason to be humbled. If thy works are compared to a rose, the colour, odour, and sweetness are Christ's; the aptness to fade, and the thorns are thine. If to a burning taper, the snuff and smoke come from thee, the bright and cheering light from thy Bridegroom. The excellence and merit of the performance flow from him; the flaws and imperfections from thee; nevertheless the whole work is as truly thine, as grapes are truly the fruit of the branch that bore them. And yet, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more canst thou, except thou abide in Christ: for without him thou canst do nothing.

Having thus cautioned thee against the Popish abuse of Mr. W.'s doctrine of the excellence of works, and shewn thee the evangelical use that a real Protestant should make of it; I return to the word merit, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid. Let a comparison help thee to understand, how a believer may use it in a very harmless sense.

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The

The king promises rewards for good pictures to miserable foundlings, whom he has charitably brought up, and graciously admitted into his royal academy of painting: far from being masters of their art, they can of themselves do nothing but spoil canvas, and waste colours by making monstrous figures: but the king's son, a perfect painter, by his father's leave, guides their hands, and by that mean good pictures are produced, tho' not so excellent as they would have been, had not he made them by their stiff and clumsy hands. The king however approves of them, and fixes the reward of each picture according to its peculiar *merit*. If thou sayest that the poor foundlings, owing all to his majesty, and the prince's having freely guided their hands, they themselves *merit* nothing; because after all they have done, they are miserable dawbers still, and nothing is properly theirs but the imperfections of the pictures, and therefore the king's reward, tho' it may be of promise, can never be of debt; I grant, I assert it. But if thou sayest the good pictures have no *merit*, I beg leave to dissent from thee, and tell thee thou speakest as unadvisedly for the king, as Job's friends did for God. For if the pictures have absolutely no *merit*, dost not thou greatly reflect upon the king's taste and wisdom in saying that he *rewards* them? In the name of common sense, what is it he rewards? The *merit* or *desert* of the work?

But this is not all. if the pictures have no *merit*, what hath the king's son been doing? Hath he lost all his trouble in helping the novices to sketch and finish them? Shall we deny the excellence of his performance, because *they* were concerned in it? Shall we be guilty of this glaring partiality any longer? No, some Protestants will dare to judge righteous judgment, and acknowledge there is *merit* where Christ *puts* it, and where God *rewards* it. they will give *honor* to *whom honor is due*, even to him *that worketh all the good in all his creatures*.

For

For my part I intirely agree with the author of the minutes, and thank him for daring to break the ice of prejudice and bigotry among us, by restoring works of righteousness to their deserved glory, without detracting from the glory of the Lord of righteousness. I am as much persuaded that the grace of Christ merits in the works of his members, tho' they themselves merit nothing but hell; as I am persuaded that gold in the ore hath its intrinsic worth, tho' it is mixed with dust and dross, which are good for nothing. As there is but one Mediator, one prevailing intercessor between God and us, even the man Christ Jesus; and nevertheless his Spirit in us maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered: so there is but one man whose works are truly meritorious; but when he works in us by his Spirit, our works cannot (so far as he is concerned in them) but be in a sense meritorious; because they are, his works. Real Protestant, if thou deniest this, thou maintainest an antichristian proposition: namely, that Christ has lost his power of meriting. Herein I must dissent from thee, nor will the cry heresy! popery! make me give up this fundamental truth of christianity, that *Jesus is the same*, the very same deserving Lord, yesterday, to-day and for ever.

In this evangelical view of things, the Redeemer is much exalted by the doctrine of the merit of good works; and believers are still left in their native dust to cry out, *Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give we the praise*. In the light of this precious truth we see, and admire the indearing contest that is always carried on, between God's loving-kindness, and the humble gratitude of believers. God says, *Well done good and faithful servants, reap what ye have sown*: and they answer, Lord, **THY** *power hath gained all; thou hast wrought all our works in us*. God says, *They shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy*; and they reply, **WORTHY** *is the Lamb that was slain, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood*. Christ crowns faith by this gracious de-

oration, *Thy faith hath saved thee: and believers in their turn crown Christ by this true confession, Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to thy mercy thou hast saved us: for thou hast quickened us by thy Spirit when we were dead in sin, yea, thou didst redeem us unto God by thy blood hundreds of years before we had done any one good work.* In a word, they justly give God all the glory of their salvation, agreeable to the first axiom in the gospel-plan, and God graciously gives them all the reward, according to the second:

And now, is it not pity that any good men should be so far biassed by the prejudices of their education, or influenced by the spirit of their party, as to account this delightful harmonizing view of evangelical truths a dreadful heresy? Is it not pity that by so doing they should expose their prepossession, strengthen the hands of Antinomians, harden the hearts of Papists, deprive their Saviour of part of the honor due to him, leave seeming contradictions in the scriptures unexplained, and trample under foot, as unworthy of their protestant-orthodoxy, a powerful motive to obedience, by which neither Moses nor Jesus were above being influenced; for the one *looked to the recompense of reward,* and the other *for the joy that was set before him both despised the shame and endured the cross.*

It may not be amiss to illustrate what has been advanced upon the merit or rewardableness of works, by scriptural instances of old and modern saints who have pleaded it before God. David speaks thus in the 18th Psalm. *The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me—I was upright before him, therefore hath he recompensed me according to my righteousness, &c.* And in the 119th Psalm, having mentioned his spiritual comforts he says, *This I had, BECAUSE, I kept thy precepts.* Another instance no less remarkable, is that of Hezekiah, who prayed thus in his sickness. *Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a per-*

a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy fight.

We see instances of this boldness in the New Testament also. *We have left all to follow thee*, said once the disciples to our Lord, *and what shall we have for this sacrifice?* Jesus instead of blaming their question, simply told them they should have an hundred fold for all they had left, and made it a standing rule of distribution for all the church. St. John exhorts the elect lady to *look to herself that she lose not the things that she hath wrought, but receive a full reward.* And evangelical Paul desires the Hebrews not to cast away their confidence, *which hath great recompense of reward,* and charges the Colossians to see that none beguile them of their reward in a voluntary humility.

From these and the like scriptures I conclude, that those who have a clear witness they have done what God commanded, may, without heresy, humbly demand the promised reward: which they can never do without this idea, that according to the tenor of the gospel-covenant, they are fit subjects for it.

I know some will take the alarm; and to save the ark which they think totters by this doctrine, will affirm, that in the above-mentioned passages David personates Christ: and Hezekiah the Pharisee. But this is contradicting the whole context, to say nothing of all sober commentators. Mr. Henry tells us that David in these verses 'reflects with comfort upon his own integrity, and rejoiceth, like St. Paul, in the testimony of his own conscience, that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity.' And he informs us, that the Psalmist lays down in this psalm 'the rules of God's government that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him. With regard to Hezekiah, it is plain his prayer was heard; a strong proof that it was inspired by the Spirit of Jesus, and not that of the Pharisee.

But if you reject, Sir, the testimony of David, and Hezekiah, because they were Jews, receive at least that of real Protestants : for which we only need go as far as Bath, or Talgarth parish : there we shall find chapels where the Protestants have agreed together, to ask *rewards* as solemnly as ever David and Hezekiah did. In the hymns you have revised for another edition, and by that means made your own with respect to the doctrine, one is calculated to " Welcome a messenger of Jesus' grace" and all the congregation sings,

" Give reward of grace and glory

" To thy faithful labourer there."

What, Sir, do you allow the *labours* of a minister to be of such dignity, and his *faithfulness* to have such uncommon *merit*, that a thousand people can boldly ask God a reward for him, and that not only of gifts and temporal blessings, but of *grace*, and not only of *grace* but *glory* too ! You have in those two lines the very quintessence of the three grand heresies of the minutes, *faithfulness*, *works* and *merit*. Permit me to add one passage more, from page 312, of Baxter's *Methodus Theologiæ Christianæ*.

" The word *merit* rightly explained is not amiss. All the fathers of the primitive church have made use of it without opposition, to the best of my remembrance. It may be used by believers who do not make a cloke for error, by wise men who will not be offended at it, and by those who want to defend the truth, and convey clearer ideas in the explanation of things intricate. There is no word that fully conveys the same idea : that which comes nearest to it is *dignity*, and suspicious persons will not like it much better. We have three words in the New Testament that come very near it *ἀξιος*, *ἰσχυρος*, and *δικαιος*, and they occur pretty frequently here. We render them *worthy*, *reward*, and *just* ; and the abuse Papists make of them ought not to persuade us reject their use. The English word *worthy* conveys no other idea than that of the Latin word *meritum* taken actively : nor hath the word *reward*

any other signification than the word *meritum* taken passively: therefore they who can put a candid sense upon the words *worthy* and *reward* should do the same with regard to the word *merit*."

Having explained and vindicated the sixth article of the minutes, I proceed to the

VII.

7. *The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions, is drawn from matter of fact. God does in fact justify those, who by their own confession, neither feared God nor wrought righteousness. Is this an exception to the rule?*

It is a doubt, if God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure, that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness? His own saying so is not proof: for we know, how all that are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect.

Do you think, Sir, the heresy of this proposition consists in intimating, that God does in fact justify those who fear him, and not those who make absolutely no stop in the downward road of open sin and flagrant iniquity? If it does, I am sure the sacred writers are heretics to a man. See the account we have of conversions in the scripture; please to remember what Mr. W. means by justification, and then answer the following questions:

Did not the prodigal son come to himself, repent, and return to his father, before he received the kiss of peace? Did not the woman that was a sinner forsake her wicked course of life, before our Lord said to her, *Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee?*

Again, was not the woman of Samaria convinced of sin, yea of *all that ever she did*, before our Lord revealed himself to her, to enable her to believe unto justification? Did not Zaccheus evidence his fear of God, yea and *work righteousness* by hearty offers of restitution, before Christ testified that he was a son of Abraham? Did not St. Paul express his fear of God, and readiness to *work righteousness*, when he cried out, *Lord what wouldst thou have me*

to do? Yea did he not produce fruits meet for repentance, by praying three days and three nights, before Ananias was sent to direct him how to wash away his sins? Did not the Eunuch and Cornelius fear God? Did not David himself, whom the apostle mentions as a grand instance of justification *without* the merit of *works*, fear God from his youth? And when he had wrought folly in Israel, was he not humbled for his sin, before he was washed from it? Did he not confess his crime and say, *I have sinned*: before Nathan said, *The Lord hath put away thy sin*?

Does not St. Paul himself carry Mr. W.'s heresy so far as to say? *Whosoever among you seareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent*? Acts xiii. 26. Must we so understand Rom. iv. 5. as to make him contradict point blank his own declarations, his own experience, and the account of all the above-mentioned conversions? Certainly not. Tho' words *God justifies the ungodly, and him that worketh not, but believeth in Jesus*, when candidly explained, agree perfectly with Mr. W.'s doctrine. (1.) By *the ungodly* the Apostle does not mean *the wicked* that does not forsake his way: but the man, who before he believed to justification was *ungodly*, and still remains *ungodly in the eye of the law of works*, needing daily forgiveness by grace, even after he is made *godly in a gospel sense*. (2.) By *him that worketh not*, St. Paul does not mean a lazy, indolent wretch, who without any reluctance follows the stream of his corrupt nature; but a penitent who, whatever works he does, has no dependance upon them, esteems them as nothing, yea, as *dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of Christ*: and in short, one who does not work to merit or purchase his justification, but comes to receive that invaluable blessing as a free gift. (3.) That this is the meaning of the Apostle is evident from his adding, that *he who worketh not, yet believeth*. For if he took the word *worketh not*, in an absolute sense, he could never make it agree with *believing*, which is certainly a *work*, yea, a
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work of our noblest part ; for *with the HEART man believeth to righteousness*. Add to this, Sir, that justifying faith, as I observed before, never comes without her forerunner, conviction, nor conviction of sin without suitable tempers or inward works. *There is nothing, says Dr. Owen, that I will more firmly adhere to in this whole doctrine, than the necessity of convictions previous to true believing—as also displacency, sorrow, fear, a desire of deliverance, with other necessary effects of true convictions.* St. Paul therefore is consistent with himself, and Mr. W. with St. Paul.

Again, if God justifies sinners merely as ungodly, and people that work not, why should he not justify all sinners? For they are all ungodly, and there is none of them that does good, no not one? Why did not the Pharisee, for example, go to his house justify'd as well as the Publican? You will probably answer, that he was not convinced of sin. Why, Sir, this is just what Mr. W. maintains: express yourself in St. Peter's words, *he did not fear God—or in those of John the Baptist, he did not bring forth fruit meet for repentance.*

Should some ask, what works meet for repentance did the woman caught in adultery do, before our Lord justify'd her? I would ask in my turn; How do they know that the Lord justify'd her? Do they conclude it from those words, *Neither do I condemn thee?* Does not the context show, that as the Pharisees had not condemned her to be stoned, according to the Mosaic law, neither would our Lord take upon himself to pass sentence upon her, according to his declaration on another occasion: *I am not ent to condemn the world, but that the world thro' me might be saved?* This by no means implies, that the world is justify'd in St. Paul's sense, Rom. v. 1. But supposing she was justify'd, how do you know, that our Lord's words, writing, looks, and grace had not brought her to godly shame and sorrow, that is, to the *fear of God*, and the *working of internal righteousness*, before he gave her the peace that passes all understanding?

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After all, Mr. W. says with modesty and wisdom, *It is a doubt whether God makes any exception at all* : and it lies upon you, to show there is in these words any thing contrary to the humility of the true christian, and orthodoxy of the sound divine : but please to remember, that if you judge of orthodoxy according to the works of Dr. Crisp ; we will take the liberty to appeal to the word of God.

But you make perhaps Mr. W.'s heresy in this proposition consist in his refusing to take the word of persons convinced of sin, when they say they never feared God, nor worked righteousness. For we know, says he, *how all that are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect.*

Had Mr. W. imagined, that some *christian friends*, (O my God save me from such *friendship* !) would leave no stone unturned to procure a copy of his minutes, in order to find some occasion against him, he would probably have worded this with more circumspection. But he wrote for *real friends* : and he knew such would at once enter into his meaning, which is, that " Persons deeply convinced of sin are apt very apt to form a wrong judgment both of their state and performances, and to think the worst of themselves in every respect, that is, both with regard to what divine grace does in them, and by them."

And this is so obvious a truth, that he must be a novice indeed in christian experience, who doubts of it for a moment ; and a great lover of disputing, who will make a man an offender for so true an assertion. Do not we daily see, some in whom the arrows of conviction stick fast, who think they are as much past recovery as Satan himself ? Do not we hear others complain, " they grow worse and worse," when they only discover more and more how bad they are by nature ? And are there not some who bind upon themselves heavy burdens of their own making, and when they cannot bear them are tormented in their conscience with imaginary guilt : while others are ready to go distracted thro' ground-
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less fears of having committed the sin against the Holy Ghost? In a word, do we not see hundreds, who when they have reason to hope well of themselves, think there is no hope for them? In all these respects do they not act like Jonah in the whale's belly, and say, *I am cast out of thy fight?* And have not they need to encourage themselves in their God, and say *Why art thou cast down O my soul?*

But let your conscience speak, Sir, on this matter. When some deep mourners have complained to you, of their misery, danger, and desperate state, did you never drop a word of comfort to this effect, "*You undervalue yourselves; you write too bitter things against yourselves, your case is not so bad as your unbelieving fears represent it: God's thoughts are not as your thoughts: many like the foolish virgins think themselves sure of heaven, when they stand on the brink of hell; and many think they are just dropping into it, who are not far from the kingdom of God?*"

Yea, and as it is with real seekers, so it is with real believers. Did not they undervalue, yea degrade themselves by the remains of their unbelief, or which is the same, did they live up to their dignity, and every where consider themselves as *members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, what manner of persons, yea what angels would they be in all holy conversation!*

Sometimes their light shines with peculiar lustre like Moses' face, and *they know it not.* Thousands see their good works and glorify their Father who is in heaven, but the matter is hid from them; they complain perhaps they are the most unprofitable of all his children. Let me instance in one particular; St. Paul, Mr. Whitefield, and thousands of the brightest stars of the church, have called themselves both *the chief of sinners, and the least of all saints.* Now, as in a chain there is but one link that can be called the first, or the last: so, in the very nature of things, there can be but one man in the immense file of Christ's soldiers, that is actually *the chief of sinners*

sinners and the least of all saints: if a thousand believers therefore say those two appellations belong to themselves, it is evident that at least 999 undervalue themselves. For my part I cannot but think they suit me ten thousand times better than they did St. Paul: I must therefore insolently think myself a less sinner and a greater saint than him; or of necessity believe that he, and all that are *partakers of the same convincing grace, undervalue themselves in every respect.*

One more article remains, and if it does not contain the *dreadful heresy*, which hitherto we have looked for in vain, the minutes are from first to last scripturally orthodox, and you have given Churchmen and Dissenters a false alarm.

VIII.

8. *Does not talking of a justified and sanctified state, tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour, and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS? According to the whole of our inward tempers and outward behaviour.*

To do this proposition justice, and prevent misunderstandings, I must premise some observations.

(1.) Mr. W. is not against persons *talking of justification and sanctification in a scriptural sense*: for when he *knows the tree by the fruits*, he says himself to his flock, as St. Paul did to the Corinthians, *some of you are sanctified and justified.* Nor does he deny that God justifies a penitent sinner *in a moment*, and that *in a moment* he can *manifest himself* unto his believing people *as he does not to the world*, and give them *an inheritance among them that are sanctified thro' faith in Jesus.* His objection respects only the idea entertained by some and countenanced by others, that when God forgives us our sins, he introduces us into a *state* where we are unalterably fixed in his blessed favour, and for ever stamped with his holy image: so that it matters no longer whether

whether the tree is barren or not, whether it produces good or bad fruit; it was set at such a time, and therefore it must be *a tree of righteousness* still. A conclusion directly contrary to the words of our Lord and his beloved disciple. *By their fruit ye shall know them.* Every branch in me that beareth not fruit (much more that beareth evil fruit) *my Father taketh away.*

(2.) Permit me, Sir, to observe also, that Mr. W. has many persons in his societies (and would to God there were none in ours) who profess they were justified or sanctified in a moment; but instead of trusting in the living God, so *trust to what was done in THAT moment*, as to give over taking up their cross *daily*, and *watching unto prayer with all perseverance.* The consequences are deplorable; they slide back into the spirit of the world; and their tempers are no more regulated by the meek, gentle, humble love of Jesus. Some inquire with the Heathens, *What shall we eat and what shall we drink to please ourselves?* Others evidently love the world: *lay up treasures on earth*, or ask *Wherewith shall we be fashionably clothed?* Therefore *the love of the Father is not in them.*— And not a few are *led captive by the devil at his will*: influenced by his unhappy suggestions, they harbour bitterness, malice, and revenge; none is in the right but themselves, and “wisdom shall die wish them.”

Now, Sir? Mr. W. cannot but fear, it is not well with persons who are in any of these cases: though every body should join to extol them as “*dear children of God.*” he is persuaded that *Satan has beguiled them as he did Eve*, and he addresses them as our Lord did the angel of the church of Sardis, *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest; and art dead or dying: Repent therefore, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.* He hath the word of prophecy, which he thinks more sure than the opinion of a world of professors; and according to that word he sees, that *they who are led*

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by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, and that God's Spirit does not lead into the vanities of the world, or indulgence of fleshly lusts, any more than into the pride or malice of Satan. Nor does he think that those are not under the law, who can merrily laugh at the law, and pass jests upon Moses the venerable servant of God: but with St. Paul he asserts, that when people are under grace and not under the law, sin hath not dominion over them. With our Lord he declares, *He who committeth sin is the servant of sin*; and with his Prophet that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with the least degree of approbation. In short he believes that God being unchangeable in his holiness, cannot but always love righteousness and hate iniquity: and that as the heart is continually working either iniquity or righteousness, and as God cannot but be pleased at the one and displeased at the other, he is continually pleased or displeased with us, according to the workings of our heart, and the fruits which they outwardly produce.

Perhaps you object to the word *every moment*. But why should you, Sir? If it is not *every moment*, it is *never*. If God does not approve holiness and disapprove sin *every moment*, he never does it, for he changes not. If he does it only now and then, *he is such an one as ourselves*; for even wicked men will approve righteousness and condemn unrighteousness by fits and starts. I may *every moment* harbour malice in my heart, and so commit internal murder. If God winks at this one instant, why not two? And so on to days, months, and years? Does the *duration* of moral evil constitute sin? May not I be guilty of the greatest enormity in the twinkling of an eye? And is it not the ordinary property of the most horrid crimes, such as robbery and adultery, that they are soon finished.

Do not say, Sir, that this doctrine sets aside salvation by faith; it is highly consistent with it. He that, in God's account, does the best works, hath most faith, most of the sap of eternal life that flows from

from the heavenly vine : and he that has most faith, has most of Christ's likeness, and is of course most pleasing to God, who cannot but be pleased with Christ and his living image. On the other hand, he that in God's account does the worst works, and has the worst tempers, has most unbelief. He that has most unbelief, is most like his father the devil ; and must consequently be most displeasing to him that accepts us *in the Beloved*, and not *in the wicked one*.

Having premised those observations I come closer to the point, and assert, that if we are not every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to the works of our hearts and hands, you must set your seal to the following absurdities :

1. *God is angry with the wicked (cl ium) all the day*, and yet there are moments in which he is not angry at them. (2.) *Lot pleased God as much in those moments in which he got drunk and committed incest with his daughters, as in the day he exercised hospitality towards the disguised angels.* (3.) *David did not displease God more when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, and imbrued his heart in her husband's blood, than when he danced before the ark, or composed the 103 psalm.* (4.) *Solomon was as acceptable to God in the moment his wives turned away his heart after other gods, as when he chose wisdom, and his speech pleased the Lord—when he went after the goddess Astoreth, and built an high place to bloody Molech ; as when he represented our Melchisedec, and dedicated the temple.* (5.)

Again you must set your seal to these propositions of Dr. Crisp. ' From the time thy transgressions were laid upon Christ, thou ceasest to be a transgressor to the last hour of thy life ; so that now thou art not an idolater, thou art not a thief, &c. thou art not a sinful person, whatsoever sin thou committest.'—Again, ' God does no longer stand offended nor displeased, tho' a believer, after he is a believer, do sin often : except he will be offended where there is no cause to be offended,

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' which is blasphemy to speak.' Yet again, ' It is
' thought that elect persons are in a damnable estate,
' in the time they walk in excess of riot ; let me
' speak freely to you, that the Lord has no more to
' lay to the charge of an elect person, yet in the
' height of iniquity, and in the excess of riot, and
' committing all the abominations that can be com-
' mitted.'—' There is no time but such a person is
' a child of God.' (6.) In short, Sir, you must be of
the sentiment of the wildest Antinomian I ever knew,
who because he had once a bright manifestation of
pardon, not only concludes he is safe, tho' he lives
in sin, but asserts, God would no more be *displeas'd*
with him for whoring and stealing than for pray-
ing and receiving the sacrament.

Again. It is an important truth, that we may
please God for a time, and yet afterwards displease
him. St. Paul mentions those who by *putting away*
a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck,
and therefore please God no longer, seeing that
without faith it is impossible to please him.

Of this the Israelites are a remarkable instance.
They did all drink of that spiritual rock that followed
them, (and that rock was Christ.) Yet with many of
them God was NOT WELL PLEASED : then comes the
proof of the divine displeasure ; *for they were over-*
thrown in the wilderness : Now, adds the Apostle, *these*
things happened unto them for examples, and they are
written for our admonition, that we should not lust after
evil things, and tempt Christ, as they did. Therefore
let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest, after their
example, he fall into wilful sin, the divine displea-
sure, and utter destruction.

Our Lord teaches the same doctrine both by pa-
rables, and positive assertions. He gives us the
history of a man to whom his Lord and King com-
passionately *forgave a debt of ten thousand talents :*
this ungrateful wretch by not forgiving his fellow-
servant who owed him a hundred pence, forfeited his
own pardon, and drew upon himself the king's
heaviest displeasure, *for he was wroth, and delivered*
him

him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due to him : and to the eternal overthrow of Dr. Crisp's fashionable tenets, our Lord adds, " So likewise shall my Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Agreeably to this he assured his disciples that his Father pruneth every branch in him that beareth fruit, and taketh away every one that beareth not fruit ; and to shew how far this displeasure may proceed, he observes, that such a barren branch is cast forth, is withered, gathered, cast into the fire and burned.

Here, Sir, I might add all those scriptures that testify the possibility of falling away from the divine favour : I might bring the alarming instances of those apostates, who once tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and afterwards fell from their steadfastness, lost their reward, became enemies to God by wicked works, hated the light which once they rejoiced in, because it reproved their evil deeds ; trod under foot the Son of God, forgot they were washed from their old sins, and counted the blood of Christ wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing. But I refer you, Sir, to the two John Goodwins of the age, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, and the Rev. Mr. Sellon, who have so cut down and stripped the *Crispian* orthodoxy, that some people think it actually lies without either root, bark, or branches, exposed to the view of those who have courage enough to see and think for themselves.

Should all they have advanced, to shew that we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to our internal and external works, have no weight with you ; let me conclude by producing the testimony of two respectable divines, against whom you will not enter a protest.

The one is the Rector of Loughrea. You tell us, Sir, in your sermons, page 88, that the acceptance of Cornelius was not absolutely final and decisive ; and you add, *So long as we continue in the flesh, we are doubtless in a probationary state. Even after Cornelius had been endued with the Holy Ghost, had he*

wilfully done despite to the Spirit of grace, he might have (not only displeas'd God which is all Mr. W. asserts in this proposition, but) fallen as deep into perdition as ever Judas did.

I know one, Sir, who was burn'd as a *dreadful heretic*, that did not go farther in this heresy than you do. And that is good bishop Latimer; who not only affirmed, that *Christ shed as much blood for Judas as he did for Peter*, but roundly asserted, *We may one time be in the book and another out, as it appeareth by David who was written in the book of life; but when he sinned (which by the bye we may do every moment) he at the same time was out of the favour of God until he had repented; out of Christ who is the book in which all believers are written: Lat. Serm. on the 3d Sunday after Epiph.*

Thus, Sir, have I looked out for the *heresy*, the *dreadful heresy* of Mr. W.'s minutes, by bringing all the propositions they contain to the touch-stone of scripture and common sense: but instead of finding it, I have found the very marrow of the gospel of Christ, so far as it is oppos'd to Dr. Crisp's Antinomian gospel; which at this time would overflow our little Sion, if God did not sit above the water floods, and say to the proudest billows of error, *Hitherto shall ye come and no farther*. I have shew'd that the minutes contain nothing but what is truly scriptural, and nothing but what the best Calvinist divines have themselves directly or indirectly asserted: except perhaps the sixth proposition concerning the merit of works: and with respect to this I hope I have demonstrated upon rational and evangelical principles, that Mr. W. far from *bringing in a damnable heresy*, hath done the gospel justice, and protestantism service, by candidly giving up an old prejudice equally contrary to scripture and good sense, a piece of bigotry which hath long harden'd the Papists against the doctrine of salvation by the merit of Christ, and hath added inconceivable strength to the Antinomian delusion among us. One difficulty remains, and that

that is, to account for your attacking Mr. W. tho' you could not wound him without stabbing yourself. Reserving my reflections upon this amazing step for another letter.

I remain,

Your astonished servant in the bonds
of a peaceful gospel,

J. F.

FIFTH

F I F T H L E T T E R.

Hon. and Rev. Sir,

HAVING vindicated both some important doctrines of the gospel, and an eminent servant of Christ from the charge of *dreadful heresy*; I will now take the liberty of a friend to expostulate a little with *you*.

When Brutus among other Senators rushed upon Cæsar, the venerable general, as he wrapped himself in his mantle, just said, "And art thou also among them? Even thou, my son?" May not Mr. W. address you, Sir, in the same words, and add, "If a body of men must be raised to attack me, let some zealous follower of Dr. Crisp, some hot-headed vindicator of reprobation and eternal justification blow the trumpet, and put himself at their head: but let it not be *you*, who believe with me that we are moral agents; that God is love; that Jesus tasted death for every man; and that the holy Spirit shall not always strive with sinners. If you do not regard my reputation, consider at least your own; and expose me not as an heretic for advancing propositions, the substance of which you have avowed before the sun."

But had those propositions at length appeared to you unsound, yea, and had you never maintained them yourself, should you not as a Christian and a brother, have wrote to him, acquainted him with your objections, and desired him to solve them and explain himself, or you should be obliged publicly to expose him?

Was this condescension, more than was due from you, Sir, and our other friends, to a grey-headed minister

minister of Christ, an old general in the armies of Emanuel, a Father who has children capable of instructing even masters in Israel; and one whom God made the first and principal instrument of the late revival of internal religion in our church?

Instead of this friendly method, as if you was a Barak, *commanded by the Lord God of Israel*, you call together the children of Nephtali and Zebulon: you convene from England and Wales, Clergy, and Laity, Churchmen and Dissenters, to meet you at Bristol, where they are, it seems, to be entertained in good and free quarters. And for what grand expedition. Why, on a day appointed, you are to march up *in a body*; not to attack Sisera and his iron chariots, but an old Caleb, who, without meddling with you, quietly goes on to the conquest of Canaan: not to desire in a friendly manner, after a fair debate of every proposition that appears dangerous, and upon previous conviction, that what is exceptionable may be given up; but to do what I think was never done by nominal, much less by *real Protestants*.—O let it not be told in Rome, lest the sons of the Inquisition rejoice!—This mixed, this formidable body is to *insist upon* Mr. W. and the preachers in his connection, *formally recanting* their minutes, as *appearing injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity*, and being *dreadfully heretical*. And this, astonishing! without the least inquiry made into their meaning and design—without a shadow of authority from our superiors in church or state—without an appeal *to the law and to the testimony*—without form of process—without judge or jury—without so much as allowing the poor heretics, (who are condemned six weeks before they can possibly be heard) to answer for themselves!

As I was fortunate enough to stop some months ago such rash proceedings in Wales, permit me, Sir, to bear my testimony against them in England, and to tell you they exceed the late transactions in
Edmund

Edmund-Hall. The six students, against whom wrath was gone forth, were allowed to say what they could in their own defence, before they were sentenced, as unfit members of a literary society. Likewise the Vice-Chancellor had the statutes of the University of Oxford, seeming to countenance his proceedings: but what statute of the University of Jesus can you produce, even to save appearances? Surely not that which the Papists make such use of, *Compel them to come in*; for I am persuaded that altho' Clergy and Laity, Churchmen and Dissenters, are convened to go in a body to Mr. W.'s conference, you mean no external *compulsion*. Much less are you authorized to *insist* upon his owning himself a *heretic*, by these words of the Apostle, *As much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men, and esteem ministers highly in love for their works-sake*—Neither by his command, *An heretic after the first and second admonition reject*; for you have neither proved Mr. W. an heretic, nor once admonished him as such.

Surely our Lord will not smile upon your undertaking; for he has left his sentiments upon record, the reverse of your practice. He had said, *Whosoever shall receive, not provoke, one of such children in my name, receiveth me. But John answer'd him saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. Forbid him not, said Jesus, for there is no man who can do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me.* Festus himself, tho' a poor heathen, will disapprove of such a step. *It is not the manner of the Romans, says he, to deliver any man to die, (or to insist on his publicly giving up his reputation, which in some cases is worse than death) before that he who is accused, have the accuser's face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.* The lordliness of your procedure, Sir, even exceeds, in one respect, the severity of the council of Constance; where poor Jerom of Prague had leave to plead his own cause, before he was obliged to acknowledge

knowledge himself an heretic, and make a *formal recantation* of the propositions he had advanced.

Besides, how could you suppose, Sir, that Mr. W. and the preachers who shall assemble with him, are such weak men, as tamely to acknowledge themselves heretics upon your ipse dixit? Suppose Mr. W. took it in his head to convene all the divines that disapprove the extract of Zanchius, to go with him in a body to Mr. Toplady's chapel, and demand a formal recantation of that performance, as heretical: yea, to insist upon it, before they had "measured swords or broken a pike together;" would not the translator of Zanchius from the ramparts of common sense deservedly laugh at him, and ask whether he thought to frighten him by his protests, and bully him into orthodoxy?

O Sir, have we not fightings enough without, to employ all our time and strength? Must we also declare war and promote fightings within? Must we catch at every opportunity to stab one another, because the livery of truth which we wear is not turned up in the same manner? What can be more cruel than this? What can be more cutting to an old minister of Christ, than to be traduced as a dreadful heretic, in printed letters sent to the best men in the land, yea, thro' all England and Scotland, and signed by a person of your rank and piety? To have things that he knows not, that he never meant, laid to his charge, and dispersed far and near? While he is gone to a neighbouring kingdom, to preach Jesus Christ, to have his friends prejudiced, his foes elevated, and the fruit of his extensive ministry at the point of being blasted? Put yourself in his place, Sir, and you will see that the wound is deep and reaches the very heart.

I can apologize for the other *real Protestants*. Some are utter strangers to polemic divinity; others are biassed by Calvinism: and one, whose name is used, never saw your circular letter 'till it was in print. But what can I say for you, Sir? Against hope I must believe in hope, that an unaccountable

panic

panic influenced your mind, and deprived you for a time of the calmness and candor which adorn your natural temper. If this is the case, may you act with less precipitancy for the future. And may the *charity that believeth all things, becometh all things*, does not provoke, and is not provoked, rule in our hearts and lives. So shall the heathen world drop their just objections against our unhappy divisions, and once more be forced to cry out, *See how these Christians love!* And so shall we give over trying to disturb or pull down a part of the church of Christ, because we dislike the colour of the stones with which it is built; or because our fellow-builders cannot pronounce *Shibboleth* just as we do.

One word more about Mr. W. and I have done. Of the two greatest, and most useful ministers I ever knew, one is no more. The other, after amazing labours, flies still with unwearied diligence thro' the three kingdoms, calling sinners to repentance, and to the healing fountain of Jesus' blood. Tho' oppressed with the weight of near 70 years, and the care of near thirty thousand souls, he shames still, by his unabated zeal and immense labours, all the young ministers in England, perhaps in Christendom. He has generally blown the gospel-trump, and rode twenty miles, before most of the professors who despise his labours have left their downy pillow. As he begins the day, the week, the year, so he concludes them, still intent upon extensive services for the glory of the Redeemer, and the good of souls. And shall we lightly lift up our pens, our tongues, our hands against him? No, let them rather forget their cunning. If we *will* quarrel, can we find no body to fall out with, but the minister upon whom God puts the greatest honor?

Our Elijah has lately been translated to heaven. Grey-headed Elisha is yet awhile continued upon earth. And shall we make an hurry and noise, to bring in railing accusations against him with more success? While we pretend to a peculiar zeal for
Christ's

Christ's glory, shall the very same Spirit be found in us, which made his persecutors say, *He hath spoken blasphemy, (or heresy) what need we any farther witnesses?* Shall the sons of the Prophets, shall even children in grace and knowledge, openly traduce the venerable seer and his abundant labours? When they see him run upon his Lord's errands, shall they cry, not *go up thy bald head*, but *Go up thou heretic?* O Jesus of Nazareth, thou rejected of men, thou who wast once called a deceiver of the people, suffer it not; lest the ranging bear of persecution come suddenly out of the wood upon those sons of discord, and tear them in pieces!

And suppose a Noah, an old preacher of righteousness, should have really nodded under the influence of an honest mistake, shall we act a worse part than that of Canaan? Shall we make sport of the nakedness which we say he has disclosed, when we have boldly uncovered it ourselves? O God, do not thou permit it, lest a curse of pride, self-sufficiency, bigotry, Antinomianism and bitter zeal come upon us; and lest the children begotten by our unkind preaching and unloving example, walk in our steps and inherit our propagated punishment!

Rather may the blessing of *peace-makers* be ours: may the meek, loving Spirit of Jesus fill our hearts! May streams, not of the bitter waters which cause the curse, but of the living water which gladdens the city of God, flow from our Catholic breasts, and put out the fire of wild zeal and persecuting malice. May we know when Sion is really in danger: and when the accuser of the brethren gives a false alarm to disturb the peace of the church, and turn the stream of undefiled, lovely, and loving religion, into the miry channel of obstinate prejudice, imperious bigotry, and noisy, vain jangling. And may we at last unanimously worship together in the temple of peace, instead of striving for the mastery in the house of discord!

I

Should

Should this public attempt to stop the war
 has been publicly declared, be in any de-
 cessful—should it check a little the force
 that has lately appeared to stir up content
 der pretence of opposing heresy—should
 warm men willing to let the light of their
 tion shine before men, and to keep a co
 void of offence towards their neighbours, in
 openly opposing their liberty of conscience
 it cause the good that is in an eminent
 Christ to be less evil spoken of—And al
 should it convince any, of the great impro
 exposing precious truths as dreadful here
 of preferring the gospel of Dr. Crisp, to
 as it is in Jesus :—I shall be less grieved a
 been obliged to expostulate with you, Sir
 public manner.

I hope this will be the case, and with
 full of ardent wishes that all our unhappy
 may end in a greater union. I remain,

Hon. and Rév. Sir,

Your obedient servant, in the peace

gospel of Jesus Christ,

July 29, 1772.

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