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THREE
LETTERS,

Written by RICHARD HILL, Esq.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]



T H R E E
L E T T E R S,

WRITTEN BY

RICHARD ^kHILL, Esq.

TO THE

Rev. J. FLETCHER, Vicar of *Madeley*.

In the YEAR 1773,

SETTING FORTH

Mr. HILL's Reasons for declining any further Con-
troverfy relative to Mr. *Wesley's* Principles.

I am for peace, but when I speak they are for war. Pfa. cxx. 7.

Behold, for peace I had great bitternefs. Ifa. xxxviii. 17.

S H R E W S B U R Y :

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THREE LETTERS, &c.

THE most injurious misrepresentations having been industriously propagated, concerning the reasons of my declining all further controversy relative to Mr. *Wesley's* minutes; it having even been affirmed that I had recanted my sentiments, and had begged Mr. *Wesley's* pardon for having written against his principles; and these reports having been spread with such amazing confidence, that, not only many of the friends of truth in general, but my own friends in particular, have been stagger'd at them, I think myself under the disagreeable necessity of appearing once more in public upon the occasion, not to carry on the dispute, for I have not read a single page which treats on the subject, since I wrote my *Finishing Stroke*, but only to lay before the religious world, my real motives for discontinuing it: And as these will be best

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seen by the private letters which I wrote to Mr. Fletcher, I have been prevailed upon to let them go out in their original dress, not having had the least design of publishing them at the time they were written, tho' I judged it prudent to preserve copies of them.

I am told that one *Thomas Oliver*, (alias *Olivers*), a journeyman Cordwainer, has attempted to write a pamphlet against me; which pamphlet, though in itself *black of the grain*, was afterwards *lacquer'd up*, *new soled*, and *heel-tapped* by his *master*, before it was exposed to sale. I hear also that the man has begged a *Greek motto*, being himself (if I may credit a particular friend of his,) most profoundly ignorant of the very rudiments of the language, to stick up in his title page; however if this important disciple of *St. Crispin* was like *Pontius Pilate* of old, to have prefixed an inscription in *Hebrew*, *Greek* and *Latin*, (and he might as well have borrowed a scrap of all the languages, as of one of them); I should not take the least notice of him, or read a line of his composition, any more than, if I was travelling on the road, I would stop to lash, or even order my footman to

lash

lash every impertinent little quadruped † in a village that should come out and bark at me, but would willingly let the contemptible animal have the satisfaction of thinking he had driven me out of fight.—But I ought to implore the kind reader's forgiveness for having dwelt so long upon a *subject*, as well as upon an *object*, of such absolute insignificance; and shall therefore take my leave of both with recommending the following words to Mr. *Oliver's* consideration, “*Ne Sutor ultra crepidam.*” In plain *English*, Sir, “Let not the Cobler go beyond his last.”

But my motives for reading no more of Mr. *Fletcher's* works are very different. This gentleman, I allow, shines conspicuously in the republic of letters. As a man of distinguished parts, lively imagination, and great learning, he is certainly an able defender of the faith adopted by Mr. *Wesley*; and I confess that it is a mark of his condescension that he ever deigns to take up his pen against so feeble an

† I beg to inform *Thomas Oliver*, (alias *Oliviers*.) that the word *quadruped* means having four feet; from two Latin words *quatuor pedes*.

antagonist as the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*: But because I have seen these noble endowments prostituted to the little end of advancing a party; because I have detected so many misrepresentations of facts throughout his publications; because I have seen so many unbecoming artifices in his manner of making quotations, which even in a writer on *profane* subjects can never be justifiable, and have discovered so much declamation, chicanery, and evasion to throw dust into the eyes of unwary readers; I say, upon these accounts, I really cannot with any degree of satisfaction, whilst my mind is simply and honestly bent in the pursuit of truth, read the works of one, who I am in continual suspicion is endeavouring to mislead me by false glosses, and pious frauds; and whilst he is unreasonably crying out against the want of candor in the *Calvinists*, will not even suffer them to be the explainers of their own doctrines, but in the most unwarrantable manner, draws consequences and conclusions from them which they themselves (as he himself very well knows) detest and abhor. However it is a comfort to reflect, that every cavil which *Semipelagians*, *Papists*, *Ar-*
minians,

minians, Perfectionists, and the whole body of careless and formal Clergy now bring against us, were before brought against the Apostle *Paul*, and these though *separately* very numerous, yet *collectively* may all be reduced to two, *first* that our doctrine makes God unjust; *secondly*, that it tends to licentiousness; * and if it were not liable to the same objections that *Paul's* was, it could not be the gospel which *Paul* preached; but Mr. *Wesley's* gospel is not liable to these objections, *ergo* Mr. *Wesley* and St. *Paul* preach a different gospel; however, to both the one and the other of these trite cavils, we answer as the Apostle has already answered for us, *God forbid*: and I do not conceive it possible for the *Checkist* himself to bring a single charge against Calvinism as tending to en-

* That these objections were brought against St. *Paul* above 1700 years before they were adopted by Messrs. *Wesley* and *Fletcher*, is clear from the following scriptures:

Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?

Is there unrighteousness with God?

Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?

See also these cavils fully stated and answered by the Apostle, Rom. iii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

courage

courage evil, but what might equally hold good against those words of the beloved Disciple, *if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous.* “ Oh! (might an objector say,) this is
 “ fine licentious doctrine! here is the *Crispian*
 “ Gospel without disguise! sin as much as we will,
 “ the advocacy of Christ still prevails, the covenant
 “ always standeth fast in behalf of the elect. In vain
 “ O *John* dost thou come in with thy palliating
 “ salvo, and say *I write unto you that ye sin not*, when
 “ with the same breath, thou affirmest that if any
 “ man *do sin* we have an advocate with the Father.
 “ How dost thou by such unguarded speeches let in
 “ Antinomianism full tide upon the Church! For if
 “ the advocacy of Christ still prevails whenever a
 “ believer sins, he needs not trouble himself what
 “ lengths in wickedness and impiety he may run,
 “ but may upon this principle commit adultery and
 “ murder and still continue a pleasant child, a man
 “ after God’s own heart?” Thus argues fallen nature and unenlightened reason, and *thus we be slanderously reported, and some affirm that we say let us do evil that good may come, whose damnation is just.*
 Rem. iii. 8. But

But there is no end of reasoning with men of a Pharisaic cast; and indeed I have seen so much of their spirit and tempers, and have experienced such ungenerous treatment from them, when “*love! love!*” was all their cry, that from henceforth I desire to say “let me fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of Arminians, Perfectionists, and Merit-mongers.” §

As to what passed between Mr. *Wesley* and me it was briefly this; Mr. *Wesley* hearing from Mr.

§ I esteem it an happiness that my little piece intitled “A Present for your Neighbour” was published at the very time when the cry of Antinomianism rang loudest against all those who chose rather to abide by the determinations of our Lord and his *Apostles*, than by those of Mr. *Wesley* and his Associates; as I hope it carries with it a standing confutation of the base slanders, with which I and all who believe the same truths have been loaded from a certain quarter.

And whereas Mr. *Fletcher* produces the authority of one *Williams*, whom he calls a *Puritan Divine*, for many of the accusations which he has brought against us, I beg to acquaint the reader, that tho’ this *Williams* was indeed a *Puritan Divine*, yet his doctrine was protested against by a large number of the sound orthodox men of that time, as rank Neonomianism, between which and Antinomianism, I own I cannot split the hair; for if the latter makes all obedience to the Law needless, the former in a manner annihilates the Law itself.—But Mr. *Williams* was a *Puritan Divine*.—And Mr. *Fletcher* is a *Clergyman* of the Church of England; but does it follow from thence, that Mr. *Fletcher* holds the doctrines of that Church? just as necessarily as that Mr. *Williams* held the doctrines of the Puritans, because he was a Nonconformist.

Fletcher

Fletcher that I had suppressed the sale of my books, wrote me a short and civil letter, in which he told me that he himself intended to write no more; that he hoped all would be peace for the time to come, and that we should think and let think, bear and forbear with one another; or something to that effect. This letter I took kindly of *Mr. Wesley*, and therefore as I went soon afterwards to *London*, I embraced the opportunity of going one evening in company with the Reverend *Mr. Pentycrofs* to *West-Street Chapel*, and after service *Mr. Pentycrofs* introduced me to *Mr. Wesley*, when I thanked him for his letter, assured him of my intentions to drop the controversy, and added that I hoped there would be no more said upon the subject from any quarter. *Mr. Wesley* took me by the hand, assured me of his loving pacific disposition, and we parted very good friends. This I declare was in substance the whole that passed between *Mr. Wesley* and me, as he himself as well as *Mr. Pentycrofs*, can testify: how therefore this could be magnified into a recantation of my principles, or an acknowledgment to *Mr. Wesley* that I had done wrong in writing against his minutes, let all who read judge. But

But I hasten to transcribe my letters to Mr. *Fletcher*, from which I hope it will clearly appear from what motives I gave up the controversy, and stopped the sale of my pamphlets concerning it; however, I must first observe, that though I am certainly guilty of no breach of confidence in publishing my letters to Mr. *Fletcher*, yet I should think myself unpardonable in publishing his to me: as therefore I would not on any account betray a private correspondence, I leave it to Mr. *Fletcher's* discretion whether he chooses to send his answers to me abroad into the world or not; and if he have not reserved copies of them, I am ready to let him have the originals in his own hand writing.

I must also add that though I cannot read any more of Mr. *Fletcher's* books, for the reasons already given, and consequently cannot write any thing else on the subject, yet after what has happened, I now think it the way of duty to permit the *Paris* conversation, the five letters to Mr. *Fletcher*, the review of Mr. *Wesley's* doctrines with remarks on the third check annexed, *Logica Wesleienfis*, or the *Farrago* double distilled, and the *Finishing Stroke*,

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which

which are all I ever wrote on the controversy, to be again fold, in order that both friends and enemies may, if possible, be convinced that though I wished for peace, I never retracted my sentiments.

L E T T E R I.

Occasioned by my hearing (tho' it appears the report was ill-grounded,) that Mr. *Fletcher* had done with the controversy.

Rev. and Dear Sir, *Hawthorne, July 31, 1773.*

I Am credibly informed that you wish to have done with controversy, and that you are resolved to publish nothing more on the subject of the late disputes. Upon the strength of this information, as well as to maintain my own desire of promoting peace, I shall write to my bookseller in *London*, to sell no more of any of my pamphlets which relate to the minutes; and for whatever may have favor'd too much of my own spirit, either in my answers to you, or to Mr. *Wesley*, I sincerely crave the forgiveness of you both, and should be most heartily glad

glad if no person whatever, were to add another word to what has been already said on either side. And permit me to hint, that if some restraint could be laid upon several of Mr. *Wesley's* preachers, particularly upon one *Peronet* (of whose superlatively abusive and insolent little piece, I believe Mr. *Charles Wesley* testified his abhorrence from the Pulpit,) I think (under God) it might be a salutary means of preventing the poison of vain janglings, from spreading any further. But tho' it is the desire of my soul, to live in harmony, love, and friendship, with you, dear sir, yet if God has ever shewn me any thing of my own heart, or of the truths of his own word, I must and still do think that your principles are exceedingly erroneous; and of this I ever cherish a secret hope that God will convince you, in the course of his dealings with your soul.

Wishing you an abundance of grace, mercy and peace, I beg leave to subscribe myself,

Rev. and dear sir,

Your sincere friend in the

Gospel of Emmanual,

R. HILL,

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P. S.

P. S. I wish, dear fir, you would make Mr. *Westley* acquainted with the contents of this letter, and if I stop the sale of my books, I hope that of the four Checks, will be stopped also.

L E T T E R II.

The copy of this letter bears no date, but I conclude by the contents, that it was written in *August* 1773.

Rev. and dear Sir,

ATtendance at the assizes, and multiplicity of business in my office as a justice of the peace, have prevented my returning a more speedy answer to your letter, in which I find you complain of my having treated you with severity; this obliges me to request you to call to mind the four checks, and then to say what right the author of them has to complain of severity: read over the sneering mock proclamation given by the four secretaries of state of the predestinarian department;* read the charges

* Fourth Check, p. 182.

brought

brought againſt our celebrated pulpits; and if you can ſtill juſtify what you have advanced, you may then with better reaſon accuſe me of ſeverity. It now pains me to bring theſe things to your remembrance, as I was determined, when I wrote laſt, to avoid every ſhadow of an accuſation againſt you for what was paſſed, and I think you muſt acknowledge, that my letter was friendly: but your introduction of the ſubject obliges me to ſay what I have.

I wiſh I had any grounds to recal what I have ſaid concerning your having laid very great miſrepresentations before the public, in your quotations from Mr. *Wefley's* Minutes, and in the harmony you would make your readers believe, there is between the Reformers and Puritans, and Mr. *Wefley* and yourſelf; for it is moſt ſure that your principles and theirs are as wide as eaſt from weſt.

How far it may be fair to alter the title of your ſermon, from what it ſtands in the manuſcript, muſt be left to yourſelf: however, I am ſure, I have no objection to it as you propoſe to print it. As to your explanatory notes, and additions in brackets, you know, Sir, that by theſe you may eaſily

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by make the sermon itself speak what language you see proper. *Clarke* and *Priestly* by explanatory notes and additions in brackets, can explain away the divinity of CHRIST; *Socinus* his attonement, &c. &c. *Taylor* the corruption of human nature. As you intend to introduce my worthless name into your next publication, I must beg to decline the obliging offer you make of my perusing your M.S.S. and am,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Your sincere friend for Christ's sake.

RICH^d HILL.

P.S. As you have composed some creeds for the Calvinists, (particularly that contained in the proclamation of the four predestinarian secretaries) I have also composed one from the sentiments of Arminians and perfectionists, and though I can scarcely read it without horror, yet it is such as your principles must unavoidable end in; however I hope I shall not publish it.†

† Mr. *Fletcher's* continuation of the controversy with so much warmth, seems now to call for this creed, and therefore the reader will find it at the end of the piece.

L E T.

L E T T E R III.

Rev. and dear Sir,

Hawkstone, Dec. 23, 1773.

I Take the liberty of requesting you, to distribute among the poor of *Madely*, the inclosed two guineas, in such way and manner as you shall judge fit and proper.

I sent your last letter to my Brother *Rowland*, who is now at *Tottenham Court Chapel*, and suppose he received it. However, I wave saying any thing of the subject of it, as it is my design to have totally done with the controverfy, which I am firmly persuaded has not done *me* any good; (excuse me if I say "I wish you to examine closely whether it has done *you* any") and therefore for my own part I desire to be humbled before God, as well as to ask your forgiveness and *Mr. Wesley's*, (to whom I purpose making a visit of peace and love when I go to *London*;) for every thing that has favor'd of irony or of my own spirit, in what I have written relative to his minutes; and tho' I believe your sentiments to be

be erroneous, yet I esteem and honor you for all you have said against sin; and for the stand you have made for practical religion in this Laodicean Antinomian age; and truly concerned should I be, if any expressions have dropped from my pen, which might make the readers think lightly of sin, under the notion of honoring the Saviour *from* sin. But as God can bear me witness that I had no intentions of this sort, so I am certain that whosoever makes Christ all their salvation, can never at the same time make him a minister of sin: and I trust the hour will come, when under a deep sense of your own sinfulness and nothingness, you will be glad to lay hold of some of those comfortable gospel truths, which now you even look upon as dangerous poison.

In consequence of my former letter to you, I wrote to my bookseller in *London*, and told Mr. *Eddowes* in *Shrewsbury*, to stop the sale of all my publications, concerning the controversy between us, and (unless God shews me that it is matter of duty so to do) I shall not revoke this order; it being my earnest desire for the time to come, if it be possible

possible, to live peaceably with all men; and tho' I cannot approve some of Mr. *Wesley's* doctrines, because I believe them to be contrary to scripture, and am sure they are contrary to my own experience, yet as I am persuaded that many who are the excellent of the earth are in his connections, I wish to confirm my love towards them on account of the grace that is in them, and whilst I reject their errors, still to esteem their persons, nor ever to say or do any thing that may hurt that common cause for which we ought all to be contending, or which may grieve the weakest or meanest of Christ's people.

These, dear sir, are my present sentiments and intentions, and you have my free permission to declare them upon the house top. An afflictive breach which God has lately been pleased to make in our family, by depriving me of a most tender and affectionate mother, calls upon me to beg your prayers, that the sudden stroke may be sanctified to me and to us all, and loudly bids me remember that I am but a stranger and pilgrim here below. May the Lord give me a pilgrim's spirit! and may

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he give us both a right judgment in all things.
Permit me to subscribe myself,

Rev. and dear sir,

your sincere friend,

and servant in Christ,

RICHARD HILL.

P. S. Upon second thoughts, I believe it will be safer, to leave the two guineas with Mrs. G—e, till she can convey them to you with safety.

LEAVING the reader to follow his own unbiased judgment concerning the foregoing letters, I beg leave to give an extract from two, which I lately received, from a very eminent minister in the *Church of England*, as his observations appeared to me both just and striking.

“ I have been informed of the overtures you
“ have made to Mr. F——r for reconciliation, and
“ of the treatment you have met with in return;
“ but we must bear with this, and worse; from
“ them who think they do well in slandering our
“ doctrine, and us for it. It is our portion, which
“ we

“ we must expect and prepare for. And as to
 “ appealing to the world, or even to many real
 “ Christians, who know but the first principles in
 “ defence of the deep things of GOD, it is ap-
 “ pealing to judges who are strongly prejudiced
 “ against us. There is no possibility of admitting
 “ the truths we contend for from the authority
 “ of GOD’s own word, ’till we are taught them
 “ by himself; the most that even education can
 “ do in this matter, is to produce a partiality to-
 “ wards them of a very slight and superficial nature,
 “ and which, when hard pressed by arguments
 “ from the Arminian, must give way. But when
 “ watching, and prayer, and faith in *Christ*, and
 “ the leadings of the *Holy Ghost*, have made us to
 “ see ourselves, the Law, the Covenant, and *Christ*;
 “ we then see the plan awful, great, excellent, and
 “ agreeable to all the divine perfections.”

The same dear friend, in another letter which I received since the above, thus expresses himself:

“ I have not seen Mr. F——r’s last piece, but
 “ I have seen enough of his writings, to convince
 “ me, that his heart is full of bitter prejudice, and

“ his mind blinded to such a degree, that he will
 “ furiously attack every one who differs from him
 “ one tittle: (Witness his slandering Mr. *Berridge's*
 “ book, as Antinomian, and particularly that part
 “ which exposes the common error about sincere
 “ obedience.) Whilst every child might see that
 “ Mr. *Berridge* speaks only of that obedience
 “ which is substituted in the place of *Christ*, Mr.
 “ *F-----r* exclaims and abuses, as if Mr. *Berridge*
 “ disparaged the obedience of faith and love.---
 “ Neither am I surpris'd to hear how Mr. *Wesley's*
 “ preachers have represented your overture for
 “ peace. I know them and their spirit intimately,
 “ The fact is, they look upon themselves as the
 “ only people of GOD; opposition therefore to them
 “ is fighting against GOD; and few of them will
 “ stick at misrepresenting or injuring any one,
 “ who dares to differ from them.---But patience,
 “ meekness, love, and zeal, manifesting themselves
 “ in our works and conversation, are our best
 “ weapons.

“ I hope your own soul is full of desires after
 “ GOD. I often think of dear Mr. *Hervey*; I
 “ visited

“ visited him in the years 55 and 56, eighteen
 “ years since; the force of that flaming love and
 “ deep humility with which he spoke, still re-
 “ proves, humbles, and condemns me, and excites
 “ me to long to resemble him a little.---Nothing
 “ but this, my dear friend, is worth living for,
 “ and when, in answer to constant fervent prayer,
 “ this grace of being made a burning and shining
 “ light is given, our example will prove the
 “ strongest plea for the excellency of our prin-
 “ ciples, at least it will confute the slanderers
 “ of them, as if they were of pernicious ten-
 “ dency.”

TO these extracts let me subjoin the follow-
 ing title, which a lay gentleman of great learn-
 ing and abilities drew up, after reading Mr.
Fletcher's Checks, as what he judged a proper
 one to be prefixed to all his writings:

A

T R E A T I S E,

By the Rev. J. FLETCHER.

SHEWING,

- I. That God is not all in all.
- II. That the Lord Jesus Christ did not know whom he died for.
- III. That glorified saints have none to thank but themselves for their future happiness.
- IV. That heaven shall be bestowed on them only who deserve it.
- V. That poor *Pietas Oxoniensis* has given up all reasonable expectation of a place in the mansions of bliss, by indulging such a wicked notion, as that salvation is of free grace.
- VI. That the said *P. O.* is inexcusable for adhering to the opinion of *Paul of Tarsus*, in preference to that of *John Fletcher*, of *Madely*.

Somewhat

Somewhat similar to this title, is the following confession of faith, which however shocking, not to say blasphemous, it may appear to the humble Christian, must inevitably be adopted, if not in express words, yet in substance, by every Arminian, and Perfectionist whatsoever; tho' the last article of it chiefly concerns such as are ordained Ministers in the Church of *England*.

A

C R E E D,

F O R

ARMINIANS and PERFECTIONISTS.

I.

I Believe that *Jesus Christ* died for the whole human race, and that he had no more love towards those who now are, or hereafter shall be in glory, than for those who now are, or hereafter shall be lifting up their eyes in torments; and that the one are no more indebted to his grace than the other.

II.

J. W. M.

II.

I believe that divine grace is indiscriminately given to all men; and that God foreseeing that by far the greater part of the world would reject this grace, doth nevertheless bestow it upon them, in order to heighten their torments, and to encrease their damnation in Hell.

III.

I believe it depends wholly on the will of the creature whether he shall or shall not receive any benefit from divine grace.

IV.

Though the scripture tells me that the carnal mind is enmity against God, yet I believe that there is something in the heart of every natural man, that can nourish and cherish the grace of God, and that the sole reason why this grace is effectual in some and not in others, is entirely owing to themselves, and to their own faithfulness, and not to the distinguishing love and favor of God.

V.

I believe that GOD sincerely wishes for the salvation of many who never will be saved; consequently that it is intirely owing to want of ability in GOD, that what he so earnestly willeth is not accomplished.

VI.

I believe that the Redeemer not only shed his precious blood, but prayed for the salvation of many souls who are now in Hell; consequently that his blood was shed in vain, and his prayer rejected by his Father, and that therefore he told a *gross untruth* when he said "I know that thou hearest me always."

VII.

I believe that GOD foreseeing some men's nature will improve the grace which is given them; and that they will repent, believe, and be very good, elects them unto salvation.

VIII.

I believe that the love and favor of him with
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whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning, and whose gifts and callings are without repentance, * may vary, change, and turn every hour, and every moment, according to the behaviour of the creature.

IX.

I believe that the seed of the word by which God's children are born again, is a *corruptible* seed, and that so far from enduring *for ever*, (as that mistaken apostle *Peter* rashly affirms,) that it is frequently rooted out of the hearts of those in whom it is sown.

X.

I believe that *Christ* doth not always give unto his sheep eternal life, but that they often perish, and are by the power of *Satan* frequently plucked out of his hand.

XI.

Though I have solemnly subscribed to the 39 Articles of the Church of England, and have af-

* *Rom.* xi. 29. *Jam.* i. 17.

firmed that I believe them from my heart, yet I think our Reformers were profoundly ignorant of true christianity, when they declared in the 9th Article that "the infection of nature doth remain in them which are regenerate," and in the 15th that "ALL WE, the rest (*Christ* only excepted) altho' baptized and born again in *Christ*, yet offend in many things, and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." This I totally deny, because it cuts up root and branch, my favorite doctrine of *Perfection*, and therefore let *Peter, Paul, James* or *John*, say what they will, and let Reformers and Martyrs join their syren song, their eyes were at best but half opened (for want of a little *Foundery* eye-salve,) therefore I cannot look upon them as adult believers and fathers in *Christ*.

J. F.

J. W.

W. S.

Now, dear reader, hoping I have fully convinced thee that I have neither recanted *St. Paul's* sentiments, nor espoused those of *Mr. Wesley*; I say no more, but that I wish thee grace, mercy and peace from *God our Father*, and from the *Lord Jesus Christ*. Amen.

F I N I S

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