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LETTERS AND SERMONS,

WITH

A REVIEW OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY,

AND

H Y M N S.

By JOHN NEWTON,
RECTOR OF ST MARY, WOOLNOTH, LONDON.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

V O L. III.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. BUCKLAND, No. 57. Pater-noster-Row;
and J. JOHNSON, No. 72. St. Paul's Church-yard.

MDCCLXXXVII.

CARDIPHONIA:
OR, THE
UTTERANCE
OF THE
HEART;
IN THE COURSE OF
A REAL CORRESPONDENCE.

Hæc res et jungit, junctos et servat amicos.

HOR. Lib. i. Sat. 3.

As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

PROV. xxvii. 19.

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S E V E N

L E T T E R S

T O

MRS —.

VOL. III.

*

A

L E T T E R I.

My dear Madam,

Nov.—1775.

TOO much of that impatience which you speak of, towards those who differ from us in some religious sentiments, is observable on all sides. I do not consider it as the fault of a few individuals, or of this or that party, so much as the effect of that inherent imperfection which is common to our whole race. Anger and scorn are equally unbecoming in those who profess to be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, and who acknowledge themselves to be both sinful and fallible; but too often something of this leaven will be found cleaving to the best characters, and mixed with honest endeavours to serve the best cause. But thus it was from the beginning; and we have reason to confess that we are no better than the apostles were, who, tho' they meant well, manifested once and again a wrong spirit in their zeal, Luke, ix. 54. Observation and experience contribute, by the grace of God, gradually to soften and sweeten our spirits; but then there will always be ground for mutual forbearance and mutual forgiveness on this head. However, so far as I may judge of myself, I think this hastiness is not my most easy besetting sin. I am not indeed an advocate for that indifference and lukewarmness to the truths of God, which seem to constitute the candour many plead for in the present day. But while I desire to hold fast the sound doctrines of the gospel towards the persons of my fellow-

creatures, I wish to exercise all moderation and benevolence : Protestants or Papists, Socinians or Deists, Jews, Samaritans, or Mahometans, all are my neighbours, they have all a claim upon me for the common offices of humanity. As to religion, they cannot all be right ; nor may I compliment them by allowing the differences between us are but trivial, when I believe and know they are important ; but I am not to expect them to see with my eyes. I am deeply convinced of the truth of John Baptist's aphorism, John, iii. 27. " A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." I well know, that the little measure of knowledge I have obtained in the things of God has not been owing to my own wisdom and docility, but to his goodness. Nor did I get it all at once : he has been pleased to exercise much patience and long-suffering towards me, for about twenty-seven years past, since he first gave me a desire of learning from himself. He has graciously accommodated himself to my weakness, borne with my mistakes, and helped me through innumerable prejudices, which, but for his mercy, would have been insuperable hindrances : I have therefore no right to be angry, impatient, or censorious, especially as I have still much to learn, and am so poorly influenced by what I seem to know. I am weary of controversies and disputes, and desire to chuse for myself, and to point out to others, Mary's part, to sit at Jesus feet, and to hear his words. And, blessed be his name ! so far as I have learned from him, I am favoured with a comfortable certainty, I know whom I have believed, and am no longer tossed about by the various winds and tides of opinions, by which I see many are dashed one against the other. But I cannot, I must not, I dare not contend ; only, as a witness for God, I am ready to bear my simple testimony to what I have known

known

known of his truth, whenever I am properly called to it.

I agree with you, that some accounted evangelical teachers have too much confined themselves to a few leading and favourite topics. I think this a fault; and believe, when it is constantly so, the auditories are deprived of much edification and pleasure, which they might receive from a more judicious and comprehensive plan. The whole scripture, as it consists of histories, prophecies, doctrines, precepts, promises, exhortations, admonitions, encouragements, and reproofs, is the proper subject of the gospel-ministry; and every part should in its place and course be attended to; yet so as that, in every compartment we exhibit, Jesus should be the capital figure; in whom the prophecies are fulfilled, the promises established; to whom, in a way of type and emblem, the most important parts of scripture-history have an express reference; and from whom alone we can receive that life, strength, and encouragement, which are necessary to make obedience either pleasing or practicable. And where there is *true spiritual faith* in the heart, and in exercise, I believe a person will not so much need a detail of what he is to practise, as to be often greatly at a loss without it. Our Saviour's commandments are plain and clear in themselves; and that love which springs from faith is the best casuist and commentator to apply and enforce them.

You are pleased to say, "Forgive me if I transgress; I know the place whereon I stand is holy ground" Permit me to assure you, my dear Madam, that were I, which I am not, a person of some importance, you would run no hazard of offending me by controverting any of my sentiments; I hold none (knowingly) which I am not willing to submit to examination; nor am I afraid of of-

fending you by speaking freely, when you point out my way. I should wrong you, if I thought to please you by palliating or disguising the sentiments of my heart; and if I attempted to do so, you would see through the design, and despise it. There may perhaps be an improper manner of chiming upon the name of Jesus, and I am not for vindicating any impropriety; yet could I feel what I ought to mean when I pronounce that name, I should not fear mentioning it too often. I am afraid of no excess in thinking highly of it, because I read it is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father. Laboured explanations of the Trinity I always avoid. I am afraid of darkening counsel by words without knowledge. Scripture, and even reason assures me, there is but one God, whose name *alone* is Jehovah. Scripture likewise assures me, that Christ is God, that Jesus is Jehovah. I cannot say that reason assents with equal readiness to this proposition as to the former. But admitting what the scripture teaches concerning the evil of sin, the depravity of human nature, the method of salvation, and the offices of the Saviour; admitting that God has purposed to glorify, not his mercy only, but his justice, in the work of redemption; that the blood shed upon the cross is a proper, adequate satisfaction for sin; and that the Redeemer is at present the shepherd of those who believe in him, and will hereafter be the judge of the world; that in order to give the effectual help which we need, it is necessary that he be always *intimately with those* who depend upon him in every age, in every place; must know the thoughts and intents of every heart; must have his eye always upon them, his ear always open to them, his arm ever stretched out for their relief; that they can receive nothing but what he bestows, can do nothing but as he enables them, nor stand a mo-
ment

ment but as he upholds them: admitting these and the like promises, with which the word of God abounds, reason must allow, whatever difficulties may attend the thought, that only he who is God over all, blessed for ever, is able or worthy to execute this complicated plan, every part of which requires the exertion of infinite wisdom and almighty power; nor am I able to form any clear, satisfactory, comfortable thoughts of God, suited to awaken my love or engage my trust, but as he has been pleased to reveal himself in the person of Jesus Christ. I believe with the Apostle, that God was once manifested in the flesh upon earth; and that he is now manifested in the flesh in heaven; and that the worship, not only of redeemed sinners, but of the holy angels, is addressed to the Lamb that was slain, and who, in that nature in which he suffered, now exercises universal dominion, and has the government of heaven, earth, and hell upon his shoulders. This truth is the foundation upon which my hope is built, the fountain from whence I derive all my strength and consolation, and my only encouragement for venturing to the throne of grace, for grace to help in time of need.

*Till God in human flesh I see,
 My thoughts no comfort find;
 The holy, just, and sacred Three,
 Are terrors to my mind.
 But if Immanuel's face appear,
 My hope, my joy begins;
 His name forbids my slavish fear,
 His grace removes my sins.*

I am, however, free to confess to you, that, through the pride and unbelief remaining in my heart, and the power of Satan's temptations, there are seasons when I find no small perplexity and evil

reasonings upon this high point: but it is so absolutely essential to my peace, that I cannot part with it; for I cannot give it up, without giving up all hope of salvation on the one hand, and giving up the Bible, as an unmeaning, contradictory fable, on the other: and through mercy, for the most part, when I am in my right mind, I am as fully persuaded of this truth as I am of my own existence; but from the exercises I have had about it, I have learned to subscribe to the Apostle's declaration, that "no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." I am well satisfied, it will not be a burden to me at the hour of death, nor be laid to my charge at the day of judgement, that I have thought too highly of Jesus, expected too much from him myself, or laboured too much in commending and setting him forth to others, as the Alpha and Omega, the true God and eternal life. On the contrary, alas! alas! my guilt and grief are, that my thoughts of him are so faint, so infrequent, and my commendations of him so lamentably cold and disproportionate to what they ought to be.

I know not whose letters are rapturous, but I wish mine were more so: not that I am a friend to ungrounded sallies of imagination, flights of animal passions, or heat without light. But it would be amazing to me, were I not aware of human depravity (of which I consider this as one of the most striking proofs), that they who have any good hope of an interest in the gospel-salvation do not find their hearts (as Dr Watts expresses it), all on fire; and that their very looks do not express a transport of admiration, gratitude, and love, when they consider from what misery they are redeemed, to what happiness they are called, and what a price was paid for their souls. I wish to be more like the Apostle Paul in this respect, who, though he often
forms

forms and compounds new words, seems at a loss for any that could suitably describe the emotions of his heart. But I am persuaded you would not object to the just fervours of scriptural devotion. But this holy flame can seldom be found un sullied in the present life. The temper, constitution, and infirmities of individuals will mix more or less with what they say or do. Allowances must be made for such things in the present state of infirmity; for who can hope to be perfectly free from them? If the heart is right with God, and sincerely affected with the wonders of redeeming love, our gracious high priest, who knows our weakness, pities and pardons what is amiss, accepts our poor efforts, and gradually teaches us to discern and avoid what is blameable. The work of grace, in its first stages, I sometimes compare to the lighting of a fire, where for a while there is abundance of smoke, but it burns clearer and clearer. There is often, both in letters and books, what might be very well omitted; but if a love to God and souls be the leading principle, I pass as gentle censure upon the rest as I can, and apply to some eccentric expressions, what Mr Prior somewhere says of our civil dissensions in this land of liberty,

A bad effect, but from a noble cause.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R II.

*My dear Madam,**February 16. 1776.*

IT gave me great comfort to find, that what I wrote concerning the divine character of Jesus as God manifest in the flesh, met with your approbation. This doctrine is, in my view, the great foundation-stone upon which all true religion is built: but, alas! in the present day, it is the stumbling stone and rock of offence, upon which too many, fondly presuming upon their own wisdom, fall and are broken. I am so far from wondering that any should doubt of it, that I am firmly persuaded none can truly believe it, however plainly set forth in scripture, unless it be revealed to them from heaven; or, in the apostle's words, that "no one can call Jesus Christ Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." I believe there are many who think they believe it, because they have taken it for granted, and never attentively considered the difficulties with which it is attended in the eye of fallen reason. Judging by natural light, it seems impossible to believe that the title of the true God and eternal life should properly belong to that despised man who hung dead upon the cross, exposed to the insults of his cruel enemies. I know nothing that can obviate the objections the reasoning mind is ready to form against it, but a real conviction of the sinfulness of sin, and the state of a sinner as exposed to the curse of the holy law, and destitute of every plea and hope in himself. Then the necessity of a Redeemer, and the necessity of this Redeemer's being almighty, is seen and felt, with an evidence which bears down all opposition; for neither the efficacy of his atonement and intercession,

nor

nor his sufficiency to guide, save, protect, and feed those who trust in him, can be conceived of without it. When the eyes of the understanding are opened, the soul made acquainted with and attentive to its own state and wants, he that runs may read this truth, not in a few detached texts of a dubious import, and liable to be twisted and tortured by the arts of criticism, but as interwoven in the very frame and texture of the Bible, and written, as with a sun-beam, throughout the principal parts both of the Old and New Testament. If Christ be the shepherd and the husband of his people under the gospel, and if his coming into the world did not abridge those who feared God of the privileges they were intitled to before his appearance, it follows by undeniable consequence, “that he is God over all, blessed for ever.” For David tells us, that his shepherd was Jehovah; and the husband of the Old Testament church was the maker and God of the whole earth, the Holy One of Israel, whose name is the Lord of Hosts, Psal. xxiii. 1. Is. liv. 8. with xlvii. 4. I agree with you, Madam, that among the many attempts which have been made to prove and illustrate the scripture-doctrine, that the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, are one God, there have been many injudicious, unwarrantable things advanced, which have perplexed instead of instructing, and of which the enemies of the truth have known how to make their advantage. However, there have been tracts upon these sublime subjects which have been written with judgement and an uncti^on, and I believe attended with a blessing. I seem to prefer Mr Jones’s book on the Trinity to any I have seen, because he does little more than state some of the scripture-evidence for it, and draws his inferences briefly and plainly; though even he has admitted a few texts, which may perhaps be thought not quite

quite full to the point; and he has certainly omitted several of the most express and strongest testimonies. The best and happiest proof of all, that this doctrine is true in itself and true to us, is the experience of its effects. They who know his name will put their trust in him: they who are rightly impressed with his astonishing condescension and love, in emptying himself, and submitting to the death of the cross for our sakes, will find themselves under a sweet constraint to love him again, and will feel a little of that emotion of heart which the apostle expresses in that lively passage, Gal. vi. 14. The knowledge of Christ crucified (like Ithuriel's spear) removes the false appearances by which we have been too long cheated, and shews us the men and the things, the spirit, customs, and maxims of the world, in their just light. Were I perfectly master of myself and my subject, I would never adduce any text in proof of a doctrine or assertion from the pulpit, which was not direct and conclusive; because if a text is pressed into an argument to which it has no proper relation, it rather encumbers than supports it, and raises a suspicion that the cause is weak, and better testimonies in its favour cannot be obtained. Some misapplications of this kind have been so long in use, that they pass pretty current, though, if brought to the assay, they would be found not quite Sterling: but I endeavour to avoid them to the best of my judgement. Thus, for instance, I have often heard, Rom. xiv. 23. "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," quoted to prove, that without a principle of saving faith we can perform nothing acceptable to God; whereas it seems clear from the context, that faith is there used in another sense, and signifies a firm persuasion of mind respecting the lawfulness of the action. However, I doubt not but the proposition in itself is strictly true in the other sense, if considered detached

tached from the connection in which it stands ; but I should rather choose to prove it from other passages, where it is directly affirmed, as Heb. xi. 6. Matth. xii 33. In such cases, I think hearers should be careful not to be prejudiced against a doctrine, merely because it is not well supported ; for perhaps it is capable of solid proof, though the preacher was not so happy as to hit upon that which was most suitable ; and extempore preachers may sometimes hope for a little allowance upon this head, from the more candid part of their auditory, and not be made offenders for an inadvertence, which they cannot perhaps always avoid in the hurry of speaking. With respect to the application of some passages in the Old Testament to our Lord and Saviour, I hold it safest to keep close to the specimens the apostles have given us, and I would venture with caution if I go beyond their line ; yet it is probable they have only given us a specimen, and that there are a great number of passages which have a direct reference to gospel-truths, though we may run some hazard in making out the allusion. If St Paul had not gone before me, I should have hesitated to assert, that the prohibition, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,” was given, not upon the account of oxen, but altogether for our sakes : nor should I without his assistance have found out, that the history of Sarah and Hagar was a designed allegory, to set forth the difference between the law and gospel covenants. Therefore, when I hear ministers tracing some other allusions, I cannot be always sure that they push them too far, though perhaps they are not quite satisfactory to *my* judgement ; for it may be, they have a farther insight into the meaning of the places than myself. And I think scriptures may be sometimes used to advantage, by way of accommodation in popular discourses, and in some-
thing

thing of a different sense from what they bear in the place where they stand, provided they are not alledged as proofs, but only to illustrate a truth already proved or acknowledged. Though Job's friends and Job himself were mistaken, there are many great truths in their speeches, which, as such, may, I think, stand as the foundation of a discourse. Nay, I either have, or have often intended to borrow a truth from the mouth even of Satan, "Hast thou not set a hedge about him?" such a confession extorted from our grand adversary placing the safety of the Lord's people, under his providential care, in a very striking light.

I perfectly agree with you, Madam, that our religious sensations and exercises are much influenced and tinged by natural constitution; and that therefore tears and warm emotions on the one hand, or a comparative dryness of spirit on the other, are no sure indications of the real state of the heart. Appearances may agree in different persons, or vary in the same person, from causes merely natural: even a change of weather may have some influence in raising or depressing the spirits, where the nerves are very delicate; and I think such persons are more susceptible of impressions from the agency of invisible powers, both good and evil; an agency which, though we cannot explain, experience will not permit us to deny. However, though circumstantials rise and fall, the real difference between nature and grace remains unalterable. That work of God upon the heart which is sometimes called a new birth, at others a new creation, is as distant from the highest effects of natural principles, or the most specious imitations which education or resolutions can produce, as light is from darkness, or life from death. Only he who made the world can either make a Christian, or support and carry on his own work. A
thirst

thirst after God as our portion; a delight in Jesus, as the only way and door; a renunciation of self and of the world, so far as it is opposite to the spirit of the gospel: these, and the like fruits of that grace which bringeth salvation, are not only beyond the power of our fallen nature, but contrary to its tendency; so that we can have no desires of this kind till they are given us from above, and can for a season hardly bear to hear them spoken of, either as excellent or necessary.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R III.

My dear Madam,

September 17. 1776.

WE are much indebted to you for your kind thoughts of us. Hitherto I feel no uneasiness about what is before me; but I am afraid my tranquillity does not wholly spring from trust in the Lord, and submission to his will, but that a part of it at least is derived from the assurances Mr W. gave me, that the operation would be neither difficult nor dangerous. I have not much of the hero in my constitution; if in great pains or sharp trials I should ever show a becoming fortitude, it must be given me from above. I desire to leave all with him, in whose hands my ways are, and who has promised me strength according to my day.

I rejoice that the Lord has not only made you desirous of being useful to others in their spiritual concerns, but has given you in some instances to see, that your desires and attempts have not been in vain. I shall thankfully accept of the commis-
sion

sion you are pleased to offer me, and take a pleasure in perusing any papers you may think proper to put into my hands, and offer you my sentiments with that simplicity which I am persuaded will be much more agreeable to you than compliments. Though I know there is in general a delicacy and difficulty in services of this kind, yet with respect to yourself I seem to have nothing to fear.

I have often wished we had more female pens employed in the service of the sanctuary. Though few ladies encumber themselves with the apparatus of Latin and Greek, or engage in voluminous performances; yet in the article of essay-writing, I think many are qualified to succeed better than most men, having a peculiar easiness of style, which few of us can imitate. I remember you once shewed me a paper, together with the corrections and alterations proposed by a gentleman whose opinion you had asked. I thought his corrections had injured it, and given it an air of stiffness, which is often observable when learned men write in English. Grammatical rules, as they are called, are wholly derived from the mode of speaking or writing which obtains amongst those who best understand the language; for the language must be supposed established before any grammar can be made for it: and therefore women who, from the course of their education and life, have had an opportunity of reading the best written books, and conversing with those who speak well, though they do not burden themselves with the formality of grammar, have often more skill in the English language than the men who can call every figure of speech by a Latin or Greek name. You may be sure, Madam, I shall not wish your papers suppressed, merely because they were not written by a learned man. Language and style, however, are but the dress. Trifles, however adorned, are trifles still.

still. A person of spiritual discernment would rather be the author of one page written in the humble garb of Bunyan, upon a serious subject, than to be able to rival the sprightliness and elegance of Lady M. W. Montague, unless it could be with a view to edification. The subjects you propose are important; and with respect to sacramental meditations, and all devotional exercises so called, I perfectly agree with you, that to be affecting and useful they must be dictated rather by the heart than by the head; and are most likely to influence others, when they are the fruits and transcripts of our own experience. So far as I know, we are but scantily provided with specimens of this sort in print, and therefore I shall be glad to see an accession to the public stock. Your other thought of helps to recollection on Saturday evenings is, I think, an attempt in which none have been beforehand with you. So that, according to the general appearance, I feel myself disposed to encourage you to do as you have purposed. On the other hand, if I meet with any thing, on the perusal of the papers, which in my view may seem to need alteration, I will freely and faithfully point it out.

I can almost smile now, to think you once classed me amongst the *Stoics*. If I dare speak with confidence of myself in any thing, I think I may lay claim to a little of that pleasing, painful thing sensibility. I need not boast of it, for it has too often been my snare, my sin, and my punishment. Yet I would be thankful for a spice of it, as the Lord's gift, and when rightly exercised it is valuable; and I think I should make but an awkward minister without it, especially here. Where there is this sensibility in the natural temper, it will give a tincture or cast to our religious expression. Indeed I often find this sensibility weakest where it should be strongest, and have reason to reproach myself

myself that I am no more affected by the character, love, and sufferings of my Lord and Saviour, and my own peculiar personal obligations to him. However, my views of religion have been such for many years, as I supposed more likely to make me be deemed an enthusiast than a Stoic. A moonlight head-knowledge derived from a system of sentiments, however true in themselves, is in my judgement a poor thing: nor, on the other hand, am I an admirer of those rapturous fallies, which are more owing to a warm imagination, than to a just perception of the power and importance of gospel-truth. The gospel addresses both head and heart; and where it has its proper effect, where it is received as the word of God, and is clothed with the authority and energy of the holy Spirit, the understanding is enlightened, the affections awakened and engaged, the will brought into subjection, and the whole soul delivered to its impression as wax to the seal. When this is the case; when the affections do not take the lead, and push forward with a blind impulse, but arise from the principles of scripture, and are governed by them, the more warmth the better. Yet in this state of infirmity, nothing is perfect; and our natural temperament and disposition will have more influence upon our religious sensations than we are ordinarily aware. It is well to know how to make proper allowances and abatements upon this head, in the judgement we form both of ourselves and of others. Many good people are distressed and alternately elated by frames and feelings, which perhaps are more constitutional than properly religious experiences. I dare not tell you, Madam, what I am; but I can tell you what I wish to be. The love of God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, is what I would wish to be the abiding object of my contemplation; not merely to speculate upon it as

a doctrine, but so to feel it, and my own interest in it, as to have my heart filled with its effects, and transformed into its resemblance; that with this glorious exemplar in my view, I may be animated to a spirit of benevolence, love, and compassion, to all around me; that my love may be primarily fixed upon him who has so loved me, and then, for his sake, diffused to all his children, and to all his creatures. Then, knowing that much is forgiven to me, I should be prompted to the ready exercise of forgiveness, if I have aught against any. Then I should be humble, patient, and submissive under all his dispensations; meek, gentle, forbearing, and kind to my fellow worms. Then I should be active and diligent in improving all my talents and powers in his service, and for his glory; and live not to myself, but to him who loved me and gave himself for me.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R IV.

My dear Madam,

Nov. 29. 1776.

I Am persuaded you need not be told, that though there are perhaps supposable extremities in which self would prevail over all considerations, yet in general it is more easy to suffer in our own persons, than in the persons of those whom we dearly love; for through such a medium our apprehensions possibly receive the idea of the trouble enlarged beyond its just dimensions; and it would sit lighter upon us if it were properly our own case, for then we should feel it all, and there would be no room for imagination to exaggerate.

But

But though I feel grief, I trust the Lord has mercifully preserved me from impatience and murmuring, and that in the midst of all the pleadings of flesh and blood, there is a something within me that aims to say without reserve or exception, Not my will, but thine be done.

It is a comfortable consideration, that he with whom we have to do, our great High Priest, who once put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, and now for ever appears in the presence of God for us, is not only possessed of sovereign authority and infinite power, but wears our very nature, and feels and exercises in the highest degree those tendernesses and commiserations, which I conceive are essential to humanity in its perfect state. The whole history of his wonderful life is full of inimitable instances of this kind. His bowels were moved before his arm was exerted: he condescended to mingle tears with mourners, and wept over distresses which he intended to relieve. He is still the same in his exalted state; compassions dwell within his heart. In a way inconceivable to us, but consistent with his supreme dignity and perfection of happiness and glory, he still feels for his people. When Saul persecuted the members upon earth, the head complained from heaven: and sooner shall the most tender mother sit insensible and inattentive to the cries and wants of her infant, than the Lord Jesus be an unconcerned spectator of his suffering children. No, with the eye, and the ear, and the heart of a friend, he attends to their sorrows; he counts their sighs, puts their tears in his bottle; and when our spirits are overwhelmed within us, he knows our path, and adjusts the time, the measure of our trials, and every thing that is necessary for our present support and seasonable deliverance, with the same unerring wisdom and accuracy as he weighed the mountains in scales and hills in

a balance, and meted out the heavens with a span. Still more, besides his benevolent, he has an experimental sympathy. He knows our sorrows, not merely as he knows all things, but as one who has been in our situation, and who, though without sin himself, endured when upon earth inexpressibly more for us than he will ever lay upon us. He has sanctified poverty, pain, disgrace, temptation, and death, by passing through these states; and in whatever states his people are, they may by faith have fellowship with him in their sufferings, and he will by sympathy and love have fellowship and interest with them in theirs. What then shall we fear, or of what shall we complain? when all our concerns are written upon his heart, and their management, to the very hairs of our head, are under his care and providence; when he pities us more than we can do ourselves, and has engaged his almighty power to sustain and relieve us. However, as he is tender, he is wise also; he loves us, but especially with regard to our best interests. If there were not something in our hearts and our situation that required discipline and medicine, he so delights in our prosperity that we should never be in heaviness. The innumerable comforts and mercies with which he enriches even those we call our darker days, are sufficient proofs that he does not willingly grieve us: but when he sees a need be for chastisement, he will not withhold it because he loves us; on the contrary, that is the very reason why he afflicts. He will put his silver into the fire to purify it; but he sits by the furnace as a refiner, to direct the process, and to secure the end he has in view, that we may neither suffer too much, nor suffer in vain.

I am, &c.

LET.

L E T T E R V.

My dear Madam,

Dec. — 1776.

I Have often preached to others of the benefit of affliction; but my own path for many years has been so smooth, and my trials, though I have not been without trials, comparatively so light and few, that I have seemed to myself to speak by rote upon a subject of which I had not a proper feeling. Yet the many exercises of my poor afflicted people, and the sympathy the Lord has given me with them in their troubles, has made this a frequent and favourite topic of my ministry among them. The advantages of afflictions, when the Lord is pleased to employ them for the good of his people, are many and great. Permit me to mention a few of them; and the Lord grant that we may all find those blessed ends answered to ourselves, by the trials he is pleased to appoint us.

Afflictions quicken us to prayer. It is a pity it should be so; but experience testifies, that a long course of ease and prosperity, without painful changes, has an unhappy tendency to make us cold and formal in our secret worship; but troubles rouse our spirits, and constrain us to call upon the Lord in good earnest, when we feel a need of that help which we only can have from him.

They are useful, and in a degree necessary, to keep alive in us a conviction of the vanity and unsatisfying nature of the present world, and all its enjoyments; to remind us that this is not our rest, and to call our thoughts upwards, where our true treasure is, and where our conversation ought to be. When things go on much to our wish, our hearts
are

are too prone to say, It is good to be here. It is probable, that had Moses, when he came to invite Israel to Canaan, found them in prosperity, as in the days of Joseph, they would have been very unwilling to remove; but the afflictions they were previously brought into made his message welcome. Thus the Lord, by pain, sickness, and disappointments, by breaking our cisterns and withering our gourds, weakens our attachment to this world, and makes the thought of quitting it more familiar and more desirable.

A child of God cannot but greatly desire a more enlarged and experimental acquaintance with his holy word; and this attainment is greatly promoted by our trials. The far greater part of the promises in scripture are made and suited to a state of affliction; and though we may believe they are true, we cannot so well know their sweetness, power, and suitableness, unless we ourselves are in a state to which they refer. The Lord says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver."—Now till the day of trouble comes, such a promise is like a city of refuge to an Israelite, who not having slain a man, was in no danger of the avenger of blood. He had a privilege near him, of which he knew not the use and value, because he was not in the case for which it was provided. But some can say, I not only believe this promise upon the authority of the speaker, but I can set my seal to it: I have been in trouble; I took this course for relief, and I was not disappointed. The Lord verily heard and delivered me. Thus afflictions likewise give occasion of our knowing and noticing more of the Lord's wisdom, power, and goodness, in supporting and relieving, than we should otherwise have known.

I have not time to take another sheet, must therefore contract my homily. Afflictions evidence

to ourselves, and manifest to others, the reality of grace. And when we suffer as Christians, exercise some measure of that patience and submission, and receive some measure of these supports and supplies, which the gospel requires and promises to believers, we are more confirmed that we have not taken up with mere notions; and others may be convinced, that we do not follow cunningly devised tables. They likewise strengthen by exercise our graces: As our limbs and natural powers would be feeble if not called to daily exertion; so the graces of the Spirit would languish, without something was provided to draw them out to use. And to say no more, they are honourable, as they advance our conformity to Jesus our Lord, who was a man of sorrows for our sake. Methinks, if we might go to heaven without suffering, we should be unwilling to desire it. Why should we ever wish to go by any other path than that which he has consecrated and endeared by his own example? especially as his people's sufferings are not penal; there is no wrath in them; the cup he puts in their hands is very different from that which he drank for their sakes, and is only medicinal to promote their chief good. Here I must stop; but the subject is fruitful, and might be pursued through a quire of paper.

I am, &c.

LET.

L E T T E R VI.

*My dear Madam,**August — 1778.*

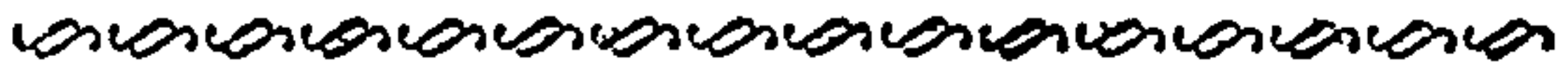
Your obliging favour of the 22d from B——, which I received last night, demands an immediate acknowledgement. Many things which would have offered by way of answer, must for the present be postponed; for the same post brought an information which turns my thoughts to *one* subject. What shall I say? Topics of consolation are at hand in abundance; they are familiar to your mind; and was I to fill the sheet with them, I could suggest nothing but what you already know. Then are they consolatory indeed, when the Lord himself is pleased to apply them to the heart. This he has promised, and therefore we are encouraged to expect it. This is my prayer for you: I sincerely sympathise with you: I cannot comfort you; but he can; and I trust he will. How impertinent would it be to advise you to forget or suspend the feelings which such a stroke must excite! who can help feeling! nor is sensibility in itself sinful. Christian resignation is very different from that stoical stubbornness, which is most easily practised by those unamiable characters whose regards centre wholly in self: nor could we in a proper manner exercise submission to the will of God under our trials, if we did not feel them. He who knows our frame is pleased to allow, that afflictions for the present are not joyous, but grievous. But to them that fear him he is near at hand, to support their spirits, to moderate their grief, and in the issue to sanctify it; so that they shall come out of the furnace refined, more humble, and more spiritual. There is, however, a part assigned us: we are to pray for

the help in need; and we are not wilfully to give way to the impression of overwhelming sorrow. We are to endeavour to turn our thoughts to such considerations as are suited to alleviate it; our deserts as sinners, the many mercies we are still indulged with, the still greater afflictions which many of our fellow-creatures endure, and, above all, the sufferings of Jesus, that man of sorrows, who made himself intimately acquainted with grief for our sakes.

When the will of the Lord is manifested to us by the event, we are to look to him for grace and strength, and be still to know that he is God, that he has a right to dispose of us and ours as he pleases, and that in the exercise of this right he is most certainly good and wise. We often complain of losses; but the expression is rather improper. Strictly speaking, we can lose nothing, because we have no real property in any thing. Our earthly comforts are lent us; and when recalled, we ought to return and resign them with thankfulness to him who has let them remain so long in our hands. But, as I said above, I do not mean to enlarge in this strain: I hope the Lord, the only comforter, will bring such thoughts with warmth and efficacy upon your mind. Your wound, while fresh, is painful; but faith, prayer, and time, will, I trust, gradually render it tolerable. There is something fascinating in grief; painful as it is, we are prone to indulge it, and to brood over the thoughts and circumstances which are suited (like fuel to fire) to heighten and prolong it. When the Lord afflicts, it is his design that we should grieve: but in this, as in all other things, there is a certain moderation which becomes a Christian, and which only grace can teach; and grace teaches us, not by books or by hearsay, but by experimental lessons: all beyond this should be avoided and guarded against as sinful
and

and hurtful. Grief, when indulged and excessive, preys upon the spirits, injures health, indisposes us for duty, and causes us to shed tears which deserve more tears. This is a weeping world. Sin has filled it with thorns and briars, with crosses and calamities. It is a great hospital, resounding with groans in every quarter. It is as a field of battle, where many are falling around us continually; and it is more wonderful that we escape so well, than that we are sometimes wounded. We *must* have some share; it is the unavoidable lot of our nature and state; it is likewise needful in point of discipline. The Lord will certainly chasten those whom he loves, though others may seem to pass for a time with impunity. That is a sweet, instructive, and important passage, Heb. xii. 5. 11. It is so plain, that it needs no comment; so full, that a comment would but weaken it. May the Lord inscribe it upon your heart, my dear Madam, and upon mine.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R VII.

My dear Madam,

Nov. — 1778.

YOUR obliging favour raised in me a variety of emotions when I first received it, and has revived them this morning while perusing it again. I have mourned and rejoiced with you, and felt pain and pleasure in succession, as you diversified the subject. However, the weight of your grief I was willing to consider as a thing that is past; and the thought that you had been mercifully supported under it, and brought through it, that you were

restored home in safety, and that at the time of writing you were tolerably well and composed, made joy upon the whole preponderate; and I am more disposed to congratulate you, and join you in praising the Lord for the mercies you enumerate, than to prolong my condolence upon the mournful parts of your letter. Repeated trying occasions have made me well acquainted with the anxious inquiries with which the busy poring mind is apt to pursue departed friends: it can hardly be otherwise under some circumstances. I have found prayer the best relief. I have thought it very allowable to avail myself to the utmost of every favourable consideration; but I have had the most comfort, when I have been enabled to resign the whole concern into his hands, whose thoughts and ways, whose power and goodness, are infinitely superior to our conceptions. I consider in such cases, that the great Redeemer can save to the uttermost, and the great Teacher can communicate light, and impress truth, when and how he pleases. I trust the power of his grace and compassion will hereafter triumphantly appear, in many instances, of persons, who, on their dying beds, and in their last moments, have been, by his mercy, constrained to feel the importance and reality of truths, which they did not properly understand and attend to in the hour of health and prosperity. Such a salutary change I have frequently, or at least more than once, twice, or thrice, been an eye-witness to, accompanied with such evidence as, I think, has been quite satisfactory. And who can say such a change may not often take place, when the person who is the subject of it is too much enfeebled to give an account to by-standers of what is transacting in his mind! Thus I have encouraged my hope. But the best satisfaction of all is, to be duly impressed with the voice that says, "Be still, and know that I am God." These words

words direct us, not only to his sovereignty, his undoubted right to do what he will with his own, but to all his adorable and amiable perfections, by which he has manifested himself to us in the Son of his love.

As I am not a Sadducee, the account you give of the music which entertained you on the road does not put my dependence either upon your veracity or your judgement to any trial. We live upon the confines of the invisible world, or rather perhaps in the midst of it. That unseen agents have a power of operating upon our minds, at least upon that mysterious faculty we call the imagination, is with me not merely a point of opinion, or even of faith, but of experience. That evil spirits can, when permitted, disturb, distress, and defile us, I know, as well as I know that the fire can burn me: And though their interposition is perhaps more easily and certainly distinguishable, yet from analogy I conclude, that good spirits are equally willing, and equally able, to employ their kind offices for our relief and comfort. I have formed in my mind a kind of system upon this subject, which for the most part I keep pretty much to myself; but I can intrust my thoughts to you as they occasionally offer. I apprehend that some persons (those particularly who rank under the class of nervous) are more open and accessible to these impressions than others, and probably the same person more so at some times than others. And though we frequently distinguish between imaginary and real, (which is one reason why nervous people are so seldom pitied), yet an impression upon the imagination may, as to the agent that produces it, and to the person that receives it, be as much a reality as any of the sensible objects around him; though a by-stander, not being able to share in the perception, may account it a mere whim, and suppose it might be avoided or re-

moved by an act of the will. Nor have any a right to withhold their assent to what the scriptures teach, and many sober persons declare, of this invisible agency, merely because we cannot answer the questions, How? or Why? The thing may be certain, though *we* cannot easily explain it; and there may be just and important reasons for it, though *we* should not be able to assign them. If what you heard, or (which in my view is much the same) what you thought you heard, had a tendency to compose your spirit, and to encourage your application to the Lord for help, at the time when you were about to stand in need of especial assistance, then there is a sufficient and suitable reason assigned for it at once, without looking farther. It would be dangerous to make impressions a *rule* of duty; but if they strengthen us and assist us in the performance of what *we know* to be our duty, we may be thankful for them.

You have taken leave of your favourite trees, and the scenes of your younger life, but a few years sooner than you must have done, if the late dispensation had not taken place. All must be left soon; for all below is polluted, and in its best state is too scanty to afford us happiness. If we are believers in Jesus, all we *can* quit is a mere nothing, compared with what we shall obtain. To exchange a dungeon for a palace, earth for heaven, will call for no self-denial when we stand upon the threshold of eternity, and shall have a clearer view than we have now of the vanity of what is passing from us, and the glory of what is before us. The partial changes we meet with in our way through life are designed to remind us of, and prepare us for the great change which awaits us at the end of it. The Lord grant that we may find mercy of the Lord in that solemn hour.

I am, &c.

FOUR

F O U R

L E T T E R S

T O

MRS T—.

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L E T T E R I.

*My dear Madam,**March 12. 1774.*

MY heart is full, yet I must restrain it. Many thoughts which crowd my mind, and would have vent were I writing to another person, would to you be unseasonable. I write not to remind you of what you have lost, but of what you have, which you cannot lose. May the Lord put a word into my heart that may be acceptable; and may his good Spirit accompany the perusal, and enable you to say with the Apostle, that as sufferings abound, consolations also abound by Jesus Christ. Indeed I can sympathize with you. I remember too the delicacy of your frame, and the tenderness of your natural spirits; so that were you not interested in the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, I should be ready to fear you must sink under your trial. But I have some faint conceptions of the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of the Lord, and may address you in the King's words to Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." Motives for resignation to his will abound in his word; but it is an additional and crowning mercy, that he has promised to apply and enforce them in time of need. He has said, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee; and as thy day is, so shall thy strength be." This I trust you have already experienced. The Lord is so rich and so good, that he can by a glance of thought compensate his children for whatever his wisdom sees fit to deprive them of.

If he gives them a lively sense of what he has delivered them from, and prepared for them, or of what he himself submitted to endure for their sakes, they find at once light springing up out of darkness, hard things become easy, and bitter sweet. I remember to have read of a good man in the last century, (probably you may have met with the story), who, when his beloved and only son lay ill, was for some time greatly anxious about the event. One morning he staid longer than usual in his closet; while he was there his son died. When he came out his family were afraid to tell him, but like David he perceived it by their looks; and when upon inquiry they said it was so, he received the news with a composure that surpris'd them. But he soon explained the reason, by telling them, that for such discoveries of the Lord's goodness as he had been favoured with that morning, he could be content to lose a son every day. Yes, Madam, though every stream must fail, the fountain is still full and still flowing. All the comfort you ever received in your dear friend was from the Lord, who is abundantly able to comfort you still; and he is gone but a little before you. May your faith anticipate the joyful and glorious meeting you will shortly have in a better world. Then your worship and converse together will be to unspeakable advantage, without imperfection, interruption, abatement, or end. Then all tears shall be wiped away, and every cloud removed; and then you will see, that all your concernments here below, (the late afflicting dispensation not excepted), were appointed and adjusted by infinite wisdom and infinite love.

The Lord, who knows our frame, does not expect or require that we should aim at a Stoical indifference under his visitations. He allows, that afflictions are at present not joyous, but grievous;
yea,

yea, he was pleased when upon earth to weep with his mourning friends when Lazarus died. But he has graciously provided for the prevention of that anguish and bitterness of sorrow, which is, upon such occasions, the portion of such as live without God in the world; and has engaged, that all shall work together for good, and yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. May he bless you with a sweet serenity of spirit, and a cheerful hope of the glory that shall shortly be revealed.

I intimated, that I would not trouble you with my own sense and share of this loss. If you remember the great kindness I always received from Mr T—— and yourself, as often as opportunity afforded, and if you will believe me possessed of any sensibility or gratitude, you will conclude that my concern is not small. I feel likewise for the public. Will it be a consolation to you, Madam, to know, that you do not mourn alone? A character so exemplary as a friend, a counsellor, a Christian, and a minister, will be long and deeply regretted; and many will join with me in praying, that you, who are most nearly interested, may be signally supported, and feel the propriety of Mrs Rowe's acknowledgement,

*Thou dost but take the dying lamp away,
To bless me with thine own unclouded day.*

We join in most affectionate respects and condolence. May the Lord bless you and keep you, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R II.

*My dear Madam,**April 8. 1775.*

I Have long and often purposed waiting upon you with a second letter, though one thing or other still caused delay; for though I could not but wish to hear from you, I was far from making that a condition of my writing. If you have leisure and spirits to favour me with a line now and then, it will give us much pleasure; but if not, it will be a sufficient inducement with me to write, to know that you give me liberty, and that you will receive my letters in good part. At the same time I must add, that my various engagements will not permit me to break in upon you so often as my sincere affection would otherwise prompt me to do.

I heartily thank you for yours, and hope my soul desires to praise the Lord on your behalf. I am persuaded that his goodness to you in supporting you under a trial so sharp in itself, and in the circumstances that attended it, has been an encouragement and comfort to many. It is in such apparently severe times that the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of the Lord, and the power and proper effects of his precious gospel, are most eminently displayed. I would hope, and I do believe, that the knowledge of your case has animated some of the Lord's people against those anxious fears which they sometimes feel when they look upon their earthly comforts with too careful an eye, and their hearts are ready to sink at the thought. What should I do, and how should I behave, were the Lord pleased to take away my desire with a stroke? But we see he can supply their absence, and afford us superior comforts without them. The gospel reveals

reveals one thing needful, the pearl of great price; and supposes, that they who possess this are provided for against all events, and have ground of unshaken hope, and a source of never-failing consolation under every change they can meet with during their pilgrimage state. When his people are enabled to set their seal to this, not only in theory, when all things go smooth, but practically, when called upon to pass through the fire and water; then his grace is glorified in them and by them; then it appears both to themselves and to others, that they have neither followed cunningly devised fables, nor amused themselves with empty notions; then they know in themselves, and it is evidenced to others, that God is with them of a truth. In this view a believer, when in some good measure divested from that narrow selfish disposition which cleaves so close to us by nature, will not only submit to trials, but rejoice in them, notwithstanding the feelings and reluctance of the flesh. For if I am redeemed from misery by the blood of Jesus, and if he is now preparing me a mansion near himself, that I may drink of the rivers of pleasure at his right hand for evermore; the question is not, (at least ought not to be), How may I pass through life with the least inconvenience? but how may my little span of life be made most subservient to the praise and glory of him who loved me, and gave himself for me? Where the Lord gives this desire he will gratify it; and as afflictions for the most part afford the fairest opportunities of this kind, therefore it is, that those whom he is pleased eminently to honour are usually called, at one time or another, to the heaviest trials; not because he loves to grieve them, but because he hears their prayers, and accepts their desires of doing him service in the world. The post of honour in war is so called, because attended
with

with difficulties and dangers which but few are supposed equal to; yet generals usually allot these hard services to their favourites and friends, who on their parts eagerly accept them as tokens of favour and marks of confidence. Should we, therefore, not account it an honour and a privilege, when the Captain of our salvation assigns us a difficult post? since he can and does (which no earthly commander can) inspire his soldier with wisdom, courage, and strength, suitable to their situation. 2 Cor. xii. 9. 10. I am acquainted with a few who have been led thus into the fore-front of the battle: they suffered much; but I have never heard them say they suffered too much; for the Lord stood by them and strengthened them. Go on, my dear Madam: yet a little while Jesus will wipe away all tears from your eyes; you will see your beloved friend again, and he and you will rejoice together for ever.—I am, &c.



L E T T E R III.

My dear Madam,

October 24. 1775.

THE manner in which you mention Omicron's letters, I hope, will rather humble me than puff me up. Your favourable acceptance of them, if alone, might have the latter effect; but alas! I feel myself so very defective in those things, the importance of which I endeavoured to point out to others, that I almost appear to myself to be one of those who say but do not. I find it much easier to speak to the hearts of others than to my own. Yet I have cause beyond many to bless God, that he has given me some idea of what a Christian ought.

ought to be, and I hope a real desire of being one myself; but verily I have attained but a very little way. A friend hinted to me, that the character I have given of C, or Grace in the full ear, must be from my own experience, or I could not have written it. To myself, however, it appears otherwise; but I am well convinced, that the state of C is attainable, and more to be desired than mountains of gold and silver. But I find you complain likewise; though it appears to me, and I believe to all who know you, that the Lord has been peculiarly gracious to you, in giving you much of the spirit in which he delights, and by which his name and the power of his gospel are glorified. It seems, therefore, that we are not competent judges either of ourselves or of others. I take it for granted, that they are the most excellent Christians who are most abased in their own eyes; but lest you should think upon this ground that I am something, because I can say so many humiliating things of myself, I must prevent your over-rating me, by assuring you, that my confessions rather express what I know I ought to think of myself, than what I actually do. Naturalists suppose, that if the matter of which the earth is formed were condensed as much as it is capable of, it would occupy but a very small space; in proof of which they observe, that a cubical pane of glass, which appears smooth and impervious to us, must be exceedingly porous in itself; since in every assignable point it receives and transmits the rays of light; and yet gold, which is the most solid substance we are acquainted with, is but about eight times heavier than glass, which is made up (if I may so say) of nothing but pores. In like manner I conceive, that inherent grace, when it is dilated, and appears to the greatest advantage in a sinner, would be found to be very small and inconsiderable, if it was condensed, and
absolutely

absolutely separated from every mixture. The highest attainments in this life are very inconsiderable, compared with what should properly result from our relation and obligations to a God of infinite holiness. The nearer we approach to him, the more we are sensible of this. While we only hear of God as it were by the ear, we seem to be something; but when, as in the case of Job, he discovers himself more sensibly to us, Job's language becomes ours, and the height of our attainment is, to abhor ourselves in dust and ashes.

I hope I do not write too late to meet you at Bath. I pray that your health may be benefited by the waters, and your soul comforted by the Lord's blessing upon the ordinances, and the converse of his children. If any of the friends you expected to see are still there, to whom we are known, and my name should be mentioned, I beg you to say, we desire to be respectfully remembered to them. Had I wings, I would fly to Bath while you are there. As it is, I endeavour to be with you in spirit. There certainly is a real, though secret, a sweet, though mysterious communion of saints, by virtue of their common union with Jesus. Feeding upon the same bread, drinking of the same fountain, waiting at the same mercy-seat, and aiming at the same ends, they have fellowship one with another, though at a distance. Who can tell how often the Holy Spirit, who is equally present with them all, touches the hearts of two or more of his children at the same instant, so as to excite a sympathy of pleasure, prayer, or praise, on each other's account? It revives me sometimes in a dull and dark hour to reflect, that the Lord has in mercy given me a place in the hearts of many of his people; and perhaps some of them may be speaking to him on my behalf, when I have hardly power to utter a word for myself. For kind services of this sort I
persuade

persuade myself I am often indebted to you. O that I were enabled more fervently to repay you in the same way! I can say, that I attempt it: I love and honour you greatly, and your concernments are often upon my mind.

We spent most of a week with Mr B—— since we returned from London, and he has been once here. We have reason to be very thankful for his connection: I find but few like minded with him, and his family is filled with the grace and peace of the gospel. I never visit them, but I meet with something to humble, quicken, and edify me. O! what will heaven be, where there shall be all who love the Lord Jesus, and they only; where all imperfection, and whatever now abates or interrupts their joy in their Lord and in each other, shall cease for ever. There at least I hope to meet you, and spend an eternity with you, in admiring the riches and glory of redeeming love.

We join in a tender of the most affectionate respects.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R IV.

My dear Madam,

October 28. 1777.

What can I say for myself, to let your obliging letter remain so long unanswered, when your kind sollicitude for us induced you to write? I am ashamed of the delay. You would have heard from me immediately, had I been at home. But I have reason to be thankful that we were providentially called to London a few days before the fire; so that Mrs —— was mercifully preserved from

from the alarm and shock she must have felt, had she been upon the spot. Your letter followed me hither, and was in my possession more than a week before my return. I purposed writing every day, but indeed I was much hurried and engaged. Yet I am not excused: I ought to have saved time from my meals or my sleep, rather than appear negligent or ungrateful. I now seize the first post I could write by since I came home. The fire devoured twelve houses; and it was a mercy, and almost a miracle, that the whole town was not destroyed; which must, humanly speaking, have been the case, had not the night been calm, as two thirds of the buildings were thatched. No lives were lost; no person considerably hurt; and I believe the contributions of the benevolent will prevent the loss from being greatly felt. It was at the distance of a quarter of a mile from my house.

Your command limits my attention, at present, to a part of your letter, and points me out a subject. Yet at the same time you lay me under a difficulty. I would not willingly offend you, and I hope the Lord has taught me not to aim at saying handsome things. I deal not in compliments, and religious compliments are the most unseemly of any. But why might I not express my sense of the grace of God, manifested in you as well as in another? I believe our hearts are all alike, destitute of every good, and prone to every evil. Like money from the same mint, they bear the same impression of total depravity: but grace makes a difference, and grace deserves the praise. Perhaps it ought not greatly to displease you, that others do, and must, and will think better of you than you do of yourself. If I do, how can I help it, when I form my judgement entirely from what you say and write? I cannot consent, that you should seriously appoint me to examine and judge of your state. I thought
you

you knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, what your views and desires are; yea, you express them in your letter, in full agreement with what the scripture declares of the principles, desires, and feelings of a Christian. It is true that you feel contrary principles, that you are conscious of defects and defilements; but it is equally true, that you could not be right if you did not feel these things. To be conscious of them and humbled for them, is one of the surest marks of grace; and to be more deeply sensible of them than formerly, is the best evidence of growth in grace. But when the enemy would tempt us to doubt and distrust, because we are not perfect, then he fights, not only against our peace, but against the honour and faithfulness of our dear Lord. Our righteousness is in him, and our hope depends, not upon the exercise of grace in us, but upon the fulness of grace and love in him, and upon his obedience unto death.

There is, my dear Madam, a difference between the holiness of a sinner and that of an angel. The angels have never sinned, nor have they tasted of redeeming love; they have no inward conflicts, no law of sin warring in their members: their obedience is perfect; their happiness is complete. Yet if I be found among redeemed sinners, I need not wish to be an angel. Perhaps God is not less glorified by your obedience, and not to shock you, I will add by mine, than by Gabriel's. It is a mighty manifestation of his grace indeed, when it can live, and act, and conquer in such hearts as ours; when, in defiance of an evil nature and an evil world, and all the force and subtilty of Satan, a weak worm is still upheld, and enabled not only to climb, but to thresh the mountains; when a small spark is preserved through storms and floods. In these circumstances, the work of grace is to be estimated, not merely from its imperfect appearance,

ance, but from the difficulties it has to struggle with and overcome; and therefore our holiness does not consist in great attainments, but in spiritual desires, in hungerings, thirstings, and mournings; in humiliation of heart, poverty of spirit, submission, meekness; in cordial admiring thoughts of Jesus, and dependence upon him alone for all we want. Indeed these may be said to be great attainments; but they who have most of them are most sensible that they, in and of themselves, are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing, and see daily cause for abhorring themselves, and repenting in dust and ashes.

Our view of death will not always be alike, but in proportion to the degree in which the Holy Spirit is pleased to communicate his sensible influence. We may anticipate the moment of dissolution with pleasure and desire in the morning, and be ready to shrink from the thought of it before night. But though our frames and perceptions vary, the report of faith concerning it is the same. The Lord usually reserves dying strength for a dying hour. When Israel was to pass Jordan, the Ark was in the river; and though the rear of the host could not see it, yet as they successively came forward and approached the banks, they all beheld the Ark, and all went safely over. As you are not weary of living, if it be the Lord's pleasure, so I hope, for the sake of your friends and the people whom you love, he will spare you amongst us a little longer; but when the time shall arrive which he has appointed for your dismissal, I make no doubt but he will overpower all your fears, silence all your enemies, and give you a comfortable, triumphant entrance into his kingdom. You have nothing to fear from death; for Jesus, by dying, has disarmed it of its sting, has perfumed the grave, and opened the gates of glory for his believing people. Satan,
so

so far as he is permitted, will assault our peace, but he is a vanquished enemy: our Lord holds him in a chain, and sets him bounds which he cannot pass. He provides for us likewise the whole armour of God, and has promised to cover our heads himself in the day of battle, to bring us honourably through every skirmish, and to make us more than conquerors at last. If you think my short unexpected interview with Mr C—— may justify my wishing he should know that I respect his character, love his person, and rejoice in what the Lord has done and is doing for him and by him, I beg you to tell him so: but I leave it entirely to you.

We join in most affectionate respects.

I am, &c.

F I V E .

L E T T E R S

T O

Mr .

L E T T E R I.

*Dear Sir,**March 7. 1765.*

Your favour of the 19th February came to my hand yesterday. I have read it with attention, and very willingly sit down to offer you my thoughts. Your case reminds me of my own: my first desires towards the ministry were attended with great uncertainties and difficulties, and the perplexity of my own mind was heightened by the various and opposite judgements of my friends. The advice I have to offer is the result of painful experience and exercise, and for this reason perhaps may not be unacceptable to you. I pray our gracious Lord to make it useful.

I was long distressed, as you are, about what was or was not a proper call to the ministry; it now seems to me an easy point to solve, but perhaps will not be so to you, till the Lord shall make it clear to yourself in your own case. I have not room to say so much as I could: in brief, I think it principally includes three things:

1. A warm and earnest desire to be employed in this service. I apprehend, the man who is once moved by the Spirit of God to this work will prefer it, if attainable, to thousands of gold and silver; so that though he is at times intimidated by a sense of its importance and difficulty, compared with his own great insufficiency (for it is to be presumed a call of this sort, if indeed from God, will be accompanied with humility and self-abasement,) yet he cannot give it up. I hold it a good rule to in-

quire in this point, whether the desire to preach is most fervent in our most lively and spiritual frames, and when we are most laid in the dust before the Lord? If so, it is a good sign. But if, as is sometimes the case, a person is very earnest to be a preacher to others, when he finds but little hungerings and thirstings after grace in his own soul, it is then to be feared, his zeal springs rather from a selfish principle than from the Spirit of God.

2. Besides this affectionate desire and readiness to preach, there must in due season appear some competent sufficiency as to gifts, knowledge, and utterance. Surely, if the Lord sends a man to teach others, he will furnish him with the means. I believe many have intended well in setting up for preachers, who yet went beyond or before their call in so doing. The main difference between a minister and a private Christian seems to consist in these ministerial gifts, which are imparted to him, not for his own sake, but for the edification of others. But then I say, these are to appear in due season; they are not to be expected instantaneously, but gradually, in the use of proper means. They are necessary for the discharge of the ministry; but not necessary as pre-requisites to warrant our desires after it. In your case, you are young, and have time before you; therefore I think you need not as yet perplex yourself with inquiring if you have these gifts already: it is sufficient if your desire is fixed, and you are willing, in the way of prayer and diligence, to wait upon the Lord for them: as yet you need them not.

3. That which finally evidences a proper call is a correspondent opening in Providence, by a gradual train of circumstances pointing out the means, the time, the place, of actually entering upon the work. And till this coincidence arrives, you must not expect to be always clear from hesitation in
your

your own mind. The principal caution on this head is, not to be too hasty in catching at first appearances. If it be the Lord's will to bring you into his ministry, he has already appointed your place and service; and though you know it not at present, you shall at a proper time. If you had the talents of an angel, you could do no good with them till his hour is come, and till he leads you to the people whom he has determined to bless by your means. It is very difficult to restrain ourselves within the bounds of prudence here, when our zeal is warm, a sense of the love of Christ upon our hearts, and a tender compassion for poor sinners is ready to prompt us to break out too soon;—but he that believeth shall not make haste. I was about five years under this constraint: sometimes I thought I must preach, though it was in the streets. I listened to every thing that seemed plausible, and to many things that were not so. But the Lord graciously, and as it were insensibly hedged up my way with thorns; otherwise, if I had been left to my own spirit, I should have put it quite out of my power to have been brought into such a sphere of usefulness, as he in his good time has been pleased to lead me to. And I can now see clearly, that at the time I would first have gone out, though my intention was, I hope, good in the main, yet I over-rated myself, and had not that spiritual judgment and experience, which are requisite for so great a service. I wish you therefore to take time; and if you have a desire to enter into the Established Church, endeavour to keep your zeal within moderate bounds, and avoid every thing that might unnecessarily clog your admission with difficulties. I would not have you hide your profession, or to be backward to speak for God; but avoid what looks like preaching, and be content with being a learner

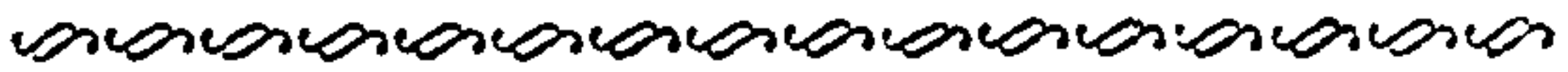
in the school of Christ for some years. The delay will not be lost time; you will be so much the more acquainted with the gospel, with your own heart, and with human nature: the last is a necessary branch of a minister's knowledge, and can only be acquired by comparing what passes within us, and around us, with what we read in the word of God.

I am glad to find you have a distaste both for Arminian and Antinomian doctrines;—but let not the mistakes of others sit too heavy upon you. Be thankful for the grace that has made you to differ; be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear; but beware of engaging in disputes, without evident necessity, and some probable hope of usefulness. They tend to eat out the life and favour of religion, and to make the soul lean and dry. Where God has begun a real work of grace, incidental mistakes will be lessened by time and experience; where he has not, it is of little signification what sentiments people hold, or whether they call themselves Arminians or Calvinists.

I agree with you, it is time enough for you to think of Oxford yet; and that if your purpose is fixed, and all circumstances render it prudent and proper to devote yourself to the ministry, you will do well to spend a year or two in private studies. It would be further helpful, in this view, to place yourself where there is gospel preaching, and a lively people. If your favourable opinion of this place should induce you to come here, I shall be very ready to give you every assistance in my power. As I have trod exactly the path you seem to be setting out in, I might so far perhaps be more serviceable than those who are in other respects much better qualified to assist you. I doubt not but in
this,

this, and every other step, you will intreat the Lord's direction; and I hope you will not forget to pray for,

Sir, your affectionate friend, &c.



L E T T E R II.

Dear Sir,

Jan. 7. 1767.

I Must beg you (once for all) to release me from any constraint about the length or frequency of my letters. Believe that I think of you, and pray for you, when you do not hear from me. Your correspondence is not quite so large as mine, therefore you may write the oftener: your letters will be always welcome; and I will write to you when I find a leisure hour; and have any thing upon my mind to offer.

You seem sensible where your most observable failing lies, and to take reproof and admonition concerning it in good part; I therefore hope and believe the Lord will give you a growing victory over it. You must not expect habits and tempers will be eradicated instantaneously; but by perseverance in prayer, and observation upon the experiences of every day, much may be done in time. Now and then you will (as is usual in the course of war) lose a battle; but be not discouraged, but rally your forces, and return to the fight. There is a comfortable word, a leaf of the tree of life, for healing the wounds we receive, in 1 John, ii. 1. If the enemy surprises you, and your heart smites you, do not stand astonished as if there was no help, nor give way to sorrow as if there was no hope, nor attempt to heal yourself; but away immediately

mediately to the throne of grace, to the great Physician, to the compassionate High Priest, and tell him all. Satan knows, that if he can keep us from confession our wounds will rankle; but do you profit by David's experience, Pſal. xxxii. 3.—5. When we are ſimple and open-hearted in abating ourſelves before the Lord, though we have acted fooliſhly and ungratefully, he will ſeldom let us remain long without affording us a ſenſe of his compaſſion; for he is gracious; he knows our frame, and how to bear with us, though we can hardly bear with ourſelves or with one another.

The main thing is to have *the heart right with God*: this will bring us in the end ſafely through many miſtakes and blunders: but a double mind, a ſelfiſh ſpirit, that would halve things between God and the world, the Lord abhors. Though I have not yet had many opportunities of commending your *prudence*, I have always had a good opinion of your *ſincerity* and *integrity*: if I am not miſtaken in this, I make no doubt of your doing well. If the Lord is pleaſed to bleſs you, he will undoubtedly make you humble; for you cannot be either happy or ſafe, or have any probable hope of abiding uſefulneſs, without it. I do not know that I have had any thing ſo much at heart in my connections with you, as to impreſs you with a ſenſe of the neceſſity and advantages of an humble frame of ſpirit: I hope it has not been in vain. O! to be little in our own eyes! this is the ground-work of every grace; this leads to a continual dependence upon the Lord Jeſus; this is the ſpirit which he has promiſed to bleſs; this conciliates us good-will and acceptance amongſt men; for he that abateſh himſelf is ſure to be honoured. And that this temper is ſo hard to attain and preſerve, is a ſtriking proof of our depravity. For are we not ſinners? Were we not rebels and enemies
before

before we knew the gospel? and have we not been unfaithful, backsliding, and unprofitable ever since? Are we not redeemed by the blood of Jesus? and can we stand a single moment except he upholds us? Have we any thing which we have not received; or have we received any thing which we have not abused? Why then is dust and ashes proud?

I am glad you have found some spiritual acquaintance in your barren land. I hope you will be helpful to them, and they to you. You do well to guard against every appearance of evil. If you are heartily for Jesus, Satan owes you a grudge. One way or other he will try to cut you out work, and the Lord may suffer him to go to the length of his chain. But though you are to keep your eye upon him, and expect to hear from him at every step, you need not be slavishly afraid of him: for Jesus is stronger and wiser than he; and there is a complete suit of armour provided for all who are engaged on the Lord's side.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R III.

Dear Sir,

Oct. 20. 1767.

A Concern for the perplexity you have met with, from objections which have been made against some expressions in my printed sermons, and in general against exhorting sinners to believe in Jesus, engages me to write immediately; otherwise I should have waited a little longer; for we are now upon the point of removing to the vicarage, and I believe this will be the last letter I shall write

from the old house. I shall chiefly confine myself at present to the subject you propose.

In the first place, I beg you to be upon your guard against a reasoning spirit. Search the scriptures; and where you can find a plain rule or warrant for any practice, go boldly on; and be not discouraged because you may not be clearly able to answer or reconcile every difficulty that may either occur to your own mind, or be put in your way by others. Our hearts are very dark and narrow, and the very root of all apostasy is a proud disposition to question the necessity or propriety of divine appointments. But the child-like simplicity of faith is to follow God without reasoning; taking it for granted a thing must be right if he directs it, and charging all seeming inconsistencies to the account of our own ignorance.

I suppose the people that trouble you upon this head are of two sorts: 1st, Those who preach upon Arminian principles, and suppose a free will in man, in a greater or less degree, to turn to God when the gospel is proposed. These, if you speak to sinners at large, though they will approve of your doing so, will take occasion perhaps to charge you with acting in contradiction to your own principles. So it seems Mr ——— has said. I love and honour that man greatly, and I beg you will tell him so from me; and tell him farther, that the reason why he is not a Calvinist, is because he misapprehends our principles. If I had a proper call, I would undertake to prove the direct contrary; namely, that to exhort and deal plainly with sinners, to stir them up to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold of eternal life, is an attempt not reconcileable to sober reason upon any other grounds than those doctrines which we are called Calvinists for holding; and that all the absurdities which are charged upon us, as consequences of
what

what we teach, are indeed truly chargeable upon those who differ from us in these points. I think this unanswerably proved by Mr Edwards, in his discourse on the freedom of the will; though the chain of reasoning is so close, that few will give attention and pains to pursue it. As to myself, if I was not a Calvinist, I think I should have no more hope of success in preaching to men, than to horses or cows.

But these objections are more frequently urged by Calvinists themselves; many of them, I doubt not, good men, but betrayed into a curiosity of spirit, which often makes their ministry (if ministers) dry and inefficacious, and their conversation sour and unfavoury. Such a spirit is too prevalent in many professors, that if a man discovers a warm zeal for the glory of God, and is enabled to bear a faithful testimony to the gospel truths; yea, though the Lord evidently blesses him, they overlook all, and will undervalue a sermon, which upon the whole they cannot but acknowledge to be scriptural, if they meet with a single sentence contrary to the opinion they have taken up. I am sorry to see such a spirit prevailing. But this I observe, that the ministers who give into this way, though good men and good preachers in other respects, are seldom very useful or very zealous; and those who are in private life, are more ready for dry points of disputation, at least harping upon a string of doctrines, than for experimental and heart-searching converse, whereby one may warm and edify another. Blessed be God, who has kept me and my people from this turn: if it should ever creep in or spread among us, I should be ready to write *Ichabod* upon our assemblies.

I advise you therefore to keep close to the Bible and prayer: bring your difficulties to the Lord, and intreat him to give you and maintain in you a

simple spirit. Search the scripture. How did Peter deal with Simon Magus? We have no right to think worse of any who can hear us, than the apostle did of him. He seemed almost to think his case desperate, and yet he advised him to repentance and prayer. Examine the same apostle's discourse, Acts, iii. and the close of St Paul's sermon, Acts, xiii. The power is all of God; the means are likewise of his appointment; and he always is pleased to work by such means as may shew that the power is his. What was Moses's rod in itself, or the trumpets that threw down Jericho? What influence could the pool of Siloam have, that the eyes of the blind man by washing in it should be opened? or what could Ezekiel's feeble breath contribute to the making dry bones live? All these means were exceedingly disproportionate to the effect; but he who ordered them to be used accompanied them with his power. Yet if Moses had gone without his rod; if Joshua had slighted the ram's horns; if the prophet had thought it foolishness to speak to dry bones, or the blind man refused to wash his eyes, nothing could have been done. The same holds good in the present subject: I do not reason, exhort, and persuade sinners, because I think I can prevail with them, but because the Lord has commanded it. He directs me to address them as reasonable creatures; to take them by every handle; to speak to their consciences; to tell them of the terrors of the Lord, and of his tender mercies; to argue with them what good they find in sin; whether they do not need a Saviour; to put them in mind of death, judgement, and eternity, &c. When I have done all, I know it is to little purpose, except the Lord speaks to their hearts; and this to his own, and at his own time, I am sure he will, because he has promised it. See Isaiah, lv. 10. 11. Matth. xxviii. 20. Indeed I have heard expressions in the
warmth

warmth of delivery which I could not wholly approve, and therefore do not imitate. But in general, I see no preaching made very useful for the gathering of souls, where poor sinners are shut out of the discourse. I think one of the closest and most moving addresses to sinners I ever met with is in Dr Owen's exposition of the 130th Psalm (in my edition) from p. 243. to 276. If you get it and examine it, I think you will find it all agreeable to scripture; and he was a steady, deep-sighted Calvinist. I wish you to study it well, and make it your pattern. He handles the same point likewise in other places, and shews the weakness of the exceptions taken somewhere at large, but I cannot just now find the passage. Many think themselves quite right, because they have not had their thoughts exercised at large, but have confined themselves to one track. There are extremes in every thing. I pray God to shew you the golden mean.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R. IV.

Dear Sir,

Aug. 30. 1770.

I Would steal a few minutes here to write, lest I should not have leisure at home. I have not your letter with me, and therefore can only answer so far as I retain a general remembrance of the contents.

You will doubtless find rather perplexity than advantage from the multiplicity of advice you may receive, if you endeavour to reconcile and adopt the very different sentiments of your friends. I

C. 6.

think.

think it will be best to make use of them in a full latitude, that is, to correct and qualify them one by another, and to borrow a little from each without confining yourself entirely to any. You will probably be advised to different extremes, it will then be impossible to follow both; but it may be practicable to find a middle path between them: and I believe this will generally prove the best and safest method. Only consult your own temper, and endeavour to incline rather to that side to which you are the least disposed, by the ordinary strain of your own inclination; for on that side you will be in the least danger of erring. Warm and hasty dispositions will seldom move too slow, and those who are naturally languid and cool are as little liable to over-act their part.

With respect to the particulars you instance, I have generally thought you warm and enterprising enough, and therefore thought it best to restrain you; but I meant only to hold you in, till you had acquired some farther knowledge and observation both of yourself and of others. I have the pleasure to hope (especially of late) that you are become more self-diffident and wary than you was some time ago. And therefore as your years and time are advancing, and you have been for a tolerable space under a probation of silence, I can make no objection to your attempting sometimes to speak in select societies; but let your attempts be confined to such, I mean where you are acquainted with the people, or the leading part of them, and be upon your guard against opening yourself too much amongst strangers;—and again, I earnestly desire you would not attempt any thing of this sort in a very public way, which may perhaps bring you under inconveniencies, and will be inconsistent with the part you ought to act (in my judgement) from the time you receive Episcopal ordination. You may remember

remember a simile I have sometimes used of green fruit: children are impatient to have it while it is green, but persons of more judgement will wait till it is ripe. Therefore I would wish your exhortations to be brief, private, and not very frequent. Rather give yourself to reading, meditation, and prayer.

As to speaking without notes, in order to do it successfully, a fund of knowledge should be first possessed. Indeed, in such societies as I hope you will confine your attempts to, it would not be practicable to use notes; but I mean, that if you design to come out as a preacher without notes from the first, you must use double diligence in study: your reading must not be confined to the scriptures; you should be acquainted with church-history, have a general view of divinity as a system, know something of the state of controversies in past times and at present, and indeed of the general history of mankind. I do not mean that you should enter deeply into these things; but you will need to have your mind enlarged, your ideas increased, your style and manner formed; you should read, think, write, compose, and use all diligence to exercise and strengthen your faculties. If you would speak extempore as a clergyman, you must be able to come off roundly, and to fill up your hour with various matter, in tolerable coherence, or else you will not be able to overcome the prejudice which usually prevails amongst the people. Perhaps it may be as well to use some little scheme in the note way, especially at the beginning; but a little trial will best inform you what is most expedient.

Let your backwardness to prayer and reading the scripture be ever so great, you must strive against it. This backwardness, with the doubts you speak of, are partly from your own evil heart, but perhaps

haps chiefly temptations of Satan: he knows, if he can keep you from drawing water out of the wells of salvation, he will have much advantage. My soul goes often mourning under the same complaints, but at times the Lord gives me a little victory. I hope he will over-rule all our trials, to make us more humble, dependent, and to give us tenderness of spirit towards the distressed. The exercised and experienced Christian, by the knowledge he has gained of his own heart, and the many difficulties he has had to struggle with, acquires a skill and compassion in dealing with others; and without such exercise, all our study, diligence, and gifts in other ways, would leave us much at a loss in some of the most important parts of our calling.

You have given yourself to the Lord for the ministry; his providence has thus far favoured your views; therefore harbour not a thought of flinching from the battle, because the enemy appears in view, but resolve to endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Lift up your banner in his name; trust in him, and he will support you; but above all things, be sure not to be either enticed or terrified from the privilege of a throne of grace.

Who your enemies are, or what they say, I know not; for I never conversed with them. Your friends here have thought you at times harsh and hasty in your manner, and rather inclining to self-confidence. These things I have often reminded you of; but I considered them as blemishes usually attendant upon youth, and which experience, temptation, and prayer would correct. I hope and believe you will do well. You will have a share in my prayers and best advice; and when I see occasion to offer a word of reproof, I shall not use any reserve.

Yours, &c.

L. E. T.

L E T T E R V.

Dear Sir,

July 25. 1772.

I Am glad to hear you are accommodated at D—, where I hope your best endeavours will not be wanting to make yourself agreeable, by an humble, inoffensive, and circumspect behaviour.

I greatly approve of your speaking from one of the lessons in the afternoon; you will find it a great help to bring you gradually to that habit and readiness of expression which you desire; and you will perhaps find it make more impression upon your hearers than what you read to them from the pulpit. However, I would not discourage or dissuade you from reading your sermons for a time. The chief inconvenience respecting yourself is that which you mention. A written sermon is something to lean upon; but it is best for a preacher to lean wholly upon the Lord. But set off gradually; the Lord will not despise the day of small things: pray heartily that your *spirit* may be right with him, and then all the rest will be well. And keep on writing: if you compose one sermon, and should find your heart enlarged to preach another, still your labour of writing will not be lost. If your conscience bears you witness that you desire to serve the Lord, his promise (now he has brought you into the ministry) of a sufficiency and ability for the work belongs to you as much as to another. Your borrowing help from others may arise from a diffidence of yourself, which is not blameable; but it may arise in part likewise from a diffidence of the Lord, which is hurtful. I wish you may get encouragement from that word, Exodus, iv. 11. 12. It was a great encouragement to me. While I
would

would press you to diligence in every rational means for the improvement of your stock in knowledge, and your ability of utterance, I would have you remember, that preaching is a *gift*. It cannot be learned by industry and imitation only, as a man may learn to make a chair or a table : it comes from above ; and if you patiently wait upon God, he will bestow this gift upon you, and increase it in you. It will grow by exercise. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. And be chiefly solicitous to obtain an unction upon what you *do* say. Perhaps those sermons in which you feel yourself most deficient, may be made most useful to others. I hope you will endeavour likewise to be plain and familiar in your language and manner, (though not low or vulgar), so as to suit yourself as much as possible to the apprehensions of the most ignorant people. There are in all congregations some persons exceedingly ignorant ; yet they have precious souls, and the Lord often calls such. I pray the Lord to make you wise to win souls. I hope he will. You cannot be too jealous of your own heart ; but let not such instances as Mr ——— discourage you. Cry to him who is able to hold you up, that you may be safe, and you shall not cry in vain. It is indeed an alarming thought, that a man may pray and preach, be useful and acceptable for a time, and yet be nothing. But still the foundation of God standeth sure. I have a good hope, that I shall never have cause to repent the part I have taken in your concerns. While you keep in the path of duty, you will find it the path of safety. Be punctual in waiting upon God in secret. This is the life of every thing, the only way, and the sure way, of maintaining and renewing your strength.

I am, &c.

E I G H T

L E T T E R S

T O

THE REV. MR ———.

L E T T E R I.

*Dear Sir,**June 29. 1757.*

I Endeavour to be mindful of you in my prayers, that you may find both satisfaction and success, and that the Lord himself may be your light, to discover to you every part of your duty. I would earnestly press you and myself to be followers of those who have been followers of Christ; to aim at a life of self-denial; to renounce self-will, and to guard against self-wisdom. The less we have to do with the world the better; and, even in conversing with our brethren, we have been, and unless we watch and pray shall often be, ensnared. Time is precious, and opportunities once gone are gone for ever. Even by reading, and what we call studying, we may be comparatively losers. The shorter way is to be closely waiting upon God in humble, secret, fervent prayer. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in his hands; and he gives bountifully, without upbraiding. On the other hand, whatever we may undertake with a sincere desire to promote his glory, we may comfortably pursue: nothing is trivial that is done for him. In this view, I would have you, at proper intervals, pursue your studies, especially at those times when you are unfit for better work. Pray for me, that I may be enabled to break through the snares of vanity that lie in my way; that I may be crucified with Christ, and live a hidden life by faith in him who loved me and gave himself for me.

Adieu.

LET-

L E T T E R II.

*Dear Sir,**August 31. 1757.*

I Wish you much of that spirit which was in the Apostle, which made him content to become all things to all men, that he might gain some. I am persuaded, that love and humility are the highest attainments in the school of Christ, and the brightest evidences that he is indeed our master. If any should seem inclined to treat you with less regard, because you are or have been a Methodist teacher, you will find forbearance, meekness, and long-suffering, the most prevailing means to conquer their prejudices. Our Lord, has not only taught us to expect persecution from the world, though this alone is a trial too hard for flesh and blood; but we must look for what is much more grievous to a renewed mind, to be in some respects slighted, censured, and misunderstood, even by our Christian brethren; and that, perhaps, in cases where we are really striving to promote the glory of God and the good of souls, and cannot, without the reproach of our consciences, alter our conduct, however glad we should be to have their approbation. Therefore we are required, not only to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, but likewise to bear one another's burdens; which plainly intimates there will be something to be borne with on all hands; and happy indeed is he that is not offended. You may observe what unjust reports and surmises were received, even at Jerusalem, concerning the Apostle Paul; and it seems he was condemned unheard, and that by many thousands too, Acts, xxi. 20. 21.; but we do not find he was at all ruffled, or that he sought to retort any thing upon

upon them, though doubtless, had he been so disposed, he might have found something to have charged them with in his turn; but he calmly and willingly complied with every thing in his power to soften and convince them. Let us be followers of this pattern, so far as he was a follower of Christ; for even Christ pleased not himself. How did he bear with the mistakes, weakness, intemperate zeal, and imprudent proposals, of his disciples while on earth; and how does he bear with the same things from you and me, and every one of his followers now? and do we, can we, think much to bear with each other for his sake? Have we all a full remission of ten thousand talents which we owed him, and were utterly unable to pay, and do we wrangle amongst ourselves for a few pence? God forbid!

If you should be numbered among the regular Independents, I advise you not to offend any of them by unnecessary singularities. I wish you not to part with any truth, or with any thing really expedient; but if the omitting any thing of an indifferent nature will obviate prejudices, and increase a mutual confidence, why should not so easy a sacrifice be made? Above all, my dear friend, let us keep close to the Lord in a way of prayer: he giveth wisdom that is profitable to direct; he is the wonderful counsellor; there is no teacher like him. Why do the living seek to the dead? why do we weary our friends and ourselves, in running up and down, and turning over books for advice? If we shut our eyes upon the world and worldly things, and raise our thoughts upwards in humility and silence, should we not often hear the secret voice of the Spirit of God whispering to our hearts, and pointing out to us the way of truth and peace? Have we not often gone astray, and hurt either ourselves or our brethren,
for

for want of attending to this divine instruction? Have we not sometimes mocked God, by pretending to ask direction from him, when we had fixed our determination beforehand? It is a great blessing to know that we are sincere; and next to this, to be convinced of our insincerity, and to pray against it.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R III.

Dear Sir,

November 21. 1757.

CAN you forgive so negligent a correspondent? I am indeed ashamed; but (if that is any good excuse) I use you no worse than my other friends. Whenever I write, I am obliged to begin with an apology; for what with business, and the incidental duties of every day, my time is always mortgaged before it comes into my hands, especially as I have so little skill in redeeming and improving it. I long to hear from you, and I long to see you; and indeed, from the terms of yours, I expected you here before this; which has been partly a cause of my delay. I have mislaid your letter, and cannot remember the particulars; in general, I remember you were well, and going on comfortably in your work; which was matter of joy to me; and my poor prayers are for you, that the Lord may own and prosper you more and more. The two great points we are called to pursue in this sinful divided world, are peace and holiness: I hope you are much in the study of them. These are the peculiar characteristics of a disciple of Jesus; they are the richest part of the enjoyments of heaven;

and

and so far as they are received into the heart, they bring down heaven upon earth; and they are more inseparably connected between themselves than some of us are aware of. The longer I live, the more I see of the vanity and the sinfulness of our unchristian disputes: they eat up the very vitals of religion. I grieve to think how often I have lost my time and my temper that way, in presuming to regulate the vineyards of others, when I have neglected my own; when the beam in my own eye has so contracted my sight, that I could discern nothing but the mote in my neighbour's. I am now desirous to chuse a better part. Could I speak the publican's words with a proper feeling, I wish not for the tongue of men or angels to fight about notions or sentiments. I allow that every branch of gospel-truth is precious, that errors are abounding, and that it is our duty to bear an honest testimony to what the Lord has enabled us to find comfort in, and to instruct with meekness such as are willing to be instructed; but I cannot see it my duty, nay, I believe it would be my sin, to attempt to beat my notions into other people's heads. Too often I have attempted it in time past; but I now judge, that both my zeal and my weapons were carnal. When our dear Lord questioned Peter, after his fall and recovery, he said not, Art thou wise, learned, and eloquent? nay, he said not, Art thou clear, and sound, and orthodox? but this only, "Lovest thou me?" An answer to this was sufficient then, why not now? Any other answer we may believe would have been insufficient then. If Peter had made the most pompous confession of his faith and sentiments, still the first question would have recurred, "Lovest thou me?" This is a scripture-precedent. Happy the preacher, whoever he be, my heart and my prayers are with him, who can honestly and steadily appropriate Peter's answer.

answer. Such a man, I say, I am ready to hear, though he should be as much mistaken in some points as Peter afterwards appears to have been in others. What a pity it is, that Christians in succeeding ages should think the constraining force of the love of Christ too weak, and suppose the end better answered by forms, subscriptions, and questions of their own devising! I cannot acquit even those churches who judge themselves nearest the primitive rule in this respect: alas! will-worship and presumption may creep into the best external forms. But the misfortune both in churches and private Christians is, that we are too prone rather to compare ourselves with others, than to judge by the scriptures; and while each can see that they give not into the errors and mistakes of the opposite party, both are ready to conclude that they are right: and thus it happens, that an attachment to a supposed gospel-order will recommend a man sooner and farther to some churches, than an eminency of gospel-practice. I hope you will beware of such a spirit whenever you publicly assume the Independent character: this, like a worm at the root, has nipt the graces, and hindered the usefulness of many a valuable man; and those who change sides and opinions are the most liable to it. For the pride of our heart insensibly prompts us to cast about far and near for arguments to justify our own behaviour, and makes us too ready to hold the opinions we have taken up to the very extreme, that those amongst whom we are newly come may not suspect our sincerity. In a word, let us endeavour to keep close to God, to be much in prayer, to watch carefully over our hearts, and leave the busy warm spirits to make the best of their work. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and that wait on him continually; to these he will shew his covenant, not notionally, but experimentally.

tally. A few minutes of the Spirit's teaching will furnish us with more real useful knowledge, than toiling through whole folios of commentators and expositors: they are useful in their places, and are not to be undervalued by those who can perhaps in general do better without them; but it will be our wisdom to deal less with the streams, and be more close in applying to the fountain-head. The scripture itself, and the spirit of God, are the best and the only sufficient expositors of scripture. Whatever men have valuable in their writings, they got it from hence; and the way is as open to us as to any of them. There is nothing required but a teachable humble spirit; and learning, as it is commonly called, is not necessary in order to this. I commend you to the grace of God, and remain
Yours, &c.



L E T T E R I V.

Dear Sir,

January 10. 1760.

I Have procured Cennick's sermons;—they are in my judgement *sound* and *sweet*. O that you and I had a double portion of that spirit and unction which is in them! Come, let us not despair; the fountain is as full and as free as ever;—precious fountain, ever flowing with blood and water, milk and wine. This is the stream that heals the wounded, refreshes the weary, satisfies the hungry, strengthens the weak, and confirms the strong; it opens the eyes of the blind, softens the heart of stone, teaches the dumb to sing, and enables the lame and paralytic to walk, to leap, to run, to fly, to mount up with eagle's wings: a taste of this stream raises

earth to heaven, and brings down heaven upon earth. Nor is it a fountain only; it is a universal blessing, and assumes a variety of shapes to suit itself to our wants. It is a sun, a shield, a garment, a shade, a banner, a refuge: it is bread, the true bread, the very staff of life: it is life itself, immortal, eternal life!

*The cross of Jesus Christ, my Lord,
Is food and medicine, shield and sword.*

Take that for your motto; wear it in your heart; keep it in your eye; have it often in your mouth, till you can find something better. The cross of Christ is the tree of life and the tree of knowledge combined. Blessed be God! there is neither prohibition nor flaming sword to keep us back, but it stands like a tree by the highway side, which affords its shade to every passenger without distinction. Watch and pray. We live in a sifting time: error gains ground every day. May the name and love of our Saviour Jesus keep us and all his people. Either write or come very soon to

Yours, &c.



L E T T E R V.

Dear Sir,

November 15. 1760,

IF your visit should be delayed, let me have a letter. I want either good news or good advice; to hear that *your* soul prospers, or to receive something that may quicken *my own*. The Apostle says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" alas! we know how to say something about

about it, but how faint and feeble are our real perceptions of it! Our love to him is the proof and measure of what we know of his love to us. Surely then we are mere children in this kind of knowledge, and every other kind is vain. What should we think of a man who should neglect his business, family, and all the comforts of life, that he might study the Chinese language; though he knows beforehand he should never be able to attain it, nor ever find occasion or opportunity to use it? The pursuit of every branch of knowledge that is not closely connected with the one thing needful is no less ridiculous.

You know something of our friend Mrs B——. She has been more than a month confined to her bed, and I believe her next remove will be to her coffin. The Lord has done great things for her. Though she has been a serious exemplary person all her life, when the prospect of death presented, she began to cry out earnestly, “What shall I do to be saved?” But her solicitude is at an end; she has seen the salvation of God, and now for the most part rejoices in something more than hope. This you will account good news, I am sure. Let it be your encouragement and mine. The Lord’s arm is not shortened, nor is his presence removed; he is near us still, though we perceive him not. May he guide you with his eye in all your public and private concerns, and may he in particular bless our communications to our mutual advantage.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R VI.

*Dear Sir,**July 29. 1761.*

ARE the quarrels made up? Tell those who know what communion with Jesus is worth, that they will never be able to maintain it, if they give way to the workings of pride, jealousy, and anger. This will provoke the Lord to leave them dry; to command the clouds of his grace that they rain no rain upon them. These things are sure signs of a low frame, and a sure way to keep it so. Could they be prevailed upon, from a sense of the pardoning love of God to their own souls, to forgive each other as the Lord forgives us, freely, fully, without condition and without reserve, they would find this like breaking down a stone wall, which has hitherto shut up their prayers from the Lord's ears, and shut out his blessing from filling their hearts. Tell them, I hope to hear that all animosities, little and big, are buried by mutual consent in the Redeemer's grave. Alas! the people of God have enemies enough: Why then will they weaken their own hands? Why will they help their enemies to pull down the Lord's work? Why will they grieve those who wish them well, cause the weak to stumble, the wicked to rejoice, and bring a reproach upon their holy profession. Indeed this is no light matter; I wish it may not lead them to something worse; I wish they may be wise in time, lest Satan gains further advantage over them, and draw them to something that shall make them (as David did) roar under the pains of broken bones. But I must break off. May God give you wisdom, faithfulness, and patience: Take care that you do not catch an angry spirit yourself,
while

while you aim to suppress it in others: this will spoil all, and you will exhort, advise, and weep in vain. May you rather be an example and pattern to the flock: and in this view be not surprised if you yourself meet some hard usage; rather rejoice, that you will thereby have an opportunity to exemplify your own rules, and to convince your people, that what you recommend to them you do not speak by *rote*, but from the experience of your heart. One end why our Lord was tempted was for the encouragement of his poor followers, that they might know him to be a High Priest suited to them, having had a fellow-feeling in their distresses. For the like reason he appoints his ministers to be sorely exercised both from without and within, that they may sympathize with their flock, and know in their own hearts the deceitfulness of sin, the infirmities of the flesh, and the way in which the Lord supports and bears with all that trust him. Therefore be not discouraged; usefulness and trials, comforts and crosses, strength and exercise go together. But remember he has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." When you get to heaven, you will not complain of the way by which the Lord brought you. Farewell. Pray for us.

Yours, &c.

L E T T E R VII.

*Dear Sir,**Dec. 14. 1761.*

I Pray the Lord to accompany you; but cannot help fearing you go on too fast. If you have not (as I am sure you ought not) made an absolute promise, but only conditional, you need not be so solicitous; depend upon it, when the Lord is pleased to remove you, he will send one to supply your place. I am grieved that your mind is so set upon a step, which I fear will occasion many inconveniences to a people who have deserved your best regard. Others may speak you fairer, but none wishes you better than myself; therefore I hope you allow me to speak my mind plainly, and believe that it is no pleasure to me to oppose your inclinations. As to your saying they will take no denial, it has no weight with me. Had they asked what you were exceedingly averse to, you would soon have expressed yourself so as to convince them it was to no purpose to urge you; but they saw something in your manner or language that encouraged them; they saw the proposal was agreeable to you, that you were not at all unwilling to exchange your old friends for new ones; and this is the reason they would take no denial. If you should live to see those who are most forward in pressing you become the first to discourage you, you will think seriously of my words.

If I thought my advice would prevail, it should be this: Call the people together, and desire them (if possible) to forget you ever intended to depart from them; and promise not to think of a removal, till the Lord shall make your way so clear, that even they shall have nothing reasonable to object
against

against it. You may keep your word with your other friends too; for when a proper person shall offer, as likely to please and satisfy the people as yourself, I will give my hearty consent to your removal.

Consider what it is you would have in your office, but maintenance, acceptance, and success. Have you not those where you are? Are you sure of having them where you are going? Are you sure the Spirit of God (without which you will do nothing) will be with you there, as he has been with you hitherto? Perhaps if you act in your own spirit, you may find as great a change as Sampson. I am ready to weep when I think what difficulties were surmounted to accomplish your ordination; and now when the people thought themselves fixed, that you should so soon disappoint them.

Yours, &c.



L E T T E R V I I I .

Dear Sir,

Feb. 15. 1762.

I Have been often thinking of you since your removal, and was glad to receive your letter to-day. I hope you will still go on to find more and more encouragement to believe, that the Lord has disposed and led you to the step you have taken. For though I wrote with the greatest plainness and earnestness, and would if in my power have prevented it while under deliberation, yet, now it is done and past recall, I would rather help than dishearten you. Indeed, I cannot say that my view of the affair is yet altered. The best way not to be cast down hereafter, is not to be too sanguine at first.

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You:

You know there is something pleasing in novelty ; as yet you are new to them, and they to you : I pray God that you may find as cordial a regard from them as at present, when you have been with them as many years as in the place you came from. And if you have grace to be watchful and prayful, all will be well ; for we serve a gracious Master, who knows how to over-rule even our mistakes to his glory and our own advantage. Yet I observe that when we do wrong, sooner or later we smart for our indiscretion ; perhaps many years afterwards. After we have seen and confessed our fault, and received repeated proofs of pardoning love, as to the guilt, yet chastisement, to remind us more sensibly of our having done amiss, will generally find us out. So it was with David in the matter of Uriah : the Lord put away his sin, healed his broken bones, and restored unto him the light of his countenance ; yet many troubles, in consequence of this affair, followed one upon another, till at length (many years afterwards) he was driven from Jerusalem by his own son. So it was with Jacob : he dealt deceitfully with his brother Esau ; notwithstanding this the Lord appeared to him and blessed him, gave him comfortable promises, and revealed himself to him from time to time ; yet after an interval of twenty years his fault was brought afresh to his remembrance, and his heart trembled within him when he heard his brother was coming with armed men to meet him. And thus I have found it in my own experience : things which I had forgotten a long while have been brought to my mind by providential dispensations which I little expected ; but the first rise of which I have been able to trace far back, and forced to confess, that the Lord is indeed He that judgeth the heart and trieth the reins. I hint this for your caution : you know best upon what grounds you have proceeded ; but if, (though

I do not affirm it, I hope otherwise), I say, if you have acted too much in your own spirit, been too hasty and precipitate; if you have not been sufficiently tender of your people, nor thoughtful of the consequences which your departure will probably involve them in; if you were impatient under the Lord's hand, and instead of waiting his time and way of removing the trials and difficulties you found, you have ventured upon an attempt to free and mend yourself: I say, if any of these things have mixed with your determinations, something will fall out to shew you your fault: either you will not find the success you hope for, or friends will grow cold, or enemies and difficulties you dream not of will present themselves, or your own mind will alter, so as what seems now most pleasing will afford you little pleasure. Yet though I write thus, I do not mean (as I said before) to discourage you, but that you may be forewarned, humble, and watchful. If you should at any time have a different view of things, you may take comfort from the instances I have mentioned. The trials of David and Jacob were sharp; but they were short, and they proved to their advantage, put them upon acts of humiliation and prayer, and ended in a double blessing. Nothing can harm us that quickens our earnestness and frequency in applying to a throne of grace: only trust the Lord and keep close to him, and all that befalls you shall be for good. Temptations end in victory; troubles prove an increase of consolation; yea, our very falls and failings tend to increase our spiritual wisdom, to give us a greater knowledge of Satan's devices, and make us more habitually upon our guard against them. Happy case of the believer in Jesus! when bitten by the fiery serpent he needs not go far for a remedy; he has only to look to a bleeding Saviour, and be healed.

I think one great advantage that attends a removal into a new place is, that it gives an easy opportunity of forming a new plan, and breaking off any little habits which we have found inconvenient, and yet perhaps could not so readily lay aside, where our customs and acquaintance had been long formed. I earnestly recommend to you to reflect, if you cannot recollect some things which you have hitherto omitted, which may properly be now taken up; some things formerly allowed, which may now with ease and convenience be laid aside. I only give the hint in general; for I have nothing in particular to charge you with. I recommend to you to be very choice of your time, especially the fore part of the day: let your morning hours be devoted to prayer, reading, and study; and suffer not the importunity of friends to rob you of the hours before noon, without a just necessity: and if you accustom yourself to rise early in the morning, you will find a great advantage. Be careful to avoid losing your thoughts, whether in books or otherwise, upon any subjects which are not of a direct subserviency to your great design, till towards dinner-time: the afternoon is not so favourable to study; this is a proper time for paying and receiving visits, conversing among your friends, or unbending with a book of instructive entertainment, such as history, &c. which may increase your general knowledge, without a great confinement of your attention; but let the morning hours be sacred. I think you would likewise find advantage in using your pen more: write short notes upon the scriptures you read, or transcribe the labours of others; make extracts from your favourite authors, especially those who, besides a fund of spiritual and evangelical matter, have a happy talent of expressing their thoughts in a clear and lively, or pathetic manner: you would find a continued exercise in this way would
be

be greatly useful to form your own style, and help your delivery and memory; you would become insensibly master of their thoughts, and find it more easy to express yourself justly and clearly: what we only read we easily lose; but what we commit to paper is not so soon forgot. Especially remember, (what you well know, but we cannot too often remind each other), that frequent secret prayer is the life of all we do. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given; but all our diligence will fail, if we are remiss in this particular. I am glad it is not thought necessary for you to go to London on this occasion. I hope you will not think it necessary upon any other account. Rather keep close to the work you have undertaken; and endeavour to avoid any thing that looks like ostentation, or a desire to be taken notice of. You see I advise you with the freedom of a friend who loves you, and longs to see your work and your soul prosper.

You will, I doubt not, endeavour to promote the practice of frequent prayer in the houses that receive you. I look upon prayer meetings as the most profitable exercises (excepting the public preaching) in which Christians can engage: they have a direct tendency to kill a worldly trifling spirit, to draw down a divine blessing upon all our concerns, compose differences, and enkindle (at least to maintain) the flame of divine love amongst brethren. But I need not tell you the advantages; you know them; I only would exhort you; and the rather as I find in my own case the principal cause of my leanness and unfruitfulness is owing to an unaccountable backwardness to pray. I can write, or read, or converse, or hear, with a ready will; but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these; and the more spiritual any duty is, the more my carnal heart is apt to start from it.

May the Lord pour forth his precious spirit of prayer and supplication in both our hearts.

I am not well pleased with the account you give of so many dry bones. It increases my wonder, that you could so readily exchange so much plump flesh and blood as you had about you for a parcel of skeletons. I wish they may not haunt you, and disturb your peace. I wish these same dry bones do not prove thorns in your sides and in your eyes. You say, now you have to pray, and prophesy, and wait for the four winds to come and put life into these bones. God grant that your prayers may be answered: but if I knew a man who possessed a field in a tolerable soil, which had afforded him some increase every year; and if this man, after having bestowed seven years labour in cultivating, weeding, manuring, fencing, &c. just when he has brought his ground (in his neighbour's judgement) into good order, and might reasonably hope for larger crops than he had ever yet seen, should suddenly forego all his advantages, leave his good seed for the birds to eat, pull up the young fences which cost him so much pains to plant, and all this for the sake of making a new experiment upon the top of a mountain; though I might heartily wish him great success, I could not honestly give him great encouragement. You have parted with that for a trifle, which in my eyes seems an inestimable jewel; I mean the hearts and affections of an enlightened people. This appears to me one of the greatest honours and greatest pleasures a faithful minister can possess, and which many faithful and eminent ministers have never been able to obtain. This gave you a vast advantage; your gift was more acceptable there than that of any other person, and more than you will probably find elsewhere. For I cannot make a comparison between the hasty approbation of a few, whose eyes are but beginning

to open, and their affections and passions warm, so that they must, if possible, have the man that first catches their attention; I say, I cannot think this worthy to be compared to the regard of a people who understood the gospel, were able to judge of men and doctrines, and had tried of you for so many years. It is indeed much to your honour (it proves that you were faithful, diligent, and exemplary) that the people proved so attached to you; but that you should force yourself from them, when they so dearly loved you, and so much needed you, this has made all your friends in these parts to wonder, and your enemies to rejoice; and I, alas! know not what to answer in your behalf to either. Say not, "I hate this Micaiah, for he prophesies not good of me, but evil;" but allow me the privilege of a friend. My heart is full when I think of what has happened, and what will probably be the consequence. In few words, I am strongly persuaded you have taken an unadvised step, and would therefore prepare you for the inconvenience and uneasiness you may probably meet with. And if I am (as I desire I may prove) mistaken, my advice will do no harm; you will want something to balance the caresses and success you meet with.

We should be very glad to see you, and hope you will take your measures when you do come to lengthen your usual stay, in proportion to the difference of the distance. Pray for us.

I am, &c.

F O U R

L E T T E R S

T O

MRS P——.

L E T T E R I.

*My dear Madam,**May — 1774.*

I Have had sudden notice, that I may send you a hasty line, to express our satisfaction in hearing that you had a safe, though perilous journey. I hope I shall be always mindful to pray, that the Lord may guide, bless, and comfort you, and give you such a manifestation of his person, power, and grace, as may set you at liberty from all fear, and fill you with abiding peace and joy in believing. Remember that Jesus has all power, the fullness of compassion, and embraces with open arms all that come to him for life and salvation.

I know not whether Mrs ———'s illness was before or since my last. Through mercy she is better again; and I remain so, though death and illness are still walking about the town. O for grace to take warning by the sufferings of others, and set loose to the world, and so number our days as to incline our hearts to the one thing needful! Indeed that one thing includes many things, sufficient to engage the best of our thoughts and the most of our time, if we were duly sensible of their importance; but I may adopt the Psalmist's expression, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." How is it that the truths of which I have the most undoubted conviction, and which are of all others the most weighty, should make so little impression upon me? O I know the cause! It is deeply rooted. An evil nature cleaves to me; so that when I would do good, evil is present with me. It is, however, a mercy to be made sensible of it, and in any measure

sure humbled for it. Ere long it will be dropped in the grave; then all complaints shall cease. That thought gives relief. I shall not always live this poor dying life: I hope one day to be all ear, all heart, all tongue: when I shall see the Redeemer as he is, I shall be like him. This will be a heaven indeed, to behold his glory without a veil, to rejoice in his love without a cloud, and to sing his praises, without one jarring or wandering note, for ever. In the mean time, may he enable us to serve him with our best. O that every power, faculty, and talent, were devoted to him! He deserves all we have, and ten thousand times more if we had it; for he has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. He gave himself for us. In one sense we are well suited to answer his purpose; for if we were not vile and worthless beyond expression, the exceeding riches of his grace would not have been so gloriously displayed. His glory shines more in redeeming one sinner, than in preserving a thousand angels. Poor Mr —— is still in the dark valley, but we trust prayer shall yet bring him out. Mighty things have been done in answer to prayer, and the Lord's arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy. It is our part to wait till we have an answer. One of his own hymns says,

*The promise may be long deferr'd,
But never comes too late.*

I suppose you have heard of the death of Mr T—— of R——. This is apparently a heavy blow. He was an amiable, judicious, candid man, and an excellent preacher in a great sphere of usefulness; and his age and constitution gave hopes that he might have been eminently serviceable for many years. How often does the Lord write Vanity
upon

upon all our expectations from men! He visited a person ill of a putrid fever, and carried the seeds of infection with him to London, where he died. Mrs —— is a very excellent and accomplished woman, but exceedingly delicate in her frame and spirits. How can she bear so sudden and severe a stroke! But yet I hope she will afford a proof of the Lord's all-sufficiency and faithfulness. O Madam, the Lord our God is a great God! If he frowns, the smiles of the whole creation can afford no comfort; and if he is pleased to smile, he can enable the soul under the darkest dispensations to say, All is well. Yet the flesh will feel, and it ought; otherwise the exercise of faith, patience, and resignation would be impracticable. I have lost in him one of my most valued and valuable friends: but what is my loss to that of his people!

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord increase you more and more, you and your children. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you his peace. I thank him for leading you to us, but especially for making your visit there in any measure agreeable and profitable to yourself. If I have been an instrument in his hand for your comfort, I have reason to remember it among the greatest favours he has conferred upon me. And now, dear Madam, once more farewell. If the Lord spares our lives, I hope we shall see each other again upon earth. But above all, let us rejoice in the blessed gospel, by which immortality is brought to light, and a glorious prospect opened beyond the grave.

*There sits our Saviour thron'd in light,
Cloth'd with a body like our own.*

There at least, after all the changes and trials of this state, we shall meet to part no more.

I am, &c.

LET

L E T T E R II.

My dear Madam,

1775.

I Should have been more uneasy at being prevented writing immediately, had I any reason to apprehend my advice necessary upon the point you propose, which by this time I suppose is settled as it should be without me. I smiled at Miss M——'s disappointment. However, if the Lord favours her with a taste for the library of my proposing, she will be like the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, and will count all other books but pebbles in comparison of those four volumes, which present us with something new and important whenever we look into them. I shall be much obliged to her if she will commit the third chapter of Proverbs to her memory, and I shall pray the Lord to write it in her heart.

You surprise me when you tell me, that the incident of my birth-day was noticed by those I never saw. Be so good as to return my thanks to my unknown friends, and tell them, that I pray our common Lord and Saviour to bless them abundantly. His people while here are scattered abroad, separated by hills and rivers, and too often by names and prejudices; but by and by we shall all meet where we shall all know and acknowledge each other, and rejoice together for evermore. I have lately read with much pleasure, and I hope with some profit, the history of the Greenland Mission. Upon the whole it is a glorious work. None who love the Lord will refuse to say, it is the finger of God indeed. For my own part, my soul rejoices in it; and I honour the instruments, as men who have hazarded their lives in an extraordinary

ordinary manner for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Sure I am that none could have sustained such discouragements at first, or have obtained such success afterwards, unless the Lord had sent, supported, and owned them.

I hope we shall have an interest in your prayers. I trust the Lord is yet with us. We have some ripe for the sickle, and some just springing up; some tokens of his gracious presence amongst us; but sin and Satan cut us out abundance of work as individuals, though through mercy as a society we walk in peace.

The toad and spider is an exhibition of my daily experience. I am often wounded, but the Lord is my health. Still I am a living monument of mercy; and I trust that word, "Because I live you shall live also," will carry me to the end. I am poor, weak, and foolish; but Jesus is wise, strong, and abounding in grace. He has given me a desire to trust my all in his hands, and he will not disappoint the expectation which he himself has raised. At present I have but little to say, and but little time to say it in. When you think of this place, I hope you will think and believe, that you have friends here most cordially interested in your welfare, and often remembering you in prayer. May the Lord be your guide and shield, and give you the best desires of your heart. I pray him to establish and settle you in the great truths of his word. I trust he will. We learn more, and more effectually, by one minute's communication with him through the medium of his written word, than we could from an assembly of divines, or a library of books.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R III.

*My dear Madam,**August 1775.*

IT is not owing to forgetfulness that your letter has been thus long unanswered. It has lain within my view this fortnight, demanding my first leisure hour; but affairs of daily occurrence have been so many and so pressing, that I have been constrained to put it off till now. I trust the Lord, by his Spirit and providence, will direct and prosper the settlement of your children. I desire my love to Miss M——. My idea of her enlarges. Methinks I see her aspiring to be as tall as her Mamma. I hope likewise that she increases in grace and wisdom as in years and stature; and that hearing our Lord's flock is a little flock, she feels an earnest thirst to be one of the happy number which constitutes his fold.

*There the Lord dwells amongst them upon his own hill,
With the flocks all around him awaiting his will.*

If she has such a desire, I can tell who gave it her, for I am persuaded it was not born with her; and where the good husbandman sows, there will he also reap. Therefore, dear Miss M——, press forward: knock, and it shall be opened unto you, for yet there is room. O what a fold! O what a pasture! O what a shepherd! Let us love, and sing, and wonder.

I hope the good people at Bristol, and every where else, are praying for our sinful, distracted land, in this dark day. The Lord is angry, the sword is drawn, and I am afraid nothing but the spirit of wrestling prayer can prevail for the re-
turning

turning it into the scabbard. Could things have proceeded to these extremities, except the Lord had withdrawn his salutary blessing from both sides? It is a time of prayer. We see the beginning of trouble, but who can foresee the possible consequences? The fire is kindled, but how far it may spread, those who are above may perhaps know better than we. I meddle not with the disputes of party, nor concern myself with any political maxims, but such as are laid down in scripture. There I read that righteousness exalteth a nation, and that sin is the reproach, and if persisted in, the ruin of any people. Some people are startled at the enormous sum of our national debt: they who understand spiritual arithmetic, may be well startled if they sit down and compute the debt of national sin. *Imprimis*, Infidelity: *Item*, Contempt of the gospel: *Item*, The profligacy of manners: *Item*, Perjury: *Item*, The cry of blood, the blood of thousands, perhaps millions, from the East Indies. It would take sheets, yea quires, to draw out the particulars under each of these heads, and then much would remain untold. What can we answer, when the Lord saith, "Shall not I visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Since we received the news of the first hostilities in America, we have had an additional prayer meeting. Could I hear that professors in general, instead of wasting their breath in censuring men and measures, were plying the throne of grace, I should still hope for a respite. Poor New England! once the glory of the earth, now likely to be visited with fire and sword. They have left their first love, and the Lord is sorely contending with them. Yet surely their sins as a people are not to be compared with ours. I am just so much affected with these things as to know, that I am not affected enough. Oh! my spirit is sadly cold and insensible, or I should

should lay them to heart in a different manner: yet I endeavour to give the alarm as far as I can. There is one political maxim which comforts me, “the Lord reigns.” His hand guides the storm; and he knows them that are his, how to protect, support, and deliver them. He will take care of his own cause, yea, he will extend his kingdom, even by these formidable methods. Men have one thing in view, he has another, and his counsel shall stand.

The chief piece of news since my last is concerning B. A. She has finished her course, and is now with the great multitude, who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of his testimony. Tuesday, the 1st of February, she was in our assembly, was taken ill the next day, and died while we were assembled the Tuesday following. She had an easy dissolution, retained her senses and her speech till the last minute, and went without a struggle or a sigh. She was not in raptures during her illness, but was composed, and maintained a strong and lively faith. She had a numerous levee about her bed daily, who were all witnesses to the power of faith, and to the faithfulness of the Lord, enabling her to triumph over the approaches of death; for she was well known and well respected. She will be much missed; but I hope he will answer the many prayers she put up for us, and raise up others in her room. “Blessed
“are the dead who die in the Lord.” Blessed are they who know whom they have believed, and when death comes can cheerfully rest their hopes on him who died that we might live. B — had been long a precious and honourable woman; but her hope in the trying hour rested not in what she had done for the Lord, but upon what he had done for her; not upon the change his grace had wrought in her, but upon the righteousness he had wrought

wrought out for her by his obedience unto death. This supported her; for she saw nothing in herself but what she was ashamed of. She saw reason to renounce her own goodness, as well as her own sins, as to the point of acceptance with God, and died as St Paul lived, determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

The time when Mr and Mrs C—— remove to Scotland drawing near, Mrs —— is gone to spend a week or two with them, and take her leave. She feels something at parting with a sister, who is indeed a valuable person; and from children they have always lived in the most tender intimacy and uninterrupted friendship. But all beneath the moon (like the moon itself) is subject to incessant change. Alterations and separations are graciously appointed of the Lord, to remind us that this is not our rest, and to prepare our thoughts for that approaching change which shall fix us for ever in an unchangeable state. O Madam, what shall we poor worms render to him who has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel, taken away the sting of death, revealed a glorious prospect beyond the grave, and given us eyes to see it? Now the reflection, that we must ere long take a final farewell of what is most capable of pleasing us upon earth, is not only tolerable, but pleasant. For we know we cannot fully possess our best friend, our chief treasure, till we have done with all below: nay, we cannot till then properly see each other. We are cased up in vehicles of clay, and converse together as if we were in different coaches with the blinds close drawn round. We see the carriage, and the voice tells us that we have a friend within: but we shall know each other better, when death shall open the coach-doors, and hand out the company successively, and lead them into the glorious apartments which the Lord has appointed to be the com-

mon residence of them that love him. What an assembly will there be! What a constellation of glory, when each individual shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father! No sins, sorrows, temptations; no veils, clouds, or prejudices, shall interrupt us then. All names of idle distinction (the fruits of present remaining darkness, the channels of bigotry, and the stumbling-block of the world), will be at an end.

The description you give of your present residence pleases me much, and chiefly because it describes and manifests to me something still more interesting, I mean the peaceable situation of your mind. Had he placed you in an Eden some months ago, it would hardly have awakened your descriptive talent. But he whom the winds and seas obey has calmed your mind, and I trust will go on to fill you with all joy and peace in believing. It is no great matter where we are, provided we see that the Lord has placed us there, and that he is with us.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R I V.

1776.

SO, my dear Madam, I hope we have found you out, and that this letter will reach you in good time to welcome you in our names to London. We are ready to take it for granted that you will now most certainly make us a visit. Do come as soon, and stay as long as you possibly can. Methinks you will be glad to get out of the smell and noise as soon as possible. If we did not go to London now and then, we should perhaps forget how
people

people live there. Especially I pity professors; they are exposed to as many dangers as people who live in mines; chilling damps, scorching blasts, epidemical disorders, owing to the impure air. Such are the winds of false doctrines, the explosions of controversy, the blights of worldly conversation, the contagion of evil custom. In short, a person had need have a good constitution of grace, and likewise to be well supplied with antidotes, to preserve a tolerable share of spiritual health in such a situation.

And now, how shall I fill up the rest of the paper? It is a shame for a Christian and a minister to say he has no subject at hand, when the inexhaustible theme of redeeming love is ever pressing upon our attention. I will tell you then, though you know it, that the Lord reigns. He who once bore our sins, and carried our sorrows, is seated upon a throne of glory, and exercises all power in heaven and on earth. Thrones, principalities, and powers, bow before him. Every event in the kingdoms of providence and of grace are under his rule. His providence pervades and manages the whole, and is as minutely attentive to every part as if there were only that single object in his view. From the tallest archangel to the meanest ant or fly, all depend on him for their being, their preservation, and their powers. He directs the sparrows where to build their nests, and to find their food. He overrules the rise and fall of nations, and bends, with an invincible energy and unerring wisdom, all events; so that while many intend nothing less, in the issue their designs all concur and coincide in the accomplishment of his holy will. He restrains with a mighty hand the still more formidable efforts of the powers of darkness; and Satan with all his hosts cannot exert their malice a hair's-breadth beyond the limits of his permission. This is he who

is the head and husband of his believing people. How happy are they whom it is his good pleasure to bless ! How safe are they whom he has engaged to protect ! How honoured and privileged are they to whom he is pleased to manifest himself, and whom he enables and warrants to claim him as their friend and their portion ! Having redeemed them by his own blood, he sets a high value upon them ; he esteems them his treasure, his jewels, and keeps them as the pupil of his eye. They shall not want ; they need not fear : his eye is upon them in every situation, his ear is open to their prayers, and his everlasting arms are under them for their sure support. On earth he guides their steps, controuls their enemies, and directs all his dispensations for their good ; while in heaven he is pleading their cause, preparing them a place, and communicating down to them reviving foretastes of the glory that shall be shortly revealed. O how is this mystery hidden from an unbelieving world ! Who can believe it, till it is made known by experience, what an intercourse is maintained in this land of shadows between the Lord of glory and sinful worms ! How should we praise him that he has visited us ; for we were once blind to his beauty, and insensible to his love, and should have remained so to the last, had he not prevented us with his goodness, and been found of us when we sought him not.

Mrs ——— presents her love. The bite of the leech which I mentioned to you has confined her to the house ever since ; but I hope she will be able to go out to-morrow. We were for a while apprehensive of worse consequences ; but the Lord is gracious : he shews us in a variety of instances what dependent creatures we are, how blind to events, and how easily the methods which we take to relieve ourselves from a small inconvenience may plunge us into a greater. Thus we learn (happy indeed

indeed if we can effectually learn it) that there is no safety but in his protection, and that nothing can do us good but by his blessing. As for myself, I see so many reasons why he might contend with me, that I am amazed he affords me and mine so much peace, and appoints us so few trials. We live as upon a field of battle; many are hourly suffering and falling around us, and I can give no reason why we are preserved, but that he is God, and not man. What a mercy that we are only truly known to him who is alone able to bear us!

May the Lord bless you and yours; may he comfort you, guide you, and guard you. Come quickly to

Yours, &c.

S I X

L E T T E R S

T O T H E

REV. MR B——.

E 4

L E T T E R I.

*Rev. and Dear Sir,**Sept. 14. 1765.*

WHEN I was at London in June last your name first reached me, and from that time I have been desirous to wish you success in the name of the Lord. A few weeks ago I received a further account from Mrs —, with a volume of your sermons: she likewise gave me a direction where to write, and an encouragement that a letter would not be unacceptable. The latter indeed I did not much need when I had read your book. Though we have no acquaintance, we are already united in the strictest ties of friendship, partakers of the same hope, servants of the same Lord, and in the same part of his vineyard: I therefore hold all apologies needless. I rejoice in the Lord's goodness to you; I pray for his abundant blessing upon your labours; I need an interest in your prayers; I have an affectionate desire to know more concerning you: these are my motives for writing.

Mrs — tells me that you have read my Narrative: I need not tell you, therefore, that I am one of the most astonishing instances of the forbearance and mercy of God upon the face of the earth. In the close of it I mention a warm desire I had to the ministry: this the Lord was pleased to keep alive for several years, through a succession of views and disappointments. At length his hour came, and my way was made easy. I have been here about fifteen months. The Lord has led me,

by a way that I little expected, to a pleasant lot, where the gospel has been many years known, and is highly valued by many. We have a large church and congregation, and a considerable number of lively thriving believers, and in general go on with great comfort and harmony. I meet with less opposition from the world than is usual where the gospel is preached. This burden was borne by Mr B—— for ten years, and in that course of time some of the fiercest opposers were removed, some wearied, and some softened; so that we are now remarkably quiet in that respect. May the Lord teach us to improve the privilege, and preserve us from indifference. How unspeakable are our obligations to the grace of God! What a privilege is it to be a believer! They are comparatively few, and we by nature were no nearer than others; it was grace, free grace, that made the difference. What an honour to be a minister of the everlasting gospel! These upon comparison are perhaps fewer still. How wonderful that one of these few should be sought for among the wilds of Africa, reclaimed from the lowest state of impiety and misery, and brought to assure other sinners, from his own experience, that “there is, there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.” And you, Sir, though not left to give such flagrant proofs of the wickedness of the heart and the power of Satan, yet owe your present views to the same almighty grace. If the Lord had not distinguished you from your brethren, you would have been now in the character of a minister misleading the people, and opposing those precious truths you are now labouring to establish. Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the glory! I shall be thankful to hear from you at your leisure. Be pleased to inform me, whether you received the knowledge of the truth before or since you were in orders; how long
long

long you have preached the joyful sound of salvation by Jesus, and what is the state of things in your parts.

We are called to an honourable service, but it is arduous. What wisdom does it require to keep the middle path in doctrines, avoiding the equally dangerous errors on the right hand and the left! What steadiness, to speak the truth boldly and faithfully in the midst of a gainfaying world! What humility, to stand against the tide of popularity! What meekness, to endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may be saved. "Who is sufficient for these things?" We are not in ourselves, but there is an all-sufficiency in Jesus. Our enemy watches us close; he challenges and desires to have us, that he may sift us as wheat; he knows he can easily shake us if we are left to ourselves; but we have a shepherd, a keeper, who never slumbers nor sleeps. If he permits us to be exercised, it is for our good; he is at hand to direct, moderate, and sanctify every dispensation; he has prayed for us that our faith may not fail, and he has promised to maintain his fear in our hearts, that we may not depart from him. When we are prone to wander, he calls us back; when we say, my feet slip, his mercy holds us up; when we are wounded, he heals; when we are ready to faint, he revives. The people of God are sure to meet with enemies, but especially the ministers: Satan bears them a double grudge: the world watches for their halting, and the Lord will suffer them to be afflicted, that they may be kept humble, that they may acquire a sympathy with the sufferings of others, that they may be experimentally qualified to advise and help them, and to comfort them with the comforts with which they themselves have been comforted of God. But the captain of our salvation is with us; his eye is upon us, his everlasting arm beneath us;

in his name therefore may we go on, lift up our banners, and say, “If God be for us who can be
“against us? Nay, in all these things we are more
“than conquerors, through him that has loved us.”
The time is short: yet a little while, and he will wipe all tears from our eyes, and put a crown of life upon our heads with his own gracious hand. In this sense, how beautiful are those lines:

*Temporis illius
Me consolor imagine
Festis quum populus me reducem choris,
Faustisque excipiet vocibus, et Dei
Pompa cum celebri, me comitabitur
Augusta ad penetralia.*

Buch. in Pf. 42.

If any occasions should call you into these parts, my house and pulpit will be glad to receive you. Pray for us, dear Sir, and believe me to be
Yours, &c.



L E T T E R II.

Very dear Sir,

November 2. 1765.

Your letter of the 4th ult. gave me great pleasure. I thank you for the particular account you have favoured me with. I rejoice with you, sympathise with you, and find my heart opened to correspond with unreserved freedom. May the Lord direct our pens, and help us to help each other. The work you are engaged in is great, and your difficulties many; but faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it. The weapons
which

which he has now put into your hands are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. Men may fight, but they shall not prevail against us, if we are but enabled to put our cause simply into the Lord's hands, and keep steadily on in the path of duty. He will plead our cause, and fight our battles; he will pardon our mistakes, and teach us to do better. My experience as a minister is but small, having been but about eighteen months in the vineyard; but for about twelve years I have been favoured with an increasing acquaintance among the people of God, of various ranks and denominations, which, together with the painful exercises of my own heart, gave me opportunity of making observations which were of great use to me when I entered upon the work myself: and ever since I have found the Lord graciously supplying new lights and new strength, as new occurrences arise. So I trust it will be with you. I endeavour to avail myself of the examples, advice, and sentiments of my brethren, yet at the same time to guard against calling any man master. This is the peculiar of Christ. The best are but men; the wisest may be mistaken; and that which may be right in another might be wrong in me, through a difference of circumstances. The Spirit of God distributes variously, both in gifts and dispensations; and I would no more be tied to act strictly by others rules than to walk in shoes of the same size. My shoes must fit my own feet.

I endeavour to guard against extremes: our nature is prone to them: and we are liable likewise, when we have found the inconvenience of one extreme, to revert insensibly (sometimes to fly suddenly) to the other. I pray to be led in the midst of the path. I am what they call a Calvinist; yet there are flights, niceties, and hard sayings, to be
found.

found among some of that system, which I do not chuse to imitate. I dislike those sentiments against which you have borne your testimony in the note at the end of your preface: but having known many precious souls in that party, I have been taught, that the kingdom of God is not in names and sentiments, but in righteousness, faith, love, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. I should however upon some occasions oppose those tenets, if they had any prevalence in my neighbourhood; but they have not; and in general I believe the surest way to refute or prevent error, is to preach the truth. I am glad to find you are aware of that spirit of enthusiasm which has so often broken loose and blemished hopeful beginnings, and that the foundation you build upon is solid and scriptural: this will I hope save you much trouble, and prevent many offences. Let us endeavour to make our people acquainted with the scripture, and to impress them with a high sense of its authority, excellence, and sufficiency. Satan seldom remarkably imposes on ministers or people, except where the word of God is too little consulted or regarded. Another point in which I aim at a medium is in what is called *prudence*. There is certainly such a thing as Christian prudence, and a remarkable deficiency of it is highly inconvenient. But caution too often degenerates into cowardice; and if the fear of man, under the name of prudence, gets within our guard; like a chilling frost it nips every thing in the bud. Those who trust the Lord, and act openly with an honest freedom and consistence, I observe he generally bears them out, smooths their way, and makes their enemies their friends, or at least restrains their rage; while such as halve things, temporise, and aim to please God and man together, meet with double disappointment, and are neither useful nor respected.

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If we trust to him, he will stand by us; if we regard men, he will leave us to make the best we can of them.

I have set down hastily what occurred to my pen, not to dictate to you, but to tell you how I have been led, and because some expressions in your letter seemed to imply that you would not be displeas'd with me for so doing. As to books, I think there is a medium here likewise. I have read too much in time past; yet I do not wholly join with some of our brethren, who would restrain us entirely to the word of God. Undoubtedly this is the fountain; here we should dwell; but a moderate and judicious perusal of other authors may have its use; and I am glad to be beholden to such helps, either to explain what I do not understand, or to confirm me in what I do. Of these the writings of the last age afford an immense variety.

But above all, may we, dear Sir, live and feed upon the precious promises, John, xiv. 16. 17. 26. and xvi. 13.—15. There is no teacher like Jesus, who by his Holy Spirit reveals himself in his word to the understanding and affections of his children. When we thus behold his glory in the gospel glass, we are changed into the same image. Then our hearts melt, our eyes flow, our stammering tongues are unloos'd. That this may be your increasing experience, is the prayer of, dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

L E T T E R III.

Dear Sir,

January 21. 1766.

YOur letters give me the sincerest pleasure. Let us believe that we are daily thinking of and praying for each other, and write when opportunity offers without apologies. I praise the Lord that he has led you so soon to a settled judgement in the leading truths of the gospel. For want of this, many have been necessitated with their own hands to pull down what, in the first warm emotions of their zeal, they had laboured hard to build. It is a mercy likewise, to be enabled to acknowledge what is excellent in the writings or conduct of others, without adopting their singularities, or discarding the whole on account of a few blemishes. We should be glad to receive instruction from all, and avoid being led by the *ipse dixit* of any. *Nul- lius jurare in verbum* is a fit motto for those who have one master, even Christ. We may grow wise apace in opinions, by books and men; but vital, experi- mental knowledge can only be received from the Holy Spirit, the great instructor and comforter of his people. And there are two things observable in his teaching: 1. That he honours the means of his own appointment, so that we cannot expect to make any great progress without diligence on our parts: 2. That he does not teach all at once, but by de- grees. Experience is his school; and by this I mean the observation and improvement of what passes within us and around us in the course of every day. The word of God affords a history in miniature of the heart of man, the devices of Sa- tan, the state of the world, and the method of grace. And the most instructing and affecting commentary

on it to an enlightened mind may be gathered from what we see, feel, and hear, from day to day. *Res, etas, usus, semper aliquid apportent novi*: and no knowledge in spiritual things but what we acquire in this way is properly our own, or will abide the time of trial. This is not always sufficiently considered: we are ready to expect that others should receive upon our word, in half an hour's time, those views of things which have cost us years to attain. But none can be brought forward faster than the Lord is pleased to communicate inward light. Upon this ground controversies have been multiplied among Christians to little purpose, for plants of different standings will be (*cæteris paribus*) in different degrees of forwardness. A young Christian is like a green fruit; it has perhaps a disagreeable austerity, which cannot be corrected out of its proper course: it wants time and growth: wait a while, and by the nourishment it receives from the root, together with the action of the sun, wind, and rain, in succession from without, it will insensibly acquire that flavour and maturity, for the want of which an unskilful judge would be ready to reject it as nothing worth. We are favoured with many excellent books in our tongue; but I with you agree in assigning one of the first places (as a teacher) to Dr Owen. I have just finished his discourse on the Holy Spirit, which is an epitome, if not the master-piece of his writings. I should be glad to see the republication you speak of; but I question if the booksellers will venture upon it. I shall perhaps mention it to my London friends. As to Archbishop Leighton, besides his select works, there are two octavo volumes published at Edinburgh in the year 1748, and since reprinted at London. They contain a valuable commentary on St Peter's First Epistle, and Lectures on Isa. vi. Ps. xxxix. cxxx. iv. and a part of Rom. xii. I
have

have likewise a small quarto in Latin, of his Divinity Lectures, when Professor at Edinburgh: the short title is, *Prælectiones Theologiæ* Mine was printed in London 1698. I believe this book is scarce: I set the highest value upon it. He has wonderfully united the simplicity of the gospel with all the captivating beauties of style and language. Bishop Burnet says, he was the greatest master of the Latin tongue he ever knew, of which, together with his compass of learning, he has given proof in his lectures: yet, in his gayer drefs, his eminent humility and spirituality appear to no less advantage than when clad in plain English. I think it may be said to be a diamond set in gold. I could wish it translated, if it was possible (which I almost question) to preserve the beauty and spirit of the original.

Edwards on Free-will I have read with pleasure, as a good answer to the proud reasoners in their own way; but a book of that sort cannot be generally read: where the subject-matter is unpleasing, and the method of treating it requires more attention than the Athenian spirit of the times will bear, I wonder not if it is uncalled for; and am afraid we shall not see him upon Original Sin, if it depends upon the sale of the other. This answer to Dr Taylor, which you speak of, is not a MS. but has been already printed at Boston.

You send us good news indeed, that two more of your brethren are declaring on the gospel side. The Lord confirm and strengthen them, add yet to your numbers, and make you helps and comforts to each other. Surely he is about to spread his work. Happy those whom he honours to be fellow-workers with him. Let us account the disgrace we suffer for his name's sake to be our great honour. Many will be against us; but there are more for us. All the praying souls on earth, all the glorified saints
in

in heaven, all the angels of God, yea, the God of angels himself, all are on our side. Satan may rage, but he is a chained enemy. Men may contradict and fight, but they cannot prevail. Two things we shall especially need, courage and patience, that we neither faint before them, nor upon any provocation act in their spirit. If we can pity and pray for them, return good for evil, make them sensible that we bear them a hearty good will, and act as the disciples of him who wept for his enemies, and prayed for his murderers; in this way, we shall find the Lord will plead our cause, soften opposers, and by degrees give us a measure of outward peace. Warmth and imprudence have often added to the necessary burden of the cross. I rejoice that the Lord has led you in a different way; and I hope your doctrine and example will make your path smoother every day: you find it so in part already. As the Lord brings you out a people witnesses for you to the truth of his word, you will find advantage in bringing them often together. The interval from Sabbath to Sabbath is a good while, and affords time for the world and Satan to creep in. Intermediate meetings for prayer, &c. when properly conducted, are greatly useful. I could wish for larger sheets and longer leisure; but I am constrained to say adieu, in our dear Lord and Saviour.

Yours, &c.

L. E. T.

L E T T E R IV.

*Dear Sir,**Dec. 12. 1767.*

THis is not intended as an answer to your last acceptable letter, but an occasional line, in consequence of the account Mr T— has given me of your late illness. I trust this dispensation will be useful to you; and I wish the knowledge of it may be so to me. I am favoured with an unusual share of health, and an equal flow of spirits. If the blow you have received should be a warning to me, I shall have cause to be thankful. I am glad to hear you are better; I hope the Lord has no design to disable you from service, but rather (as he did Jacob) to strengthen you by wounding you; to maintain and increase in you that conviction which, through grace, you have received, of the vanity and uncertainty of every thing below; to give you a lively sense of the value of health and opportunities, and to add to the treasury of your experience new proofs of his power and goodness, in supporting, comforting, and healing you; and likewise to quicken the prayers of your people for you, and to stir them up to use double diligence in the present improvement of the means of grace, while by this late instance they see how soon and suddenly you might have been removed from them.

I understand you did not feel that lively exercise of faith and joy which you would have hoped to have found at such a season: but let not this discourage you from a firm confidence, that when the hour of dismissal shall come, the Lord will be faithful to his gracious promise, and give you strength sufficient to encounter and vanquish your last enemy. You had not this strength lately, because you need-
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ed it not: for though you might think yourself near to death, the Lord intended to restore you; and he permitted you to feel weakness, that you might know your strength does not consist in grace received, but in his fullness, and his promise to communicate from himself as your occasions require. O it is a great thing to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus! but it is a hard lesson; it is not easy to understand it in theory; but when the Lord has taught us so far, it is still more difficult to reduce our knowledge to practice. But this is one end he has in view, in permitting us to pass through such a variety of inward and outward exercises, that we may cease from trusting in ourselves, or in any creature, or frame, or experiences, and be brought to a state of submission and dependence upon him alone. I was once visited something in the same way, seized with a fit of the apoplectic kind, which held me near an hour, and left a disorder in my head, which quite broke the scheme of life I was then in, and was consequently one of the means the Lord appointed to bring me into the ministry: but I soon perfectly recovered. From the remembrance Mrs —— has of what she then suffered, she knows how to sympathise with Mrs B—— in her share of your trial. And I think dear Mr —— some years since had a sudden stroke on a Christmas-day, which disabled him from duty for a time. To him and to me these turns were only like the caution which Philip of Macedon ordered to be repeated to him every morning, Remember thou art a man. I hope it will be no more to you, but that you shall live to praise him, and to give many cause to praise him on your behalf. Blessed be God, we are in safe hands; the Lord himself is our keeper; nothing befalls us but what is adjusted by his wisdom and love. Health is his gift; and sickness, when sanctified, is a token of
love

love likewise. Here we may meet with many things which are not joyous, but grievous to the flesh; but he will in one way or other sweeten every bitter cup, and ere long he will wipe away all tears from our eyes. O that joy, that crown, that glory which awaits the believer! Let us keep the prize of our high calling in view, and press forward in the name of Jesus the Redeemer, and he will not disappoint our hopes.

I am but just come off from a journey, am weary, and it grows late; must therefore break off. When you have leisure and strength to write, oblige me with a confirmation of your recovery, for I shall be something anxious about you.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R V.

My dear Friend,

March 14. 1775.

I Thought you long in writing, but am afraid I have been longer. A heavy family-affliction called me from home in December, which put me out of my usual course, and threw me behind-hand in my correspondence; yet I did not suspect the date of your last letter was so old by two months as I find it. Whether I write more frequently or more seldom, the love of my heart to you is the same, and I shall believe the like of you; yet if it can be helped, I hope the interval will not be so long again on either side. I am glad that the Lord's work still flourishes in your parts, and that you have a more comfortable prospect at home than formerly; and I was pleased with the acceptance you found at S——; which I hope will be an earnest

nest of greater things. I think affairs in general, with respect to this land, have a dark appearance; but it is comfortable to observe, that, amidst the aboundings of iniquity, the Lord is spreading his gospel; and that, though many oppose, yet in most places whither the word is sent, great numbers seem disposed to hear. I am going (if the Lord please) into Leicestershire on Friday. This was lately such a dark place as you describe your country to be, and much of it is so still; but the Lord has visited three of the principal towns with gospel-light. I have a desire of visiting these brethren in the vineyard, to bear my poor testimony to the truths they preach, and to catch, if I may, a little fire and fervour among them. I do not often go abroad; but I have found a little excursion now and then (when the way is made plain) has its advantages, to quicken the spirits, and enlarge the sphere of observation. On these accounts, the recollection of my N—— journey gives me pleasure to this day; and very glad should I be to repeat it; but the distance is so great, that I consider it rather as desirable than practicable.

My experiences vary as well as yours: but possibly your sensations, both of the sweet and of the bitter, may be stronger than mine. The enemy assaults me more by sap than storm; and I am ready to think I suffer more by langour than some of my friends do by the sharper conflicts to which they are called. So likewise in these seasons, which comparatively I call my best hours, my sensible comforts are far from lively. But I am in general enabled to hold fast my confidence, and to venture myself upon the power, faithfulness, and compassion of that adorable Saviour, to whom my soul has been directed and encouraged to flee for refuge. I am a poor, changeable, inconsistent creature; but he deals graciously with me; he does not leave me wholly to myself;

myself; but I have such daily proofs of the malignity and efficacy of the sin that dwelleth in me, as ought to cover me with shame and confusion of face, and make me thankful if I am permitted to rank with the meanest of those who sit at his feet. That I was ever called to the knowledge of his salvation, was a singular instance of his sovereign grace; and that I am still preserved in the way, in defiance of all that has arisen from within and from without to turn me aside, must be wholly ascribed to the same sovereignty: and if, as I trust, he shall be pleased to make me a conqueror at last, I shall have peculiar reason to say, Not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the glory and the praise!

*How oft have sin and Satan strove
To rend my soul from thee, my God!
But everlasting is thy love,
And Jesus seals it with his blood.*

The Lord leads me in the course of my preaching to insist much on a life of communion with himself, and of the great design of the gospel to render us conformable to him in love; and as by his mercy nothing appears in my outward conduct remarkably to contradict what I say, many who only can judge by what they see, suppose I live a very happy life. But alas! if they knew what passes in my heart, how dull my spirit is in secret, and how little I am myself affected by the glorious truths I propose to others, they would form a different judgement. Could I be myself what I recommend to them, I should be happy indeed. Pray for me, my dear friend, that now the Lord is bringing forward the pleasing spring, he may favour me with a spring season in my soul; for indeed I mourn under a long winter.

I am, &c.

LET.

L E T T E R VI.

*My dear Friend,**April 16. 1772.*

I Hope the Lord has contracted my desires and aims almost to the one point of study, the knowledge of his truth. All other acquisitions are transient, and comparatively vain. And yet, alas! I am a slow scholar: nor can I see in what respect I get forward, unless that every day I am more confirmed in the conviction of my own emptiness and inability to all spiritual good. And as, notwithstanding this, I am still enabled to stand my ground, I would hope, since no effect can be without an adequate cause, that I have made some advance, though in a manner imperceptible to myself, towards a more simple dependence upon Jesus as my all in all. It is given me to thirst and to taste, if it is not given me to drink abundantly; and I would be thankful for the desire. I see and approve the wisdom, grace, suitableness, and sufficiency of the gospel salvation; and since it is for sinners, and I am a sinner, and the promises are open, I do not hesitate to call it mine. I am a weary, laden soul; Jesus has invited me to come, and has enabled me to put my trust in him. I seldom have an uneasy doubt, at least not of any continuance, respecting my pardon, acceptance, and interest in all the blessings of the New Testament. And amidst a thousand infirmities and evils under which I groan, I have the testimony of my conscience when under the trial of his word, that my desire is sincerely towards him, that I choose no other portion, that I allowedly serve no other master. When I told our friend —— lately to this purpose, he wondered, and asked, “How is it

possible that if you can say these things you should not be always rejoicing?" Undoubtedly I derive from the gospel a peace at bottom which is worth more than a thousand worlds: but so it is, I can only speak for myself, though I rest and live upon the truths of the gospel, they seldom impress me with a warm and lively joy. In public, indeed, I sometimes seem in earnest and much affected, but even then it appears to me rather as a part of the gift intrusted to me for the edification of others, than as a sensation which is properly my own. For when I am in private I am usually dull and stupid to a strange degree, or the prey to a wild and un-governed imagination; so that I may truly say, when I would do good, evil, horrid evil, is present with me. Ah, how different is this from sensible comfort! and if I was to compare myself to others, to make their experience my standard, and was not helped to retreat to the sure word of God as my refuge, how hard should I find it to maintain a hope that I had either part or lot in the matter! What I call my good times are, when I can find my attention in some little measure fixed to what I am about, which indeed is not always nor frequently my case in prayer, and still seldomer in reading the scripture. My judgement embraces these means as blessed privileges, and Satan has not prevailed to drive me from them; but in the performance I too often find them tasks, feel a reluctance when the seasons return, and am glad when they are finished. O what a mystery is the heart of man! What a warfare is the life of faith, (at least in the path the Lord is pleased to lead me)! What reason have I to lie in the dust as the chief of sinners, and what cause for thankfulness that salvation is wholly of grace! Notwithstanding all my complaints, it is still true that Jesus died and rose again, that he ever liveth to make inter-

cession,

cession, and is able to save to the uttermost. But on the other hand, to think of that joy of heart in which some of his people live, and to compare it with that apparent deadness and want of spirituality which I feel, this makes me mourn. However, I think there is a scriptural distinction between faith and feeling, grace and comfort; they are not inseparable, and perhaps when together, the degree of the one is not often the just measure of the other. But though I pray that I may be ever longing and panting for the light of his countenance, yet I would be so far satisfied, as to believe the Lord has wise and merciful reasons for keeping me so short of the comforts which he has taught me to desire and value more than the light of the sun.

I am, &c.

N I N E

L E T T E R S

T O T H E

R E V. M R R—.

L E T T E R I.

Dear Sir,

Jan. 16. 1772.

I T is true I was apprehensive from your silence that I had offended you; but when your letter came it made me full amends: and now I am glad I wrote as I did, though I am persuaded I shall never write to you again in the same strain. I am pleased with the spirit you discover; and your bearing so well to be told of the mistakes I pointed out to you, endears you more to me than if you had not made them. Henceforward I can converse freely with you, and shall be glad when I have the opportunity.

As to your view of justification, I did not oppose it; I judge for myself, and I am willing others should have the same liberty. If we hold the *head* and love the Lord, we *agree* in him, and I should think my time ill employed in disputing the point with you. I only meant to except against the positive manner in which you had expressed yourself. My end is answered, and I am satisfied. Indeed I believe the difference between a *judicious* Supralapsarian, and a *sound* Sub-lapsarian, lies more in a different way of expressing their sentiments than is generally thought. At the close of Halyburton's *Insufficiency of Natural Religion*, he has an *Enquiry into the Nature of Regeneration and Justification*, wherein he proposes a scheme, in which, if I mistake not, the moderate of both parties might safely unite. I have used the epithets *judicious* and *sound*, because, as I acknowledge some of the one

side are not quite *sound*, so I think some on the other side are not so *judicious* as I could wish; that is, I think they do not sufficiently advert to the present state of human nature, and the danger which may arise from leading those who are weak in faith and judgement, into inquiries and distinctions evidently beyond the line of their experience, and which may be hurtful; because, admitting them to be true when properly explained, they are very liable to be misunderstood. To say nothing of Mr Hufsey, (in whose provisions I have frequently found more bones than meat, and seasoned with much of an angry and self-important spirit,) I have observed passages in other writers, for whom I have a higher esteem, which, to say the least, appear to me paradoxical and hard to be understood; though perhaps I can give my consent to them, if I had such restrictions and limitations as the authors would not refuse. But plain people are easily puzzled. And though I know several in the Supra-lapsarian scheme, at whose feet I am willing to sit and learn, and have found their preaching and conversation favourable and edifying; yet I must say I have met with many who have appeared to be rather wise than warm, rather positive than humble, rather captious than lively, and more disposed to talk of speculations than experience. However, let us give ourselves to the study of the word and to prayer; and may the great teacher make every scriptural truth food to our souls. I desire to grow in knowledge, but I want nothing which bears that name that has not a direct tendency to make sin more hateful, Jesus more precious to my soul; and at the same time to animate me to a diligent use of every appointed means, and an unreserved regard to every branch of duty. I think the Lord has shewn me in a measure there is a consistent sense running through the whole scripture,

ture, and I desire to be governed and influenced by it all: Doctrines, precepts, promises, warnings, all have their proper place and use: and I think many of the inconveniencies which obtain in the present day, spring from separating those things which God hath joined together, and insisting on some parts of the word of God almost to the exclusion of the rest.

I have filled my paper with what I did not intend to say a word of when I began, and must leave other things which were more upon my mind for another season. I thank you for saying you pray for me. Continue that kindness; I both need it and prize it.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R. II.

Dear Sir,

July 31. 1773.

I Received your sorrowful epistle yesterday, and in order to encourage you to write, I answer it to-day.

The ship was safe when Christ was in her, tho' he was *really* asleep. At present I can tell you good news, though you know it; he is wide awake, and his eyes are in every place. You and I, if we could be pounded together, might perhaps make two tolerable ones. You are too anxious, and I am too easy in some respects. Indeed I cannot be too easy, when I have a right thought that all is safe in his hands; but if your anxiety makes you pray, and my composure makes me careless, you have certainly the best of it. However, the ark is fixed upon an immoveable foundation; and if we

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think:

think we see it totter, it is owing to a swimming in our heads. Seriously, the times look dark and stormy, and call for much circumspection and prayer; but let us not forget that we have an infallible pilot, and that the power, and wisdom, and honour of God, are embarked with us. At Venice they have a fine vessel, called the *Bucentaur*, in which, on a certain day of the year, the Doge and Nobles embark, and go a little way to sea, to repeat the foolish ceremony of marriage between the Republic and the Adriatic, (in consequence of some lying, antiquated Pope's bull, by which the bans of matrimony between Venice and the Gulf were published in the dark ages), when they say a gold ring is very gravely thrown overboard. Upon this occasion, I have been told, when the honour and government of Venice are shipped on board the *Bucentaur*, the pilot is obliged by his office to take an oath that he will bring the vessel safely back again, *in defiance of winds and weather*. Vain mortals! If this be true, what an instance of God's long-suffering is it, that they have never yet sunk as lead in the mighty waters! But my story will probably remind you, that Jesus has actually entered into such an engagement in behalf of his church. And well he may, for both wind and weather are at his command; and he can turn the storm into a calm in a moment. We may therefore safely and confidently leave the government upon his shoulders. Duty is our part, the care is his.

A revival is wanted with us as well as with you, and I trust some of us are longing for it. We are praying and singing for one; and I send you, on the other side, a hymn, that you (if you like it) may sing with us. Let us take courage; though it may seem marvellous in our eyes, it is not so in the Lord's. He changed the desert into a fruitful field, and bid dry bones live. And if he pre-
pare

pare our heart to pray, he will surely incline his ear to hear.

The miscarriages of professors are grievous; yet such things must be; how else could the scriptures be fulfilled? But there is one who is able to keep us from falling. Some who have distressed us perhaps never were truly changed; how then could they stand? We see only the outside. Others who are sincere are permitted to fall for our instruction, that we may not be high-minded, but fear. However, he that walketh humbly walketh surely.

Believe me, &c.



L E T T E R III.

Dear Sir,

Feb. 22. 1774.

Your letter by last post surprised and grieved me. We knew nothing of the subject, though Mrs — remembers, when — was here, a hint or two was dropped which she did not understand; but no name was mentioned.

This instance shews the danger of leaning to impressions. Texts of scripture brought powerfully to the heart are very desirable and pleasant, if their tendency is to humble us, to give us a more feeling sense of the preciousness of Christ, or of the doctrines of grace; if they make sin more hateful, enliven our regard to the means, or increase our confidence in the power and faithfulness of God. But if they are understood as intimating our path of duty in particular circumstances, or confirming us in purposes we may have already formed, not otherwise clearly warranted by the general strain of the

word, or by the leadings of Providence, they are for the most part ensnaring, and always to be suspected. Nor does their coming into the mind at the time of prayer give them more authority in this respect. When the mind is intent upon any subject, the imagination is often watchful to catch at any thing which may seem to countenance the favourite pursuit. It is too common to ask counsel of the Lord when we have already secretly determined for ourselves: and in this disposition we may easily be deceived by the sound of a text of scripture, which, detached from the passage in which it stands, may seem remarkably to tally with our wishes. Many have been deceived this way; and sometimes, when the event has shewn them they were mistaken, it has opened a door for great distress, and Satan has found occasion to make them doubt even of their most solid experiences.

I have sometimes talked to —— upon this subject, though without the least suspicion of any thing like what has happened. As to the present case, it may remind us all of our weakness. I would recommend prayer, patience, much tenderness towards her, joined with faithful exhortation. Wait a little while, and I trust the Lord who loves her will break the snare. I am persuaded, in her better judgement, she would dread the thoughts of doing wrong; and I hope and believe the good Shepherd, to whom she has often committed her soul and her ways, will interpose to restore and set her to rights. - - - - -

- - - I am sorry you think any of whom you have hoped well are going back; but be not discouraged. I say again, pray, and wait, and hope the best. It is common for young professors to have a slack time; it is almost necessary, that they may be more sensible of the weakness and deceitfulness of their
their

their hearts, and be more humbled in future, when the Lord shall have healed their breaches, and restored their souls. We join love to you and yours. Pray for us.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R IV.

Dear Sir,

Feb. 3. 1775.

IT would be wrong to make you wait long for an answer to the point you propose in your last. It is an important one. I am not a casuist by profession, but I will do my best. Suppose I imitate your laconic manner of stating the question and circumstances.

I doubt not but it is very lawful at your age to think of marriage, and, in the situation you describe, to think of money likewise. I am glad you have no person, as you say, *fixedly in view*; in that case advice comes a post or two too late. But your expression seems to intimate, that there is one *transiently in view*. If it be so, since you have no settlement, if she has no money, I cannot but wish she may pass on till she is out of sight and out of mind. I see this will not do; I must get into my own grave way about this grave business. I take it for granted, that my friend is free from the love of filthy lucre; and that money will never be the turning point with you in the choice of a wife. Methinks I hear you think, if I wanted money I would either dig or beg for it; but to preach or marry for money, that be far from me. I commend you. However, though the love of money be a great evil,

evil, money itself, obtained in a fair and honourable way, is desirable upon many accounts, though not for its own sake. Meat, clothes, fire, and books, cannot easily be had without it: therefore, if these be necessary, money which procures them must be a necessary likewise. If things were otherwise than you represent them, if you were able to provide for a wife yourself, then I would say, Find a gracious girl (if she be not found already) whose person you like, whose temper you think will suit; and then, with your father and mother's consent, (without which I think you would be unwilling to move) thank the Lord for her, marry her, and account her a valuable portion, though she should not have a shilling. But while you are without income or settlement, if you have thoughts of marriage, I hope they will be regulated by a due regard to consequences. They who set the least value upon money have in some respects the most need of it. A generous mind will feel a thousand pangs in strait circumstances which some unfeeling hearts would not be sensible of. You could perhaps endure hardships alone, yet it might pinch you to the very bone to see the person you love exposed to them. Besides, you might have a John, a Thomas, and a William, and half a dozen more to feed, (for they must all eat); and how this could be done without a competency on one side or the other, or so much on both sides as will make a competency when united, I see not. Besides, you would be grieved not to find an occasional shilling in your pocket to bestow upon one or other of the Lord's poor, though you should be able to make some sort of a shift for those of your own house.

But is it not written, "The Lord will provide?" It is: but it is written again, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Hastily to plunge
ourselves

ourselves into difficulties, upon a persuasion that he will find some way to extricate us, seems to me a species of tempting him.

Therefore I judge, *It is so far lawful for you to have a regard to money in looking out for a wife, that it would be wrong, that is, in other words, unlawful, for you to omit it, supposing you have a purpose of marrying in your present situation.*

Many serious young women have a predilection in favour of a minister of the gospel; and I believe among such one or more may be found as spiritual, as amiable, as suitable to make you a good wife, with a tolerable fortune to boot, as another who has not a penny. If you are not willing to trust your own judgement in the search, intreat the Lord to find her for you. He chose well for Isaac and Jacob; and you as a believer have warrant to commit your way to him, and many more express promises than they had for your encouragement. He knows your state, your wants, what you are at present, and what use he designs to make of you. Trust in him, and wait for him: prayer, and faith, and patience, are never disappointed. I commend you to his blessing and guidance. Remember us to all in your house.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R V.

Dear Sir,

May 28. 1775.

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 - - - - - You must not expect a long letter this morning; we are just going to court, in hopes of seeing the King, for he has promised to meet

meet us. We can say he is mindful of his promise; and yet is it not strange that though we are all in the same place, and the King in the midst of us, it is but here and there one (even of those who love him) can see him at once! However, in our turns we are all favoured with a glimpse of him, and have had cause to say, How great is his goodness! How great is his beauty! We have the advantage of the Queen of Sheba, a more glorious object to behold, and not so far to go for the sight of it. If a transient glance exceeds all that the world can afford for a long continuance, what must it be to dwell with him! If a day in his courts be better than a thousand. what will eternity be in his presence! I hope the more you see, the more you love; the more you drink, the more you thirst; the more you do for him, the more you are ashamed you can do so little; and that the nearer you approach to your journey's end, the more your pace is quickened. Surely, the power of spiritual attraction should increase as the distance lessens. O, that heavenly loadstone! may it so draw us that we may not creep, but run. In common travelling the strongest become weary if the journey be very long; but in the spiritual journey we are encouraged with a hope of going on from strength to strength. *Instaurabit iter vires*, as Johnson expresses it. No road but the road to heaven can thus communicate refreshment to those who walk in it, and make them more fresh and lively when they are just finishing their course than when they first set out.

I am, &c.

L. E. T.

L E T T E R VI.

*Dear Sir,**April 18. 1776.*

ARE you sick, or lame of your right hand, or are you busy in preparing a folio for the press, that I hear nothing from you? You see by the excuses I would contrive I am not willing to suppose you have forgotten me, but that your silence is rather owing to a *cannot* than a *will not*.

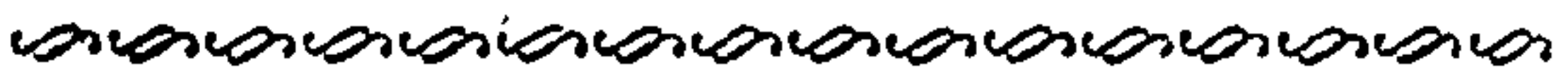
I hope your soul prospers. I do not ask you if you are always filled with sensible comfort: but do you find your spirit more bowed down to the feet and will of Jesus, so as to be willing to serve him for the sake of serving him, and to follow him, as we say, through thick and thin; to be willing to be any thing or nothing, so that he may be glorified? I could give you plenty of good advice upon this head; but I am ashamed to do it, because I so poorly follow it myself. I want to live with him by the day, to do all for him, to receive all from him, to possess all in him, to live all to him, to make him my hiding-place and my resting-place. I want to deliver up that rebel self to him in chains; but the rogue, like Proteus, puts on so many forms, that he slips through my fingers: but I think I know what I would do if I could fairly catch him.

My soul is like a besieged city: a legion of enemies without the gates, and a nest of restless traitors within, that hold a correspondence with them without; so that I am deceived and counteracted continually. It is a mercy that I have not been surpris'd and overwhelmed long ago: without help from on high it would soon be over with me. How often have I been forced to cry out, O God, the
Heathen

Heathen are got into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled, and defaced all thy work! Indeed it is a miracle that I still hold out. I trust, however, I shall be supported to the end, and that my Lord will at length raise the siege, and cause me to shout deliverance and victory.

Pray for me, that my walls may be strengthened and wounds healed. We are all pretty well as to the outward man, and join in love to all friends.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R VII.

Dear Sir,

July 6. 1776.

I Was abroad when your letter came, but employ the first post to thank you for your confidence. My prayers (when I can pray) you may be sure of; as to advice, I see not that the case requires much. Only be a quiet child, and lie patiently at the Lord's feet. He is the best friend and manager in these matters, for he has a key to open every heart I should not have taken Mr Z——'s letter for a denial, as it seems you did. Considering the years of the parties, and other circumstances, a prudent parent could hardly say more, if he were inclined to favour your views. To me you seem to be in a tolerable fair way; but I know in affairs of this kind Mr Self does not like suspense, but would willingly come to the point at once: but Mr Faith (when he gets liberty to hold up his head) will own, that in order to make our temporal mercies wear well, and to give us a clearer sense of the hand that

that bestows them, a waiting and a praying time are very feasonable. Worldly people expect their schemes to run upon all-fours, as we fay, and the objects of their wishes to drop into their mouths without difficulty; and if they succeed, they of course burn incense to their own drag, and fay, This was my doing: but believers meet with rubs and difappointments, which convince them, that if they obtain any thing it is the Lord must do it for them. For this reason I observe, that he ufually brings a death upon our prospects, even when it is his purpose to give us fuccess in the iffue. Thus we become more affured that we did not act in our own fpirits, and have a more fatisfactory view that his providence has been concerned in filling up the rivers and removing the mountains that were in our way. Then when he has given us our defire, how pleafant is it to look at it and fay, 'This I got not by my own fword and my own bow, but I wrestled for it in prayer, I waited for it in faith, I put it into the Lord's hand, and from his hand I received it.

You have met with the ftory of one of our kings (if I mistake not) who wanted to fend a nobleman abroad as his ambaffador, and he defired to be excufed on account of fome affairs which required his prefence at home: the king answered, "Do you take care of my bufinefs, and I will take care of yours." I would have you think the Lord fays thus to you. You were fent into the world for a nobler end than to be pinned to a girl's apron-string; and yet if the Lord fees it not good for you to be alone, he will provide you a helpmeet. I fay, if he fees the marriage ftate best for you, he has the proper person *already* in his eye, and though ſhe were in Peru or Nova-Zembla, he knows how to bring you together. In the meantime, go thou and preach the gofpel. Watch in all

all things; endure afflictions; do the work of an Evangelist; make full proof of your ministry: and when other thoughts rise in your mind, (for you have no door to shut them quite out), run with them to the throne of grace, and commit them to the Lord. Satan will perhaps try to force them upon you unreasonably and inordinately; but if he sees they drive you to prayer, he will probably desist, rather than be the occasion of doing you so much good. Believe likewise, that as the Lord has the appointment of the person, so he fixes the time. His time is like the time of the tide; all the art and power of man can neither hasten or retard it a moment: it must be waited for; nothing can be done without it, and when it comes, nothing can resist it. It is unbelief that talks of delays: faith knows that properly there can be no such thing. The only reason why the Lord seems to delay what he afterwards grants, is, that the best hour is not yet come. I know you have been enabled to commit and resign your all to his disposal. You did well. May he help you to stand to the surrender. Sometimes he will put us to the trial, whether we mean what we say. He takes his course in a way we did not expect; and then, alas! how often does the trial put us to shame. Presently there is an outcry raised in the soul against his management; this is wrong, that unnecessary, the other has spoiled the whole plan; in short, all these things are against us. And then we go into the pulpit, and gravely tell the people how wise and how good he is; and preach submission to his will, not only as a duty, but a privilege! Alas, how deceitful is the heart! Yet since it is and will be so, it is necessary we should know it by experience. We have reason however to say, He is good and wise; for he bears with our perverseness, and in the event shews us that if he had listened to our murmurings, and
taken

taken the methods we would have prescribed to him, we should have been ruined indeed, and that he has been all the while doing us good in spite of ourselves.

If I judge right, you will find your way providentially opened more and more; and yet it is possible, that when you begin to think yourself sure, something may happen to put you in a panic again. But a believer, like a sailor, is not to be surpris'd if the wind changes, but to learn the art of suiting himself to all winds for the time; and though many a poor sailor is shipwrecked, the poor believer shall gain his port. O it is good failing with an infallible pilot at the helm, who has the wind and weather at his command.

I have been much abroad, which of course puts things at sixes and sevens at home. If I did not love you well, I could not have spared so much of the only day I have had to myself for this fortnight past. But I was willing you should know that I think of you and feel for you, if I cannot help you.

I have read Mr ——'s book. Some things I think strongly argued; in some he has laid himself open to a blow, and I doubt not but he will have it. I expect answers, replies, rejoinders, &c. &c. and say with Leah, *Gad, a troop cometh*. How the wolf will grin to see the sheep and the shepherds biting and worrying one another! And well he may. He knows that contentions are a surer way to weaken the Spirit of love, and stop the progress of the gospel, than his old stale method of fire and sword. Well, I trust we shall be of one heart and one mind when we get to heaven at least.

Let who will fight, I trust neither water nor fire shall set you and me at variance. We unite in love to you. The Lord is gracious to us, &c.

I am, &c.

LET.

L E T T E R VIII.

Dear Sir,

— 1776.

I Do not often serve your letters so, but this last I burnt, believing you would like to have it out of danger of falling into improper hands. When I saw how eagerly the flames devoured the paper, how quickly and entirely every trace of the writing was consumed, I wished that the fire of the love of Jesus might as completely obliterate from your heart every uneasy impression which your disappointment has given you

. Surely when he crosses our wishes it is always in mercy, and because we short-sighted creatures often know not what we ask, nor what would be the consequences if our desires were granted.

Your pride it seems has received a fall by meeting a repulse. I know Self does not like to be mortified in these affairs; but if you are made successful in wooing souls for Christ, I hope that will console you for meeting a rebuff when only wooing for yourself. Besides, I would have you pluck up your spirits. I have two good old proverbs at your service: "There is as good fish in the sea as any that are brought out of it;" and "If one won't another will, or wherefore serves the market?" Perhaps all your difficulties have arisen from this, that you have not yet seen the right person; if so, you have reason to be thankful that the Lord would not let you take the wrong, though you unwittingly would have done it if you could. Where the right one lies hid I know not, but

but upon a supposition that it will be good for you to marry, I may venture to say,

Ubi ubi est, diu celari non potest.

The Lord in his Providence will disclose her, put her in your way, and give you to understand, This is she. Then you will find your business go forward with wheels and wings, and have cause to say, His choice and time were better than your own.

Did I not tell you formerly, that if you would take care of his business he will take care of yours? I am of the same mind still. He will not suffer them who fear him and depend upon him to want any thing that is truly good for them. In the mean while, I advise you to take a lodging as near as you can to Gethsemane, and to walk daily to mount Golgotha, and borrow (which may be had for asking) that telescope which gives a prospect into the unseen world. A view of what is passing within the veil has a marvellous effect to compose our spirits, with regard to the little things that are daily passing here. Praise the Lord, who has enabled you to fix your supreme affection upon him who is alone the proper and suitable object of it, and from whom you cannot meet a denial or fear a change. He loved you first, and he will love you for ever; and if he be pleased to arise and smile upon you, you are in no more necessity of begging for happiness to the prettiest creature upon earth, than of the light of a candle on Midsummer noon.

Upon the whole, I pray and hope the Lord will sweeten your crosses, and either in kind or in kindness make you good amends. Wait, pray, and believe, and all shall be well. A cross we must have somewhere; and they who are favoured with health, plenty, peace, and a conscience sprinkled
with

with the blood of Jesus, *must* have more causes for thankfulness than grief. Look round you, and take notice of the very severe afflictions which many of the Lord's own people are groaning under, and your trials will appear comparatively light. Our love to all friends.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R IX.

Dear Sir,

June 3. 1777.

IT seems I must write something about the small-pox, but I know not well what: having had it myself, I cannot judge how I should feel if I were actually exposed to it. I am not a professed advocate for inoculation; but if a person who fears the Lord should tell me, “I think I can do it in
 “faith, looking upon it as a salutary expedient,
 “which he in his providence has discovered, and
 “which therefore appears my duty to have re-
 “course to, so that my mind does not hesitate with
 “respect to the lawfulness, nor am I anxious about
 “the event; being satisfied, that whether I live or
 “die, I am in that path in which I can cheerfully
 “expect his blessing,” I do not know that I could offer a word by way of dissuasion.”

If another person should say, “My times are in
 “the Lord's hands; I am now in health, and am
 “not willing to bring upon myself a disorder, the
 “consequences of which I cannot possibly foresee:
 “If I am to have the small-pox, I believe he is the
 “best judge of the season and manner in which I
 “shall be visited, so as may be most for his glory
 “and my own good; and therefore I chuse to wait

“his

“ his appointment, and not to rush upon even the
“ possibility of danger without a call. If the very
“ hairs of my head are numbered, I have no reason
“ to fear that, supposing I receive the small-pox in
“ a natural way, I shall have a single pimple more
“ than he sees expedient; and why should I wish
“ to have one less? Nay, admitting, which how-
“ ever is not always the case, that inoculation
“ might exempt me from some pain and inconve-
“ nience, and lessen the apparent danger, might it
“ not likewise, upon that very account, prevent
“ my receiving some of those sweet consolations,
“ which I humbly hope my gracious Lord would
“ afford me, if it were his pleasure to call me to a
“ sharp trial? Perhaps the chief design of this
“ trying hour, if it comes, may be to shew me more
“ of his wisdom, power, and love, than I have
“ ever yet experienced. If I could devise a mean
“ to avoid the trouble, I know not how great a
“ loser I may be in point of grace and comfort.
“ Nor am I afraid of my face; it is now as the
“ Lord has made it, and it will be so after the
“ small-pox. If it pleases him, I hope it will please
“ me. In short, though I do not censure others,
“ yet, as to myself, inoculation is what I dare not
“ venture upon. If I did venture, and the issue
“ should not be favourable, I should blame myself
“ for having attempted to take the management out
“ of the Lord’s hands into my own, which I never
“ did yet in other matters, without finding I am
“ no more able than I am worthy to chuse for
“ myself. Besides, at the best, inoculation would
“ only secure me from *one* of the innumerable na-
“ tural evils the flesh is heir to; I should still be
“ as liable as I am at present to a putrid fever, a
“ bilious cholic, an inflammation in the bowels or
“ in the brain, and a thousand formidable diseases
“ which are hovering round me, and only wait his
“ permission to cut me off in a few days or hours:

“ and therefore I am determined, by his grace, to
 “ resign myself to his disposal. Let me fall into
 “ the hands of the Lord, (for his mercies are
 “ great), and not into the hands of men.”

If a person should talk to me in this strain, most certainly I could not say, Notwithstanding all this, your safest way is to be inoculated.

We preach and hear, and I hope we know something of faith, as enabling us to intrust the Lord with our souls: I wish we had all more faith to intrust him with our bodies, our health, our provision, and our temporal comforts likewise. The former should seem to require the strongest faith of the two. How strange is it, that when we think we can do the *greater*, we should be so awkward and unskilful when we aim at the *less*! Give my love to your friend. I dare not advise: but if she can quietly return at the usual time, and neither run intentionally into the way of the small-pox, nor run out of the way, but leave it simply with the Lord, I shall not blame her. And if you will mind your praying and preaching, and believe that the Lord can take care of her without any of your contrivances, I shall not blame you: nay, I shall praise him for you both. My prescription is to read Dr Watts, Psalm cxxi. every morning before breakfast, and pray it over till the cure is effected. *Probatum est.*

*Hast thou not giv'n thy word,
 To save my soul from death?
 And I can trust my Lord
 To keep my mortal breath.
 I'll go and come,
 Nor fear to die,
 Till from on high
 Thou call me home.*

Adieu, pray for yours.

T H R E E

T H R E E

L E T T E R S

T O

M I S S T H ———.

G. 2

L E T T E R I.

My dear Madam,

LET what has been said on the subject of acquaintance, &c. suffice. It was well meant on my side, and well taken on yours. You may perhaps see that my hints were not wholly unnecessary, and I ought to be satisfied with your apology, and am so. The circumstance of your being seen at the playhouse has nothing at all mysterious in it, as you say you have not been there these six or seven years; it was neither more nor less than a mistake. I heard you had been there within these two years: I am glad to find I was misinformed. I think there is no harm in your supposing, that of the many thousands who frequent public diversions some may in other respects be better than yourself; but I hope your humble and charitable construction of their mistake will not lead you to extenuate the evil of those diversions in themselves. For though I am persuaded that a few, who know better what to do with themselves, are for want of consideration drawn in to expose themselves in such places; yet I am well satisfied, that if there is any practice in this land sinful, attendance on the playhouse is properly and eminently so. 'The theatres are fountains and means of vice; I had almost said, in the same manner and degree as the ordinances of the gospel are the means of grace: and I can hardly think there is a Christian upon earth who would dare to be seen there, if the nature and effects of the theatre were properly set before them. Dr

WITHERSPOON OF SCOTLAND has written an excellent piece upon the stage, or rather against it, which I wish every person who makes the least pretence to fear God had an opportunity of perusing. I cannot judge much more favourably of Ranelagh, Vauxhall, and all the innumerable train of dissipations, by which the God of this world blinds the eyes of multitudes, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine in upon them. What an awful aspect upon the present times have such texts as Isa. xxii. 12.—14; iii. 12.; Amos, vi. 3. 6.; James, iv. 4. I wish you therefore not to plead for any of them, but use all your influence to make them shunned as pest-houses, and dangerous nuisances to precious souls; especially if you know any who you hope in the main are seriously disposed, who yet venture themselves in those purlieus of Satan, endeavour earnestly and faithfully to undeceive them.

The time is short; eternity at the door: was there no other evil in these vain amusements than the loss of precious time, (but, alas! their name is legion), we have not leisure in our circumstances to regard them. And, blessed be God! we need them not. The gospel opens a source of purer, sweeter, and more substantial pleasures: we are invited to communion with God; we are called to share in the theme of angels, the songs of heaven, and the wonders of redeeming love are laid open to our view. The Lord himself is waiting to be gracious, waiting with promises and pardons in his hands. Well then may we bid adieu to the perishing pleasures of sin; well may we pity those who can find pleasure in those places and parties where he is shut out; where his name is only mentioned to be profaned; where his commandments are not only broken, but insulted; where sinners proclaim their shame as in Sodom, and attempt not to hide it;

where

where at best wickedness is wrapt up in a disguise of delicacy, to make it more insinuating; and nothing is offensive that is not grossly and unpolitely indecent.

I sympathise with all your complaints; but if the Lord is pleased to make them subservient to the increase of your sanctification, to wean you more and more from this world, and to draw you nearer to himself, you will one day see cause to be thankful for them, and to number them amongst your choicest mercies. A hundred years hence it will signify little to you whether you were sick or well the day I wrote this letter.

We thank you for your kind condolence. There is a pleasure in the pity of a friend; but the Lord alone can give true comfort. I hope he will sanctify the breach, and do us good. Mrs —— exchanges forgiveness with you about your not meeting in London; that is, you forgive her not coming to you, and she forgives you entertaining a suspicious thought of her friendship (though but for a minute) on account of what she was really unable to do.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R II.

My dear Madam,

Sept. 1. 1767.

I shall not study for expressions to tell my dear friend how much we were affected by the news that came last post. We had, however, the pleasure to hear that your family was safe. I hope this will

find you recovered from the hurry of spirits you must have been thrown into, and that both you and your papa are composed under the appointment of him who has a right to dispose of his own as he pleases; for we know that whatever may be the second causes and occasions, nothing can happen to us but according to the will of our heavenly Father. Since what is past cannot be recalled, my part is now to pray, that this, and every other dispensation you meet with, may be sanctified to your soul's good; that you may be more devoted to the God of your life, and have a clearer sense of your interest in that kingdom which cannot be shaken, that treasure which neither thieves nor flames can touch, that better and more enduring substance which is laid up for believers, where Jesus their head and favour is. With this in view, you may take joyfully the spoiling of your goods.

I think I can feel for my friends; but for such as I hope have a right to that promise, that all things shall work together for their good, I soon check my solicitude, and ask myself, Do I love them better, or could I manage more wisely for them, than the Lord does? Can I wish them to be in safer or more compassionate hands than in his? Will he who delights in the prosperity of his servants afflict them with sickness, losses, and alarms, except he sees there is need of these things? Such thoughts calm the emotions of my mind. I sincerely condole you; but the command is, to rejoice always in the Lord. The visitation was accompanied with mercy. Not such a case as that of the late Lady Moleworth's, which made every one's ears to tingle that heard it. Nor is yours such a case as of some, who in almost every great fire lose their all, and perhaps have no knowledge of God to support them.

Though our first apprehensions were for you, we
almost

almost forgot you for a moment when we thought of your next door-neighbour, and the circumstance she was in, so unfit to bear either a fright or a removal. We shall be in much suspense till we hear from you. God grant that you may be able to send us good news, that you are all well, at least as well as can be expected after such a distressing scene. If what has happened should give you more leisure, or more inclination, to spend a little time with us, I think I need not say we shall rejoice to receive you.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R I I I .

My dear Madam,

Sept. 3. 1767.

THE vanity of all things below is confirmed to us by daily experience. Amongst other proofs, one is, the precariousness of our intimacies, and what little things, or rather what nothings, will sometimes produce a coolness, or at least a strangeness, between the dearest friends. How is it that our correspondence has been dropt, and that, after having written two letters since the fire, which removed you from your former residence, I should be still disappointed in my hopes of an answer? On our parts I hope there has been no abatement of regard; nor can I charge you with any thing but remissness. Therefore, waving the past, and all apologies on either side, let me beg you to write soon, to tell us how it is with you, and how you

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have

have been supported under the various changes you have met with since we saw you last. I doubt not but you have met with many exercises. I pray that they may have been sanctified to lead you nearer to the Lord, the fountain of all consolation, who is the only refuge in time of troubles, and whose gracious presence is abundantly able to make up every deficiency and every loss. Perhaps the reading of this may recall to your mind our past conversations, and the subjects of the many letters we have exchanged. I know not in what manner to write after so long an interval. I would hope your silence to us has not been owing to any change of sentiments, which might make such letters as mine less welcome to you. Yet when you had a friend, who I think you believed very nearly interested himself in your welfare, it seems strange, that in a course of two years you should have nothing to communicate. I cannot suppose you have forgotten me; I am sure I have not forgotten you; and therefore I long to hear from you soon, that I may know how to write; and should this likewise pass unanswered, I must sit down and mourn over my loss.

As to our affairs, I can tell you the Lord has been and is exceedingly gracious to us: our lives are preserved, our healths continued, an abundance of mercies and blessings on every side; but especially we have to praise him that he is pleased to crown the means and ordinances of his grace with tokens of his presence. It is my happiness to be fixed amongst an affectionate people, who make an open profession of the truth as it is in Jesus, and are enabled, in some measure, to shew forth its power in their lives and conversation. We walk in peace and harmony. I have reason to say, the Lord Jesus is a good master, and that the doctrine of free salvation,

tion,

tion, by faith in his name, is a doctrine according to godliness; for through mercy I find it daily effectual to the breaking down the strong holds of sin, and turning the hearts of finners from dead works to serve the living God. May the Lord give my dear friend to live in the power and consolation of his precious truth.

I am, &c.

S E V E N

L E T T E R S

T O

L E T T E R I.

March 18. 1767.

I Can truly say, that I bear you upon my heart and in my prayers. I have rejoiced to see the beginning of a good and gracious work in you; and I have confidence in the Lord Jesus, that he will carry it on and complete it; and that you will be amongst the number of those who shall sing redeeming love to eternity. Therefore fear none of the things appointed for you to suffer by the way; but gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end. Be not impatient, but wait humbly upon the Lord. You have one hard lesson to learn, that is, the evil of your own heart: you know something of it, but it is needful that you should know more; for the more we know of ourselves, the more we shall prize and love Jesus and his salvation. I hope what you find in yourself by daily experience will humble you, but not discourage you; humble you it should, and I believe it does. Are not you amazed sometimes that you should have so much as a hope, that poor and needy as you are, the Lord thinketh of you? But let not all you feel discourage you; for if our physician is all-mighty, our disease cannot be desperate; and if he casts none out that come to him, why should you fear? Our sins are many, but his mercies are more: our sins are great, but his righteousness is greater: we are weak, but he is power. Most of our complaints are owing to unbelief, and the remainder of a legal spirit; and these evils are not removed in a day. Wait on the
 Lord,

Lord, and he will enable you to see more and more of the power and grace of our high priest. The more you know him, the better you will trust him; the more you trust him, the better you will love him; the more you love him, the better you will serve him. This is God's way: you are not called to buy, but to beg; not to be strong in yourself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He is teaching you these things, and I trust he will teach you to the end. Remember, the growth of a believer is not like a mushroom, but like an oak, which increases slowly indeed but surely. Many suns, showers, and frosts, pass upon it before it comes to perfection; and in winter, when it seems dead, it is gathering strength at the root. Be humble, watchful, and diligent in the means, and endeavour to look through all, and fix your eye upon Jesus, and all shall be well. I commend you to the care of the good shepherd, and remain, for his sake,

Yours, &c.



L E T T E R II.

May 31. 1769.

I Was sorry I did not write as you expected, but I hope it will do now. Indeed I have not forgotten you; you are often in my thoughts, and seldom omitted in my prayers. I hope the Lord will make what you see and hear while abroad profitable to you, to increase your knowledge, to strengthen your faith, and to make you from henceforth well satisfied with your situation. If I am not mistaken, you will be sensible, that though there
are

are some desirable things to be met with in London preferable to any other place, yet upon the whole, a quiet situation in the country, under one stated ministry, and in connection with one people, has the advantage. It is pleasant now and then to have opportunity of hearing a variety of preachers, but the best and greatest of them are no more than instruments; some can please the ear better than others, but none can reach the heart any farther than the Lord is pleased to open it. This he shewed you upon your first going up, and I doubt not but your disappointment did you more good than if you had heard with all the pleasure you expected.

The Lord was pleased to visit me with a slight illness in my late journey. I was far from well on the Tuesday, but supposed it owing to the fatigue of riding, and the heat of the weather; but the next day I was taken with a shivering, to which a fever succeeded. I was then near sixty miles from home. The Lord gave me much peace in my soul, and I was enabled to hope he would bring me safe home, in which I was not disappointed: and tho' I had the fever most part of the way, my journey was not unpleasant. He likewise strengthened me to preach twice on Sunday; and at night I found myself well, only very weary, and I have continued well ever since. I have reason to speak much of his goodness, and to kiss the rod, for it was sweetened with abundant mercies. I thought that had it been his pleasure I should have continued sick at Oxford, or even have died there, I had no objection. Though I had not that joy and sensible comfort which some are favoured with, yet I was quite free from pain, fear and care, and felt myself sweetly composed to his will, whatever it might be. Thus he fulfils his promise in making our strength equal to our day; and every new trial gives

us a new proof how happy it is to be enabled to put our trust in him.

I hope, in the midst of all your engagements, you find a little time to read his good word, and to wait at his mercy-seat. It is good for us to draw nigh to him. It is an honour that he permits us to pray; and we shall surely find he is a God hearing prayer. Endeavour to be diligent in the means; yet watch and strive against a legal spirit, which is always aiming to represent him as a hard master, watching as it were to take advantage of us. But it is far otherwise. His name is Love: he looks upon us with compassion; he knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust; and when our infirmities prevail, he does not bid us despond, but reminds us that we have an Advocate with the Father, who is able to pity, to pardon, and to save to the uttermost. Think of the names and relations he bears. Does he not call himself a Saviour, a Shepherd, a Friend, and a Husband? Has he not made known unto us his love, his blood, his righteousness, his promises, his power, and his grace, and all for our encouragement? Away then with all doubting, unbelieving thoughts; they will not only distress your heart but weaken your hands. Take it for granted upon the warrant of his word, that you are his, and he is yours; that he has loved you with an everlasting love, and therefore in loving-kindness has drawn you to himself; that he will surely accomplish that which he has begun, and that nothing which can be named or thought of shall ever be able to separate you from him. This persuasion will give you strength for the battle; this is the shield which will quench the fiery darts of Satan; this is the helmet which the enemy cannot pierce. Whereas if we go forth doubting and fearing, and are afraid to trust any farther than we can feel, we are weak as
water,

water, and easily overcome. Be strong therefore, not in yourself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Pray for me, and believe me to be,
Yours, &c.

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L E T T E R III.

March 14.

I Think you would hardly expect me to write if you knew how I am forced to live at London. However, I would have you believe I am as willing to write to you as you are to receive my letters. As a proof, I try to send you a few lines now, though I am writing to you and talking to Mrs ——— both at once! and this is the only season I can have to change a few words with her. She is a woman of a sorrowful spirit: she talks and weeps. I believe she would think herself happy to be situated as you are, notwithstanding the many advantages she has at London. I see daily, and I hope you have likewise learnt, that places and outward circumstances cannot of themselves either hinder or help us in walking with God. So far as he is pleased to be with us, and to teach us by his Spirit, where-ever we are we shall get forward; and if he does not bless us and water us every moment, the more we have of our own wishes and wills, the more uneasy we shall make ourselves.

One thing is needful; an humble, dependent spirit, to renounce our own wills, and give up ourselves to his disposal without reserve. This is the path of peace: and it is the path of safety; for he has said, The meek he will teach his way, and those who yield up themselves to him he will guide
with

with his eye. I hope you will fight and pray against every rising of a murmuring spirit, and be thankful for the great things which he has already done for you. It is good to be humbled for sin, but not to be discouraged; for though we are poor creatures, Jesus is a complete Saviour; and we bring more honour to God, by believing in his name, and trusting his word of promise, than we could do by a thousand outward works.

I pray the Lord to shine upon your soul, and to fill you with all joy and peace in believing. Remember to pray for us, that we may be brought home to you in peace.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R I V.

London, Aug. 19. 1775.

YOU see I am mindful of my promise, and glad should I be to write something that the Lord may be pleased to make a word in season. I went yesterday into the pulpit very dry and heartless. I seemed to have fixed upon a text, but when I came to the pinch, it was so shut up that I could not preach from it. I had hardly a minute to choose, and therefore was forced to snatch at that which came first upon my mind, which proved 2 Tim. i. 12. Thus I set off at a venture, having no resource but in the Lord's mercy and faithfulness; and indeed what other can we wish for? Presently my subject opened, and I know not when I have been favoured with more liberty. Why do I tell you this? Only as an instance of his goodness,

ness, to encourage you to put your strength in him, and not to be afraid, even when you feel your own weakness and insufficiency most sensibly. We are never more safe, never have more reason to expect the Lord's help, than when we are most sensible that we can do nothing without him. This was the lesson Paul learnt, to rejoice in his own poverty and emptiness, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Could Paul have done any thing, Jesus would not have had the honour of doing all. This way of being saved entirely by grace, from first to last, is contrary to our natural wills; it mortifies self, leaving it nothing to boast of, and through the remains of an unbelieving, legal spirit, it often seems discouraging. When we think ourselves so utterly helpless and worthless, we are too ready to fear that the Lord will therefore reject us; whereas in truth such a poverty of spirit is the best mark we can have of an interest in his promises and care.

How often have I longed to be an instrument of establishing you in the peace and hope of the gospel, and I have but one way of attempting it, by telling you over and over of the power and grace of Jesus. You want nothing to make you happy, but to have the eyes of your understanding more fixed upon the Redeemer, and more enlightened by the Holy Spirit to behold his glory. O, he is a suitable Saviour! he has power, authority, and compassion to save to the uttermost. He has given his word of promise to engage our confidence, and he is able and faithful to make good the expectations and desires he has raised in us. Put your trust in him; believe (as we say) through thick and thin, in defiance of all objections from within and without. For this Abraham is recommended as a pattern to us. He overlooked all difficulties; he ven-

tured.

tured and hoped even against hope, in a case which to appearance was desperate; because he knew that he who had promised was also able to perform.

Your sister is much upon my mind. Her illness grieves me; were it in my power I would quickly remove it: The Lord can, and I hope will, when it has answered the end for which he sent it. I trust he has brought her to us for good, and that she is chastised by him that she may not be condemned with the world. I hope though she says little she lifts up her heart to him for a blessing. I wish you may be enabled to leave her and yourself and all your concerns in his hands. He has a sovereign right to do with us as he pleases, and if we consider what we are, surely we shall confess we have no reason to complain: and to those who seek him his sovereignty is exercised in a way of grace. All shall work together for good: every thing is needful that he sends; nothing can be needful that he with-holds. Be content to bear the cross; others have borne it before you. You have need of patience; and if you ask, the Lord will give it; but there can be no settled peace till our will is in a measure subdued. Hide yourself under the shadow of his wings; rely upon his care and power; look upon him as a physician who has graciously undertaken to heal your soul of the worst of sicknesses, sin. Yield to his prescriptions, and fight against every thought that would represent it as desirable to be permitted to chuse for yourself. When you cannot see your way, be satisfied that he is your leader. When your spirit is overwhelmed within you he knows your path: he will not leave you to sink. He has appointed seasons of refreshment, and you shall find he does not forget you. Above all, keep close to the throne of grace. If we seem to get no good by attempting to draw near him,

we may be sure we shall get none by keeping away from him.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R V.

I Promised you another letter, and now for the performance. If I had said, it may be, or perhaps I will, you would be in suspense; but if I promise, then you expect that I will not disappoint you, unless something should render it impossible for me to make my word good. I thank you for your good opinion of me, and for thinking I mean what I say; and I pray that you may be enabled more and more to honour the Lord, by believing his promise: for he is not like a man that should fail or change, or be prevented by any thing unforeseen from doing what he has said. And yet we find it easier to trust to worms than to the God of truth. Is it not so with you? And I can assure you it is often so with me. But here is the mercy, that his ways are above ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. Though we are foolish and unbelieving, he remains faithful; he will not deny himself. I recommend to you especially that promise of God, which is so comprehensive that it takes in all our concernments, I mean, that all things shall work together for good. How hard is it to believe, that not only those things which are grievous to the flesh, but even those things which draw forth our corruptions, and discover to us what is in our hearts, and fill us with guilt and shame, should in the issue work for our good! Yet the Lord has said it. All your pains and trials, all that

that befalls you in your own person, or that affects you upon the account of others, shall in the end prove to your advantage. And your peace does not depend upon any change of circumstances which may appear desirable, but in having your will bowed to the Lord's will, and made willing to submit all to his disposal and management. Pray for this, and wait patiently for him, and he will do it. Be not surpris'd to find yourself poor, helpless, and vile; all whom he favours and teaches will find themselves so. The more grace increases, the more we shall see to abase us in our own eyes; and this will make the Saviour and his salvation more precious to us. He takes his own wise methods to humble you, and to prove you, and I am sure he will do you good in the end.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R VI.

September 16. 1775.

WHEN you receive this, I hope it will give you pleasure to think, that if the Lord be pleas'd to favour us with health we shall all meet again in a few days. I have met with much kindness at London, and many comforts and mercies; however, I shall be glad to return home. There my heart lives, let my body be where it will. I long to see all my dear people, and I shall be glad to see you. I steal a little time to write another line or two, more to satisfy you than for any thing particular I have to say. I thank you for your letter. I doubt not but the Lord is bringing you forward, and that you have a good right to say to your soul, Why art thou cast down and disquieted?

Hope

Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him. An evil heart, an evil temper, and the many crosses we meet with in passing through an evil world, will cut us out trouble: but the Lord has provided a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care: the fruit of all is to take away sin, and the end of all will be eternal life in glory. Think of these words; put them in the balance of the sanctuary; and then throw all your trials into the opposite scale, and you will find there is no proportion between them. Say then, "Though he slay me I will trust in him;" for when he has fully tried me I shall come forth like gold. You would have liked to have been with me last Wednesday. I preached at Westminster Bridewell. It is a prison and house of correction. The bulk of my congregation were housebreakers, highwaymen, pickpockets, and poor unhappy women, such as infect the streets of this city, sunk in sin, and lost to shame. I had a hundred or more of these before me. I preached from 1 Tim. i. 15. and began with telling them my own story: this gained their attention more than I expected. I spoke to them near an hour and a half. I shed many tears myself, and saw some of them shed tears likewise. Ah! had you seen their present condition, and could you hear the history of some of them, it would make you sing, O to grace how great a debtor! By nature they were no worse than the most sober and modest people. And there was doubtless a time when many of them little thought what they should live to do and suffer. I might have been, like them, in chains, and one of them have come to preach to me, had the Lord so pleased.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R VII.

October 10. 1777.

I Am just come from seeing A—— N——. The people told me she is much better than she was, but she is far from being well. She was brought to me into a parlour, which saved me the painful task of going to inquire and seek for her among the patients. My spirits always sink when I am within those mournful walls, and I think no money could prevail on me to spend an hour there every day. Yet surely no sight upon earth is more suited to teach one thankfulness and resignation. Surely I have reason, in my worst times, to be thankful that I am out of hell, out of Bedlam, out of Newgate. If my eyes were as bad as yours, and my back worse, still I hope I should set a great value upon this mercy, that my senses are preserved. I hope you will think so too. The Lord afflicts us at times; but it is always a thousand times less than we deserve, and much less than many of our fellow-creatures are suffering around us. Let us therefore pray for grace to be humble, thankful, and patient.

This day twelvemonth I was under Mr W——'s knife: there is another cause for thankfulness, that the Lord inclined me to submit to the operation, and brought me happily through it. In short, I have so many reasons for thankfulness, that I cannot count them. I may truly say they are more in number than the hairs of my head. And yet, alas! how cold, insensible, and ungrateful! I could make as many complaints as you; but I find no good by complaining, except to him who is able to help me. It is better for you and me to be admiring the
compassion

compassion and fullness of grace that is in our Saviour, than to dwell and pore too much upon our own poverty and vileness. He is able to help and save to the uttermost: there I desire to cast anchor, and wish you to do so likewise. Hope in God, for you shall yet praise him.

I am, &c.

F I V E

L E T T E R S

T O

Mr C_____.

H 3

L E T T E R I.

*Dear Sir,**January 16. 1775.*

THE death of a near relative called me from home in December, and a fortnight's absence threw me so far behind-hand in my course, that I deferred acknowledging your letter much longer than I intended. I now thank you for it. I can sympathise with you in your troubles; yet knowing the nature of our calling, that by an unalterable appointment the way to the kingdom lies through many tribulations, I ought to rejoice rather than otherwise, that to you it is given, not only to believe, but also to suffer. If you escaped these things, whereof all the Lord's children are partakers, might you not question your adoption into his family? How could the power of grace be manifest either to you, in you, or by you, without afflictions? How could the corruptions and devastations of the heart be checked without a cross? How could you acquire a tenderness and skill in speaking to them that are weary, without a taste of such trials as they also meet with? You could only be a hearsay witness to the truth, power, and sweetness of the precious promises, unless you have been in such a situation as to need them, and to find their suitableness and sufficiency. The Lord has given you a good desire to serve him in the gospel, and he is now training you for that service. Many things, yea, the most important things belonging to the gospel-ministry, are not to be learned by books and study, but by painful experience.

H 4 .

You

You must expect a variety of exercises; but two things he has promised you, that you shall not be tried above what he will enable you to bear, and that all shall work together for your good. We read somewhere of a conceited orator, who declaimed upon the management of war in the presence of Hannibal, and of the contempt with which Hannibal treated his performance. He deserved it; for how should a man who had never seen a field of battle be a competent judge of such a subject? Just so, were we to acquire no other knowledge of the Christian warfare than what we could derive from cool and undisturbed study, instead of coming forth as able ministers of the New Testament, and competently acquainted with the *τα νοηματα*, with the devices, the deep laid counsels and stratagems of Satan, we should prove but mere declaimers. But the Lord will take better care of those whom he loves and designs to honour. He will try, and permit them to be tried in various ways. He will make them feel much in themselves, that they may know how to feel much for others, according to that beautiful and expressive line,

Haud ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.

And as this previous discipline is necessary to enable us to take the field in a public capacity with courage, wisdom, and success, that we may lead and animate others in the fight, it is equally necessary, for our own sakes, that we may obtain and preserve the grace of humility, which I perceive with pleasure he has taught you to set a high value upon. Indeed we cannot value it too highly; for we can be neither comfortable, safe, nor habitually useful, without it. The root of pride lies deep in our fallen nature, and where the Lord has given natural and acquired abilities, it would grow apace,
if

if he did not mercifully watch over us, and suit his dispensations to keep it down. Therefore I trust he will make you willing to endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. May he enable you to behold him with faith holding out the prize, and saying to you, Fear none of these things that thou shalt suffer; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

We sail upon a turbulent and tumultuous sea; but we are embarked on a good bottom, and in a good cause, and we have an infallible and almighty pilot, who has the winds and weather at his command, and can silence the storm into a calm with a word whenever he pleases. We may be persecuted, but we shall not be forsaken; we may be cast down, but we cannot be destroyed. Many will thrust fore at us that we may fall, but the Lord will be our stay.

I am sorry to find you are quite alone at Cambridge, for I hoped there would be a succession of serious students to supply the place of those who are transplanted to shine as lights in the world. Yet you are not alone; for the Lord is with you, the best counsellor and the best friend. There is a strange backwardness in us (at least in me) fully to improve that gracious intimacy to which he invites us. Alas! that we so easily wander from the fountain of life to hew out cisterns for ourselves, and that we seem more attached to a few drops of his grace in our fellow-creatures than to the fullness of grace that is in himself. I think nothing gives me a more striking sense of my depravity than my perverseness and folly in this respect: yet he bears with me, and does me good continually.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R II.

*Dear Sir,**March 1776.*

I Know not the length of your college-terms, but hope this may come time enough to find you still resident. I shall not apologise for writing no sooner, because I leave other letters of much longer date unanswered that I may write so soon. It gave me particular pleasure to hear that the Lord helped you through your difficulties, and succeeded your desires. And I have sympathised with you in the complaints you make of a dark and mournful frame of spirits afterwards. But is not this upon the whole right and salutary, that if the Lord is pleased at one time to strengthen us remarkably in answer to prayer, he should leave us at another time, so far as to give us a real sensibility that we were supported by his power, and not our own? Besides, as you feel a danger of being elated by the respect paid you, was it not a merciful and seasonable dispensation that made you feel your own weakness, to prevent your being exalted above measure? The Lord, by withdrawing his smiles from you, reminded you that the smiles of men are of little value, otherwise perhaps you might have esteemed them too highly. Indeed you scholars that know the Lord are singular instances of the power of his grace; for (like the young men in Dan. iii.) you live in the very midst of the fire. Mathematical studies in particular have such a tendency to ingross and fix the mind to the contemplation of cold and uninteresting truth, and you are surrounded with so much intoxicating applause if you succeed in your researches, that for a soul to be kept humble and alive in such a situation, is such a proof of the Lord's presence

presence and power, as Moses had when he saw the bush unconsumed in the midst of the flames. I believe I had naturally a turn for the mathematics myself, and dabbled in them a little way; and though I did not go far, my head, sleeping and waking, was stuffed with diagrams and calculations. Every thing I looked at that exhibited either a right-line or a curve set my wits a wool-gathering. What then must have been the case had I proceeded to the interior *arcana* of speculative geometry? I bought my namesake's *Principia*, but I have reason to be thankful that I left it as I found it, a sealed book, and that the bent of my mind was drawn to something of more real importance before I understood it. I say not this to discourage you in your pursuits; they lie in your line and path of duty, in mine they did not. As to your academics, I am glad that the Lord enables you to shew those among whom you live, that the knowledge of his gospel does not despoil you either of diligence or acumen. However, as I said, you need a double guard of grace, to preserve you from being either puffed up or deadened by those things, which, considered in any other view than *quoad hoc*, to preserve your rank and character in the university while you remain there, are, if taken in the aggregate, little better than a *splendidum nihil*. If my poor people at —— could form the least conception of what the learned at Cambridge chiefly admire in each other, and what is the intrinsic reward of all their toil, they would say (supposing they could speak Latin) *Quam suave istis suavitatibus carere!* How gladly would some of them, if such mathematical and metaphysical lumber could by any means get into their heads, how gladly would they drink at Lethe's stream to get it out again! How many perplexities are they freed from by their happy ignorance, which often pester those to their lives end.

who have had their natural proneness to vain reasoning sharpened by academical studies.



L E T T E R III.

Dear Sir,

May 18. 1776.

THough I wished to hear from you sooner, I put a candid interpretation upon your silence, was something apprehensive for your health, but felt no disposition to anger. Let our correspondence be free from fetters. Write when you please, and when you can: I will do the like. Apologies may be spared on both sides. I am not a very punctual correspondent myself, having so many letters to write, and therefore have no right to stand upon punctilios with you.

I sympathise with you in your sorrow for your friend's death. Such cases are very distressing! But such a case might have been our own. Let us pray for grace to be thankful for ourselves, and submit every thing in humble silence to the sovereign Lord, who has a right to do as he pleases with his own. We feel what happens in our own little connections; but O, the dreadful mischief of sin! Instances of this kind are as frequent as the hours, the minutes, perhaps the moments of every day: and though we know but one in a million, the souls of others have an equal capacity for endless happiness or misery. In this situation the Lord has honoured us with a call to warn our fellow-sinners of their danger, and to set before them his free and sure salvation; and if he is pleased to make us instrumental of snatching but one as a brand out of the fire, it is a service of more importance than

to be the means of preserving a whole nation from temporal ruin. I congratulate you upon your admission into the ministry, and pray him to favour you with a single eye to his glory, and a fresh anointing of his Holy Spirit, that you may come forth as a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of his kingdom, and that his word in your mouth may abundantly prosper.

I truly pity those who rise early and take late rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, with no higher prize and prospect in view than the obtaining of academical honours. Such pursuits will ere long appear (as they really are) vain as the sports of children. May the Lord impress them with a noble ambition of living to and for him. If these adventurers, who are labouring for pebbles under the semblance of goodly pearls, had a discovery of the pearl of great price, how quickly and gladly would they lay down their admired attainments, and become fools that they might be truly wise! What a snare have you escaped! You would have been poorly content with the name of a mathematician or a poet, and looked no farther, had not he visited your heart and enlightened you by his grace. Now I trust you account your former gain but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ the Lord. What you have attained in a way of literature will be useful to you if sanctified, and chiefly so by the knowledge you have of its insufficiency to any valuable purpose, in the great concerns of walking with God, and winning souls.

I am pleased with your fears lest you should not be understood in your preaching. Indeed, there is a danger of it. It is not easy for persons of quick parts duly to conceive how amazingly ignorant and slow of apprehension the bulk of our congregations generally are. When our own ideas are clear, and our expressions proper, we are ready to think we
have

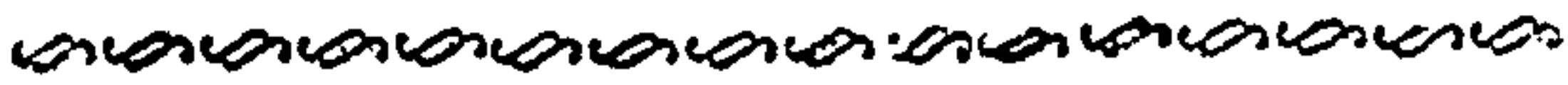
have sufficiently explained ourselves; and yet perhaps nine out of ten (especially of those who are destitute of spiritual light) know little more of what we say than if we were speaking Greek. A degree of this inconvenience is always inseparable from written discourses. They cast our thoughts into a style which, though familiar to ourselves, is too remote from common conversation to be comprehended by narrow capacities; which is one chief reason of the preference I give, *cæteris paribus*, to extempore preaching. When we read to the people, they think themselves less concerned in what is offered than when we speak to them point blank. It seems a good rule, which I have met with somewhere, and which perhaps I have mentioned to you, to fix our eyes upon some one of the auditory whom we judge of the least capacity; if we can make *him* understand, we may hope to be understood by the rest. Let those who seek to be admired for the exactness of their compositions enjoy the poor reward they aim at. It is best for gospel-preachers to speak plain language. If we thus singly aim at the glory of our master and the good of souls, we may hope for the accompanying power of his Spirit, which will give our discourses a weight and energy that Demosthenes had no conception of.

I can give you no information of a curacy in a better situation. But either the Lord will provide you one, or I trust he will give you usefulness and a competency of health and spirits where you are. He who caused Daniel to thrive upon pulse, can make you strong and chearful even in the Fens, if he sees that best for you. All things obey him, and you need not fear but he will enable you for whatever service he has appointed you to perform.

This letter has been a week in hand: many interruptions from without, and indispositions within.

I seem to wh̄ile away my life, and shall be glad to be saved upon the footing of the thief upon the cross, without any hope or plea but the power and grace of Jesus, who has said, I will in no wise cast out. Adieu.

Pray for yours, &c.



L E T T E R I V .

Dear Sir,

Sept. 10. 1777.

I Was glad to hear from you at last, not being willing to think myself forgotten. I supposed you were ill. It seems, by your account, that you are far from well; but I hope you are as well as you ought to be, that is, as well as the Lord sees it good for you to be. I say, I hope so; for I am not sure that the length and vehemence of your sermons, which you tell me astonish many people, may not be rather improper and imprudent, considering the weakness of your constitution; at least if this expression of yours be justly expounded by a report which has reached me, that the length of your sermons is frequently two hours, and the vehemence of your voice so great that you may be heard far beyond the church-walls. Unwilling should I be to damp your zeal; but I feel unwilling likewise that by excessive, unnecessary exertions you should wear away at once, and preclude your own usefulness. This concern is so much upon my mind that I begin with it, though it makes me skip over the former part of your letter; but when I have relieved myself upon this point, I can easily skip back again. I am perhaps the more ready to credit the report; because I know the spirits of you

nervous

nervous people are highly volatile. I consider you as mounted upon a fiery steed, and provided you use due management and circumspection, you travel more pleasantly than we plodding folks upon our sober, phlegmatic nags; but then, if instead of pulling the rein you plunge in the spurs, and add wings to the wind, I cannot but be in pain for the consequences. Permit me to remind you of the Terentian adage, *ne quid nimis*. The end of speaking is to be heard, and if the person farthest from the preacher can hear, he speaks loud enough. Upon some occasions a few sentences of a discourse may be enforced with a voice still more elevated, but to be uncommonly loud from beginning to end is hurtful to the speaker, and I apprehend no way useful to the hearer. It is a fault which many inadvertently give into at first, and which many have repented of too late: when practice has rendered it habitual it is not easily corrected. I know some think that preaching very loudly and preaching with power are synonymous expressions, but your judgement is too good to fall in with that prejudice. If I was a good Grecian I would send you a quotation from Homer, where he describes the eloquence of Nestor, and compares it, if I remember right, not to a thunder-storm or a hurricane, but to a fall of snow, which, though pressing, insinuating, and penetrating, is soft and gentle. You know the passage: I think the simile is beautiful and expressive.

Secondly (as we say) as to long preaching. There is still in being an old-fashioned instrument called an hour-glass, which in days of yore, before clocks and watches abounded, used to be the measure of many a good sermon, and I think it a tolerable stint. I cannot wind up my ends to my own satisfaction in a much shorter time, nor am I pleased with myself if I greatly exceed it. If an angel
was

was to preach for two hours, unless his hearers were angels likewise, I believe the greater part of them would wish he had done. It is a shame it should be so, but so it is, partly through the weakness and partly through the wickedness of the flesh, we can seldom stretch our attention to spiritual things for two hours together without cracking it, and hurting its spring; and when weariness begins, edification ends. Perhaps it is better to feed our people like chickens, a little and often, than to cram them like turkeys, till they cannot hold one gobbet more. Besides, over long sermons break in upon family-concerns, and often call off the thoughts from the sermon to the pudding at home, which is in danger of being over-boiled. They leave likewise but little time for secret or family-religion, which are both very good in their place, and are intitled to a share in the Lord's day. Upon the preacher they must have a bad effect, and tend to wear him down before his time: and I have known some, by over-acting at first, have been constrained to sit still and do little or nothing for months or years afterwards. I rather recommend to you the advice of your brother Cantab. Hobson the carrier, So to set out that you may hold out to your journey's end.

Now, if Fame with her hundred mouths has brought me a false report of you, and you are not guilty of preaching either too long or too loud, still I am not willing my remonstrance may stand for nothing. I desire you will accept it, and thank me for it, as a proof of my love to you, and likewise of the sincerity of my friendship; for if I had wished to flatter you, I could easily have called another subject.

I have one more report to trouble you with, because it troubles me; and therefore you must bear a part of my burden. Assure me it is false, and I

will

will send you one of the handsomest letters I can devise by way of thanks. It is reported, then, (but I will not believe it till you say I must), that you stand upon your tiptoes, upon the point of being whirled out of our vortex, and hurried away, comet-like, into the regions of eccentricity : in plain English, that you have a hankering to be an itinerant. If this be true, I will not be the first to tell it in St John's college, or to publish it on the banks of Cam, lest the mathematicians rejoice and the poets triumph. But to be serious, for it is a serious subject; let me beg you to deliberate well, and to pray earnestly before you take this step. Be afraid of acting in your own spirit, or under a wrong impression; however honestly you mean, you may be mistaken. The Lord has given you a little charge; be faithful in it, and in his good time he will advance you to a greater : but let his Providence evidently open the door for you, and be afraid of moving one step before the cloud and pillar. I have had my warm fits and desires of this sort in my time; but I have reason to be thankful that I was held in with a strong hand. I wish there were more itinerant preachers. If a man has grace and zeal, and but little fund, let him go and diffuse the substance of a dozen sermons over as many counties; but you have natural and acquired abilities, which qualify you for the more difficult, and, in my judgement, not less important, station of a parochial minister. I wish you to be a burning, shining, steady light. You may perhaps have less popularity, that is, you will be less exposed to the workings of self and the snares of Satan, if you stay with us; but I think you may live in the full exercise of your gifts and graces, be more consistent with your voluntary engagements, and have more peace of mind, and humble intercourse with God, in watching over a flock which he has committed to you, than by for-

faking

faking them, to wander up and down the earth without a determined scope.

Thus far I have been more attentive to the *utile* than the *dulce*. I should now return to join you in celebrating the praises of poetry, and the other subjects of your letter; but time and paper fail together. Let me hear from you soon, or I shall fear I have displeased you, which, fond as I am of poetry, would give me more pain than I ever found pleasure in reading Alexander's Feast. Indeed I love you; I often measure over the walks we have taken together; and when I come to a favourite stile, or such a favourite spot upon the hill-top, I am reminded of something that passed, and say, or at least think, *Hic stetit C——*.

Yours, &c.



L E T T E R V.

Dear Sir,

BY your flying letter from London, as well as by your more particular answer to my last, I judge that what I formerly wrote will answer no other end than to be a testimony of my fidelity and friendship. I am ready to think you were so far determined before you applied to the Bishop, as to be rather pleased than disappointed by a refusal which seemed to afford you liberty to preach at large. As your *testimonium* was not countersigned, the consequence was no other than might have been expected; yet I have been told, (how true I know not), that the Bishop would have passed over the informality, if you had not, unasked by him, avowed yourself a Methodist. I think, if you had
been.

been unwilling to throw hindrances in your own way, the most perfect simplicity would have required no more of you than to have given a plain and honest answer to such questions as he might think proper to propose. You might have assisted Mr —— for a season without being in full orders; and you may still, if you are not resolved at all events to push out. He wrote to me about you, and you may easily judge what answer I gave. I have heard from him a second time, and he laments that he cannot have you. I likewise lament that you cannot be with him. I think you would have loved him; and I hoped his acquaintance might not have proved unuseful to you.

If you have not actually passed the Rubicon, if there be yet room for deliberation, I once more intreat you to pause and consider. In many respects I ought to be willing to learn from you; but in one point I have a little advantage of you; I am some years older, both in life and in profession; and in this difference of time perhaps I have learned something more of the heart, the world, and the devices of Satan, than you have had opportunity for. I hope I would not damp your zeal, but I will pray the Lord to direct it into the best channel for permanent usefulness; I say permanent; I doubt not that you would be useful in the itinerant way; but I more and more observe great inconveniencies follow in that way. Where you make a gathering of people, others will follow you; and if they all possessed your spirit, and had your disinterested views, it might be well. But generally an able preacher only so far awakens people to a desire to hear, as exposes them to the incursions of various winds of doctrine, and the attempts of injudicious pretenders, who will resemble you in nothing but your eagerness to pass from place to place. From such measures in time proceed errors, parties, contentions, offences,

offences, enthusiasm, spiritual pride, and a noisy ostentatious form of godliness, but little of that power and life of faith which shews itself by humility, meekness, and love.

A parochial minister, who lives among his people, who sees and converses with them frequently, and exemplifies his doctrine in their view by his practice, having knowledge of their states, trials, growth, and dangers, suits himself to their various occasions, and, by the blessing of God, builds them up, and brings them forward in faith and holiness. He is instrumental in forming their experience; he leads them to a solid, orderly, scriptural knowledge of divine things. If his name is not in so many mouths as that of the itinerant, it is upon the hearts of the people of his charge. He lives with them as a father with his children. His steady consistent behaviour silences in some measure the clamours of his enemies; and the Lord opens him doors of occasional usefulness in many places, without provoking our superiors to discountenance other young men who are seeking Orders.

I now wish I had taken larger paper, for I have not room for all I would say. I have no end to serve. I am of no party. I wish well to irregulars and itinerants who love and preach the gospel. I am content that they should labour that way, who have not talents nor fund to support the character and fill up the office of a parochial minister. But I think you are qualified for more important service. If you had patient faith to wait a while for the Lord's opening, I doubt not but you might yet obtain Priest's Orders. We are hasty, like children; but God often appoints us a waiting time. Perhaps it requires as much or more grace to wait than to be active; for it is more trying to self. After all, whatever course you take, I shall love you, pray for you, and be glad to see you.

I am, &c.

EIGHT

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I am, &c.

EIGHT

E I G H T

L E T T E R S

T O

MRS .

L E T T E R I.

*My dear Madam,**July — 1764.*

THE complaints you make are inseparable from a spiritual acquaintance with our own hearts: I would not wish you to be less affected with a sense of indwelling sin. It becomes us to be humbled into the dust; yet our grief, though it cannot be too great, may be under a wrong direction; and if it leads us to impatience or distrust, it certainly is so.

Sin is the sickness of the soul, in itself mortal and incurable, as to any power in heaven or earth but that of the Lord Jesus only. But he is the great, the infallible physician. Have we the privilege to know his name? Have we been enabled to put ourselves into his hand? We have then no more to do but to attend his prescriptions, to be satisfied with his methods, and to wait his time. It is lawful to wish we were well; it is natural to groan, being burdened; but still he must and will take his own course with us; and, however dissatisfied with ourselves, we ought still to be thankful that he has begun his work in us, and to believe that he will also make an end. Therefore, while we mourn, we should likewise rejoice; we should encourage ourselves to expect all that he has promised; and we should limit our expectations by his promises. We are sure, that when the Lord delivers us from the guilt and dominion of sin, he could with equal ease free us entirely from sin, if he pleased. The doctrine of sinless perfection is

not to be rejected, as though it were a thing simply impossible in itself, for nothing is too hard for the Lord, but because it is contrary to that method which he has chosen to proceed by. He has appointed that sanctification should be effected, and sin mortified, not at once completely, but by little and little; and doubtless he has wise reasons for it. Therefore, though we are to desire a growth in grace, we should at the same time acquiesce in his appointment, and not to be discouraged or despond, because we feel that conflict which his word informs us will only terminate with our lives.

Again, some of the first prayers which the Spirit of God teaches us to put up, are for a clearer sense of the sinfulness of sin, and our vileness on account of it. Now, if the Lord is pleased to answer your prayers in this respect, though it will afford you cause enough for humiliation, yet it should be received likewise with thankfulness, as a token for good. Your heart is not worse than it was formerly, only your spiritual knowledge is increased; and this is no small part of the growth in grace which you are thirsting after, to be truly humbled and emptied and made little in your own eyes.

Farther, the examples of the saints recorded in scripture prove, (and indeed of the saints in general), that the greater measure any person has of the grace of God in truth, the more conscientious and lively they have been; and the more they have been favoured with assurances of the Divine favour, so much the more deep and sensible their perception of indwelling sin and infirmity has always been: so it was with Job, Isaiah, Daniel, and Paul. It is likewise common to overcharge ourselves. Indeed we cannot think ourselves worse than we really are; yet some things which abate the comfort and alacrity of our Christian profession are rather

rather impediments than properly sinful, and will not be imputed to us by him who knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust. Thus to have an infirm memory, to be subject to disordered, irregular, or low spirits, are faults of the constitution, in which the *will* has no share, though they are all burthensome and oppressive, and sometimes needlessly so, by our charging ourselves with guilt on their account. The same may be observed of the unspeakable and fierce suggestions of Satan with which some persons are pestered, but which shall be laid to him from whom they proceed, and not to them who are troubled and terrified because they are forced to feel them. *Lastly*, It is by the experience of these evils within ourselves, and by feeling our utter insufficiency, either to perform duty or to withstand our enemies, that the Lord takes occasion to shew us the suitableness, the sufficiency, the freeness, the unchangeableness of his power and grace. This is the inference St Paul draws from his complaints, Rom. vii. 25. and he learnt it upon a trying occasion from the Lord's own mouth, 2 Cor. xii. 8.—9.

Let us then, dear Madam, be thankful and chearful, and while we take shame to ourselves, let us glorify God, by giving Jesus the honour due to his name. Though we are poor, he is rich; though we are weak, he is strong; though we have nothing, he possesses all things. He suffered for us; he calls us to be conformed to him in sufferings. He conquered in his own person and he will make each of his members more than conquerors in due season. It is good to have one eye upon ourselves, but the other should ever be fixed on him who stands in the relation of Saviour, Husband, Head, and Shepherd: In him we have righteousness, peace, and power: He can controul all that we fear; so that if our path should be through the

fire or through the water, neither the flood shall drown us, nor the flame kindle upon us, and ere long he will cut short our conflicts, and say, Come up hither. "Then shall our grateful songs abound, and every fear be wiped away." Having such promises and assurances, let us lift up our banner in his name, and press on through every discouragement.

With regard to company that have not a favour of the best things, as it is not your choice, I would advise you (when necessary) to bear it as a cross: we cannot suffer by being where we ought to be, except through our own impatience; and I have an idea, that when we are providentially called amongst such (for something is due to friends and relations, whether they walk with us or no) that the hours need not be wholly lost: nothing can pass but may be improved; the most trivial conversation may afford us new views of the heart, new confirmation of scripture, and renew a sense of our obligations to distinguishing grace, which has made us in any degree to differ. I would wish when you go amongst your friends, that you do not confine your views to getting safe away from them without loss, but entertain a hope that you may be sent to do some of them good. You cannot tell what effect a word or a look may have, if the Lord is pleased to bless it. I think we may humbly hope, that while we sincerely desire to please the Lord, and to be guided by him in all things, he will not suffer us to take a journey, or hardly to make a short visit, which shall not answer some good purpose to ourselves or others, or both. While your gay friends affect an air of raillery, the Lord may give you a secret witness in their consciences; and something they observe in you, or hear from you, may set them on thinking perhaps after you are gone, or after the first occasion has entirely slipped
your

your memory, Eccles. xi. 1. For my own part, when I consider the power, the freedom of divine grace, and how fovereign the Lord is in the choice of the instruments and means by which he is pleased to work, I live in hopes from day to day of hearing of wonders of this sort. I despair of nobody: and if I sometimes am ready to think such or such a person seems more unlikely than others to be brought in, I relieve myself by a possibility that that very person, and for that very reason, may be the first instance. The Lord's thoughts are not like ours: in his love and in his ways there are heights which we cannot reach, depths which we cannot fathom, lengths and breadths beyond the ken of our feeble sight. Let us then simply depend upon him, and do our little best, leaving the event in his hand.

I cannot tell if you know any thing of Mrs ———. In a letter I received yesterday she writes thus: ——— “ I am at present very ill with some disorder in my throat, which seems to threaten my life; but death or life, things present or things to come, all things are mine, and I am Christ's, and Christ's is God's. O glorious privilege! precious foundation of soul-rest and peace, when all things about us are most troublous! Soon we shall be at home with Christ, where sin, sorrow, and death have no place; and in the mean time our beloved will lead us through the wilderness. How safe, how joyous are we, may we be, in the most evil case!” — If these should be some of the last notes of this swan, I think them worth preserving. May we not with good reason say, Who would not be a Christian? The Lord grant that you and I, Madam, and yours and mine, may be happy in the same assurance, when we shall have death and eternity near in view.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R II.

My dear Madam,

Sept. 1764.

YOUR welfare I rejoice in; your warfare I understand something of. St Paul describes his own case in few words, “Without were fightings, “within were fears.” Does not this comprehend all you would say? And how are you to know experimentally either your own weakness, or the power, wisdom, and grace of God, seasonably and sufficiently afforded, but by frequent and various trials? How are the graces of patience, resignation, meekness and faith, to be discovered and increased but by exercise? The Lord has chosen, called, and armed us for the fight; and shall we wish to be excused? Shall we not rather rejoice that we have the honour to appear in such a cause, under such a Captain, such a banner, and in such company? A complete suit of armour is provided, weapons not to be resisted, and precious balm to heal us if haply we receive a wound, and precious ointment to revive us when we are in danger of fainting. Further, we are assured of the victory beforehand; and O what a crown is prepared for every conqueror, which Jesus, the righteous Judge, the gracious Saviour, shall place upon every faithful head with his own hand! Then let us not be weary and faint, for in due season we shall reap. The time is short; yet a little while, and the struggle of indwelling sin, and the contradiction of surrounding sinners shall be known no more. You are blessed, because you hunger and thirst after righteousness; he whose name is *Amen* has said you shall be filled. To claim the promise is to make it our own; yet it is becoming us to practise submission and patience,
not

not in temporals only, but also in spirituals. We should be ashamed and grieved at our slow progress, so far as it is properly chargeable to our remissness and miscarriage; yet we must not expect to receive every thing at once, but wait for a gradual increase; nor should we forget to be thankful for what we may account a little, in comparison of the much we suppose others have received. A little grace, a spark of true love to God, a grain of living faith, though small as mustard-seed, is worth a thousand worlds. One draught of the water of life gives interest in and earnest of the whole fountain. It becometh the Lord's people to be thankful; and to acknowledge his goodness in what we have received, is the surest as well as the pleasantest method of obtaining more. Nor should the grief, arising from what we know and feel of our own hearts, rob us of the honour, comfort and joy, which the word of God designs us, in what is there recorded of the person, offices, and grace of Jesus, and the relations he is pleased to stand in to his people, Psal. xxiii. 1. Isa. liv. 5. Cant. v. 16. John xv. 15. 1 John ii. 1. John xv. 1. Jer. xxiii. 5. 1 Cor. i. 30. Matt. i. 21.—23. Give me leave to recommend to your consideration Psal. lxxxix. 15.—18. these verses may be called the Believer's Triumph: though they are nothing in themselves, yet having all in Jesus, they may rejoice in his name all the day. 'The Lord enable us so to do! The joy of the Lord is the strength of his people; whereas unbelief makes our hands hang down, and our knees feeble, dispirits ourselves, and discourages others; and though it steals upon us under a semblance of humility, it is indeed the very essence of pride. By inward and outward exercises the Lord is promoting the best desire of your heart, and answering your daily prayers. Would you have assurance? The true solid assurance is to be obtained

tained no other way. When young Christians are greatly comforted with the Lord's love and presence, their doubts and fears are for that season at an end. But this is not assurance; so soon as the Lord hides his face they are troubled, and ready to question the very foundation of hope. Assurance grows by repeated conflict, by our repeated experimental proof of the Lord's power and goodness to save; when we have been brought very low and helped, sorely wounded and healed, cast down and raised again, have given up all hope, and been suddenly snatched from danger, and placed in safety; and when these things have been repeated to us and in us a thousand times over, we begin to learn to trust simply to the word and power of God, beyond and against appearances; and this trust, when habitual and strong, bears the name of assurance;—for even assurance has degrees.

You have good reason, Madam, to suppose, that the love of the best Christians to an unseen Saviour is far short of what it ought to be. If your heart be like mine, and you examine your love to Christ by the warmth and frequency of your emotions towards him, you will often be in a sad suspense whether or no you love him at all. The best mark to judge, and which he has given us for that purpose, is to inquire if his word and will have a prevailing, governing influence upon our lives and temper. If we love him, we do endeavour to keep his commandments: and it will hold the other way; if we have a desire to please him, we undoubtedly love him. Obedience is the best test; and when, amidst all our imperfections, we can humbly appeal concerning the sincerity of our views, this is a mercy for which we ought to be greatly thankful. He that has brought us to will, will likewise enable us to do according to his good pleasure. I doubt not but the Lord whom you love, and on whom
you

you depend, will lead you in a sure way, and establish and strengthen, and settle you in his love and grace. Indeed he has done great things for you already. The Lord is your shepherd; a comprehensive word. The sheep can do nothing for themselves; the shepherd must guide, guard, feed, heal, recover. Well for us that our shepherd is the Lord Almighty. If his power, care, compassion, fullness, were not infinite, the poor sheep would be forsaken, starved, and worried. But we have a shepherd full of care, full of kindness, full of power, who has said, I will seek that which was lost, and bind up that which was broken, and bring again that which was driven away, and will strengthen that which was sick. How tender are these expressions, and how well fulfilled! His sheep feed in the midst of wolves, yet are preserved safe; for though they see him not, his eye and his heart are upon them. Do we wonder that Daniel was preserved in the lion's den? Why, it is a common case. Which of God's children have not cause to say, "My soul is among lions?" But the angel of the covenant stops their mouths, or only permits them to gape and roar, to shew their teeth, and what they would do if they might; but they may not, they shall not bite and tear us at their own will. Let us trust him, and all shall be well.

As to daily occurrences, it is best to believe that a daily portion of comforts and crosses, each one the most suitable to our case, is adjusted and appointed by the hand which was once nailed to the cross for us; that where the path of duty and prudence leads, there is the best situation we could possibly be in at that juncture. We are not required to afflict ourselves immoderately for what is not in our power to prevent, nor should any thing that affords occasions for mortifying the spirit of self be accounted unnecessary.——I am, &c.

L E T T E R III.

1768.

I Have been some time hoping to hear from you, but Mr ——— was here last Saturday, and informed me that you were ill, or had been so very lately. This intelligence prompted me to write as soon as I could find leisure. I think the Lord has seen fit to visit you with much indisposition of late; I say *he* has seen fit, for all our trials are under his immediate direction, and we are never in heaviness without a *need be*. I trust he does and will give you strength equal to your day, and sweeten what would be otherwise bitter with the essence of his precious love. I hope soon to hear that you are restored to health, and that you have found cause to praise him for the rod.

How happy is the state of a believer, to have a sure promise that all shall work together for good in the end, and in the mean time a sure refuge where to find present relief, support, and protection! How comfortable is it when trouble is near, to know that the Lord is near likewise, and to commit ourselves and all our cares simply to him, believing that his eye is upon us, and his ear open to our prayers. Under the conduct of such a shepherd we need not fear, though we are called to pass through fire and water, through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be with us, and will shew himself mighty on our behalf. It seems almost needless to say, that we were very happy in the company of ———: the only inconvenience was, that it renewed the pain it always gives me to part with them. Though the visit was full as long as I could possibly expect, it seemed very short. This must
be

be the case while we are here: our pleasures are short, interrupted, and mixed with troubles: this is not, cannot be our rest. But it will not be always the case; we are travelling to a better world, where every evil and imperfection shall cease; then we shall be for ever with the Lord, and with each other. May the prospect of this blessed hope set before us revive our fainting spirits, and make us willing to endure hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Here we must often sow in tears, but there we shall reap in joy, and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes for ever. I hope the conversation of friends whom I so greatly love and honour afforded me not only pleasure but profit; it left a favour upon my mind, and stirred up my languid desires after the Lord. I wish I could say the good effect has remained with me to this hour; but, alas! I am a poor creature, and have had many causes of humiliation since. But, blessed be God! amidst all my changes I find the foundation stands sure, and I am seldom or never left to doubt either of the Lord's love to me, or the *reality* of the desires he has given me towards himself; though when I measure my love by the degree of its exercise, or the fruits it produceth, I have reason to sit down ashamed, as the chief of sinners and the least of all saints. But in him I have righteousness and peace, and in him I must and will rejoice.

I would willingly fill up my sheet, but feel a straitness in my spirit, and know not what further to say. O for a ray of divine light to set me at liberty, that I might write a few lines worth reading, something that might warm my heart and comfort yours. Then the subject must be Jesus; but of him what can I say that you do not know? Well, though you know him, you are glad to hear of him again and again. Come then, magnify the Lord with me, and let us call his name together. Let

us adore him for his love, that love which has a height, and depth, and length, and breadth, beyond the grasp of our poor conceptions; a love that moved him to empty himself, to take on him the form of a servant, and to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; a love that pitied us in our lost estate, that found us when we sought him not, that spoke peace to our souls in the day of our distress; a love that bears with all our present weaknesses, mistakes, backslidings, and shortcomings; a love that is always watchful, always ready to guide, to comfort, and to heal; a love that will not be wearied, cannot be conquered, and is incapable of changes; a love that will in the end prevail over all opposition, will perfect that which concerns us, and will not leave us till it has brought us perfect in holiness and happiness, to rejoice in his presence in glory. The love of Christ: it is the wonder, the joy, the song of angels, and the sense of it shed abroad in our hearts makes life pleasant and death welcome. Alas! what a heart have I that I love him no better! But I hope he has given me a desire to make him my all in all, and to account every thing loss and dross that dares to stand in competition with him.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R IV.

1769.

I Found this morning among my unanswered letters one from you, but hope I left it among them by mistake. I am willing, however, to be on the sure side, and would rather write twice than be

too long silent. I heard of your being laid on the bed of affliction, and of the Lord's goodness to you there, and of his raising you up again. Blessed be his name! he is all-sufficient and faithful; and though he cause grief, he is sure to shew compassion in supporting and delivering. Ah! the evil of our nature is deeply rooted and very powerful, or such repeated, continual corrections and chastisements would not be necessary; and were they not necessary, we should not have them. But such we are, and therefore such must be our treatment; for though the Lord loves us with a tenderness beyond what the mother feels for her sucking child, yet it is a tenderness directed by infinite wisdom, and very different from that weak indulgence which in parents we call fondness, which leads them to comply with their children's desires and inclinations, rather than to act with a steady view to their true welfare. The Lord loves his children, and is very indulgent to them so far as they can safely bear it, but he will not spoil them. Their sin-sickness requires medicines, some of which are very unpalatable; but when the case calls for such, no short-sighted intreaties of ours can excuse us from taking what he prepares for our good. But every dose is prepared by his own hand, and not one is administered in vain, nor is it repeated any oftener than is needful to answer the purposed end. Till then, no other hand can remove what he lays upon us; but when his merciful design is answered, he will relieve us himself; and in the mean time he will so moderate the operation, or increase our ability to bear, that we shall not be overpowered. It is true, without a single exception, that all his paths are mercy and truth to them that fear him. His love is the same, when he wounds as when he heals, when he takes away as when he gives: we have reason to thank him for *all*, but *most* for the *severe*.

I received a letter from you which mentions dear Mrs ———'s case, a very trying one; but in this likewise we see the Lord's faithfulness. Our own experience, and all that we observe of his dealings with others, may convince us that we need not be afraid to intrust ourselves and our dearest concerns in his hands; for he can and will make every thing work for good.

How little does the world know of that intercourse which is carried on between heaven and earth; what petitions are daily presented, and what answers are received at a throne of grace. O the blessed privilege of prayer! O the wonderful love, care, attention, and power of our great Shepherd! His eye is always upon us; when our spirits are almost overwhelmed within us, he knoweth our path. His ear is always open to us; let who will overlook and disappoint us, he will not. When means and hope fail, when every thing looks dark upon us, when we seem shut up on every side, when we are brought to the lowest ebb, still our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. To him all things are possible; and before the exertion of his power, when he is pleased to arise and work, all hindrances give way and vanish like a mist before the sun. And he can so manifest himself to the soul, and cause his goodness to pass before it, that the hour of affliction shall be the golden hour of the greatest consolation. He is the fountain of life, strength, grace, and comfort, and of his fullness his children receive according to their occasions: but this is all hidden from the world; they have no guide in prosperity, but hurry on as they are instigated by their blinded passions, and are perpetually multiplying mischiefs and miseries to themselves; and in adversity they have no resource, but must feel all the evil of affliction, without inward support, and without deriving any advantage

vantage from it. We have therefore cause for continual praise. The Lord has given us to know his name, as a resting-place and a hiding-place, a sun and a shield. Circumstances and creatures may change; but he will be an unchangeable friend. The way is rough, but he trod it before us, and is now with us in every step we take; and every step brings us nearer to our heavenly home. Our inheritance is surely reserved for us, and we shall be kept for it by his power through faith. Our present strength is small, and without a fresh supply would be quickly exhausted; but he has engaged to renew it from day to day; and he will soon appear to wipe all tears from our eyes; and then we shall appear with him in glory.

I am very sorry if our friend Mr ——— appears to be aiming to reconcile things that are incompatible. I am indeed afraid that he has been for some time under a decline; and, as you justly observe, we meet with too many instances to teach us, that they who express the warmest zeal at their first setting out do not always prove the most steady and thriving afterwards; yet I am willing to hope in this case, that he will revive and flourish again. Sometimes the Lord permits those whom he loves to wander from him for a season; and when his time comes to heal their backslidings, they walk more humbly, thankfully, and fruitfully afterwards, from a sense of his abounding mercy, and the knowledge they have by experience acquired of the deceitfulness and ingratitude of their hearts. I hope and pray it will be so with him. However, these things for the present are grievous; and usually before the Lord heals such breaches, he makes his people sensible, that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake him when he led them by the way.

Indeed London is a dangerous and ensnaring place to professors. I account myself happy that my lot

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is cast at a distance from it. It appears to me like a sea, wherein most are tossed by storms, and many suffer shipwreck. In this retired situation, I seem to stand upon a cliff; and while I pity those whom I cannot help, I hug myself in the thoughts of being safe upon the shore. Not that we are without our trials here; the evil of our own hearts, and the devices of Satan, cut us out work enough; but we are happily screened from many things which must be either burdensome or hurtful to those who live in the way of them; such as, political disputes, winds of doctrine, scandals of false professors, parties for and against particular ministers, and fashionable amusements, in some measure countenanced by the presence of persons in other respects exemplary. In this view, I often think of our dear friend's expression, upon a certain occasion, of the difference between London and country grace. I hold it in a twofold sense. By London grace, when genuine, I understand grace in a very advanced degree. The favoured few who are kept alive to God, simple-hearted, and spiritually minded, (I mean especially in genteel life), in the midst of such snares and temptations, appear to me to be the first-rate Christians of the land: I adore the power of the Lord in them, and compare them to the young men who walked unhurt in the midst of the fire. In another sense, the phrase *London grace* conveys no great idea to me. I think there is no place in the kingdom where a person may set up for a professor upon a smaller stock. If people can abstain from open immoralities, if they will fly to all parts of the town to hear sermons, if they can talk about the doctrines of the gospel, if they have something to say upon that useleſs question, Who is the best preacher? if they can attain to a speaking acquaintance with some of an acknowledged character, then they expect to pass muster. I am afraid
there

there are many who, upon no better evidences than these, deceive both themselves and others for a course of years. Though I feel not in a writing cue to-day, I have almost filled the sheet somehow; and if a line or a word may be a means of suggesting a seasonable and comfortable thought to you, I have my end. Through mercy we are all pretty well. My soul is kept alive as it were by miracle. I feel much inward warfare; the enemy thrusts fore at me, that I may fall; and I have abundant experience of the evil and deceitfulness of my heart; but the Lord is gracious, and, in the midst of all conflicts, I have a peace springing from the knowledge of his power and grace, and a consideration that I have been helped to commit myself to him.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R V.

1769.

WE are much obliged to you for your late visit; and I am glad to find that the Lord is pleased to give you some tokens of his presence when you are with us, because I hope it will encourage you to come again. I ought to be very thankful that our Christian friends in general are not wholly disappointed of a blessing when they visit us.

I hope the Lord will give me an humble sense of what I am, and that broken and contrite frame of heart in which he delights. This is to me the chief thing. I had rather have more of the mind that was in Christ, more of a meek, quiet, resigned, peaceful,

peaceful, and loving disposition, than to enjoy the greatest measure of sensible comforts, if the consequence should be (as perhaps it would) spiritual pride, self-sufficiency, and a want of that tenderness to others which becomes one who has reason to style himself the chief of sinners. I know indeed that the *proper* tendency of sensible consolations is to humble; but I can see, that through the depravity of human nature they have not always that effect. And I have been sometimes disgusted with an apparent want of humility, an air of self-will and self-importance, in persons of whose sincerity I could not at all doubt. It has kept me from envying them those pleasant frames with which they have sometimes been favoured; for I believe Satan is never nearer us than at some times when we think ourselves nearest the Lord.

What reason have we to charge our souls in David's words, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God." A great stress should be laid upon that word *only*: We dare not entirely shut him out of our regards, but we are too apt to suffer something to share with him. This evil disposition is deeply fixed in our hearts; and the Lord orders all his dispensations towards us with a view to rooting it out; that, being wearied with repeated disappointments, we may at length be compelled to betake ourselves to him alone. Why else do we experience so many changes and crosses? why are we so often in heaviness? We know that he delights in the pleasure and prosperity of his servants; that he does not willingly afflict or grieve his children; but there is a necessity on our parts, in order to teach us that we have no stability in ourselves, and that no creature can do us good but by his appointment. While the people of Israel depended upon him for food, they gathered up the manna every morning in the field; but when they would hoard it up in their
houses,

houses, that they might have a stock within themselves, they had it without his blessing, and it proved good for nothing; it soon bred worms, and grew offensive. We may often observe something like this occurs both in our temporal and spiritual concerns. The Lord gives us a dear friend to our comfort; but ere long we forget that the friend is only the channel of conveyance, and that all the comfort is from himself. To remind us of this, the stream is dried up, the friend torn away by death, or removed far from us, or perhaps the friendship ceases, and a coolness insensibly takes place, we know not *how* or *why*: the true reason is, that when we rejoiced amidst in our gourd, the Lord, for our good, sent a worm to the root of it. Instances of this kind are innumerable; and the great inference from them all, Cease from man, cease from creatures, for wherein are they to be accounted of? My soul, wait thou *only, only* upon the Lord, who is (according to the expressive phrase, Heb. iv. 13.) he with whom we have to do for soul and body, for time and eternity. What thanks do we owe, that though we have not yet attained perfectly this great lesson, yet we are admitted into that school where alone it can be learnt; and though we are poor, slow scholars, the great and effectual teacher to whom we have been encouraged and enabled to apply, can and will bring us forward? He communicates not only instructions, but capacities and powers. There is none like him; he can make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak: and how great is his condescension and patience! how does he accommodate himself to our weakness, and teach us as we are able to bear! Though all are very dunces when he first receives them, not one was ever turned out as *incapable*, for he makes them what he would have them to be. O that we may set him always before us, and con-

sider

consider every dispensation, person, thing, we meet in the course of every day as messengers from him, each bringing us some *line of instruction* for us to copy into that day's experience. Whatever passes within us or around us may be improved (when he teaches us how) as a perpetual commentary upon his good word. If we converse and observe with this view, we may learn something every moment, where-ever the path of duty leads us, in the streets as well as in the closet, and from the conversation of those who know not God (when we cannot avoid being present at it) as well as from those who do.

Separation of dear friends is, as you observed, hard to flesh and blood; but grace can make it tolerable. I have an abiding persuasion that the Lord can easily give more than ever he will take away. Which part of the alternative must be my lot, or when, he only knows; but in general I can rely on him to appoint the time, the manner; and I trust his promise of strength suited to the day shall be made good. Therefore I can for the most part rejoice, that all things are in the hand and under the direction of him who knows our frame, and has himself borne our griefs and carried our sorrows in his own body. A time of weeping must come, but the morning of joy will make amends for all. Who can expound the meaning of that one expression, "An exceeding and eternal weight of glory?" The case of unconverted friends is still more burdensome to think of; but we have encouragement and warrant to pray and to hope. He who called *us* can easily call others: and he seldom lays a desire of this sort very closely and warmly upon the hearts of his people, but when it is his gracious design sooner or later to give an answer of peace. However, it becomes us to be thankful for ourselves, and to bow our
anxieties

anxieties and reasonings before his sovereign will, who doth as he pleases with his own.

Methinks winter is your summer. You have been like the bee, collecting from many flowers; I hope you will carry good store of honey home with you. May you find the Lord there, and he can easily supply the failure of means and creatures. We cannot be in any place to so much advantage as where the call of duty leads. What we cannot avoid may we cheerfully submit to, and not indulge a vain thought that we could chuse a better situation for ourselves (all things considered) than he has chosen for us.

When we have opportunity of enjoying many ordinances, it is a mercy to be able to prize and improve them; but when he cuts us short for a season, if we wait upon him, we shall do well without them. Secret prayer, and the good word, are the chief *wells* from whence we draw the water of salvation. These will keep the soul alive when creature streams are cut off; but the richest variety of public means, and the closest attendance upon them, will leave us lean and pining in the midst of plenty, if we are remiss and formal in the other two. I think David never appears in a more lively frame of mind than when he wrote the 42d, 63d, and 84th Psalms, which were all penned in a dry land, and at a distance from the public ordinances.

I am, &c.

L E T T E R VI.

1772.

I Had been wishing to hear from you, that I might know where to write. I hope I can assure you of a friendly sympathy with you in your trials. I can in some measure guess at what you feel, from what I have seen and felt myself in cases where I have been nearly concerned. But my compassion, though sincere, is ineffectual: if I can pity, I cannot relieve. All I can do is, as the Lord enables me, to remember you both before him. But there is one whose compassion is infinite. The love and tendernefs of ten thousand earthly friends, of ten thousand mothers towards their sucklings, if compared with his, are less than a drop of water to the ocean: and his power is infinite too. Why then do our sufferings continue, when he is so compassionate, and could remove them with a word? Surely, if we cannot give the particular reasons, (which yet he will acquaint us with hereafter, John, xiii. 7.), the general reason is at hand; he afflicts not for his own pleasure, but for our profit; to make us partakers of his holiness, and because he loves us.

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace:
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

I wish you much comfort from David's thought, Psal. cxlii. 3. "When my spirit was overwhelmed
" within me, thou knewest my path." The Lord is not withdrawn to a great distance, but his eye is
upon

upon you, and he sees you not with the indifference of a mere spectator; but he observes with attention, he knows, he considers your path: yea, he appoints it, and every circumstance about it is under his direction. Your trouble began at the hour he saw best; it could not come before, and he has marked the degree of it to a hair's breadth, and the duration to a minute. He knows likewise how your spirit is affected; and such supplies of grace and strength, and in such seasons as he sees needful, he will afford. So that when things appear darkest, you shall still be able to say, Though chastened, not killed. Therefore hope in God, for you shall yet praise him.

I shall pray that the Bath waters may be beneficial; and that the waters of the sanctuary there may be healing and enlivening to you all. Our all-sufficient God can give seasons of refreshment in the darkest hours, and break through the thickest clouds of outward (affliction) or distress. To you it is given not only to believe in Jesus, but to suffer for his sake: for so we do, not only when we are called to follow him to imprisonment or death, but when he enables us to bear afflictive dispensations with due submission and patience. Then he is glorified: then his grace and power are manifested in us. The world, so far as they know our case, have a proof before them that our religion is not merely notional, but that there is a power and reality in it. And the Lord's people are encouraged by what they see of his faithfulness to ourselves. And there are more eyes upon us still. We are a spectacle to the universe, to angels as well as to men. Cheer up: the Lord has put you in your present trying situation, that you may have the fairer opportunity of adorning your profession of the gospel; and though you suffer much, he is able to make you abundant amends. Nor
need

need I remind you that he has suffered unspeakably more for you: he drank for your sake a cup of unmixed wrath, and only puts into your hand a cup of affliction mixed with many mercies.

The account you gave of the poor man detained in the inn was very affecting. Such scenes are or should be instructive, to teach us resignation under the trials we must meet with every day. For not only are we visited less than our iniquities have deserved, but much less than many of our fellow-creatures daily meet with. We need not look about far or long to find others in a worse situation than ourselves. If a fit of the gout or cholic is so grievous and so hard to bear, what do we owe to him who delivered us from that place of unutterable torment, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever, without hope or respite? and if we cannot help interesting ourselves in the groans of a stranger, how ought the groans of Jesus to be as it were continually sounding in our ears? What are all other sufferings compared to his? And yet he endured them freely. He needed not to have borne them, if he would have left us to perish; but such was his love, he died that we might live, and endured the fiercest agonies that he might open to us the gate of everlasting peace and happiness. How amazingly perverse is my heart, that I can be more affected with a melancholy story in a newspaper concerning persons I never saw, than with all that I read of his bitter passion in the garden and on the cross, though I profess to believe he endured it all for me. O! if we could always behold him by faith as evidently crucified before our eyes, how would it compose our spirits as to all the sweets and bitters of this poor life! What a banner would it prove against all the snares and temptations whereby Satan would draw us into evil; and what a firm ground of confidence

fidence would it afford us amidst the conflicts we sustain from the working of unbelief and indwelling sin ! I long for more of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, that I may be preserved humble, thankful, watchful, and dependent. To behold the glory and the love of Jesus is the only effectual way to participate of his image.

We are to set out to-night from the Interpreter's house towards the hill *difficulty*, and hope to be favoured with a sight of the cross by the way. To stand at the foot of it, with a softened heart and melting eyes ; to forget our sins, sorrows, and burdens, while we are wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of him who bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, is certainly the most desirable situation on this side the grave. To speak of it, and to see it by the light of the Spirit, are widely different things : and though we cannot always enjoy this view, yet the remembrance of what we have seen is an excellent means of encouragement to mount the hill, and to face the lions.

I believe I shall hardly find leisure to fill my paper this time. It is now Saturday evening, and growing late. I am just returned from a serious walk, which is my usual manner of closing the week when the weather is fine. I endeavour to join in heart with the Lord's ministers and people, who are seeking a blessing on to-morrow's ordinances. At such times I especially remember those friends with whom I have gone to the house of the Lord in company, consequently you are not forgot. I can venture to assure you, that if you have a value for our prayers, you have a frequent share in them, yea, are loved and remembered by many here ; but as we are forgetful creatures, I hope you will always refresh our memory, and quicken our prayers by a yearly visit. In the morning I shall

think of you again. What a multitude of eyes and hearts will be directed to our Redeemer to-morrow! He has a numerous and necessitous family, but he is rich enough to supply them all, and his tender compassions extend to the meanest and most unworthy. Like the sun, he can cheer and enlighten thousands and millions at once, and give to each as bountifully as if there were no more to partake of his favour. His best blessings are not diminished by being shared among many. The greatest earthly monarch would soon be poor if he was to give a little (though but a little) to all his subjects; but Jesus has unsearchable, inexhaustible riches of grace to bestow. The innumerable assembly before the throne have been all supplied from his fullness, and yet there is enough and to spare for us also, and for all that shall come after us. May he give us an eager appetite, an hunger and thirst that will not be put off with any thing short of the bread of life; and then we may confidently open our mouths wide, for he has promised to fill them.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R V I I

1773.

Since I wrote last, the Lord has been gracious to us here. He crowned the last year with his goodness, and renews his benefits to us every day. He has been pleased to bless the preaching of his gospel amongst us, both to consolation and conviction; and several are, I hope, earnestly seeking him, who were lately dead in trespasses and sins.

Dear

Dear Mr ——— was released from all his complaints the 25th of November. A few days before his death he was enabled to speak more intelligibly than usual for about a quarter of an hour, and expressed a comfortable hope, which was a great satisfaction to us; for though we had not the least doubt of his being built upon the rock, it was to us an answer to prayer that he could again speak the language of faith; and much prayer had been made on this account, especially that very evening. After that night he spoke little, and hardly took any notice, but continued chiefly drowsy till he died. I preached his funeral sermon from Lam. iii. 31. 32. 33. Mrs L——'s complaint grows worse and worse; she suffers much in her body, and has much more perhaps to suffer; but her consolations in the Lord abound. He enables her to maintain faith, patience, and submission, in an exemplary manner, and shews us, in his dealings with her, that he is all-sufficient and faithful to those who put their trust in him. I am glad to hear that you had comfortable seasons while at Bath. It is indeed a great mercy that God's ordinances are established in that place of dissipation; and I hope many who go there with no higher view than to drink the Bath waters, will be brought to draw with joy the waters of life from those wells of salvation. He does nothing in vain, and when he affords the means, we may confidently hope he will bestow the blessing. The dissipation of spirit you complain of, when you are in a strange place, is I suppose felt by most, if not by all, who can be satisfied in no place without some token of the Lord's presence. I consider it rather as an infirmity than a sin, strictly speaking; though all our infirmities are sinful, being the effects of a depraved nature. In our present circumstances new things excite new ideas, and when our usual course of life

is broken in upon, it disjoins and unsettles our thoughts. It is a proof of our weakness: it may and ought to be lamented; but I believe we shall not get the better of it, till we leave the mortal body to moulder into dust. Perhaps few suffer more inconvenience from this article than myself, which is one reason why I love home, and seldom leave it without some reluctance: and it is one reason why we should love heaven, and long for the hour when, at liberty from all incumbrance, we shall see the Lord without a veil, and serve him without distraction. The Lord, by his providence, seconds and confirms the declarations of his word and ministry. Much we read and much we hear concerning the emptiness, vanity, and uncertainty of the present state. When our minds are enlightened by his Holy Spirit, we receive and acknowledge what his word declares to be truth: yet if we remain long without changes, and our path is very smooth, we are for the most part but faintly affected with what we profess to believe. But when some of our dearest friends are taken from us, the lives of others threatened, and we ourselves are brought low with pain and sickness, then we not only *say* but *feel* that this must not, cannot be our rest. You have had several exercises of this kind of late in your family, and I trust you will be able to set your seal to that gracious word, That though afflictions in themselves are not joyous, but grievous, yet in due season they yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness. Various and blessed are the fruits they produce. By affliction prayer is quickened, for our prayers are very apt to grow languid and formal in a time of ease. Affliction greatly helps us to understand the scriptures, especially the promises, most of which being made to times of trouble, we cannot so well know their fullness, sweetness, and certainty, as when we have been in the situation

tuation to which they are suited, have been enabled to trust and plead them, and found them fulfilled in our own case. We are usually indebted to affliction as the means or occasion of the most signal discoveries we are favoured with of the wisdom, power, and faithfulness of the Lord. These are best observed by the evident proofs we have that he is near to support us under trouble, and that he can and does deliver us out of it. Israel would not have seen so much of the Lord's arm outstretched in their behalf, had not Pharaoh oppressed, opposed, and pursued them. Afflictions are designed likewise for the manifestation of our sincerity to ourselves and to others. When faith endures the fire, we know it to be of the right kind; and others, who see we are brought safe out, and lose nothing but the dross, will confess that God is with us of a truth, Dan. iii. 27. 28. Surely this thought should reconcile us to suffer, not only with patience but with cheerfulness, if God may be glorified in us. This made the Apostle rejoice in tribulation, that the power of Christ might be noticed, as resting upon him and working mightily in him. Many of our graces likewise cannot thrive or shew themselves to advantage without trials, such as resignation, patience, meekness, long-suffering. I observe some of the London porters do not appear to be very strong men; yet they will trudge along under a burden which some stouter people could not carry so well: the reason is, that they are accustomed to carry burdens, and by continual exercise their shoulders acquire a strength suited to their work. It is so in the Christian life; activity and strength of grace is not ordinarily acquired by those who sit still and live at ease, but by those who frequently meet with something which requires a full exertion of what power the Lord has given them. So again, it is by our own sufferings we learn to

pity and sympathise with others in their sufferings: such a compassionate disposition, which excites our feelings for the afflicted, is an eminent branch of the mind which was in Christ. But these feelings would be very faint, if we did not in our experience know what sorrows and temptations mean. Afflictions do us good likewise, as they make us more acquainted with what is in our own hearts, and thereby promote humiliation and self-abasement. There are abominations which, like nests of vipers, lie so quietly within, that we hardly suspect they are there till the rod of affliction rouses them; then they hiss and shew their venom. This discovery is indeed very distressing; yet, till it is made, we are prone to think ourselves much less vile than we really are, and cannot so heartily abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes.

But I must write a sermon rather than a letter, if I would enumerate all the good fruits which, by the power of sanctifying grace, are produced from this bitter tree. May we, under our several trials, find them all revealed in ourselves, that we may not complain of having suffered in vain. While we have such a depraved nature, and live in such a polluted world; while the roots of pride, vanity, self-dependence, self-seeking, are so strong within us, we need a variety of sharp dispensations to keep us from forgetting ourselves, and from cleaving to the dust.

I am, &c.

L E T.

L E T T E R VIII.

1774.

THE very painful illness which Mrs ——— so long endured, had doubtless not only prepared you to expect the news of her dismissal, but made you more willing to resign her. You are bereaved of a valuable friend : but life in her circumstances was burdensome ; and who can be sorry to consider her now as freed from all suffering, and possessed of all happiness ? But besides this, I trust the Lord has favoured you with an habitual sense of the wisdom and propriety of all his appointments ; so that, when his will is manifested by the event, you are enabled to say, “ All is well.” “ I was dumb, “ and opened not my mouth, because thou didst “ it.” She is gone a little before you ; and after a few more changes, you will meet her again to unspeakable advantage, and rejoice together before the throne for ever. There every tear will be wiped away, and you shall weep no more. The Lord could have prevented the cause of her great sufferings ; but I doubt not he afflicted her in wisdom and mercy : he could easily have restored her to health ; but the time was hastening when he purposed to have her with him where he is, that she might behold his glory, and have all the desires he put into her heart abundantly satisfied. Precious in his sight is the death of his saints, and every circumstance under the direction of infinite wisdom. His sovereignty forbids us to say, Why hast thou done this ? And his love assures that he does all things well. I have lost a friend likewise : I believe I may say few persons, not immediately related to her, could value her more highly than myself ; and

though of late years I could not have the pleasure of her company, it was a constant satisfaction to me to know I had such a friend.

Mr T———'s sickness and death followed immediately upon this stroke. I doubt not but you have been much affected with this dispensation likewise. But here again we have the same strong hold to retreat to: 'The Lord has done it. What a pleasing prospect of increasing usefulness is now interrupted! How many will mourn his loss! Yet we are sure the work which the Lord had appointed him was finished. They who loved his ministry, and were profited by it, are left apparently destitute; but Jesus, the good Shepherd, is able to take care of his own, and will fulfil his promise to them all. He has said, Verily they shall be fed.

We have had trying and dying times here: half my time almost has been taken up with visiting the sick. I have seen death in a variety of forms, and have had frequent occasion of observing how insignificant many things, which are now capable of giving us pain or pleasure, will appear, when the soul is brought near to the borders of eternity. All the concerns which relate solely to this life will then be found as trivial as the traces of a dream from which we are awakened. Nothing will then comfort us but the knowledge of Jesus and his love; nothing grieve us but the remembrance of our unfaithful carriage to him, and what poor returns we made to his abundant goodness. The Lord forbid that this thought should break our peace! No, faith in his name may forbid our fear, though we shall see and confess we have been unprofitable servants. There shall be no condemnation to them that are in him; but surely shame and humiliation will accompany us to the very threshold of heaven, and ought to do so. I surely shall then be more affected

fecter than I am now with the coolness of my love, the faintness of my zeal, the vanity of my heart, and my undue attachment to the things of time. O these clogs, fetters, vales, and mountains, which obstruct my course, darken my views, slacken my pace, and disable me in service! Well it is for me that I am not under the law, but under grace.

To-morrow is the Sabbath. I am usually glad when it returns, though it seldom finds me in that frame of mind which I would desire. But it is my happiness to live amongst many who count the hours from one ordinance to another. I know they pray that I may be a messenger of peace, and an instrument of good to their souls; and I have cause to hope their prayers are in a measure answered. For their sakes, as much as my own, I am glad to go up to the house of the Lord. O that in watering others I may be also watered myself! I have been praying that to-morrow may be a day of power with you and with us, and with all that love Jesus in sincerity; that we may see his glory, and taste his love in the sanctuary. When it is thus, the Sabbath is a blessed day indeed, an earnest of heaven. There they keep an everlasting Sabbath, and cease not night or day admiring the riches of redeeming love, and adoring him who washed his people from their sins in his own blood. To have such imperfect communion with them as is in this state attainable in this pleasing exercise, is what alone can make life worth the name. For this I sigh and long, and cry to the Lord to rend the vail of unbelief, scatter the clouds of ignorance, and break down the walls which sin is daily building up to hide him from my eyes. I hope I can say, my soul is athirst for God, and nothing less than the light of his countenance can satisfy me. Blessed be his name for the desire: it is his own gift, and

he never gives it in vain. He will afford us a taste of the water of life by the way; and ere long we shall drink abundantly at the fountain-head, and have done with complaint for ever. May we be thankful for what we receive, and still earnestly desirous of more.

I am, &c.

FIVE

F I V E

L E T T E R S

T O

M I S S D ~~—————~~

K 6

L E T T E R I.

*My dear Miss,**August — 1772.*

THE Lord brought us home in peace. My visit to ——— was agreeable, and I shall often think of it with pleasure; though the deadness and dryness of my own spirit, a good part of the time I was there, proved a considerable abatement. I am eager enough to converse with the Lord's people, when at the same time I am backward and indisposed to communion with the Lord himself. The two evils charged upon Israel of old, a proneness to forsake the fountain of living waters, and to trust to broken cisterns, (which can do me no good unless he supplies them), run through the whole of my experience abroad and at home. A few drops of grace in my fellow-worms endear them to me exceedingly. If I expect to see any Christian friends, I count the hours till we meet; I promise myself great benefit; but if the Lord withdraws his influence, the best of them prove to me but clouds without water. It was not, however, wholly so with me all the time I staid with my friends; but I suffer much in learning to depend upon the Lord alone: I have been at this lesson many a long year; but am so poor and dull a scholar, that I have not yet made any tolerable progress in it. I think I received some instruction and advantage where I little expected it; I mean at Mr Cox's Museum. The efforts of his ingenuity amazed me, while at the same time I was struck with their insignificance. His fine things were curious beyond all I had any
idea

idea of; and yet what are they better than toys and amusements, suited to the taste of children! And notwithstanding the variety of their motions, they were all destitute of life. There is unspeakably more wisdom and contrivance in the mechanism of a butterfly or a bee, that flies unnoticed in the fields, than in all his apparatus put together. But the works of God are disregarded, while the feeble imitations of them which men can produce gain universal applause.

If you and I could make self-moving dragons and elephants, what would it profit us? Blessed be God, that he has given us some glimpses of his wisdom and love! by which our hearts, more hard and lifeless by nature than the stones in the street, are constrained and enabled to move upwards, and to seek after the Lord. He has given us in his word a greater treasure than all that we ever beheld with our eyes, and a hope which shall flourish when the earth and all its works shall be burnt up. What will all the fine things of men's device be worth in that day?

I think the passage you refer to in Mr —— justly exceptionable. His intention is good, and the mistake he would censure very dangerous; but he might have explained himself more clearly. I apprehend he and you do not mean the same thing by being in the dark. It is not an uncomfortable, but a careless frame which he would censure. They who walk in darkness and see no light, and yet are exhorted to stay themselves upon God, Isa. l. 10. are said to hearken to the voice of his servant. Though they cannot see the Lord, they are seeking and mourning after him, and waiting in the use of means, and warring against sin. Mr —— had another set of people in view, who trust in the notions of gospel truth, or some past convictions and comforts; though at present they give no
evidence

evidence of spiritual desires, but are worldly in their spirit and conversation; talk of trusting in the Lord; account it a weakness to doubt of their state, and think all is well, because they profess to believe the doctrines of grace. In a word, it is the darkness of sin and sloth, not the occasional darkness of an exercised soul, against which his observation is pointed. Or if indeed he meant more than this, we are not obliged to believe him. Remember your privilege; you have the Bible in your hands, and are not bound to follow books or preachers any farther than what they deliver agrees with the oracles of truth. We have great reason to be thankful for the instructions and writings of spiritual men, but they are all fallible even as ourselves. One is our master, even Christ: what he says we are to receive implicitly; but we do not owe implicit subjection to the best of our fellow-creatures. The Bereans were commended that they would not take even the Apostle Paul upon trust, but searched the scriptures to see whether these things were so. May the Lord give us a spirit of humility and discernment in all things.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R I I.

May 4. 1773.

MEthinks it is high time to ask you how you do, to thank you for your last letter, and to let you know, that though necessity makes me slack in writing, yet I can and do often think of you. My silence has been sometimes owing to want of leisure; and sometimes, when I could have found
leisure,

leisure, my harp has been out of tune, and I had no heart to write. Perhaps you are ready to infer, by my sitting down to write at last, that my harp is now well tuned, and I have something extraordinary to offer: beware of thinking so, lest you should be sadly disappointed. Should I make myself the subject, I could give you at present but a mournful ditty. I suppose you have heard I have been ill; through mercy I am now well. But indeed I must farther tell you, that when I was sick I was well; and since the Lord has removed my illness I have been much worse. My illness was far from violent in itself, and was greatly sweetened by a calm submissive frame the Lord gave me under it. My heart seemed more alive to him than it has done since my cough, fever, and deafness have been removed. Shall I give you another bit of a riddle, that notwithstanding the many changes I pass through I am always the same? This is the very truth: "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" so that if sometimes my spirit is in a measure humble, lively, and dependent, it is not I am grown better than I was, but the Lord is pleased to put forth his gracious power in my weakness: and when my heart is dry and stupid, when I can find no pleasure in waiting upon God, it is not because I am worse than I was before, but only the Lord sees it best that I should feel as well as say what a poor creature I am. My heart was once like a dungeon, out of the reach of day and always dark: the Lord by his grace has been pleased to make this dungeon a room, by putting windows in it; but I need not tell you, that though windows will transmit the daylight into a room, they cannot supply the want of it. When the day is gone, windows are of little use; when the day returns, the room is enlightened by them again. Thus, unless the Lord shines, I cannot

not

not retain to-day the light I had yesterday; and though his presence makes a delightful difference, I have no more to boast of in myself at one time than another; yet when it is dark, I am warranted to expect the return of light again. When he is with me, all goes on pleasantly; when he withdraws, I find I can do nothing without him. I need not wonder that I find it so, for it must be so of course, if I am what I confess myself to be, a poor, helpless, sinful creature in myself. Nor need I be over much discouraged, since the Lord has promised to help those who can do nothing without him, not those who can make a tolerable shift to help themselves. Through mercy he does not so totally withdraw, as to leave me without any power or will to cry for his return. I hope he maintains in me at all times a desire of his presence; yet it becomes me to wait for him with patience, and to live upon his faithfulness, when I can feel nothing but evil in myself.

In your letter, after having complained of your inability, you say you converse with many who find it otherwise, who can go whenever they will to the Father of mercies with a child-like confidence, and never return without an answer, an answer of peace. If they only mean that they are favoured with an established faith, and can see that the Lord is always the same, and that their right to the blessings of the covenant is not at all affected by their unworthiness, I wish you and I had more experience of the same privilege. In general, the Lord helps me to aim at it, though I find it sometimes difficult to hold fast my confidence. But if they speak absolutely with respect to their frames, that they not only have something to support them under their changes, but meet with no changes that require such support, I must say it is well that they do not live here; if they did, they would not
know

know how to pity us, and we should not know how to understand them. We have an enemy at — that fights against our peace, and I know not one amongst us but often groans under the warfare. I advise you not to be troubled by what you hear of other folks experience, but keep close to the written word, where you will meet with much to encourage you, though you often feel yourself weary and heavy laden. For my own part, I like that path best which is well beaten by the footsteps of the flock, though it is not always pleasant and strewn with flowers. In *our* way we find some hills, from whence we can cheerfully look about us; but we meet with deep valleys likewise, and seldom travel long upon even ground.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R III.

1775.

I Am satisfied with your answer to my question: we are not proper judges of each other's circumstances, and I am in some measure weaned from judging hastily, that what would not be convenient for me must therefore necessarily be wrong for another. However, my solicitude for your welfare made me venture to drop a hint, as I was persuaded you would take it in good part. Indeed all situations and circumstances (supposing them not sinful in themselves, and that we are lawfully placed in them) are nearly alike. In London I am in a crowd, in the country I am sure there is a crowd in *me*. To what purpose do I boast of retirement, when I am pestered by a legion in every place?
How

How often, when I am what I call alone, may my mind be compared to a puppet-shew, a fair, a Newgate, or any of those scenes where folly, noise, and wickedness most abound? On the contrary, sometimes I have enjoyed sweet recollection and composure where I could have hardly expected it. But still, though the power be all of the Lord, and we of ourselves can do nothing, it is both our duty and our wisdom to be attentive to the use of appointed means on the one hand, and on the other, watchful against those things which we find by experience have a tendency to damp our fervour, or to dissipate our spirits. A comfortable intimacy with a fellow-worm cannot be maintained without a certain delicacy and circumspection, a studiousness in improving opportunities of pleasing, and in avoiding what is known to be offensive. For though love will make large allowances for involuntary mistakes, it cannot easily brook a slight. We act thus as it were by instinct towards those whom we dearly love, and to whom we feel ourselves greatly obliged: and happy are they who are most influenced by this sentiment in their walk before the Lord. But alas! here we are chargeable with such inconsistencies as we should be greatly ashamed of in common life. And well it is for us that the Lord's thoughts and ways are above ours, and that he is infinite in mercy as well as in power; for surely our dearest friends would have been weary of us, and have renounced us long ago, had we behaved to them as we have too often done to him. He is God and not man, and therefore he still waits to be gracious, though we have so often trifled with him. Surely we may well say with the prophet, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity!" His tenderness and forbearance towards his own people (whose sins being committed

ted against love, and light, and experience, are more aggravated than others) is astonishing indeed. But, oh! may the times past suffice to have grieved his Spirit, and may we be enabled from henceforth to serve him with a single eye and a simple heart, to be faithful to every intimation of his will, and to make him our All in all!

Mr —— has been here, and I have been with him at —— since his return. We seem glad to be together when we can. When I am with him I feel quite at home and at ease, and can tell him (so far as I dare tell a creature) all that is in my heart: A plain proof, that union of spirit depends no more upon an exact uniformity of sentiment than on a uniformity of prayers: for in some points of doctrine we differ considerably; but I trust I agree with him in the views I have of the excellency, suitableness, and sufficiency of the Saviour, and of his right to reign without a rival in the hearts of his redeemed people. An experimental knowledge of Jesus, as the deliverer from *sin* and *wrath*, and the author of eternal life and salvation to all who are enabled to believe, is a sufficient ground for union of heart: in this point all who are taught of God are of one mind. But an eager fighting for or against those points which are usually made the subjects of controversy, tends to nourish pride and evil tempers in ourselves, and to alienate our hearts from those we hope to spend an eternity with. In heaven we shall neither be Dissenters, Moravians, nor Methodists; neither Calvinists nor Arminians; but followers of the Lamb, and children of the kingdom. There we shall hear the voice of war no more.

We are still favoured with health and many temporal blessings. My spiritual walk is not so smooth as my outward path; in public I am mercifully supported,

ported, in secret I most sensibly feel my own vileness and weakness; but through all the Lord is gracious.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R I V.

January 10. 1775.

THere is hardly any thing in which the Lord permits me to meet with more disappointment, than in the advantage I am ready to promise myself from creature-converse. When I expect to meet any of my Christian friends, my thoughts usually travel much faster than my body; I anticipate the hour of meeting, and my imagination is warmed with expectation of what I shall say and what I shall hear: and sometimes I have had seasons for which I ought to be more thankful than I am. It is pleasant indeed when the Lord favours us with a happy hour, and is pleased to cause our hearts to burn within us while we are speaking of his goodness. But often it is far otherwise with me: I carry with me a dissipation of spirit, and find that I can neither impart or receive. Something from within or from without crosses my schemes, and when I retire I seem to have gained nothing but a fresh conviction, that we can neither help or be helped, unless the Lord himself is pleased to help us. With his presence in our hearts, we might be comfortable and happy if shut up in one of the cells of Newgate: without it, the most select company, the most desirable opportunities, prove but clouds without water.

I have sometimes thought of asking you, whether
you

you find that difference between being abroad and at home that I do? But I take it for granted that you do not; your connections and intimacies are I believe chiefly with those who are highly favoured of the Lord, and if you can break through or be upon your guard against the inconveniencies which attend frequent changes and much company, you must be very happy in them. But I believe, considering my weakness, the Lord has chosen wisely and well for me, in placing me in a state of retirement, and not putting it in my power, were it ever so much my inclination, to be often abroad. As I stir so seldom, I believe when I do it is not upon the whole to my disadvantage; for I meet with more or less upon which my reflections afterwards may by his blessing be useful to me, though at the time my visits most frequently convince me how little wisdom or skill I have in improving time and opportunities. But were I to live in London, I know not what might be the consequence. Indeed I need not puzzle myself about it, as my call does not lie there; but I pity and pray for those who do live there, and I admire such of them as, in those circumstances which appear so formidable to me, are enabled to walk simply, humbly, and closely with the Lord. They remind me of Daniel, unhurt in the midst of lions, or of the bush which Moses saw, surrounded with flames, yet not consumed, because the Lord was there. Some such I do know, and I hope you are one of the number.

This is certain, that if the light of God's countenance, and communion with him in love, afford the greatest happiness we are capable of, then whatever tends to indispose us for this pursuit, or to draw a veil between him and our souls, must be our great loss. If we walk with him, it must be in the path of duty, which lies plain before us when our eye is single, and we are waiting with attention upon
his

his word, Spirit, and providence. Now wherever the path of duty leads we are safe; and it often does lead and place us in such circumstances as no other consideration would make us chuse. We were not designed to be mere recluses, but have all a part to act in life. Now if I find myself in the midst of things disagreeable enough in themselves to the spiritual life; yet if, when the question occurs, What dost thou here? my heart can answer, I am here by the will of God; I believe it to be, all things considered, my duty to be here at this time rather than elsewhere. If I say I am tolerably satisfied of this, then I would not burden and grieve myself about what I cannot avoid or alter, but endeavour to take all such things up with chearfulness, as a part of my daily cross; since I am called, not only to do the will of God, but to suffer it: but if I am doing my own will rather than his, then I have reason to fear, lest I should meet with either a snare or a sting at every step. May the Lord Jesus be with you!

I am, &c.



L E T T E R V.

Dear Madam,

April 13. 1776.

I Am rather of the latest to present my congratulation to you and Mr —— on your marriage, but I have not been unmindful of you. My heart has repeatedly wished you all that my pen can express, that the new relation in which the providence of God has placed you may be blessed to you in every respect, may afford you much temporal comfort, promote your spiritual progress, and enlarge your
sphere

sphere of usefulness in the world and in the church.

By this time I suppose visits and ceremonies are pretty well over, and you are beginning to be settled in your new situation. What an important period is a wedding-day! What an entire change of circumstances does it produce! What an influence it has upon every day of future life! How many cares, inquietudes, and trials, does it expose us to, which we might otherwise have avoided! But they who love the Lord, and are guided by his word and providence, have nothing to fear; for in every state, relation, and circumstance in life, he will be with them, and will surely do them good. His grace, which is needful in a single, is sufficient for a married life. I sincerely wish Mr —— and you much happiness together; that you may be mutually helps meet, and assist each other in walking as fellow heirs of the hope of eternal life. Your cares and trials I know must be increased; may your comforts be increased proportionally! They will be so, if you are enabled heartily and simply to intreat the Lord to keep your heart fixed near to himself. All the temporal blessings and accommodations he provides to sweeten life, and make our passage through this wilderness more agreeable, will fail and disappoint us, and produce us more thorns than roses, unless we can keep sight of his hand in bestowing them, and hold and use the gifts in some due subserviency to what we owe to the giver. But, alas! we are poor creatures, prone to wander, prone to admire our gourds, cleave to our cisterns, and think of building tabernacles, and taking our rest in this polluted world. Hence the Lord often sees it necessary, in mercy to his children, to embitter their sweets, to break their cisterns, send a worm to their gourds, and draw a dark cloud over their pleasing prospects. His word tells us, that all here is vanity, compared
with

with the light of his countenance; and if we cannot or will not believe it upon the authority of his word, we must learn it by experience. May he enable you to settle it in your hearts, that creature-comforts are precarious, insufficient, and ensnaring; that all good comes from his hand, and that nothing can do *us* good, but so far as he is pleased to make it the instrument of communicating, as a stream, that goodness which is in him as a fountain. Even the bread which we eat, without the influence of his promise and blessing, would no more support us than a stone; but his blessing makes every thing good, gives a tenfold value to our comforts, and greatly diminishes the weight of every cross.

The ring upon your finger is of some value as gold, but this is not much; what makes it chiefly valuable to you is, that you consider it as a pledge and token of the relation you bear to him who gave it you. I know no fitter emblem of the light in which we should consider all those good things which the Lord gives us richly to enjoy. When every thing we receive from him is received and prized as a fruit and pledge of his covenant-love, then his bounties, instead of being set up as rivals, and idols to draw our hearts from him, awaken us to fresh exercises of gratitude, and furnish us with fresh motives of cheerful obedience every hour.

Time is short, and we live in a dark and cloudy day. When iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold; and we have reason to fear the Lord's hand is lifted up in displeasure at our provocations. May he help us to set loose all below, and to be found watching unto prayer for grace to keep our garments undefiled, and to be faithful witnesses for him in our places! O! it is my desire for myself and for all my dear friends, that whilst too many seem content with a half profession, a name to live,

an outward attachment to ordinances and sentiments and parties, we may be ambitious to experience what the glorious gospel is capable of effecting, both as to sanctification and consolation, in this state of infirmity; that we may have our loins girded up, our lamps burning, and by our simplicity and spirituality constrain those who know us to acknowledge that we have been with Jesus, have sat at his feet, and drank of his Spirit.

I am, &c.

THREE

T H R E E

L E T T E R S

T O

M R S H———.

L E T T E R I.

Long and often I have thought of writing to you: now the time is come. May the Lord help me to send a word in season! I know not how it may be with you, but *he* does, and to him I look to direct my thoughts accordingly. I suppose you are still in the school of the cross, learning the happy art of extracting *real* good out of *seeming* evil, and to grow tall by stooping. The *flesh* is a sad untoward dunce in this school; but grace makes the spirit willing to learn by suffering; yea, it cares not what it endures, so sin may be mortified, and a conformity to the image of Jesus be increased. Surely when we see the most and the best of the Lord's children so often in heaviness, and when we consider how much he loves them, and what he has done and prepared for them, we may take it for granted that there is a need-be for their sufferings. For it would be easy to his power, and not a thousandth part of what his love intends to do for them, should he make their whole life here, from the hour of their conversion to their death, a continued course of satisfaction and comfort, without any thing to distress them from within or without. But were it so, should we not miss many advantages? In the first place, we should not then be very conformable to our head, nor be able to say, As he was, so are we in this world. Methinks a believer would be ashamed to be so utterly unlike his Lord. What! The master *always* a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, and

the servant *always* happy and full of comfort! Jesus despised, reproached, neglected, opposed, and betrayed, and his people admired and caressed: *he* living in the want of all things, and *they* filled with abundance: *he* sweating blood for anguish, and *they* strangers to distress: how unsuitable would these things be! How much better to be called to the honour of filling up the measure of his sufferings! A cup was put into his hand on our account, and his love engaged him to drink it for us. The wrath which it contained he drank wholly himself; but he left us a little affliction to taste, that we might pledge him, and remember how he loved us, and how much more he endured for us than he will ever call us to endure for him. Again, how could we without sufferings manifest the nature and truth of gospel-grace? What place should we then have for patience, submission, meekness, forbearance, and a readiness to forgive, if we had nothing to try us either from the hand of the Lord or from the hand of men. A Christian without trials would be like a mill without wind or water; the contrivance and design of the wheel-work within side would be unnoticed and unknown, without something to put it in motion from without. Nor would our graces grow, unless they were called out to exercise: the difficulties we meet with not only prove but strengthen the graces of the Spirit. If a person was always to sit still, without making use of legs or arms, he would probably wholly lose the power of moving his limbs at last; but by walking and working he becomes strong and active. So in a long course of ease the powers of the new-man would certainly languish; the soul would grow soft, indolent, cowardly, and faint; and therefore the Lord appoints his children such dispensations as make them strive, and struggle, and pant; they must

must press through a croud, swim against a stream, endure hardships, run, wrestle, and fight, and thus their strength grows in the using.

By these things likewise they are made more willing to leave the present world, to which we are prone to cleave too closely in our hearts when our path is very smooth. Had Israel enjoyed their former peace and prosperity in Egypt, when Moses came to invite them to Canaan, I think they would hardly have listened to him. But the Lord suffered them to be brought into great trouble and bondage, and then the news of deliverance was more welcome; yet still they were but half willing, and they carried a love to the flesh-pots of Egypt with them into the wilderness. We are like them; though we say this world is vain and sinful, we are too fond of it; and though we hope for true happiness only in heaven, we are often well content to stay longer here. But the Lord sends afflictions one after another to quicken our desires, and to convince us that this cannot be our rest. Sometimes if you drive a bird from one branch of a tree he will hop to another a little higher, and from thence to a third; but if you continue to disturb him, he will at last take wing and fly quite away. Thus we, when forced from one creature-comfort, perch upon another, and so on; but the Lord mercifully follows us with trials, and will not let us rest upon any: by degrees our desires take a nobler flight, and can be satisfied with nothing short of himself; and we say, To depart and be with Jesus is best of all.

I trust you find the name and grace of Jesus more and more precious to you; his promises more sweet, and your hope in them more abiding; your sense of your own weakness and unworthiness daily increasing; your persuasion of his all-sufficiency to guide,

support, and comfort you, more confirmed. You owe your growth in these respects in a great measure to his blessing upon those afflictions which he has prepared for you and sanctified to you. May you praise him for all that is past, and trust him for all that is to come.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R II.

THOUGH I have the pleasure of hearing of you, and sending a remembrance from time to time, I am willing by this opportunity to direct a few lines to you, as a more express testimony of my sincere regard.

I think your experience is generally of the fearful, doubting cast. Such souls, however, the Lord has given particular charge to his ministers to comfort. He knows our infirmities, and what temptations mean, and as a good shepherd he expresses a peculiar care and tenderness for the weak of the flock, Is. xl. 4. But how must I attempt your comfort? Surely not by strengthening a mistake to which we are all too liable, by leading you to look into your own heart for (what you will never find there) something in yourself whereon to ground your hopes, if not wholly, yet at least in part. Rather let me endeavour to lead you out of yourself: let me invite you to look unto Jesus. Should we look for light in our own eyes, or in the sun? Is it indwelling sin distresses you? Then I can tell you (though you know it) that Jesus died for sin and sinners. I can tell you, that his
blood

blood and righteousness are of infinite value; that his arm is almighty and his compassions infinite: yea, you yourself read his promises every day, and why should you doubt their being fulfilled? If you say you do not question their truth, or that they are accomplished to many, but that you can hardly believe they belong to you; I would ask, what evidence you would require? A voice or an angel from heaven you do not expect. Consider, if many of the promises are not expressly directed to those to whom they belong. When you read your name on the superscription of this letter, you made no scruple to open it: why then do you hesitate at embracing the promises of the gospel; where you read that they are addressed to those who mourn, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who are poor in spirit, &c. and cannot but be sensible that a gracious God has begun to work these dispositions in your heart. If you say, that though you do at times mourn, hunger, &c. you are afraid you do it not enough, or not aright; consider, that this sort of reasoning is very far from the spirit and language of the gospel; for it is grounded on a secret supposition, that in the forgiveness of sin God has a respect to something more than the atonement and mediation of Jesus; namely, to some previous good qualifications in a sinner's heart, which are to share with the blood of Christ in the honour of salvation. The enemy deceives us in this matter the more easily, because a propensity to the covenant of works is a part of our natural depravity. Depend upon it, you will never have a suitable and sufficient sense of the evil of sin, and of your share in it, so long as you have any sin remaining in you. We must see Jesus as he is, before our apprehensions of any spiritual truth will be complete. But if we know that we must perish without Christ, and that he is able to save to the uttermost, we

know enough to warrant us to cast our souls upon him, and we dishonour him by fearing that when we do so he will disappoint our hope. But if you are still perplexed about the high points of election, &c. I would advise you to leave the disposal of others to the great Judge: and as to yourself, I think I need not say much to persuade you, that if ever you are saved at all, it must be in a way of free and absolute grace. Leave disputes to others; wait upon the Lord, and he will teach you all things, in such degree and time as he sees best. Perhaps you have suffered for taking things too much upon trust from men. Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. One is your master, even Christ. Study and pray over the Bible; and you may take it as a sure rule, that whatever sentiment makes any part of the word of God unwelcome to you is justly to be suspected. Aim at a chearful spirit. The more you trust God, the better you will serve him. While you indulge unbelief and suspicion, you weaken your own hands and discourage others. Be thankful for what he has shewn you, and wait upon him for more: you shall find he has not said, "Seek ye my face in vain." I heartily commend you to his grace and care.

And am, &c.

L E T T E R III.

AT length, and without farther apology for my silence, I sit down to ask you how you fare? Afflictions I hear have been your lot; and if I had not heard so, I should have taken it for granted: for I believe the Lord loves you; and as many as he loves

loves he chastens. I think you can say, afflictions have been good for you, and I doubt not but you have found strength according to your day; so that though you may have been sharply tried, you have not been overpowered. For the Lord has engaged his faithfulness for this to all his children, that he will support them in all their trials; so that the fire shall not consume them, nor the floods drown them, 1 Cor. x. 13. Isa. xliii. 2.

If you can say thus much, cannot you go a little further, and add in the Apostle's words, "None
 " of these things move me, neither count I my life
 " dear. I rather glory in my infirmities, that the
 " power of Christ may rest upon me; yea, doubt-
 " less I count all things loss and of no regard,
 " for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ
 " Jesus my Lord; for when I am weak, then I am
 " strong." Methinks I hear you say, "God,
 " who comforteth those who are cast down, has
 " comforted my soul, and as my troubles have
 " abounded, my consolations in Christ have a-
 " bounded also. He has delivered, he does de-
 " liver, and in him I trust that he will yet deliver
 " me." Surely you can set your seal to these words. The Lord help you then to live more and more a life of faith, to feed upon the promises, and to rejoice in the assurance that all things are yours, and shall surely work for your good.

If I guess right at what passes in your heart, the name of Jesus is precious to you; and this is a sure token of salvation, and that of God. You could not have loved him, if he had not loved you first. He spoke to *you*, and said, "Seek my face," before your heart cried to *him*, Thy face, O Lord, will I seek. But you complain, "Alas! I love him so
 " little." That very complaint proves that you love him a great deal: for if you loved him but a little, you would think you loved him enough. A

mother loves her child a great deal, yet does not complain for not loving it more; nay, perhaps she hardly thinks it possible. But such an infinite object is Jesus, that they who love him better than parents or child, or any earthly relation or comfort, will still think they hardly love him at all; because they see such a vast disproportion between the utmost they can give him, and what in himself he deserves from them. But I can give you good advice and good news: love him as well as you can now, and ere long you shall love him better. O when you see him as he is, then I am sure you will love him indeed! If you want to love him better now while you are here, I believe I can tell you the secret how this is to be attained: *trust him*. The more you trust him, the better you will love him. If you ask farther, How shall I do to trust him? I answer, *Try him*: the more you make trial of him, the more your trust in him will be strengthened. Venture upon his promises; carry them to him, and see if he will not be as good as his word. But, alas! Satan and unbelief work the contrary way. We are unwilling to try him, and therefore unable to trust him; and what wonder then that our love is faint, for who can love at uncertainties?

If you are in some measure thankful for what you have received, and hungering and thirsting for more, you are in the frame I would wish for myself; and I desire to praise the Lord on your behalf. Pray for us. We join in love to you.

I am, &c.

T W O

L E T T E R S

T O

M I S S P

L E T T E R I.

August 17. 1776.

IT is indeed natural to us to wish and to plan, and it is merciful in the Lord to disappoint our plans and to cross our wishes. For we cannot be safe, much less happy, but in proportion as we are weaned from our own wills, and made simply desirous of being directed by his guidance. This truth (when we are enlightened by his word) is sufficiently familiar to the judgement; but we seldom learn to reduce it into practice, without being trained awhile in the school of disappointment. The schemes we form look so plausible and convenient, that when they are broken we are ready to say, What a pity! We try again, and with no better success: we are grieved, and perhaps angry, and plan out another, and so on: at length, in a course of time, experience and observation begin to convince us, that we are not more able than we are worthy to chuse aright for ourselves. Then the Lord's invitation to cast our cares upon him, and his promise to take care of us, appear valuable; and when *we* have done planning, *his* plan in our favour gradually opens, and he does more and better for us than we could either ask or think. I can hardly recollect a single plan of mine, of which I have not since seen reason to be satisfied, that had it taken place in season and circumstance just as I proposed, it would, humanly speaking, have proved my ruin; or at least it would have deprived me of the greater good the Lord had designed for me.

W^e

We judge of things by their present appearances, but the Lord sees them in their consequences: if we could do so likewise, we should be perfectly of his mind; but as we cannot, it is an unspeakable mercy that he will manage for us, whether we are pleased with his management or not; and it is spoken of as one of his heaviest judgements, when he gives any person or people up to the way of their own hearts, and to walk after their own councils.

Indeed we may admire his patience towards us. If we were blind, and reduced to desire a person to lead us, and should yet pretend to dispute with him, and direct him at every step, we should probably soon weary him, and provoke him to leave us to find the way by ourselves if we could. But our gracious Lord is long-suffering and full of compassion; he bears with our forwardness, yet he will take methods both to shame and to humble us, and to bring us to a confession that he is wiser than we. The great and unexpected benefit he intends us, by all the discipline we meet with, is to tread down our wills, and bring them into subjection to his. So far as we attain to this, we are out of the reach of disappointment; for when the will of God can please us, we shall be pleased every day, and from morning to night; I mean with respect to his dispensations. O the happiness of such a life! I have an idea of it; I hope I am aiming at it, but surely I have not attained it. Self is active in my heart, if it does not absolutely reign there. I profess to believe that one thing is needful and sufficient, and yet my thoughts are prone to wander after a hundred more. If it be true, that the light of his countenance is better than life, why am I solicitous about any thing else? If he be all-sufficient, and gives me liberty to call him *mine*, why do I go a-begging to creatures for help? If he be about my path and bed; if the smallest, as well as the greatest events.

events in which I am concerned are under his immediate direction; if the very hairs of my head are numbered: then my care (any farther than a care to walk in the paths of his precepts, and to follow the openings of his providence) must be useless and needless, yea indeed sinful and heathenish, burdensome to myself, and dishonourable to my profession. Let us cast down the load we are unable to carry, and if the Lord be our shepherd, refer all and trust all to him. Let us endeavour to live to him and for him to-day, and be glad that to-morrow, with all that is behind it, is in his hands.

It is storied of Pompey, that when his friends would have dissuaded him from putting to sea in a storm, he answered, It is necessary for me to sail, but it is not necessary for me to live. O pompous speech, in Pompey's sense! He was full of the idea of his own importance, and would rather have died than have taken a step beneath his supposed dignity. But it may be accommodated with propriety to a believer's case. It becomes us to say, It is not necessary for me to be rich, or what the world accounts wise; to be healthy, or admired by my fellow worms; to pass through life in a state of prosperity and outward comfort;—these things may be, or they may be otherwise, as the Lord in his wisdom shall appoint: but it is necessary for me to be humble and spiritual, to seek communion with God, to adorn my profession of the gospel, and to yield submissively to his disposal, in whatever way, whether of service or suffering, he shall be pleased to call me to glorify him in the world. It is not necessary for me to live long, but highly expedient that whilst I do live I should live to him. Here then I would bound my desires; and here, having his word both for my rule and my warrant, I am secured from asking amiss. Let me have his presence and his Spirit, wisdom to know my calling,
and

and opportunities and faithfulness to improve them; and as to the rest, Lord, help me to say, what thou wilt, when thou wilt, and how thou wilt.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R II.

Dear Madam,

WHat a poor, uncertain, dying world is this! What a wilderness in itself! How dark, how desolate, without the light of the gospel and the knowledge of Jesus! It does not appear so to us in a state of nature, because we are then in a state of enchantment, the magical lantern blinding us with a splendid delusion.

*Thus in the desert's dreary waste,
By magic pow'r produc'd in haste,
As old romances say,
Castles and groves, and music sweet,
The senses of the trav'ler cheat,
And stop him in his way;*

*But while he gazes with surprise,
The charm dissolves, the vision dies,
'Twas but enchanted ground:
Thus, if the Lord our spirit touch,
The world, which promis'd us so much,
A wilderness is found.*

It is a great mercy to be undeceived in time; and though our gay dreams are at an end, and we awake to every thing that is disgustful and dismaying, yet we see a highway through the wilderness,

a powerful guard, an infallible guide at hand to conduct us through; and we can discern, beyond the limits of the wilderness, a better land, where we shall be at rest and at home. What will the difficulties we met by the way then signify? The remembrance of them will only remain to heighten our sense of the love, care, and power of our Saviour and leader. O how shall we then admire, adore, and praise him, when he shall condescend to unfold to us the beauty, propriety, and harmony of the whole train of his dispensations towards us, and give us a clear retrospect of all the way and all the turns of our pilgrimage!

In the mean while, the best method of adorning our profession, and of enjoying peace in our souls, is simply to trust him, and absolutely to commit ourselves and our all to his management. By casting our burdens upon him, our spirits become light and chearful; we are freed from a thousand anxieties and inquietudes, which are wearisome to our minds, and which, with respect to events, are *needless* for us, yea *useless*. But though it may be easy to speak of this trust, and it appears to our judgement perfectly right and reasonable, the actual attainment is a great thing; and especially so to trust the Lord, not by fits and starts, surrendering one day and retracting the next, but to abide by our surrender, and go habitually trusting through all the changes we meet, knowing that his love, purpose, and promise are unchangeable. Some little faintings perhaps none are freed from; but I believe a power of trusting the Lord in good measure at all times, and living quietly under the shadow of his wing, is what the promise warrants us to expect, if we seek it by diligent prayer; if not all at once, yet by a gradual increase. May it be your experience and mine.

I am, &c.

FOUR.

FOURTEEN

LETTERS

TO THE

REV. MR B—

L E T T E R I.

*Dear and Rev. Sir,**Jan. 27. 1778.*

I Call you *dear* because I love you, and I shall continue to style you *Reverend* as long as you dignify me with that title. It is indeed a pretty sounding epithet, and forms a striking contrast in the usual application. The inhabitants of the moon (if there be any) have perhaps no idea how many Reverend, Right Reverend, and Most Reverend sinners we have in Europe. And yet you *are* reverend, and I revere you, because I believe the Lord liveth in you, and has chosen you to be a temple of his presence, and an instrument of his grace.

I hope the two sermons you preached in London were made useful to others, and the medicines you took there were useful to yourself. I am glad to hear you are safe at home and something better. Cheerful spring is approaching, then I hope the barometer of your spirits will rise. But the presence of the Lord can bring a pleasanter spring than April, and even in the depth of winter.

At present it is January with me, both within and without. The outward sun shines and looks pleasant, but his beams are faint, and too feeble to dissolve the frost. So is it in my heart; I have many bright and pleasant beams of truth in my view, but cold predominates in my frost-bound spirit, and they have but little power to warm me. I could tell a stranger something about Jesus that would perhaps astonish him: such a glorious person! such wonderful

derful love ! such humiliation ! such a death ! and then what he is now in himself, and what he is to his people ! What a sun ! what a shield ! what a root ! what a life ! what a friend ! My tongue can run on upon these subjects sometimes ; and could my heart keep pace with it, I should be the happiest fellow in the country. Stupid creature ! to know these things so well, and yet be no more affected with them ! Indeed I have reason to be upon ill terms with myself ! It is strange that pride should ever find any thing in my experience to feed upon ; but this completes my character for folly, vileness, and inconsistency, that I am not only poor, but proud ; and though I am convinced I am a very wretch, a nothing before the Lord, I am prone to go forth among my fellow-creatures as though I were wise and good.

You wonder what I am doing ; and well you may : I am sure you would if you lived with me. Too much of my time passes in busy idleness, too much in waking dreams. I aim at something ; but hindrances from within and without make it difficult for me to accomplish any thing. I dare not say I am absolutely idle, or that I wilfully waste much of my time. I have seldom one hour free from interruption. Letters come that must be answered, visitants that must be received, business that must be attended to. I have a good many sheep and lambs to look after, sick and afflicted souls, dear to the Lord ; and therefore whatever stands still, these must not be neglected. Amongst these various avocations, night comes before I am ready for noon ; and the week closes, when, according to the state of my business, it should not be more than Tuesday. O precious, irrecoverable time ! O that I had more wisdom in redeeming and improving thee ! Pray for me, that the Lord may teach me to serve him better.

I am, &c.

LET-

L E T T E R II.

*Dear Sir,**April 28. 1778.*

I Was not much disappointed at not meeting you at home. I knew how difficult it is to get away from ———, if you are seen in the street after breakfast. The horse-leech has three daughters, saying, Give, give : the cry there is, Preach, preach. When you have told them all, you must tell them more, or tell it them over again. Whoever will find tongue, they will engage to find ears. Yet I do not blame this importunity; I wish you were teased more with it in your own town; for though undoubtedly there are too many, both at N—— and here, whose religion lies too much in hearing, yet in many it proceeds from a love to the truth, and to the ministers who dispense it. And I generally observe, that they who are not willing to hear a stranger (if his character is known) are indifferent enough about hearing their own minister.

I beg you to pray for me. I am a poor creature, full of wants. I seem to need the wisdom of Solomon, the meekness of Moses, and the zeal of Paul, to enable me to make full proof of my ministry. But, alas ! you may guess the rest.

Send me the way to Christ. I am willing to be a debtor to the wise and unwise, to Doctors and Shoemakers, if I can get a hint, or a *Nota Bene*, from any one, without respect to parties. When a house is on fire, Churchmen, Dissenters, Methodists, Papists, Moravians and Mystics, are all welcome to bring water. At such times, no body asks, Pray, friend, whom do you hear? or, What do you think of the five points? &c. &c.

I am. &c.

L E T T E R III.

My dear Friend,

July 7. 1778.

I Know not that I have any thing to say worth postage, though perhaps, had I seen you before you set off, something might have occurred which will not be found in my letter. Yet I write a line, because you bid me, and are now in a far, foreign country. You will find Mr —— a man to your tooth, but he is in Mr W ——'s connection. So I remember Venerable Bede, after giving a high character of some cotemporary, kicks his full pail of milk down, and reduces him almost to nothing, by adding in the close to this purpose: "But, unhappy man, he did not keep Easter our way!" A fig for all connections, say I, and say you, but that which is formed by the bands, joints, and ligaments the apostle speaks of, Eph. iv. 16. *et alibi*. Therefore I venture to repeat it, that Mr ——, though he often sees and hears Mr W ——, and I believe loves him well, is a good man; and you will see the invisible mark upon his forehead, if you examine him with your spiritual spectacles.

Now methinks I do pity you: I see you melted with heat, stifled with smoke, stunned with noise. Ah! what a change from the brooks and bushes, and birds and green fields, to which you had lately access. Of old they used to retire into the deserts for mortification. If I was to set myself a moderate penance, it might be to spend a fortnight in London in the height of summer. But I forget myself: I hope the Lord is with you, and then all places are alike. He makes the dungeon and the stocks comfortable, Acts, xvi. yea, a fiery furnace, and a lion's den. A child of God in London seems

to be in all these trying situations: but Jesus can preserve his own. I honour the grace of God in those few (comparatively few, I fear) who preserve their garments undefiled in that Sardis. The air is filled with infection, and it is by special power and miraculous preservation they enjoy spiritual health, when so many sicken and fall around them on the right hand and on the left. May the Lord preserve you from the various epidemical soul diseases which abound where you are, and be your comfort and defence from day to day.

Last week we had a lion in town. I went to see him. He was wonderfully tame; as familiar with his keeper, as docile and obedient as a spaniel. Yet the man told me he had his surly fits, when they durst not touch him. No looking-glass could express my face more justly than this lion did my heart. I could trace every feature: as wild and fierce by nature; yea, much more so: but grace has in some measure tamed me. I know and love my keeper, and sometimes watch his looks that I may learn his will. But, oh! I have my surly fits too; seasons when I relapse into the savage again, as though I had forgotten all.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R IV.

My dear Friend,

July 13. 1778.

AS we are so soon to meet, as I have nothing very important to communicate, and many things occur which might demand my time; I have no other plea to offer, either to you or myself, for writing again, but because I love you.

I pity the unknown considerable minister, with whom you smoked your morning pipe. But we must take men and things as we find them: and when we fall in company with those from whom we can get little other good, it is likely we shall at least find occasion for the exercise of patience and charity towards them, and of thankfulness to him who hath made us to differ. And these are good things, though perhaps the occasion may not be pleasant. Indeed a Christian, if in a right spirit, is always in his Lord's school, and may learn either a new lesson, or how to practise an old one, by every thing he sees or hears, provided he does not wilfully tread upon forbidden ground. If he were constrained to spend a day with the poor creatures in the common side of Newgate, though he could not talk with them of what God has done for his soul, he might be more sensible of his mercy, by the contrast he would observe around him. He might rejoice for himself, and mourn over them, and thus perhaps get as much benefit as from the best sermon he ever heard.

It is necessary, all things taken together, to have connection more or less with narrow-minded people. If they are, notwithstanding their prejudices, civil to us, they have a right to some civility from us. We may love them, though we cannot admire them, and pick something good from them, notwithstanding we see much to blame. It is perhaps the highest triumph we can obtain over bigotry, when we are able to bear with bigots themselves. For they are a set of troublesome folks, whom Mr Self is often very forward to exclude from the comprehensive candour and tenderness which he professes to exercise towards those who differ from him.

I am glad your present home (a believer should be always at home) is pleasant; the rooms large
and

and airy; your host and hostess kind and spiritual; and upon the whole, all things as well as you could expect to find them, considering where you are. I could give you much such an account of my usual head quarters in the city; but still London is London. I do not wish you to live there, for my own sake as well as yours; but if the Lord should so appoint, I believe he can make you easy there, and enable me to make a tolerable shift without you. Yet I certainly should miss you; for I have no person in this neighbourhood with whom my heart so thoroughly unites in spirituals, though there are many whom I love. But conversation with most Christians is something like going to court; where, except you are dressed exactly according to a prescribed standard, you will either not be admitted, or must expect to be heartily stared at. But you and I can meet and converse, *sans contrainte*, in an undress, without fear of offending, or being accounted offenders, for a word out of place, and not exactly in the pink of the mode.

I know not how it is: I think my sentiments and experience are as orthodox and calvinistical as need be; and yet I am a sort of speckled bird among my Calvinist brethren. I am a mighty good churchman, but pass amongst such as a dissenter in prunella. On the other hand, the Dissenters (many of them I mean) think me defective, either in understanding or in conscience, for staying where I am. Well, there is a middle party, called Methodists, but neither do my dimensions exactly fit with them. I am somehow disqualified for claiming a full brotherhood with any party. But there are a few among all parties who bear with me and love me, and with this I must be content at present. But so far as they love the Lord Jesus, I desire, and by his grace I determine (with or without their leave) to love them all. Party-walls, though

stronger than the walls of Babylon, must come down in the general ruin, when the earth and all its works shall be burnt up, if no sooner.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R V.

My dear Sir,

July 1778.

I Was glad to hear that you were again within a few miles of me; and I would praise the Lord, who led you out and brought you home in safety, and preserved all in peace while you were abroad, so that you found nothing very painful to embitter your return. Many go abroad well, but return no more. The affectionate wife, the prattling children, listen for the well-known sound of papa's foot at the door; but they listen in vain: a fall or a fever has intercepted him, and he is gone far, far away. Some leave all well when they go from home; but how changed, how trying the scene when they come back! In their absence the Lord has taken away the desire of their eyes with a stroke; or perhaps ruffians have plundered and murdered their family in the dead of the night, or the fire devoured their habitation.

Ah! how large and various is the list of evils and calamities with which sin has filled the world! You and I and ours escape them: we stand, though in a field of battle, where thousands fall around us, because the Lord is pleased to keep us. May he have the praise, and may we only live to love and serve him.

Mrs —— has been very ill, and my heart often much pained while you have been absent.

But

But the Lord has removed his hand: she is much better, and I hope she will be seen in his house tomorrow. I have few trials in my own person; but when the Lord afflicts her, I feel it. It is a mercy that he has made us *one*; but it exposes us to many a pain, which we might have missed if we cared but little for each other. Alas! there is usually an ounce of the golden calf, of idolatry and dependence, in all the warm regard we bear to creatures. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!* for this reason, our sharpest trials usually spring from our most valued comforts.

I cannot come to you, therefore you must come hither speedily. Be sure to bring Mr B—— with you. I shall be very glad to see him, and I long to thank him for clothing my book. It looks well on the outside, and I hope to find it found and favourable. I love the author, and that is a step towards liking the book. For where we love, we are generally tender, and favourably take every thing by the best handle, and are vastly full of candour: but if we are prejudiced against the man, the poor book is half condemned before we open it. It had need be written well, for it will be read with a suspicious eye, as if we wished to find treason in every page. I am glad I diverted and profited you by calling you a speckled bird. I can tell you such a bird in this day, that wears the full colour of no sect or party, is *rara avis*; if not quite so scarce as the phoenix, yet to be met with but here and there. It is impossible I should be all of a colour, when I have been a debtor to all sorts; and like the jay in the fable, have been beholden to most of the birds in the air for a feather or two. Church and meeting, Methodist and Moravian, may all perceive something in my coat taken from them. None of them are angry with me for borrowing from *them*; but then why could I not be content with *their* colour,

lour, without going amongst other flocks and co-veys, to make myself such a motley figure? Let them be angry; if I have culled the best feathers from all, then surely I am finer than any.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R VI.

Dear Sir,

August 1778.

IF the Lord affords health; if the weather be tolerable; if no unforeseen change takes place; if no company comes in upon me to-night, (which sometimes unexpectedly happens); with these provisos, Mr S—— and I have engaged to travel to —— on Monday next, and hope to be with you by or before eleven o'clock.

In such a precarious world, it is needful to form our plans at two days distance, with precaution and exceptions, James, iv. 13. However, if it be the Lord's will to bring us together, and if the purposed interview be for his glory and our good, then I am sure nothing shall prevent it. And who in his right wits would wish either to visit or be visited upon any other terms? O if we could but be pleased with *his* will, we might be pleased from morning to night, and every day in the year.

Pray for a blessing upon our coming together. It would be a pity to walk ten miles to pick straws, or to come with our empty vessels upon our heads, saying, We have found no water.

I am, &c.

L E T-

L E T T E R VII.

My dear Friend,

Oct. 1778.

YOUR letters are always welcome; the last doubly so for being unexpected. If you never heard before of a line of yours being useful, I will tell you for once, that I get some pleasure and instruction whenever you write to me. And I feel not but your call to letter-writing is as clear as mine, at least when you are able to put pen to paper.

I must say something to your queries about 2 Sam. xiv. I do not approve of the scholastic distinctions about inspiration, which seem to have a tendency to explain away the authority and certainty of one half of the Bible at least. Though the penmen of scripture were ever so well informed of some facts, they would, as you observe, need express, full, and infallible inspiration, to teach them which the Lord would have selected and recorded for the use of the church; amongst many others, which to themselves might appear equally important.

However, with respect to historical passages, I dare not pronounce positively that any of them are, even in the literal sense, unworthy of the wisdom of the Holy Ghost; and the dignity of inspiration. Some, yea many of them, have often appeared trivial to me; but I check the thought, and charge it to my own ignorance and temerity. It must have some importance, because I read it in God's book. On the other hand; though I will not deny that they may all have a spiritual and mystical sense, (for I am no more qualified to judge of the deep things of the Spirit, than to tell you what is passing

this morning at the bottom of the sea); yet if, with my present modicum of light, I should undertake to expound many passages in a mystical sense, I fear such a judge as you would think my interpretations fanciful, and not well supported. I suppose I should have thought the Bible complete, though it had not informed me of the death of Rebekah's nurse, or where she was buried. But some tell me that Deborah is the law, and that by the oak I am to understand the cross of Christ: and I remember to have heard of a preacher who discovered a type of Christ crucified in Absalom hanging by the hair on another oak. I am quite a mole when compared with these eagle-eyed divines; and must often content myself with plodding upon the lower ground of *accommodation* and *allusion*, except when the New Testament writers assure me what the mind of the Holy Ghost was. I can find the gospel with more confidence in the history of Sarah and Hagar than in that of Leah and Rachel; though without Paul's help I should have considered them both as family squabbles, recorded chiefly to illustrate the general truth, that vanity and vexation of spirit are incident to the best men, in the most favoured situations. And I think there is no part of Old Testament history from which I could not (the Lord helping me) draw observations, that might be suitable to the pulpit, and profitable to his people: so I might perhaps from Livy or Tacitus. But then with the Bible in my hands I go upon sure grounds: I am certain of the facts I speak from, that they really did happen. I may likewise depend upon the springs and motives of actions, and not amuse myself and my hearers with speeches which were never spoken, and motives which were never thought of, till the historian rummaged his pericranium for something to embellish his work. I doubt not but were you to consider Joab's courtly conduct only
in

in a literal sense, how it tallied with David's desire, and how gravely and graciously he granted himself a favour, while he professed to oblige Job: I say, in this view you would be able to illustrate many important scriptural doctrines, and to shew that the *passage* is important to those who are engaged in studying the anatomy of the human heart.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R V I I I .

My dear Friend,

Oct. 27. 1778.

I Have been witness to a great and important revolution this morning, which took place while the greatest part of the world was asleep. Like many state revolutions, its first beginnings were almost undiscernible; but the progress, though gradual, was steady, and the event decisive. A while ago darkness reigned. Had a man then dropped for the first time into our world, he might have thought himself banished into a hopeless dungeon. How could he expect light to rise out of such a state? And when he saw the first glimmering of dawn in the east, how could he promise himself that it was the forerunner of such a glorious sun as has since risen! With what wonder would such a new comer observe the bounds of his view enlarging, and the distinctness of objects increasing from one minute to another; and how well content would he be to part with the twinklings of the stars, when he had the broad day all around him in exchange? I cannot say this revolution is extraordinary, because it happens every morning; but

surely it is astonishing, or rather it would be so, if man was not astonishingly stupid.

Such strangers once were we. Darkness, gross darkness, covered us. How confined were our views? And even the things which were within our reach we could not distinguish. Little did we then think what a glorious day we were appointed to see; what an unbounded prospect would ere long open before us. We knew not that there was a sun of righteousness, and that he would dawn, and rise, and shine upon our hearts. And as the idea of what we see now was then hidden from us, so at present we are almost equally at a loss how to form any conception of the stronger light and brighter prospects which we wait and hope for. Comparatively we are in the dark still; at the most we have but a dim twilight, and see nothing clearly; but it is the dawn of immortality, and a sure preface and earnest of glory.

Thus, at times, it seems a darkness that may be felt broods over your natural spirits: but when the day-star rises upon your heart, you see and rejoice in his light. You have days as well as nights; and after a few more vicissitudes, you will take your flight to the regions of everlasting light, where your sun will go down no more. Happy you, and happy I, if I shall meet you there, as I trust I shall. How shall we love and sing, and wonder, and praise the Saviour's name!

Last Sunday a young man died here of extreme old age at twenty-five. He laboured hard to ruin a good constitution, and unhappily succeeded; yet amused himself with the hopes of recovery almost to the last. We have a sad knot of such poor creatures in this place, who labour to stifle each other's convictions, and to ruin themselves and associates, soul and body. How industriously is Satan served!

served! I was formerly one of his most active under-tempters. Not content with running the broad way myself, I was indefatigable in enticing others; and had my influence been equal to my wishes, I would have carried all the human race with me. And doubtless some have perished, to whose destruction I was greatly instrumental, by tempting them to sin, and by poisoning and hardening them with principles of infidelity; and yet I was spared. When I think of the most with whom I spent my unhappy days of ignorance, I am ready to say, I only am escaped alive to tell thee. Surely I have not half the activity and zeal in the service of him who snatched me as a brand out of the burning, as I had in the service of his enemy. Then the whole stream of my endeavours and affections went one way; now my best desires are continually crossed, counteracted, and spoiled, by the sin which dwelleth in me; then the tide of a corrupt nature bore me along; now I have to strive and swim against it. The Lord cut me short of opportunities, and placed me where I could do but little mischief; but had my abilities and occasions been equal to my heart, I should have been a Voltaire and a Tiberius in one character, a monster of profaneness and licentiousness. O to grace how great a debtor! A common drunkard or profligate is a petty sinner to what I was. I had the ambition of a Cæsar or an Alexander, and wanted to rank in wickedness among the foremost of the human race. When you have read this, praise the Lord for his mercy to the chief of sinners, and pray that I may have grace to be faithful. But I have rambled. I meant to tell you, that on Sunday afternoon I preached from *Why will ye die?* Ezek. xxxiii. 10. 11. I endeavoured to shew poor sinners, that if they died it was because they *would*, and if they *would* they *must*. I was much affected for a time: I could hardly

hardly speak for weeping, and some wept with me. From some, alas! I can no more draw a tear, or a relenting thought, than from a mill-stone.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R IX.

My dear Friend,

Nov. 27. 1778.

YOU are a better expositor of scripture than of my speeches, if you really inferred from my last that I think you shall die soon. I cannot say positively you will not die soon, because life at all times is uncertain; however, according to the doctrine of probabilities, I think, and always thought, you bid fair enough to outlive me. The gloomy tinge of your weak spirits led you to consider yourself much worse in point of health than you appear to me to be.

In the other point I dare be more positive, that die when you will, you will die in the Lord. Of this I have not the least doubt; and I believe you doubt of it less, if possible, than I, except in those darker moments when the atrabilious humour prevails.

I heartily sympathize with you in your complaints; but I see you in safe hands. The Lord loves you, and will take care of you. He who raises the dead can revive your spirits when you are cast down. He who sets bounds to the sea, and says, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further," can limit and moderate that gloom which sometimes distresses you. He knows why he permits you to be thus exercised. I cannot assign the reasons, but I am sure they are worthy of his wisdom and love;
and

and that you will hereafter see, and say, He has done all things well. If I was as wise as your philosopher, I might say a great deal about a melancholy complexion; but I love not to puzzle myself with second causes, while the first cause is at hand, which sufficiently accounts for every phœnomenon in a believer's experience. Your constitution, your situation, your temper, your distemper, all that is either comfortable or painful in your lot, is of his appointment. The hairs of your head are all numbered: the same power which produced the planet Jupiter is necessary to the production of a single hair, nor can one of them fall to the ground without his notice, any more than the stars can fall from their orbits. In providence no less than in creation he is *Maximus in minimis*. Therefore fear not; only believe. Our sea may sometimes be stormy, but we have an infallible pilot, and shall infallibly gain our port.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R X.

My dear Friend,

Feb. 23. 1779.

ON Saturday, and not before, I heard you had been ill. Had the news reached me sooner, I should have sent you a line sooner. I hope you will be able to inform me that you are now better, and that the Lord continues to do you good by every dispensation he allots you. Healing and wounding are equally from his hand, and equally tokens of his love and care over us. I have but little affliction in my own person, but I have been often chastened of late by proxy. The Lord, for his

his people's sake, is still pleased to give me health and strength for public service; but when I need the rod he lays it upon Mrs ——. In this way I have felt much, without being disabled or laid aside. But he has heard prayer for her likewise, and for more than a fortnight past she has been comfortably well. I lay at least one half of her sickness to my own account. She suffers for me, and I through her. It is indeed touching me in a tender part. Perharps if *I* could be more wise, watchful, and humble, it might contribute more to the re-establishment of her health than all the medicines she takes.

I somehow neglected to confer with you about the business of the Fast-day. The last of my three sermons, when I had, as I expected, the largest congregation, was a sort of historical discourse, from Deut. xxxii. 15. : In which, running over the leading national events from the time of Wickliff; I endeavoured to trace the steps and turns by which the Lord has made us a fat and thriving people, and in the event blessed us beyond his favoured Jeshurun of old, with civil and religious liberty, peace, honour, and prosperity, and gospel-privileges. How fat we were when the war terminated in the year 1763, and how we have kicked, and forsaken the rock of our salvation of late years! Then followed a sketch of our present state and spirit as a people, both in a religious and political view. I started at the picture while I drew it, though it was a very inadequate representation. We seemed willing to afflict our souls for one day, as Dr Lowth reads Isa. lviii. 5. But the next day things returned into their former channel: the fast and the occasion seemed presently forgotten, except by a few simple souls, who are despised and hated by the rest for their preciseness, because they think sin ought to be lamented every day in the year.

Who

Who would envy Cassandra her gift of prophecy upon the terms she had it, that her declarations, however true, should meet with no belief or regard? It is the lot of gospel-ministers, with respect to the bulk of their hearers. But blessed be the grace which makes a few exceptions! Here and there one will hear, believe, and be saved. Every one of these is worth a world; and our success with a few should console us for all our trials.

Come and see us as soon as you can, only not to-morrow, for I am then to go to T—. My Lord, the Great Shepherd, has one sheep there, related to the fold under my care. I can seldom see her, and she is very ill. I expect she will be soon removed to the pasture above. Our love to Mrs B—.

Believe me yours, &c.



L E T T E R XI.

My dear Friend,

April 23. 1779.

MAY I not style myself a friend, when I remember you after an interval of several weeks since I saw you, and through a distance of threescore miles? But the truth is, you have been neither absent nor distant from my heart a day. Your idea has travelled with me: you are a kind of familiar, very often before the eye of my mind. This I hope may be admitted as a proof of friendship.

I know the Lord loves you, and you know it likewise: every affliction affords you a fresh proof of it. How wise his management in our trials! How wisely adjusted in season, weight, continuance,

ance, to answer his gracious purposes in sending them! How unspeakably better to be at his disposal than at our own! So you say; so you think; so you find. You trust in him, and shall not be disappointed. Help me with your prayers, that I may trust him too, and be at length enabled to say without reserve, What thou wilt, when thou wilt, how thou wilt. I had rather speak these three sentences from my heart, in my mother tongue, than be master of all the languages in Europe.

I am yours, &c.



L E T T E R XII.

My dear Friend,

August 19. 1779.

AMong the rest of temporal mercies I would be thankful for pen, ink, and paper, and the convenience of the post, by which means we can waft a thought to a friend when we cannot get at him. My will has been good to see you; but you must accept the will for the deed. The Lord has not permitted me.

I have been troubled of late with the rheumatism in my left arm. Mine is a sinful, vile body, and it is a mercy that any part of it is free from pain. It is virtually the seat and subject of all diseases; but the Lord holds them like wild beasts in a chain under a strong restraint; was that restraint taken off, they would rush upon their prey from every quarter, and seize upon every limb, member, joint, and nerve, at once. Yet, though I am a sinner, and though my whole texture is so frail and exposed, I have enjoyed for a number of years an almost perfect exemption both from pain and sickness.

ness. This is wonderful indeed, even in my own eyes.

But my soul is far from being in a healthy state. There I have laboured, and still labour under a complication of diseases; and, but for the care and skill of an infallible physician, I must have died the death long ago. At this very moment my soul is feverish, dropical, paralytic. I feel a loss of appetite, a disinclination both to food and to medicine; so that I am alive by miracle: yet I trust I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. When I faint, he revives me again. I am sure he is able, and I trust he has promised to heal me; but how inveterate must my disease be, that is not yet subdued, even under his management!

Well, my friend, there is a land where the inhabitant shall no more say I am sick. Then my eyes will not be dim, nor my ear heavy, nor my heart hard.

*One sight of Jesus as he is,
Will strike all sin for ever dead.*

Blessed be his name for this glorious hope! May it cheer us under all our present uneasy feelings, and reconcile us to every cross. The way must be right, however rough, that leads to such a glorious end.

O for more of that gracious influence, which in a moment can make the wilderness soul rejoice and blossom like the rose! I want something which neither critics nor commentators can help me to. The scripture itself, whether I read it in Hebrew, Greek, French, or English, is a sealed book in all languages, unless the Spirit of the Lord is present to expound and apply. Pray for me. No prayer seems more suitable to me than that of the Psalmist,
“ Bring

“ Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy
 “ name.”

I am, &c.



L E T T E R XIII.

My dear Friend,

August 28. 1779.

I Want to hear how you are. I hope your complaint is not worse than when I saw you. I hope you are easier, and will soon find yourself able to move about again. I should be sorry, if to the symptoms of the stone you should have the gout super-added in your right hand; for then you will not be able to write to me.

We go on much as usual; sometimes very poorly, sometimes a little better; the latter is the case today. My rheumatism continues; but it is very moderate and tolerable. The Lord deals gently with us, and gives us many proofs that he does not afflict willingly.

The days speed away apace; each one bears away its own burden with it, to return no more. Both pleasures and pains that are past are gone for ever. What is yet future will likewise be soon past. The *end* is coming. O to realize the thought, and to judge of things now in some measure suitable to the judgement we shall form of them, when we are about to leave them all! Many things which now either elate or depress us, will then appear to be trifles light as air.

One thing is needful: to have our hearts united to the Lord in humble faith; to set him always before us; to rejoice in him as our Shepherd and our portion; to submit to all his appointments, not of necessity,

necessity,

necessity, because he is stronger than we, but with a chearful acquiescence, because he is wise and good, and loves us better than we do ourselves; to feed upon his truth; to have our understandings, wills, affections, imaginations, memory, all filled and impressed with the great mysteries of redeeming love, to do all for him, to receive all from him, to find all in him. I have mentioned many things, but they are all comprised in one, a life of faith in the Son of God. We are empty vessels in ourselves, but we cannot remain empty. Except Jesus dwells in our hearts, and fills them with his power and presence, they will be filled with folly, vanity, and vexation.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R XIV.

My dear Friend,

Oct. 26. 1779.

BEing to go out of town to-day, I started up before light to write to you, and hoped to have sent you a long letter; when, behold! I could not get at any paper. I am now waiting for a peep at Mr B — at his lodgings, who came to town last night; and I shall write as fast as I can till I see him.

I feel for you a little in the same way as you feel for yourself. I bear a friendly sympathy in your late sharp and sudden trial. I mourn with that part of you which mourns; but at the same time I rejoice in the proof you have, and which you give, that the Lord is with you of a truth. I rejoice on your account, to see you supported and comforted, and enabled to say, He has done all things well. I rejoice on my own account. Such instances of his
faithfulness,

faithfulness and all-sufficiency are very encouraging. We must all expect hours of trouble in our turn. We must all feel in our concernments the vanity and uncertainty of creature-comforts. What a mercy is it to know from our own past experience, and to have it confirmed to us by the experience of others, that the Lord is good, a strong-hold in the day of trouble, and that he knoweth them that trust in him. Creatures are like candles, they waste while they afford us a little light, and we see them extinguished in their sockets one after another. But the light of the sun makes amends for them all. The Lord is so rich that he easily can, so good that he certainly will, give his children more than he ever will take away. When his gracious voice reaches the heart, It is I, be not afraid; Be still, and know that I am God; when he gives us an impression of his wisdom, power, love, and care; then the storm which attempts to rise in our natural passions is hushed into a calm; the flesh continues to feel, but the spirit is made willing. And something more than submission takes place; a sweet resignation and acquiescence, and even a joy that we have any thing which we value to surrender to his call.

Yours, &c.

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