STRICTURES

ON

SANDEMANIANISM,

IN

TWELVE LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

BY ANDREW FULLER,

AUTHOR OF THE CALVINISTIC AND SOCINIAN SYSTEMS COMPARED, &c.

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STRICTURES

ON

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LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE been told more than once, that my not answering the piece written some years since, by Mr. A. M'LEAN, has been considered as a proof that I felt it unanswerable. But if so, I must have felt the productions of many other opponents unanswerable as well as his, for I have seldom had the last word in a controversy. The truth is, I was not greatly inclined to answer Mr. M. I felt disgusted with the illiberality of his repeatedly arraigning my motives, his accusing me of intentional misrepresentation, and his insinuating as though I could "take either side of a question as I found occasion." I contented myself therefore with writing a small tract, called, *The great question answered,* in which, while complying with the desire of a friend, I endeavoured to state

my views *without controversy;* and as Mr. M. had given a caricature description of what my principles would amount to, if applied in the form of an address to the unconverted, I determined to reduce them to that form; hoping also that, with the blessing of God, they might prove of some use to the parties addressed.

Whether it was owing to this tract, or not, I have reason to believe, that the friends of religion who attended to the subject, did me justice at the time, and that even those who favoured Mr. M.'s side of the question, thought he must have mistaken the drift of my reasoning, as well as have imputed motives to me of which I was innocent.

Whatever Mr. M. may think of me, I do not consider him as capable of either intentional misrepresentation, or taking either side of a question as he may find occasion. That my principles are misrepresented by him, and that in a great number of instances, I could easily prove: but the opinion that I have of his character, leads me to impute it to misunderstanding, and not to design.

I am not conscious of any unbrotherly feeling towards Mr. M.: in resuming the subject however, after such a lapse of time, I have no mind to write a particular answer to his performance, though I may frequently notice his arguments. It is in consequence of observing the nature and tendency of the *system*, that I undertake to examine it. Such an examination will not only be more agreeable to

my own feelings, but more edifying to the reader, than either an attack on an individual opponent, or a defence of myself against him.

In calling the sentiments I oppose *Sandemanianism*, I mean nothing invidious. The principles taught by Messrs. GLASS and SANDEMAN, about half a century ago, did certainly give a new turn and character to almost every thing pertaining to the religion of Christ, as must appear to any one who reads and understands their publications. In the North it is the former of these authors who gives name to the denomination: with us it is the latter, as being most known by his writings.

I have denominated Sandemanianism *a system;* because it not only, as I have said, affects the whole of Christianity, but induces all who embrace it, to separate from other Christians. Mr. SANDEMAN manifestly desired that the societies which were connected with him, should be unconnected with all others, and that they should be considered as the only true churches of Christ. Such a view of things amounts to more than a difference on a few points of doctrine; it is a distinct species of religion, and requires for distinction's sake to have a name, and till some other is found by which it can be designated, it must be called after that of its author.

It is not my design to censure Sandemanianism in the gross. There are many things in the system which, in my judgment, are worthy of serious at-

tention. If Mr. SANDEMAN, and his followers, had only taught that faith has revealed truth for its object, or that which is true antecedent to its being believed, and whether it be believed or not—that the finished work of Christ, exclusive of every act, exercise, or thought of the human mind, is that for the sake of which a sinner is justified before God —that no qualifications of any kind are necessary to warrant our believing in him—and that the first scriptural consolation received by the believer arises from the gospel, and not from reflecting on the feelings of his own mind towards it, they would have deserved well of the church of Christ.

Whether those against whom Mr. S. inveighs, under the name of *popular preachers*, were so averse to these principles as he has represented them, is another question. I have no doubt, however, but they, and many other preachers and writers of the present times, stand corrected by him and by other writers who have adopted his principles.

Mr. ECKING remarks on some passages in Mr. BOSTON's *Fourfold State* with much propriety, particularly on such language as the following—"Do what you *can;* and it may be while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you *cannot*." Again, "Let us believe as we *can*, in obedience to God's command, and while we are doing so, although the act be at the beginning but natural, yet in the very act, promised and pur-

chased grace strikes in, and turns it into a supernatural act of believing." *Essays, p.* 33. From other parts of Mr. BOSTON's work, it appears that he did not consider grace as promised to any of the works of the unregenerate; but allowing him by "promised grace," in this passage, to mean that which was promised to Christ on behalf of those who were given him by the Father, yet the language is unscriptural and dangerous, as giving the sinner to understand that his inability is something that excuses him, and that in doing what he *can* while in enmity to God, he obeys the divine command, and is at least in a more hopeful way of obtaining supernatural grace. The apostles exhorted sinners to *repent and believe the gospel,* and to nothing short of it; making no account of their inability. If we follow their example, God may honour his own ordinances by accompanying them with his Holy Spirit; but as to any thing being done in concurrence with the endeavours of the unregenerate, we have no such idea held out to us in the oracles of God.

It is God's ordinary method indeed, prior to his bestowing that supernatural grace which enables a sinner to repent and believe the gospel, by various means to awaken him to reflection, and to the serious consideration of his condition as a transgressor of the divine law. Such convictions may last for a considerable time, and may issue in true conversion; but they may not: and so long as the gospel

way of salvation is rejected, or neglected, in favour of some self-righteous scheme, there is nothing truly good in them. They are as the *noise*, and the *shaking* of the dry bones, but not *the breath of life*. They are the means by which God prepares the mind for a welcome reception of the gospel; but they contain no advance towards Christ on the part of the sinner. He is not nearer the kingdom of heaven, nor less in danger of the wrath to come, than when he was at ease in his sins. Nay, notwithstanding the outward reformation which such convictions ordinarily produce, he is not upon the whole a less sinner in the sight of God than he was before. On the contrary, "He who continues under all this light, and contrary to the plain dictates, and pressing painful convictions of his own conscience, obstinately to oppose and reject Jesus Christ; is, on the account of this his impenitence and obstinacy under this clear light and conviction of conscience, (whatever alteration or reformation has taken place in him in other respects) *more guilty, vile, and odious in God's sight than he was before.*" *

For a minister to withhold the invitations of the gospel till he perceives the sinner sufficiently, as he thinks, convinced of sin, and then to bring them forward as something to which he is entitled, holding up his convictions and distress of mind as

* Hopkins's True state of the Unregenerate. p. 6.

signs of grace, and persuading him on this ground to think himself one of God's elect, and warranted to believe in Christ, is doing worse than nothing. The comfort which the apostles presented to awakened sinners consisted purely in the exhibition of Christ, and the invitations to believe in him. Neither the company addressed by Peter, nor the Philippian jailor were encouraged from any thing in the state of their own minds, though each were deeply impressed; but from the gospel only. The *preachers* might and would take encouragement on perceiving them to be pricked in their hearts, and might hope for a good issue; but it had been at their peril to encourage *them* to hope for mercy any otherwise than as believing in the Son of God.

The hyper-calvinists, who set aside the invitations of the gospel to the unregenerate, abound in these things. They are aware that the scriptures do invite sinners of some sort to believe in Christ; but then they conceive them to be sensible sinners only. It is thus that the terms *hunger, thirst, labour, heavy-laden, &c.* as used in the scripture invitations, are considered as denoting *spiritual* desire, and as marking out the persons who are entitled to come to Christ. That gospel invitations should be addressed to sinners *as the subjects of those wants and desires* which it is adapted to satisfy, such as the thirst for happiness, peace, rest, &c. is no more than might be expected. It had been strange if living waters had been presented to them who in *no*

sense were thirsty, or rest to them who were in *no sense* weary and heavy-laden; but it does not follow that this thirst and this weariness is *spiritual.* On the contrary, they who are invited to buy and eat without money and without price, are supposed to be "spending their money for that which is not bread;" are admonished as "wicked" men to forsake their way; and invited to return to the Lord under a promise of abundant pardon, on their so returning. The "heavy-laden" also are supposed as yet not to have *come to Christ*, nor *taken his yoke*, nor *learned his spirit;* and surely it could not be the design of Christ to persuade them to think well of their state, seeing he constantly teaches that till a sinner come to him, or believe in him, he is under the curse. It is also observable that the promise of *rest* is not made to them as *heavy-laden*, but as *coming to Christ with their burdens.* There is no proof that *all* who were "pricked in their hearts" under Peter's sermon, and who enquired "what shall we do?" believed and were saved. On the contrary, it seems to be intimated that only a *part* of them "gladly received the word, and were baptized." Had they *all* done so, it would probably have been said, *then they gladly received his word, and were baptized.* Instead of this it is said, "then *they that* gladly received his word were baptized &c." implying, that there were some who, though pricked in their hearts, yet *received not* the word of the gospel, and were not baptized; and

who might leave the place under an impression that the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ was a hard saying. There are many, it is to be feared, who at this day feel guilt to be a heavy burden, and yet never bring it to Christ; but lay it down on some self-righteous resting place, and so perish for ever.

It does not follow however that *all* convictions of sin are to be resolved into the operations of an awakened conscience. There is such a thing as a conviction of the *evil nature* of sin, and that by a view of the spirituality and equity of the divine law. It was by the *commandment* that Paul perceived sin to be *exceeding sinful.* Such a conviction of sin cannot consist with a rejection of the gospel way of salvation, but, as soon as it is understood, instantly leads the sinner to embrace it. It is thus that *through the law, we become dead to the law, that we may live unto God.**

I may add, the attention of christians appears to have been too much drawn towards what may be called *subjective* religion to the neglect of that which is *objective.* Many speak and write as though the truth of the gospel was a subject out of doubt, and as though the only question of importance was, whether they be interested in its blessings; and there are not a few who have no doubt of their believing the former, but many doubts respecting the

* Rom. vii, 13. Gal. ii, 19.

latter. Hence, it is probable the essence of faith came to be placed, not in a belief of the gospel, but in a persuasion of our being interested in its benefits. If however we really believe the one, there is no scriptural ground to doubt of the other, since it is constantly declared that he who believeth the gospel shall be saved.

If the attention of the awakened sinner, instead of being directed to Christ, be turned inward, and his mind be employed in searching for evidences of his conversion, the effect must, to say the least, be uncomfortable, and may be fatal, as it may lead him to make a righteousness of his religious feelings, instead of looking out of himself to the Saviour.

Nor is this all:—If the attention of christians be turned to their own feelings instead of the things which should make them feel, it will reduce their religion to something vastly different from that of the primitive christians. Such truths as the following were the life of their spirits. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures.—Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel—We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," &c. But by the turn of thought, and strain of conversation in many religious connexions of the

present day, it would seem as if these things had lost their influence. They are become "dry doctrines," and the parties must have something else. The elevation and depression of their hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, is with them the favourite theme. The consequence is, as might be expected, a living to themselves rather than to him that died and rose again; and a mind either elated by unscriptural enjoyment, or depressed by miserable despondency. It is not by thinking and talking of the sensations of hunger, but by feeding on the living aliment, that we are filled and strengthened.

Whether the above remarks will satisfy Mr. M'LEAN that these are "really my fixed sentiments," and that he has greatly misunderstood the ends for which I wrote the piece on which he animadverted, and of course misrepresented my principles as to their effect on awakened sinners*, I cannot tell. Be this as it may, I trust other readers will be under no temptation to do me injustice.

But whatever danger may arise from those principles which are too prevalent amongst us, they are not the only errors, nor does all the danger arise from that quarter. *Subjective* religion is as necessary in its place as *objective*. It is as true that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord, as that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." It is necessary to look into ourselves for

* See his Reply, pp. 46, 47, 153.

the purpose of conviction, though not for the cause of salvation; and though the evidence of the truth of the gospel is without us, and independent of our state of mind towards it, yet this is not the case with respect to evidence of an interest in its blessings. We have no warrant to expect eternal life, but as being the subjects of those things to which it is promised.

I do not perceive, therefore, how it can be justly affirmed, as it lately has been, that "self-examination is not calculated to quiet the conscience, to banish slavish fear, or to remove doubts and apprehensions of our being unbelievers;" and still less how it can be maintained, that "peace of mind founded on any thing in ourselves will always puff us up with pride." If the state of our souls be bad, indeed, self-examination must disquiet the conscience, rather than quiet it: but are there no cases in which, through the accusations of others, or a propensity in ourselves to view the dark side of things rather than the bright one, or the afflicting hand of God, our souls may be disquieted within us, and in which self-examination may yield us peace? Did the review which Job took of his past life * yield no peace to him; and though he was not clear when examined by the impartial eye of God, yet were all his solemn appeals respecting his integrity the workings of self-righteous pride? Was David puf-

* Chap. xxxi.

fed up when he said, "Lord, I have hoped in thy salvation, and have done thy commandments?" Did John encourage a confidence in the flesh, when he said, "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God?" or Peter, when he appealed to Christ, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?"

Had it been only affirmed, that no peace of mind can arise from the recollection of what we have felt or done in times past, while at present we are unconscious of any thing of the kind, this had been true. Past experiences can no otherwise be an evidence of grace to us, than as the remembrance of them rekindles the same sentiments and feelings anew. But to object to all peace of mind arising from a consciousness of having done the will of God, and to denominate it "confidence in the flesh," is repugnant to the whole tenor of scripture.

A system may contain much important truth, and yet be blended with so much error, as to destroy its salutary efficacy. Mr. SANDEMAN has expunged from Christianity a great deal of false religion; but whether he has exhibited that of Christ and his apostles, is another question. It is much easier to point out the defects and errors of other systems, than to substitute one that is even less exceptionable; and to talk of "simple truth," and "simple belief," than to exhibit the religion of Jesus in its genuine simplicity.

In discussing the points at issue, we shall meet with some things which may be thought of too metaphysical a cast to be of any great importance: and, had not the effects produced convinced me of the contrary, I might have thought so too. But though the principles on which the system rests, be many of them so minute as almost to elude detection, yet they are not the less efficacious. The seed is small, but the branch is not so.

It has been regretted that any person who drinks thoroughly into these views, is at once separated from all his former religious connexions, whatever they might be; and where the heart has been united, it must needs be a matter of regret: yet, upon the whole, it may be best. Whatever fruits are produced by this species of religion, whether good or bad, they are hereby much more easily ascertained. Its societies bear some resemblance to so many farms, taken in different parts of the kingdom, for the purpose of scientific experiment; and it must needs be apparent in the course of fifty or sixty years experience, whether, upon the whole, they have turned to a better account than those of their neighbours.

I will only add, in this place, that though I do not conceive of every one as embracing this doctrine, who in some particulars may agree with Mr. SANDEMAN, (for in that case, I should be reckoned to embrace it myself,) yet many more must be considered as friendly to it in the main, than those

who chuse to be called either Sandemanians or Glassites. It has been held by people of various denominations; by Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists; and has been observed to give a distinctive character to the whole of their religion. In this view of the subject, I wish to examine it, paying attention, not so much to persons or names, as to things, let them be embraced by whom they may.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER II.

CONTAINING A GENERAL VIEW OF THE SYSTEM, WITH ITS LEADING POINTS OF DIFFERENCE FROM THE SYSTEMS WHICH IT OPPOSES.

My dear Friend,

ALTHOUGH the writings of such men as FLAVEL, BOSTON, GUTHRIE, the ERSKINES, &c. are represented by Mr. SANDEMAN as furnishing "a devout path to hell," and the writers themselves as pharisees, "than whom no sinners were more hardened, and none greater destroyers of mankind," yet he allows them to have "set before us many articles of the apostolic doctrine," yea, and to have "asserted *almost all* the articles belonging to the sacred truth." Considering this, and that so far as these writers held with "good duties, good endeavours, and good motions" in unbelievers, preparing them for faith, we give them up, it may seem as if there could be no great difference between Mr. SANDEMAN and us. Yet a difference there is, and of that importance too, as

deeply to affect the doctrine, the worship, the spirit, and the practice of christianity.

The foundation of whatever is distinguishing in the system seems to relate to *the nature of justifying faith.* This Mr. S. constantly represents as *the bare belief of the bare truth;* by which definition he intends, as it would seem, to exclude from it every thing pertaining to the will and the affections, except as effects produced by it.

When Mr. PIKE became his disciple, and wished to think that by a "bare belief" he meant a *hearty persuasion,* and not a mere notional belief, Mr. S. rejected his construction, and insisted that the latter was his true meaning. "Every one (says he) who obtains a just *notion* of the person, and work of Christ, or whose *notion* corresponds to what is testified of him, is justified, and finds peace with God simply by that *notion.* †

This notion he considers as the effect of truth being impressed upon the mind, and denies that the mind is *active* in it. The inactivity of the mind in believing is of so much importance in his account, that the doctrine of justification by grace depends upon it. "He who maintains (says he) that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms, with Aspasio, that faith is a work exerted by the human mind, undoubtedly maintains, if he have any meaning to his words, that we are

† Epis. Cor. Let. II.

justified by a work exerted by the human mind." *

Mr. SANDEMAN not only opposes all active endeavours previous to faith, and as tending to produce it, (in which I have no controversy with him,) but sets himself against all exhortations, calls, warnings, and expostulations, with the sinner to believe in Christ. "If," says he, "it be inquired what I would say for the relief of one distrest with a sense of guilt? I would tell him to the best of my ability what the gospel says about Christ. If he still doubted, I would set before him all the evidence furnished me by the same gospel. Thus, and thus only would I press, call, invite, exhort, or urge him to believe. I would urge him with evidence for the truth." † And when asked, how he would exhort, advise, or address *stupid unconcerned souls?* He answers, "I am of the mind that a preacher of the gospel, as such, ought to have no influence on men, but by means of the gospel which he preaches.—When Paul discoursed concerning *the faith in Christ*, and as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled. —It is the *duty* of every man, in every condition, to obey every divine command. The gospel always supposes this, while, addressing all men as sinners, it demonstrates their danger, and discovers the remedy. Yet it is absurd to suppose that any

* Letters on Ther. and Asp. vol. I. p. 483.

† Epis. Cor. p. 8.

man can love the gospel, or obey it, till he believe it. Therefore, to urge unbelievers to any shadow of that obedience as preparative to justification by faith, can have no other effect than to lead them to establish their own righteousness, and to stand in awe of the preacher." *

If there be any meaning in this answer, it would seem to be that *faith itself* is not a duty, and that unbelievers ought not to be exhorted to it, lest it should lead them to self-righteousness; but barely to have the evidence of truth stated to them.

Mr. S. represents the sinner as justified, and as having obtained peace to his soul, while utterly destitute of the love of God. "I can never begin to love God (says he) till I first see him just in justifying *me* ungodly as I stand." † But being justified in this his ungodly state of mind, he loves God on account of it; and here begins his godliness: "It all consists in love to that which first relieved him." ‡

If he had represented the doctrine of Christ as giving relief to the guilty creature irrespective of any consciousness of a change in himself; or as furnishing him with a ground to conclude that God can be just and the justifier of him *if he believes in Jesus*, this had accorded with Paul's gospel: ‖ but for a sinner to perceive himself justified, implies a consciousness that he is a believer, and such a

* Epis. Cor. p. 29. † Ibid. p. 12. ‡ Ibid. p. 8. ‖ Rom. iv. 24.

consciousness can never be separate from a conscious love to the divine character. If, indeed, the gospel were an expedient merely to give relief to sinners, and no regard was had in it to the glory of God, a sinner full of enmity to God, might receive it, and derive peace from it: but if it be an essential property of it to secure the glory of the divine character, the belief of it must include a sense of that glory which cannot consist with enmity against it.

Let it also be seriously considered, whether it be true that a sinner is justified "ungodly as he stands?" If it be, he must have been so either *antecedently* to his "seeing" it to be so, and then it must be equally true of *all* ungodly sinners; or it becomes so *when* he sees it, and *by* his seeing it, which is the very absurdity which Mr. S. fastens on the popular preachers.

Mr. S. and many others have caught at the phrase of the apostle Paul, of "God's justifying the ungodly;" but unless they can prove that by *ungodly* the apostle meant one who was at the time an enemy of God, it makes nothing in their favour. The amount is, Mr. S.'s relief arises from his "seeing" what is not to be seen; viz. God to be just in justifying *him* ungodly as he stands: and his relief being founded in falsehood, all his godliness, which confessedly arises from it, must be delusive. *The root is rottenness, and the blossom will go up as the dust.*

From the leading principles of doctrine above stated, it is easy to account for almost all the other peculiarities of the system. Where the root and substance of religion is placed in *knowledge*, exclusive of approbation, it may be expected that the utmost stress will be laid on the former, and that almost every thing pertaining to the latter, will be run down under the name of pharisaism, or some other odious appellation. Thus it is that those who have drank into this system generally value themselves on their *clear views;* thus they scarcely ever use any other phrase by which to designate the state of a converted man, than his *knowing the truth;* and thus all those scripture passages which speak of *knowing the truth*, are constantly quoted as being in their favour, though they seldom, if ever, mean knowledge as distinguished from approbation, but as including it.

Farther, I do not perceive how a system whose first principle is "notion," and whose love is confined to "that which first relieves us," can have the love of God in it. It cannot justify God as a lawgiver, by taking blame and shame to ourselves, for it necessarily supposes, and even professes, an abhorrence to both law and justice in every other view than as satisfied by the cross of Christ. The reconciliation to them in this view, therefore, must be merely on the ground of their becoming friendly to our interests. But if God be not justified as a Lawgiver, Christ can never be received as a Sa-

viour. There is no more grace in justification, than there is justice in condemnation; nor is it possible we should see more of the one than of the other, for we cannot see things otherwise than as they are to be seen. But surely a system which neither justifies the Lawgiver, nor receives the Saviour *as honouring him*, cannot be of God. The love of God *as God* is not in it. Conversion on this principle is not *turning to the Lord*. It professes indeed to love God, but it is only for our own sake. The whole process requires no renovation of the spirit of the mind; for the most depraved creature is capable of loving himself and that which relieves him.

Is it any wonder that a religion founded on such a principle should be litigious, conceited, and censorious towards all who do not come into it? It is of the nature of a selfish spirit to be so. If God himself be loved only for the relief he affords us, it cannot be surprising that men should; nor that, under the cover of loving them only for the truth's sake, all manner of bitterness and contempt should be cherished against every one who dares to dispute our dogmas.

Farther, the love of God, being in a manner excluded from the system, it may be expected that the defect will be supplied by a punctilious attention to certain forms; of which some will be found to arise from a misunderstanding of the scriptures, and others which may not, yet being regarded to

the neglect of weightier matters, resemble *the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin.*

Such, from the repeated views that I have been able to take of the system, appear to me to be its grand outlines; and I am not surprised to find, that in the course of half a century it has landed so large a part of its votaries on the shores of infidelity, or sunk them in the abyss of worldly conformity. Those who live near them say, there is scarcely any appearance of serious religion in their families, unless we might call by that name the scrupulosity that would refuse to pray with an unbeliever, but would have no objection to accompany him to the theatre. Mr. S. and his admirers have reproached many for their *devotion;* but I cannot learn that they were ever reproached with this evil in return.

The grand argument of Mr. S. against faith being an act of the mind, and against admitting of any active advance of the soul towards Christ, as necessary to justification, is, that it is rendering faith a *work;* and that to be justified by faith, would after all be to be justified by a work of our own. This is the principal idea pertaining to what he calls "the very rankest poison of the popular doctrine."* If this argument can be overturned, the greater part of his system falls with it. That it may appear in all its force, I will quote his strongest representations of it.

* Letters on Ther. and Asp. p. 448.

" Perhaps it will be thought needful that I should define with greater precision than I have hitherto done, what I mean by the *popular doctrine*, especially as I have considered many as preachers thereof, who differ remarkably from each other; and particularly as I have ranked among them Mr. WESLEY, who may justly be reckoned one of the most virulent reproachers of that God whose character is drawn by the apostles, that this island has produced. To remove all doubt concerning my meaning, I shall thus explain myself. Throughout these letters I consider all those as teachers of the popular doctrine, who seek to have credit and influence among the people by resting our acceptance with God, not simply on what Christ has done, but more or less on *the use we make of him*, the advance we make towards him, or some secret desire, wish, or sigh to do so; or on something we feel or do concerning him, by the assistance of some kind of grace or spirit: or, lastly, on something we employ him to do, and suppose he is yet to do for us. In sum, all who would have us to be conscious of something else than the bare truth of the gospel; all who would have us to be conscious of some beginning of a change to the better, or some desire, however faint, toward such change, in order to our acceptance with God; these I call the popular preachers, however much they may differ from each other about faith, grace, special or common, or about any thing else.—My resentment is all

along chiefly pointed against the capital branch of the popular doctrine, which, while it asserts *almost all the articles belonging to the sacred truth*, at the same time deceitfully clogs them with the opposite falsehoods."

Again, "That the saving truth is effectually undermined by this confusion, may readily be seen in the following easy view."—(This is what I call his grand argument:) "HE WHO MAINTAINS THAT WE ARE JUSTIFIED ONLY BY FAITH, AND AT THE SAME TIME AFFIRMS, WITH ASPASIO, THAT FAITH IS A WORK EXERTED BY THE HUMAN MIND, UNDOUBTEDLY MAINTAINS, IF HE HAS ANY MEANING TO HIS WORDS, THAT WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY A WORK EXERTED BY THE HUMAN MIND.

"I have all along studied to make use of every form of expression I could think of, for evincing in the most clear, palpable, and striking manner, a difference of the last importance, which thousands of preachers have laboured to cover with a mist. If I have made that difference manifest to those who have any attention for the subject, my great end in writing is gained, on whatever side of it men shall chuse to rank themselves. It has frequently appeared to me a thing no less amazing than provoking, when the great difference between the ancient gospel here contended for, and the popular doctrine, has been pointed out as clear as words could make it, to find many, after all, so obstinately stupid, as to declare they saw no

real difference. This I cannot account for by assigning any other cause than the special agency of the prince of darkness."*

After this it may be thought an act of temerity to complain of not understanding Mr. SANDEMAN; and indeed I shall make no such complaint, for I think I do clearly understand his meaning; but whether he has fairly represented that of his opponents, I shall take the liberty to inquire.

The popular preachers "rest our acceptance with God, (it seems) not simply on what Christ hath done, but on the active advance of the soul towards him." Do they then consider faith, whether we be active or passive in it, as forming a part of our justifying righteousness? In other words, do they consider it as any part of *that for the sake of which* a sinner is accepted? They every where declare the contrary. I question if there be one of those whom Mr. S. *ordinarily* denominates popular preachers, who would not cordially subscribe to the passage which he so highly applauds in *Aspasio*, and considers as inconsistent with the popular doctrine—viz. "Both grace and faith stand in direct opposition to works; *all* works whatever, whether they be works of the law, or works of the gospel; exercises of the heart, or actions of the life; done while we remain unregenerate, or when we become regenerate; they are all and every of them *equally* set

* Lett. on Ther. and Asp. vol. II. pp. 480. 483.

aside in this great affair." *Ther. and Asp. vol. I. p. 276.* If the popular preachers maintain an active advance of the soul to be necessary to our acceptance with God, it is in no other sense than that in which he himself maintains "the bare belief of the truth" to be so; that is, not as a procuring cause, but as *that without which, according to the established order of things,* there is no acceptance. To accuse them therefore of corrupting the doctrine of justification on this account, must be owing either to gross ignorance or disingenuousness.

Yet in this strain the eulogists of Mr. SANDEMAN go on to declaim to this day. "His main doctrine," says one, "appears to be this—the bare work of Jesus Christ, which he finished on the cross, is sufficient, without a deed or a thought on the part of man, to present the chief of sinners spotless before God."* If by *sufficient* be meant that it is that only *on account,* or *for the sake of which* a sinner is justified, it is very true; and Mr. SANDEMAN's opponents believed it no less than himself: but if it be meant to deny that any deed or thought on the part of man is necessary *in the established order of things,* or that sinners *are* presented spotless before God without a deed or a thought on the subject, it is very false, and goes to deny the necessity of faith to salvation: for surely no man can be said to believe in Christ without thinking of him.

* COOPER's Letters, p. 33.

Mr. PIKE, who had embraced Mr. SANDEMAN'S views of faith, yet says to him, "I cannot but conceive that you are sometimes mistaken in your representations of what you call the popular doctrine; for instance, *upon the popular plan*, say you, *we can never have peace in our consciences until we be sensible of some beginning of a good disposition in us towards Christ.* Now setting aside some few unguarded expressions and addresses, you will find that the general drift and purport of their doctrine is just the contrary to this; and they labour this point, both MARSHALL and HERVEY, to convince persons that *nothing* of this nature does or can recommend them to God, or be any part of their justifying righteousness: and their principal view is to beget, and to draw forth such thoughts in the mind, as lead the soul entirely out of itself to Christ alone for righteousness."* It is observable too, that though Mr. S. answered this letter of Mr. PIKE, yet he takes no notice of this passage.

I am not vindicating either MARSHALL or HERVEY in all their views; but justice requires that this misrepresentation should be corrected, especially as it runs through the whole of Mr. SANDEMAN'S writings, and forms the basis of an enormous mass of invective.

By *works* opposed to grace and faith, the new testament means *works done with a view of obtaining*

* Epis. Cor. p. 24.

life, or of procuring acceptance with God as the reward of them. If repentance, faith, or sincere obedience, be recommended as being such a condition of salvation, as that God may be expected to bestow it in reward of them, this is turning the gospel into a covenant of works, and is as much opposed to grace, and to the true idea of justification by faith, as any works of the law can be. But to deny the activity of the soul in believing, lest faith itself should become a work of the law, and so after all we should be justified by a work, is both antiscriptural and nugatory: *antiscriptural*, because the whole tenor of the Bible exhorts sinners to forsake their ways, and return to the Lord *that he may have mercy upon them*—to believe in the light, *that they may be children of light*—and to come to him, *that they may have life*:—*nugatory*, because we need not go far for proof that men know how to value themselves, and despise others on *account* of *their notions*, as well as of their *actions*, and so are capable of making a righteousness of the one as well as of the other.

Farther: If there be any weight in Mr. SANDEMAN's argument, it falls equally on his own hypothesis as on that of his opponents. Thus we might argue, he who maintains that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms, with Mr. SANDEMAN, that faith is a notion formed by the human mind, undoubtedly maintains, if he have

any meaning to his words, that we are justified by a notion formed by the human mind.

Mr. S. as if aware of his exposedness to this retort, labours in the foregoing quotation, to make *nothing* of the belief of the truth, or to keep every idea but that of the truth believed out of sight. So fearful is he of making faith to be any thing which has a real subsistence in the mind, that he plunges into gross absurdity to avoid it. Speaking of that of which the believer is "conscious," he makes it to be *truth*, instead of the *belief* of it; as if any thing could be an object of consciousness but what passes or exists in the mind!

It may be thought that the phrase, "All who would have us to be *conscious* of something else than the bare *truth* of the gospel," is a mere slip of the pen; but it is not; for had Mr. S. spoken of belief instead of the truth believed as an object of consciousness, his statement would have been manifestly liable to the consequence which he charges on his opponents. It might then have been said to him, he who maintains that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms that faith is *something inherent in the human mind*, undoubtedly maintains, if he have any meaning to his words, that we are justified by something inherent in the human mind.

You must by this time perceive, that Mr. SANDEMAN'S grand argument, or, as he denominates

it, his "easy view," turns out to be a mere sophism. To detect it you have only to consider *the same thing in different views;* which is what Mr. SANDEMAN himself does on some occasions, as do all other men. "I agree with you, (says he to Mr. PIKE,) in maintaining that faith is the principle and spring of every good disposition, or of every good work: but, at the same time, I maintain that faith does not justify the ungodly *as* a principle of good dispositions." * Why then may we not maintain that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirm that faith is a grace *inherent*, an *act* of the human mind, a *duty* commanded of God; and all this without affirming that we are justified by any thing inherent, any act of ours, or any duty that we perform? And why must we be supposed to use words without a meaning, or to contradict ourselves, when we only maintain, that we are justified by that which *is* inherent, *is* an act of the human mind, and *is* a duty; while yet it is not *as such*, but as uniting us to Christ, and deriving righteousness from him, that it justifieth? †

Assuredly there is no necessity for reducing faith to a nullity, in order to maintain the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ. While we hold that faith justifieth *not in*

* Epis. Cor. p. 10. † See PRESIDENT EDWARDS's Sermons on Justification, pp. 14, 26.

respect of the act of believing, but of the righteousness on which it terminates, or that God's pardoning and receiving us to favour is in reward, not of our believing, but of his Son's obedience unto death, every purpose is answered, and all inherent righteousness is excluded.

I have been the more particular on this "easy view" of Mr. SANDEMAN, because it is manifestly the grand pillar of his doctrine. If this be overturned, there is nothing left standing but what will fall with a few slight touches; and whether it be so, I now leave you and the reader to judge.

To establish the doctrine of free justification, Mr. S. conceives it necessary to reduce justifying faith to a "bare belief," exclusive of every "advance" of the mind towards Christ, or of *coming* to him, *trusting* in him, &c. and to maintaining that these terms denote the *effects* of faith in those who are already in a justified state.*

In opposing Mr. S. many have denied that the belief of the gospel is justifying faith. Observing, on the one hand, that numbers appear to believe the truth, on whom, nevertheless, it has no salutary influence; and on the other, that believing in Christ in the new testament is synonymous with "receiving him," "trusting in him," and "coming to him," they have concluded, that the belief of the gospel is rather to be considered as

* Epis. Cor. p. 34.

something *presupposed* in faith, than faith itself. But there can be no doubt that the belief of the gospel has, in a great number of instances, the promise of salvation; and as to those nominal christians on whom it has no salutary influence, they believe Christ no more than the Jews believed Moses, which our Lord would not allow them to have done. "If ye believed Moses (saith he) ye would believe me, for he wrote of me."

But though the belief of the gospel is allowed to have the promise of salvation, and so to be justifying, yet it does not follow that it is so *exclusive* of receiving Christ, trusting in him, or coming to him. It were easy to prove that repentance has the promise of forgiveness, and that by as great a variety of passages, as are brought to prove that the belief of the gospel is saving faith: but were this attempted, we should be told, and justly too, that we are not to consider repentance, in these passages, as excluding, but including faith in the Saviour. Such then is the answer to the argument drawn from the promises of salvation made to the belief of the gospel: belief in these connexions is not to be understood exclusive of receiving the Saviour, coming to him, or trusting in him, but as supposing and including them.

It is not denied that the ideas conveyed by these terms are metaphysically distinct from that of believing the gospel, nor that they are its immediate effects; but it is not in this metaphysical sense

that faith is used in reference to justification. That belief of the gospel which justifieth, includes receiving Christ, coming to him, and trusting in him. Whatever shades of difference there be between belief and these "advances of the mind towards Christ," the scriptures represent them, *with respect to an interest in justification, and other collateral blessings*, as one and the same thing. This is manifest from the following passages—"As many as *received* him, to them gave he power (or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name—I know whom I have *believed*, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have *committed to him* against that day—That we should be to the praise and glory of his grace who *first trusted* in Christ. In whom ye also *trusted*, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after ye *believed* ye were sealed, &c.—He that *cometh* to me shall never hunger, and he that *believeth* in me shall never thirst—Ye will not *come* unto me *that ye may have life*—*Come* unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you *rest*.*

In these, and many other passages, it is manifest that believing, coming, trusting, &c. are used as convertible terms, and that the thing signified by them is necessary to justification. If

* John i. 12.—2 Tim. i. 12.—Eph. i. 12, 13.—John vi. 35.—v. 40.—Matt. xi. 28.

"receiving" Christ were an effect of faith in persons already justified, why is it used as synonymous with it, and held up as necessary to our being "the sons of God?" If "coming to Christ" were an exercise of mind in one who was already in a state of justification, why is he said to come to him *that he may have life?* And why is it said of apostates, that "they received not the *love of the truth that they might be saved,*" if salvation be promised to a mere "notion" of the truth without any love to it? Let those who have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil, judge from these things whether a mere notion of the truth, exclusive, or, if you please, antecedent to the consideration of receiving Christ, coming to him, and trusting in him, be the faith that justifieth; and whether, if the former were separate from the latter, it would not leave the sinner under condemnation.

It has been said, "in defining saving faith, some have included in its essence almost every holy temper; and by insisting so much on this faith, and giving such laboured descriptions of it, have almost inevitably led their followers to look more to their faith, than to the great object of faith; to be more occupied in attending to the working of their own minds, than with that truth which reconciles the sinner to God. It is in consequence to be feared, that not a few who are reckoned orthodox, are in fact trusting to their faith, and not to Christ; making

him merely a minister of their own self-righteousness: for we may go about to establish our own righteousness under the name of faith, as well as under any other name."

I doubt not but preachers may abound in describing one part of divine truth to the neglect of another, and may go even beyond the truth; people also may make a righteousness of their faith as well as of other things. If no more were meant than that a sinner whose inquiry is, what must I do to be saved? ought to be directed immediately to Christ, and not to an examination into the nature of faith, I should most cordially acquiesce in it: but it does not follow, that nothing should on any occasion be said of the true nature of faith. There may be a time when the same person shall come with another and very different question, namely, am I a true believer? Such questions there must have been in the Apostle's time, or there would not have been answers to them.* Now in answer to such an inquiry the true nature and genuine effects of faith require to be stated, and distinguished from that which leaves thousands short of salvation. And as to men making a righteousness of their faith, men may make a righteousness of simple belief, as well as of trust, or any other idea supposed to be included in justifying faith: and whether there be not actually as much laboured description, self-admiration,

* 1 John ii. 3.—iii. 14, 18—21.

and contempt of others (things nearly akin to self-righteousness), among the advocates of this system as among their opponents, let the candid observer judge. If we are to say nothing about the holy nature of faith, lest men should make a righteousness of it, we must say nothing of any thing else that is holy for the same reason, and so cease to distinguish all true religion in the mind, from that which is counterfeit: but so did not the sacred writers.

To the same purpose Mr. M'LEAN writes in his treatise on the *Commission*. "Now when men include in the very nature of justifying faith, such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart, as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary (no matter under what consideration) to acceptance with God, it perverts the Apostle's doctrine upon this important subject, and makes justification to be at least *as it were* by the works of the law."

I know not of any writer who has given such a definition of faith as these statements would represent. No more holy affection is pleaded for in faith, than unholy disaffection is allowed to be in unbelief. But the design is manifestly to exclude *all* holy affection from faith, as being favourable to self-righteousness.

If therefore *repentance* be considered as necessary to forgiveness, seeing this must be allowed to include holy affection, it will be considered as favour-

able to self-righteousness. And as to distinguishing between what is necessary *in the established order of things*, from what is necessary as a *procuring cause*, this will not be admitted; for it is "no matter under what consideration:" if any thing required by the moral law be rendered necessary, it makes justification to be at least "*as it were* by the works of the law." Yet Mr. M. allows faith, whatever it is, to be a *duty*. Is it then a requirement of a *new and remedial* law? Would not the love of God, which is required by the old law, lead any sinner to believe in Christ? If not, why is unbelief alleged to the Jews as a proof that they had not the love of God in them?* As Mr. M. however, in his piece on *the calls and invitations of the gospel*, has gone pretty far towards answering himself, I shall transcribe a passage from that performance. "It is an unscriptural refinement upon divine grace, (he there says,) and contrary to the doctrine of the apostles, to class faith and repentance with the works of the law, and to state them as equally opposite to free justification. Indeed neither faith nor repentance are the meritorious, or procuring cause of a sinner's justification, any more than the works of the law are; (and who that really believes and repents will imagine that they are?) But still the one is opposed to free justification, the other not. To him that worketh is the reward not

* John v. 42, 43.

reckoned of grace, but of debt; and faith and repentance corresponding exactly with the manifestation of divine grace, as freely justifying the guilty through the atonement, are in their very nature opposite to all self-dependance, and lead men to glory only in the Lord." p. 26.

We see here that there is nothing in the nature of *repentance* that clashes with a free justification, which yet must be allowed to include a portion of holy affection. Why then object to the same thing in faith? Is it because holy affection is "required by the moral law?" Be it so, it is the same in repentance as in faith; and if the one may in its very nature agree with a free justification, so may the other. The truth is, the moral law *materially* considered, is not opposed to free justification. The love of God and man, in its own nature, is as opposite to self-righteous pride as faith and repentance are. It is not the law that is against the promises, but those *works of the law done by a sinful creature with a view of obtaining life, or of procuring acceptance with God as the reward of them.* If holy affection were urged with such a view, then were it opposed to the free grace of the gospel; but while this is not the case, all such reasonings are unscriptural refinements.

If men make a righteousness of their faith, it is not owing to these representations of it, but to their own corruptions; for let faith include what good disposition it may, it is no part of the

meritorious cause of justification, and let it be simplified as it may, even till it shall contain no more of the holy nature of God than a glance of the eye, yet is it not on this account more friendly to the doctrine of grace, nor less liable to become the food of a self-righteous spirit. The way in which this spirit is cut up in the new testament is, not by reducing faith to an unfeeling speculation, but by denouncing the curse against every one who cometh short of perfect obedience. Gal. iii. 10.

It has been further said, "Faith purifies the heart, worketh by love, and discovereth itself sincere by the performance of good works. Faith therefore is not holiness, love, or new obedience, unless the effect is the same with the cause, or the evidence with the thing proved." Faith certainly is not the same thing as holiness, or love, or new obedience. Neither is unbelief the same thing as unholiness, enmity, or disobedience: but it is not so distinct from either, as not to partake of the same *general nature*. It is not only the root of all other sin, but is itself a sin. In like manner, faith is not only the root of all other obedience, but is itself an exercise of obedience. It is called "obeying the truth," and "obeying the gospel."* To say that faith includes no holiness, (which this objection certainly does,) and yet produces it, as the seed produces the plant, is to contradict the

* Rom. vi. 17.—1 Pet. i. 22.—Rom. x. 16.

established laws of nature, according to which, every seed produces *its own body*. God can produce something out of nothing, but in the ordinary course of traduction every seed produces *after its kind*. If holiness therefore were not included in faith, it would not grow out of it.

Mr. M'LEAN does not agree with Mr. SANDEMAN in considering faith as a *passive* admission of the truth, but allows it to be an *act* or *exercise* of the mind.* A large part of his work, however, is taken up in attempting to prove that it is a mere exercise of the understanding, exclusive of every thing pertaining to the will and affections. It is no part of the question between him and me, whether, properly speaking, it has *its seat* in the understanding; for this it may have, and yet be influenced by the disposition. Unbelief hath its seat in the understanding as much as belief, yet it is not denied that this is influenced by the disposition. "It arises (says Mr. M'LEAN) not merely from ignorance, but also from the *aversion* of the will, whereby the judgment is blinded, and most unreasonably prejudiced against the truth." †—Nor had Mr. M'LEAN any just ground for construing what I had said in proof of faith in Christ, being *such* a belief as arises from a renewal of the spirit of the mind, as an attempt to "prove that faith is *more than belief*." p. 80. He *allows unbelief to arise*

* Reply, p. 74, 75. † Ibid. p. 76.

in part from disposition; yet I suppose he would not be thought by this concession to make it something more than unbelief. If unbelief may consist in such a discredit of the gospel as arises from aversion to it, and yet be nothing more than unbelief, faith may consist in such a credit of the gospel as arises from a renewal of the spirit of the mind, and yet be nothing more than belief.

To this may be added, if faith in Christ be a duty commanded of God, an act of the human mind, an exercise of obedience to God, (all which Mr. M. acknowledges,) it *must* be the effect of regeneration, or it will follow that *they that are in the flesh may please God.*

Mr. M'LEAN speaks much of *simple* belief, as Mr. SANDEMAN did of *bare* belief. Mr. S. manifestly intended hereby to exclude every "advance" of the sinner to Christ, as signified by such terms as *coming* to Christ, *trusting* in him, &c. from justifying faith. Such may be the intention of Mr. M'LEAN: if it be not, I do not understand the use of the epithet. He however cannot consistently reject every "advance" of the mind to Christ, as belonging to justifying faith, since he acknowledges the soul to be active in believing. But while dwelling so much on *simple belief*, why does he not dwell also on *simple unbelief?* If belief be simple, so must unbelief, for they are opposites. And I readily acknowledge, there are such things as simple belief and simple unbe-

lief; but neither of them apply to the credit or discredit of the gospel. If a stranger, who has no claim on my confidence, relate a story of something that he has seen in a distant country, but which in no way concerns me, I may believe him, or disbelieve him: my faith in the one case, or my unbelief in the other, would be perfectly simple. But if it be a story of deep interest, if the undoubted veracity of the party have a claim on my confidence, and if my future course of life turns upon the credit or discredit that I give him, neither the one nor the other will be *simple*, but compounded of a number of moral principles, which influence my decision: if to discredit his testimony, they are prejudices which blind me to the force of evidence; if to credit it, candour, or openness to conviction. It is thus in believing the gospel, which is a subject of the deepest interest, testified by a Being, whose veracity it is a crime to question, and of such consequence to a sinner, even in this life, that if he admit it, he must relinquish all his former courses, and live a new life. Intrenched in prejudice, self-righteousness, and the love of sin, he continues an unbeliever till these strong holds are beaten down; nor will he believe so long as a wreck of them remains sufficient to shelter him against the arrows of conviction; nor, in short, till by the renovating influence of the Holy Spirit, they fall to the ground. It is then, and not till then, that the doctrine of

salvation by mere grace through a mediator, is cordially believed.

Mr. M'LEAN in his arguing for what he calls *simple* belief, seems to be aware that it is not the proper opposite of unbelief, as described in the scriptures. Hence he somewhere alleges that we cannot reason from the nature of unbelief to that of belief, any more than from that of demerit to merit. But the disparity between demerit and merit, to which he refers, does not respect their *nature*, but the condition of the party who is the subject of them. Merit is the desert of good, and demerit the desert of evil: they are therefore properly opposites, whatever may be the condition of the party as to being equally capable of exercising them; and it is fair, *in ascertaining their nature*, to argue from the one to the other.

Upon the whole, I see no reason to retract what I have in substance said before, that if faith and unbelief be opposites, (which to deny, were disowning that which is self-evident,) the one can be no more simple, or exclusive of the influence of the will, than the other.

Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

CONTAINING A MORE PARTICULAR INQUIRY INTO THE CONSEQUENCES OF MR. SANDEMAN'S NOTION OF JUSTIFYING FAITH.

My dear Friend,

You will not conclude from any thing I have said, or may yet say, that I accuse every one who favours this doctrine, of holding all the consequences which may be proved to arise from it; it is, however, a fair method of trying a principle by pointing out other principles to which it leads, which, if contrary to the scriptures, furnish reasons for rejecting it.

If the faith by which we are justified be a mere passive reception of light, or contain no exercise of affection, it follows:—

First, *That repentance is not necessary to forgiveness.* It is allowed on all hands, that justification includes the forgiveness of sin. Whatever differences there be between them, they are not so different but that he that is justified is forgiven.

If therefore we be justified by a mere notion of the truth, antecedent to all exercise of affection, we are forgiven in the same way; that is, our sins are forgiven before we repent of them.

Mr. SANDEMAN, I conceive, would have avowed this consequence. Indeed he does avow it, in effect, in declaring that "he can never begin to love God, till he first see him just in justifying him, ungodly as he stands." If he cannot begin to love God, he cannot begin to be sorry for having sinned against him, unless it be for the consequences which it has brought upon himself. By being justified "ungodly as he stands," he means to say, therefore, that he is justified, and forgiven, while his mind is in a state of impenitence, and that it is the consideration of this that renders him penitent.

Whether this notion be not in direct opposition to the whole current of both the old and new testament, let the following passages, out of many more which might be selected, determine. —"I said I will *confess* my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou *forgavest* the iniquity of my sin.—If thy people Israel sin against thee, and *repent*, and make supplication unto thee towards this house, then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and *forgive* thy people.—He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso *confesseth* and *forsaketh* them shall have mercy.—*Let the wicked forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his *thoughts*,

and let him *return unto the Lord*, and he will have *mercy* upon him, and to our God, for he will *abundantly pardon*.—Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that *repentance* and *remission of sins* should be preached, in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem—*Repent* therefore and be baptized, every one of you, *for the remission of sins*.—*Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*.—Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a saviour, to give *repentance to Israel, and the forgiveness of sins*.—If we *confess our sins*, he is faithful and just to *forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*." *

I shall not stop here, to inquire into the order in which the scriptures represent repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. This I shall attend to in a letter by itself. It is sufficient at present to observe, that whatever be the order of repentance in respect of faith, it is uniformly represented in the scriptures as necessary to *forgiveness*. Every notion therefore of standing forgiven in a state of impenitence, and of this being the only motive that can lead a sinner to repentance, is false and delusive.

Secondly, *On this principle faith in Christ is not a duty, and unbelief is not a sin*. I am not sure

* Ps. xxxii. 5.—1 Kings viii. 46—50.—Prov. xxviii. 13.—Isa. lv. 7.—Luke xxiv. 46, 47.—Acts ii. 38.—iii. 19.—v. 31. 1 John i. 9.

whether Mr. SANDEMAN would have avowed both, or either, of these consequences. He however utterly disavows urging unbelievers to the least shadow of obedience to the gospel, in order to justification, as leading them to establish their own righteousness.* The faith therefore which he allows to be necessary to justification, includes no obedience, which is the same thing as its being no duty. And if it be not a duty, unbelief is not a sin; for where there is no obligation, there can be no transgression.

But a system which goes to nullify the command of God to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and to excuse the sin which is threatened with eternal damnation, must be fundamentally erroneous, and, as far as it operates, subversive of true religion.

Mr. M'LEAN is very far from admitting this consequence, though he retains in part the principle from which it proceeds. He allows, as we have seen already, that faith is a *duty*, an *act of obedience* to God, and a *holy exercise* of mind: yet he pleads for its containing *nothing pertaining to the will*. Is it possible then for any thing to be either an *act*, or a *duty*, or to contain *obedience*, which is purely intellectual? In whatever belongs to the understanding only, exclusive of the will and affections, the soul, I conceive, is passive. There are acts, no doubt, which pertain to the intellectual,

* Epis. Cor. p. 29.

as well as to the visive faculty; but they are only such as *fall under the influence of the will.* It is an act to look, but not to see, and to collect information, but not to be informed. If therefore believing be an act of the mind, it must fall under the influence of the will.

Mr. SANDEMAN is consistent with himself, however inconsistent he may be with the scriptures. In confining faith to the understanding, he was aware that he disowned its being an act, and therefore in his usual strain of banter, selected some of the grossest representations of his opponents, and endeavoured to hold up acts of faith to ridicule. But Mr. M'LEAN allows of faith being an act, and an act of obedience, and yet will have it that it contains nothing pertaining to the will, except in its effects. I can no otherwise account for such reasoning, in a writer of his talents, than by ascribing it to the influence of early prejudices, contracted by having drank too deeply into the system of Mr. S., and retained by a partiality for what he has once imbibed, though utterly inconsistent with other sentiments which he has since learned from the scriptures.—That nothing can contain obedience but that which includes the state or exercises of the will, or has some dependence upon it, is manifest from universal experience. Tell a man that God hath commanded him to be or do that in which he is absolutely involuntary, and that the contrary is a sin, and see whether you can fasten

conviction on his conscience. Nay, make the experiment on yourself. Did you ever perceive yourself obliged to any thing in which your will had no concern, or for a moment repent of living in the neglect of it? Knowledge may be a duty, and ignorance a sin, so far as each is dependent on the will, and comprehensive of approbation, but no further. LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW, or that which comprehends the whole of duty. So much therefore as there is of love in any exercise of mind, so much there is of duty, or obedience, and no more. Duty *supposes* knowledge indeed, as Christianity supposes humanity; but the essence of it consists in disposition. It may be our duty to examine, and that with care, diligence, and impartiality; but if disposition have no place in faith, it cannot be our duty to believe.

If faith be merely light in the understanding, unbelief must be merely the absence of it; and if the former include nothing pertaining to the will, neither does the latter. To say that though unbelief contain a voluntary rejection of the truth, yet faith contains no voluntary reception of it, is saying that belief and unbelief are not opposites, which is equal to denying a self-evident proposition. If one be purely intellectual, so is the other; and as there is no obedience in the first, there is no disobedience in the last.

Mr. M'LEAN has said every thing on this subject that I could desire, except drawing the conclusion. Thus he reasons when proving faith to be a duty.

"Unbelief, which is the opposite of faith, is always represented as a very great and heinous sin against God. The unbelieving heart is termed an evil heart, Heb iii. 12, and there are many evils in the heart of man, which both occasion and attend unbelief. It is frequently ascribed to *ignorance*, Matt. xiii. 19.—Rom. x. 3.—xi. 7, 25; yet not to simple ignorance from want of information, or natural capacity, in which case it would be excusable, John ix. 41.—xv. 22, 24; but such as arises from the agency of the god of this world, blinding the minds of them that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. It is wilful ignorance, occasioned by their loving darkness, and hating the light, John iii. 19, 20, and so they are represented as having closed their eyes lest they should see. Matt. xiii. 15. From this it appears that unbelief is founded not merely on simple ignorance, but *aversion* from the things of of God.—

"Now if unbelief be a sin, and seated in the depravity of the heart, as has been shown, it necessarily follows that faith, its opposite, must be a duty," [and have its seat also in the heart.] *Sermons, pp.* 40, 41. The words added in crotchets merely go to draw the conclusion; and whether it be fairly drawn, let the reader judge.

Mr. M. cannot consistently object, that by allowing unbelief to be seated in the heart, he did not mean to grant that it was seated in the *will*, since his whole argument asserts the contrary; and

he elsewhere says, "the scriptures always represent the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the spirit as exerted upon the *heart;* which includes not only the understanding, but the will and affections, or the prevalent inclinations and dispositions of the soul." *Works, vol. II. p.* 91.

I had said, 'I can scarcely conceive of a truth more self-evident than this, that God's commands extend only to that which comes under the influence of the will.'* Mr. M. allows this to be "a principle on which my main arguments seem to be grounded." It became him therefore, if he were able, to give it a solid answer. And what is his answer? "It is so far, he says, from being self-evident, that to him it does not appear evident at all." He should instance then in something which *is allowed* not to come under the influence of the will, but which nevertheless is a duty. Instead of this, he says, the commands of God "extend not only to what comes under the influence of the will, but also *to the belief of the revealed truths and motives, by which the will itself is influenced.*" † But who does not perceive, that this is proving a thing by itself; or alleging that as evidence which is the very point in dispute?

The argument was this:—all duty comes under the influence of the will—But faith is a duty—Therefore, faith comes under the influence of the

* App. p. 163. † Reply, p. 70.

will. To have overturned the first of these propositions, which is that which he calls in question, he should have shown by *something else than belief*, something that is *allowed* not to come under the influence of the will, that it may nevertheless be commanded of God. But this he has not shown, nor attempted to show.

All that Mr. M'LEAN has done towards answering this argument, is by labouring to fasten *certain absurdities* upon it. "If believing God with the understanding (he says) be not a duty, it must be either because he has not given a clear revelation of the truth, and supported it with sufficient evidence, or if he has, that there is no moral turpitude in mental error."*

By this way of writing, it would seem as if I pleaded for men's believing without their understanding, of which I certainly have no idea, any more than of their disbelieving without it. I hold no more in respect of faith, than Mr. M. does in respect of unbelief, namely, that it does not pertain to the understanding *only*. The greatest evidence or authority cannot oblige us to that in which we are absolutely involuntary. God commands us to love him with all our powers, but not beyond our powers. To love him with all our hearts, includes every thing that depends upon disposition, even the bowing of our understandings to

* Reply, p. 76.

revealed truth, instead of proudly rejecting it; but that is all. So far as knowledge or belief is absolutely involuntary, we might as well ascribe duty to the convulsive motions of the body as to them. And as to "mental error," if it could be proved to be *merely* mental; that is, not to arise from indolence, prejudice, aversion, or any other evil *disposition*, it would be innocent. Christ did not criminate the Jews for simply misunderstanding him, but refers to the *cause* of that misunderstanding as the ground of censure. "*Why* do ye not understand my speech? because *ye cannot hear my word.*"—that is, because they were utterly averse to it.* Mr. M'LEAN acknowledges as much as this when he speaks of the neglect of the great salvation being the effect of "*perverseness*, and *aversion*, and *therefore* inexcusable." What is this but admitting, that if it arose from simple ignorance it would be excusable?

Another consequence which Mr. M. endeavours to fasten upon this principle is, "If faith be not a duty, unless it be influenced by the moral state of the heart, then it can be no man's duty to believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, *till he is previously possessed of that moral state.*"† But if this consequence were just, it would follow from his own principles as well as mine. He considers

* John viii. 43.

† Reply, p. 73.

the illumination of the Holy Spirit, as necessary to believing; but does he infer, that till such illumination take place, it is not a sinner's duty to believe? He also considers repentance as the fruit of faith; but does he infer, that till a sinner is in possession of faith, it is not his duty to repent? The truth is, that God in requiring any one duty, requires that, *as to the state of the mind*, be it repentance or faith, or what it may, which is necessary to it. It was not the duty of Absalom to ask pardon of David without feeling sorry for his offence: but it does not follow, that while his heart was hardened he was under no obligation to ask pardon. He was under obligation to both; and so are men with regard to believing the gospel. They are obliged to be of an open, upright, unprejudiced mind, and so to believe the truth.

If faith be a duty, believing is a *holy* exercise of the mind; for what else is holiness but a conformity of mind to the revealed will of God? Mr. M. allows of a belief which is "merely natural," and that it has "no holiness in it." He also allows that that which has the promise of salvation is holy. So far then we seem to be agreed. Yet when he comes to state wherein its holiness consists, he seems to resolve every thing into the cause, and the *nature of the truth believed.** Each of these indeed afford *proof* of the holy nature of

* Reply, p. 67.

faith: but to say that it consists in either, is to place the nature of a thing in its cause, and in the object on which it terminates. The objects of belief are exactly the same as those of unbelief; but it will not be alleged, I presume, that unbelief is a holy exercise!

The sum is, Mr. M. thinks he ascribes duty and holiness to faith; but his hypothesis is inconsistent with both. And this is all that I ever meant to charge him with. It never was in my heart to "impeach his honesty,"* though he has more than once impeached mine.

Thirdly, *On this principle, calls, invitations, and exhortations to believe, have no place in the christian ministry.*—To call, invite, or exhort a man to that in which his will has no concern, is self-evident absurdity. Every man must feel it if he only make the experiment. Mr. SANDEMAN is aware of this, and therefore utterly gives up the practice, declaring that the whole of what he has to offer is *evidence*. "I would set before him (the sinner) all the evidence furnished me by the gospel. Thus, and thus only, (says he) would I press, call, invite, exhort, or urge him to believe.† That is, he would not press, call, invite, exhort, or urge him to believe at all. So far he is consistent with himself, though at the utmost variance with the scriptures.

* Reply, p. 64. † Epis. Cor. p. 8.

God however, by the prophets and apostles, did not barely offer evidence, but addressed every power and passion of the human mind. Mr. SANDEMAN may call this "human clamour, pressing men on to the blind business of performing some task called believing;" but this will prove nothing but his dexterity, when pressed with an argument which he cannot answer, at turning it off by raillery. The clamour of the prophets and apostles was such as follows.—"Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.—Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

If this figurative language should be thought to leave the subject in doubt, the following verses express the same sentiments without a figure. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abun-

dantly pardon.—Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.—Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.—Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.—Repent ye, and believe the gospel.—Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come unto me and drink!—While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.—Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life.—Compel them to come in that my house may be filled.—Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.—Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.—Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. — All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.—Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech (men) by us, we pray (them) in Christ's stead, (saying) be ye reconciled to God."*

* Ps. ii. 12.—Isa. lv. 1—7.—xlv. 22.—Jer. vi. 16.—Matt. xi. 28.—Mark i. 15.—John vii. 37.—xii. 36.—vi. 27.—Luke xiv. 23.—Acts iii. 19.—Jam. iv. 8—10.—2 Cor. v. 18—20.

Mr. SANDEMAN may tell us that the character of ambassadors does not belong to ordinary ministers, and may attribute the invitations used in the present day to "priestly pride, and strutting self-importance;" but this will only prove that he has reasoned himself into a situation from which he has no other way of extricating himself, than by having recourse to abuse instead of argument. What does it make for him whether ordinary ministers be ambassadors for Christ or not? If faith be a mere *passive* reception of the truth, it were as improper for the apostles to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God, as for ordinary ministers to do so. Extraordinary powers could not render that consistent, which is in itself absurd.

But I need say the less on this head, as Mr. M'LEAN, in the First Part of his *Thoughts on the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel*, has not only alleged the foregoing passages, with others, but shown their connexion and pertinency to the point at issue. Suffice it for me to say, that a system which requires the disuse of the most distinguished means pertaining to the ministry of the word, must be fundamentally erroneous, and of a tendency to render the good news of salvation of none effect.*

* It becomes me here to acknowledge, that in the Appendix to the last Edition of "The Gospel worthy of all acceptation," I was guilty of an oversight, in attributing many of the foregoing sentiments to Mr. M'LEAN, which did not belong to him. This misstatement was owing to my having at the time entirely forgot his

"To urge unbelievers (says Mr. SANDEMAN) to any shadow of obedience to the gospel, as preparative to justification by faith, can have no other effect than to lead them to establish their own righteousness, and to stand in awe of the preacher."* Obedience to the gospel, in Mr. SANDEMAN'S view, is the *effect* of faith: the scriptures however, as we have seen, make faith itself to be obedience, and unbelief to be disobedience. If by "preparative" he mean any thing which contributes to the ground or reason of justification, what he says of its self-righteous tendency is true; and the same would be true of his "notion," or "bare belief:" but to represent obedience to the gospel as necessary, in the established order of things, to justification, is to represent it according to the whole current of scripture, as is manifest from the foregoing passages; and this can have no self-righteous tendency.

piece "On the Calls of the Gospel," and my considering an anonymous performance, entitled "Simple Truth," written by a Mr. BERNARD, as his. It is true I had the means of knowing better, and should have been more attentive to them: in this, however, lay the whole of my fault. It never was my design for a moment to misrepresent Mr. M. or any other man; nor did I ever feel the least reluctance to make the most explicit acknowledgement.

I may add, though I am sorry that I mistook him, yet I am glad I was mistaken. The difference between us is so much the less, which to any one who wishes to unite with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, as far as possible, must afford a degree of satisfaction.

* Epis. Cor. p. 29.

He that believeth *worketh not, in respect of justification.* He does not deserve what he obtains, but receives it as a free gift; and it is of the nature of faith so to receive it. We can distinguish between a man who lives by his *labours*, and one that lives by *alms;* and without denying that the latter is active in receiving them, can clearly discern that his mode of living is directly opposed to that of the other. He that should contend, that living by alms actively received was the same thing as living by works, would not be reckoned a reasoner, but a driveller.

To set ourselves against the practice of the prophets and apostles, in order to support the freeness of justification, is supporting the ark with unhallowed hands; or, as Mr. M'Lean expresses it, *replying against God.* "Cannot the wicked (continues he) be exhorted to believe, repent, and seek the Lord, and be encouraged to this by a promise of success, (Isa. lv. 6, 7.) without....making the success to depend on human merit? Are such exhortations and promises always to be suspected of having a dangerous and self-righteous tendency? Instead of taking them in their plain and simple sense, must our main care always be to guard against some supposed self-righteous use of them, till we have explained away their whole force and spirit, and so distinguished and refined upon them, as to make men more afraid to comply with them, than to reject them, lest they should be guilty of

some exertion of mind or body, some good disposition or motion towards Christ, which is supposed to be the highest wickedness, and a despising of the work of Christ?" *

I can assure you, that while I feel sorry to have mistaken Mr. M'LEAN on this subject, I am not a little happy in being able to make such important extracts as the above from his writings. Yet when I think of some of the principles which he still avows, I feel concerned at what appears to me his inconsistency; and not merely his, but that of many others whom I sincerely esteem.

If, after what has passed, I could hope for a candid attention, I would intreat Mr. M'LEAN, and others like-minded with him, to consider whether that *practical neglect* of calls and invitations to the unconverted, which is said to prevail wherever these sentiments are imbibed, and which he almost acknowledges to have attended his own ministry, † has not arisen from this cause. So long as he considers faith as something in which the will has no concern, instead of my being surprised at his feeling a difficulty in carrying the principles pleaded for in his *Thoughts on the Calls of the Gos-*

* Thoughts on Calls, &c. p. 36.

† His words are, "However negligent I may be in urging sinners to repentance, it has always been my firm belief, that not only the unconverted, but even the converted themselves, need often to be called to repentance, and that in order to forgiveness." Reply, p. 36.

pel into execution, I should be much more surprised at the contrary. If he be able to exhort sinners to repent and believe the gospel, it is more than I should be, with his professed principles. So far as I know myself, I could not possibly call or invite any man to that, in which his will had no concern, without feeling at the same time that I insulted him.

It may seem a little remarkable that this system, and that of the high, or hyper-calvinists in England, which in almost all other things are opposite, should on this point be agreed. The one confines believing to the understanding, the other represents sinners, awakened sinners at least, as being willing to believe, but unable to do so, any more than to take wings and fly to heaven. Hence neither of them hold it consistent to call on sinners to believe in Christ; nor *is it consistent with their principles;* but how it is that they do not perceive, by the uniform practice of Christ and his apostles, that these principles are antiscriptural, I cannot otherwise account for, than by ascribing it to the perverting influence of hypothesis.

Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

ON THE FAITH OF DEVILS, AND NOMINAL CHRISTIANS

My dear Friend,

You are aware that the apostle James speaks of some, whose faith "was dead being alone," and that, in answer to their boastings, he reminded them, that "the devils also believed and trembled." From hence it has been generally thought, there must be an essential difference between the *nature* of the faith of nominal christians and devils on the one hand, and that of true christians on the other. But this would overturn a leading principle of the Sandemanian system. Its advocates therefore have generally contended, that "whosoever among men believes what devils do about the Son of God, are born of God, and shall be saved;"* and that the design of the apostle was not to *compare* but rather to *contrast* it with that of the nominal christian;

* Ecking's Essays, p. 107.

the latter as having no effect upon the mind, the former as causing its subjects to tremble. It has also been commonly maintained on that side of the question, that the faith of which the apostle James speaks, instead of being of a different *nature* from that of true christians, was in reality nothing but profession, or "*saying* I have faith." "The design of the apostle (it has been said) is to represent that faith, whether it be on earth or in hell, if it really existed, and was not merely pretended, or professed, was always productive of corresponding works."

As the whole argument seems to rest upon the question, whether the faith of nominal christians be here *compared* to that of devils, or *contrasted* with it, and as the solution of this question involves a fundamental principle of the system, it is worthy of a particular examination.

The words of the apostle are as follow:—"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou

believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead." Chap. ii. 14—20.

If the design be to *contrast* the faith of devils with that of nominal christians, the apostle must undoubtedly mean to render the latter a nonentity, or a mere pretence, and to hold up the former as a reality; and, what is more, to represent the "trembling" of the fallen spirits as a species of good fruit, good at least in its nature, and wanting nothing to render it saving, but the circumstantial interference of a more favourable situation.

To this view of the passage I have several objections.—

First, The apostle does not treat the faith of nominal christians as a nonentity, but as something which existed, though void of life, as "a dead body without the spirit." On the principle here opposed there is no such thing as a dead faith; that which is so called being mere pretence. The party is indeed represented as *saying* he hath faith, but the same may be alleged of the true christian with respect to works. v. 18. If the faith of the one be from hence considered as a nonentity, the works of the other must be the same.

Secondly, The place in which the faith of devils is introduced, proves that it is for the purpose of *comparison*, and not of *contrast*. If it had been for the latter, it should have been introduced in

verse 18, and classed with the operative belief of true christians, rather than in verse 19, where it is classed with that of nominal christians. The argument then would have been this: 'Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works: the devils believe and tremble: but thou believest and tremblest not: therefore thy faith is a mere pretence.'

Thirdly, The copulative particle "also," instead of the disjunctive, determines it to be a *comparison*, and not a *contrast*. If it were the latter, the argument requires it to have been thus expressed—'Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: *but* the devils believe and tremble.' If καὶ be rendered *and* or *even*, as it often is, instead of *also*, yet the meaning is the same. 'Thou believest there is one God: thou doest well; *and* the devils believe and tremble—or *even* the devils believe and tremble.' None of these forms of expression convey the idea of contrast, but of likeness.

Judge, my friend, and let the reader judge, whether the meaning of the apostle be not expressed in the following paraphrase—'Show me, if thou canst, a faith which is of any value without works, and I will show thee a faith which is of value by its fruits. Thou believest that there is one God; a great matter truly: and may not the same be said of the worst of beings? yea, and more: for they, having felt the power of God's anger, not only believe, but tremble; whereas thy faith suffers

thee to live at ease. But as their's, with all their trembling, is of no account, neither is thine: for faith without holy fruits is dead.'

If the language of the apostle may be understood as a *contrast*, it may be used to express that which subsists between other things that differ as well as these: e. g. between the faith of Christians and that of Jews. But the absurdity of this would strike any reader of common discernment. 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: christians *also* believe and obey! To make sense of it, it should be, *but* christians believe and obey. On the other hand, make an experiment in an instance of *likeness*, and the language is plain and easy. One boasts that he is not a heathen, nor a jew, nor a deist, but a christian; while yet he is under the dominion of avarice. A man might say to him, 'Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: Felix the heathen was so far convinced of this, and, what is more, trembled: yet Felix's convictions were of no value, and brought forth no good fruit; neither are thine, for faith without works is dead.'

There is no reason to conclude, that the faith and trembling of devils differ in any thing, except in degree, from the convictions and trembling of Felix: if therefore the former would in our circumstances have terminated in salvation, why did not the latter, whose situation was sufficiently favourable, so terminate? The convictions of James's

nominal christian might not be so strong as those of Felix, and his might not be so strong as those of the fallen angels; but in their *nature* they were one and the same. The first was convinced that there was one God; but it was mere light, without love. If, like what is said of the stony-ground hearers, a portion of joy at first attended it, yet the gospel having no root in his mind, and being in circumstances wherein he saw no remarkable displays of the divine majesty, it made no durable impression upon him. The second might also be convinced that there was a God, and neither were his convictions accompanied by love; but "righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come," being set before him, he "trembled." The last are convinced of the same truth, and neither are their convictions accompanied by love; but being placed in circumstances wherein the awful majesty of God is continually before their eyes, they know already in part, by sad experience, the truth of his threatenings, and tremble in expectation of greater torments.

There is just as much holiness in each of these cases, as in the trembling of an impenitent malefactor under the gallows. To reckon it in any of them, therefore, among "the corresponding fruits which always attend faith, if it really exists," is to reckon that as fruit which the scriptures reject as unworthy of the name. Of the four sorts of hearers only one brought forth fruit.

It is remarkable that Mr. M'Lean, after what he has written, when discoursing on the parable of the sower, particularly on those who are said to have "believed for a while," should introduce the following sentiment in the form of an *objection*—"Such as fall away have never been enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, nor really believe the gospel; but had only *professed* to believe."—His answer to this objection is still more remarkable. "The scripture (he says) supposes them to have been once enlightened—to have received the knowledge of the truth, and of the way of righteousness—to have believed for a while—and to have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; see Heb. vi. 4—x. 26.—Luke viii. 13.—2 Pet. ii. 20. And their falling away after such attainments, is that which constitutes the very sin of apostacy, and by which the guilt of it is aggravated. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." *Sermons*, p. 66.

All this I account very good, though I should not have expected it from Mr. M. But his refusing after this to admit an *essential* difference between the faith of these apostates, and that of true believers, is most remarkable of all. If the difference lie not in the nature of their faith, nor in the

nature of the things believed, against which he also reasons, where does it lie? They must, one would think, have been true believers so far as they went, and so long as they continued to believe; and their falling away must afford an example of the apostacy of true believers. But if a person may be a true believer at one time, and an apostate at another, he can have no scriptural ground at any period of his life, from any consciousness of believing the gospel, to conclude on his own particular salvation. Yet this is what Mr. M. has pleaded for in his Treatise on the *Commission*. Moreover, if there be not an *essential* difference between the nature of the faith of apostates, and that of true believers, why does he himself, when describing them, write as follows?—"Whatever appearances of faith there may be in false professors, they have not the same perception of the truth, nor that persuasion of it upon its proper evidence, which real believers have." *Works*, Vol. II. p. 96. I do not say of Mr. M. as he does of me, that "he can take either side of the question as he finds occasion:" but this I say, he appears to me to feel the force of some truths which do not well comport with some of his former reasonings; and not being able, it should seem, to reconcile them, he leaves them unreconciled.

Surely it were more agreeable to the truth, and to the passages on which he discourses, to admit of an *essential* difference between the faith of nominal

and real christians. In discoursing on the "good ground," in the parable, he very properly represents true believers, and them only, as being "taught by the special illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit;" but surely that which is the fruit of this special influence possesses a special *nature*. Why else do we read, that "that which is born of the spirit is spirit;" and why does it denominate a man spiritual? * We may not, as he says, be "able to distinguish in the first impressions of the gospel, the faith of a stony-ground hearer from that of a true believer;" but it does not follow that there *is* not an essential difference notwithstanding.

The unrenewed character, with all his knowledge, "knoweth nothing as he ought to know." He perceives not the intrinsic evil of sin, and, consequently, discerns not the intrinsic excellence of the knowledge of Christ. That in the gospel which pleases him is, its giving relief to his troubled conscience. Hence "all his godliness (as Mr. SANDEMAN says) consists in love to that which first relieved him."

We have been told more than once, that "there need be no question about *how* we believe, but *what* we believe." Mr. M'LEAN will answer this, that "the *matter* or *object* of belief, even in apostates, is said to be the word of the kingdom—the truth—the way of righteousness—the Lord and

* John iii. 6.—1 Cor. ii. 15.

Saviour Jesus Christ; and what other object of faith have true believers?" *Sermons, p. 66, 67.*

I have no objection to allowing however, that if we believe the very truth as it is in Jesus, there can be nothing wanting in the *manner* of believing it. But though this be true, and though an inquirer after the way of salvation ought to be directed to the saving doctrine of the cross, rather than to the workings of his own mind concerning it, yet there *is* in the workings of a believer's mind towards it, something essentially different from those of the merely nominal christian; and which, when the inquiry comes to be, 'Am I a believer?' ought to be pointed out. He not only believes truth which the other does not, but believes the same truths in a different manner. In other words, he believes them on different grounds, and with different affections. That which he knoweth, is in measure "as he ought to know it." He discerns spiritual things *in a spiritual manner*, and which is the only manner in which they can be discerned as they are.

It might be said, there need be no question about *how* we repent, or hope, or love, or pray; but *what* we repent of, what we hope for, what we love, and what we pray for. And true it is, that if we repent of sin as sin, hope for the things which the gospel promises, love the true character of God, and all that bears his image, and pray for those things which are according to his will, there will be

nothing wanting as to the manner: but it does not follow, that there *is* no difference as to the manner of these exercises in true christians and in merely nominal ones. Our being right as to the objects may be a *proof* of our being right as to the manner, as the needle's pointing to the magnet proves the correspondence of the nature of the one with that of the other: but as in this case we should not say, it is of no account whether the needle be made of steel or of some other substance, so that it points to the magnet, neither in the other should we consider the nature of spiritual exercises as a matter of no account, but merely the objects on which they terminate.

When we read concerning the duty of prayer, that "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him *in truth;*" and that "we know not what to pray for *as we ought,*" we infer that there is something in the nature of a good man's prayers, which distinguishes them from others. But there is just the same reason for inferring that there is something in the nature of a good man's knowledge, which distinguishes it from that of others: for as he only that is assisted by the Holy Spirit prays *as he ought,* so he only that is taught of God knoweth any thing *as he ought to know.*

The holy nature of living faith may be difficult, and even impossible to be ascertained, but by its effects; as it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish some seeds from others, till they have

each brought forth their respective fruits; but a difference there *is* notwithstanding. If there need be no inquiry as to the nature of faith, but merely concerning its objects, how was it that the Corinthians, who by their unworthy spirit and conduct had rendered their being Christ's disciples *indeed* a matter of doubt, should be told to *examine themselves*, whether they were in the faith, and should be furnished with this criterion, that if they were true believers, and not reprobates, or such as would be disapproved as dross, "Jesus Christ was in them." On the principle here opposed, they should have examined not themselves, but merely their creed, or *what* they believed, in order to know whether they were in the faith.

If the faith of devils would have issued in their salvation, provided they had been placed in circumstances of hope like us, it will follow that faith is not produced by the grace of the Holy Spirit, but merely by Divine Providence. No one, I presume, will ascribe the belief of devils to the Holy Spirit: whatever they believe must be owing to the situation in which they are placed, and the circumstances attending them. But if faith may be the mere effect of situation and circumstances in one case, why not in another? Sandemanians have often been charged with setting aside the work of the Spirit; and have often denied the charge: but whatever may be said of their other principles, their notion of the faith of

devils must sap the foundation of that important doctrine. If this notion be true, all that is necessary is, that the party be placed under the influence of truth clearly stated and sufficiently impressive, and within the limits of the promise of salvation. All the change therefore, which is necessary to eternal life, may be wrought by only a proper adjustment of moral causes. Only place mankind in circumstances in which their minds shall be impressed with terror equal to that of the fallen angels, and let the promise of salvation to believers be continued as it is, and all would be saved. And with respect to the fallen angels themselves, only extend to them the promise to believers, and they are at once in a state of salvation. Such, on this hypothesis, would have been the happy condition of both men and devils: but the hope of mercy, and the sense of wrath, are both rendered abortive for want of being united. Providence places sinners on earth under the hope of salvation; but then they are not in circumstances sufficiently impressive, and so it comes to nothing. In hell the circumstances are sufficiently impressive, and they actually believe; but then there is no hope, and so again it comes to nothing!

Surely the parable of the rich man and Lazarus might suffice to teach us the insufficiency of all means to bring sinners to God, when we are assured, that if they believed not Moses and the

prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead. I am far from accusing all who have pleaded for the faith of devils, being such as would be saving in our circumstances, as *designing* to undermine the work of the Spirit; but that such is its tendency, is, I presume, sufficiently manifest.

Nor is this all: not only is the influence of the Spirit set aside in favour of the mere influence of moral suasion, but *the fruits of the Spirit* are made to consist of that which is the ordinary effect of such influence. "When any person on earth (it has been said) believes Jesus, who is now invisible, with equal assurance as the devils, he rejoices in hope, is animated by love to him, and feels disposed to obey his will, and to resist his own evil inclinations."

There are, I grant, sensations in the human mind, which arise merely from the influences of hope and fear, and which bear a near resemblance to the fruits of the Spirit; but they are not the same. The judgments of God inflicted upon the carnal Israelites in the wilderness, caused the survivors to tremble, and wrought in them a great care to be more religious, and to resist their evil inclinations. "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned early after God; they remembered that God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer."—Such was the effect of moral influence, or of the word and works of God: but what

follows? "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues: for *their heart was not right with him*, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." * Thus we still see men on the approach of death greatly affected. Light as they may have made of religion before, they now believe enough to make them tremble. At such times, it is common for them to think how good they would be, and what a different life they would lead, if it would please God to restore them. And should a favourable turn be given to their affliction, they are affected in another way; they weep, and thank God for their hopes of recovery, not doubting, but that they shall become other men. But I need not tell you, or the reader, that all this may consist with a heart at enmity with the true character of God, and that it frequently proves so by their returning, as soon as the impression subsides, to their old courses. The whole of this process may be no more than an operation of self-love, or, as Mr. SANDEMAN calls it, "a love to that which relieves them," which is something at a great remove from the love of God, and therefore is not "godliness." Godliness has respect to God, and not merely to our own relief. The distress of an ungodly mind, consisting only in a fearful apprehension of consequences, may be relieved by any thing that fur-

* Psalm lxxviii. 34—37.

nishes him with a persuasion of the removal of those consequences. It may be from an idea that he has performed the conditions of salvation; or from an impulse that his sins are forgiven; or from his imagining that he "sees God just in justifying him, ungodly as he stands." Any of these considerations will give *relief;* and no man will be so wanting to himself, as not to "love that which relieves him." There may be some difference in these causes of relief: the first may be derived from something in ourselves; and the last may seem to arise from what Christ hath done and suffered: but if the undertaking of Christ be merely viewed as a relief to a sinner, we overlook its chief glory; and the religion that arises from such views, is as false as the views themselves are partial.

The first idea in the doctrine of the cross is, "Glory to God in the highest." Its proclaiming "peace on earth, and good will to men," is consequent on this. But that which occupies the first place in the doctrine itself, must occupy the first place in the belief of it. The faith of the gospel corresponds with the gospel: "So we preached, and so ye believed." God will assert his own glory, and we must subscribe to it, before we are allowed to ask or hope for the forgiveness of our sins; as is clearly taught us in what is called the Lord's prayer. He, therefore, that views the cross of Christ merely as an expedient to relieve the

guilty, or only subscribes to the justice of God in his condemnation, when conceiving himself delivered from it, has yet to learn the first principles of christianity. His rejoicing in the justice of God *as satisfied by the death of Christ*, while he hates it in itself considered, is no more than rejoicing in a dreaded tyrant being appeased, or somehow diverted from coming to hurt him. And shall we call this the love of God? To make our deliverance from divine condemnation the condition of our subscribing to the justice of it, proves, beyond all contradiction, that we care only for ourselves, and that the love of God is not in us. And herein, if I may adopt Mr. SANDEMAN's term, consists the very "poison" of his system. It is one of the many devices for obtaining relief to the mind, without justifying God, and falling at the feet of the Saviour; or, which is the same thing, without "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

The doctrine of the cross presupposes the equity and goodness of the divine law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the exposedness of the sinner to God's righteous curse, and his utter insufficiency to deliver his soul. To believe this doctrine, therefore, must needs be to subscribe with our very heart to these principles, as they respect ourselves; and so to receive salvation as being what it is, a message

of pure grace through a mediator. Such a conviction as this never possessed the mind of a fallen angel, nor of a fallen man untaught by the special grace of God.

Yours, &c.

LETTER V.

ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD, AND FAITH TOWARD OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

My dear Friend,

THE advocates of this system do not consider the order in which these graces are ordinarily introduced in the new testament, as being the true order of nature, and therefore generally reverse it, putting faith before repentance, and invariably placing repentance among the effects of faith. A sinner therefore has no spiritual sense of the evil of sin, till he has believed in the Saviour, and stands in a justified state. Then, being forgiven all trespasses, and reconciled to God through the death of his Son, he is melted into repentance.

The question is not whether the gospel, when received by faith, operates in this way; for of this there can be no doubt. Nothing produces godly sorrow for sin, like a believing view of the suffering Saviour. Nor is it denied that to be grieved for

having dishonoured God, we must first believe that he "is;" and before we can come to him in acceptable worship, that through a mediator he is "the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Without a mediator, repentance, even if it could have existed, must have been hopeless. I have not such an idea of the sinner being brought to repentance, antecedent to his believing in Christ for salvation, as Mr. SANDEMAN had of his believing antecedent to repentance. According to him, he believes and is justified, not merely *considered* as ungodly, or *without any consideration of godliness* in him, but actually "ungodly as he stands;" and then, and not till then, begins to love God, and to be sorry for his sin. This is manifestly holding up the idea of *an impenitent believer*, though not of one that continues such. But the antecedency which I ascribe to repentance does not amount to this. I have no conception of a sinner being so brought to repentance, as to sustain the *character* of a penitent, and still less to obtain the forgiveness of sin, previous to his falling in with the way of salvation. I believe it is not possible for a sinner to repent, and at the same time to reject the Saviour. The very instant that he perceives the evil of sin so as to repent of it, he cannot think of the Saviour without believing in him. I have therefore no notion of *a penitent unbeliever*.—All that I contend for is, that in the order of cause and effect, whatever may be said as to

the order of time, repentance precedes as well as follows the faith of Christ; and that faith in Christ cannot exist without repentance for sin. A sense of sin appears to me essential to believing in the Saviour; so much so, that without it, the latter would not only be a mere "notion," but an essentially defective one.

It is admitted on both sides, that there is a priority of one or other of these graces in the order of nature, so as that one is influenced by the other; and if no other priority were pleaded for, neither the idea of a penitent unbeliever on the one hand, nor an impenitent believer on the other, would follow: for it might still be true, as Mr. M'LEAN acknowledges, that "none believe who do not repent," (*p.* 39.) and as I also acknowledge that none repent, who, according to the light they have, do not believe. But if we maintain not only that faith is prior in the order of nature, but that antecedent to any true sorrow for sin, we must "see God to be just in justifying us ungodly as we stand," this is clearly maintaining the notion of an impenitent believer.

From these introductory remarks, it will appear that I have no objection to faith being considered as cotemporary with repentance in the order of time, provided the latter were made to consist in an acquiescence with the gospel way of salvation, so far as it is understood: but if it be made to include such a clear view of the gospel as necessarily

brings peace and rest to the soul, I believe that repentance for sin often precedes it even in the order of time.

Such is the connection between repentance and faith in the scriptures, that the one commonly supposes the other. Repentance, when followed by the remission of sins, supposes faith in the Saviour;* and faith, when followed with justification, equally supposes repentance for sin.

Attempts have been made, by criticising on the word μετάνοια, to explain away, as it would seem, the proper object of repentance, as if it were *a change of mind* with regard to the gospel. "Repentance, (says Mr. S.) is the change of a man's mind to love the truth, which always carries in it a sense of shame and regret at his former opposition to it." † But this is confounding repentance and faith objectively considered. The objects of both are so marked in the apostolic ministry, that one would think they could not be honestly mistaken. Repentance is *toward God*, and faith is *toward our Lord Jesus Christ:* the one has immediate respect to the Lawgiver, the other to the Saviour.

It cannot be denied, that the order in which the new testament commonly places repentance and faith, is in direct opposition to what our opponents plead for; and what is more, that the former is

* Luke xxiv. 47.

† Letters on Ther. and Asp. p. 408.

represented as influencing the latter. This is manifest in the following passages.—"Repent ye and believe the gospel.—Testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.—They repented not, *that they might believe him.*—If God peradventure might give them repentance *to the acknowledging of the truth.*"* Mr. SANDEMAN, Mr. M'LEAN, and all the writers on that side of the question, very rarely make use of this language; and when they have occasion to write upon the subject, ordinarily reverse it. To accord with their ideas it should have been said, Believe the gospel and repent.—Testifying faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance toward God.—They believed not, that they might repent.—If God peradventure may give them faith to repent.

To this I add, it is impossible, in the nature of things, to believe the gospel, but as being made sensible of that which renders it necessary. The guilty and lost state of sinners goes before the revelation of the grace of the gospel; the latter therefore cannot be understood or believed, but as we are convinced of the former. There *is* no grace in the gospel, but upon the supposition of the holiness, justice, and goodness of the law. If God be not in the right, and we in the wrong; if we have not transgressed without cause, and be not fairly condemned; grace is no more grace, but a just exemption from un-

* Mark i. 15.—Acts xx. 21.—Matt. xxi. 32.—2 Tim. ii. 25.

deserved punishment. And as faith must needs correspond with truth, it is impossible that we should believe the doctrine of salvation by grace, in an impenitent state of mind, or without feeling that we have forfeited all claim to the divine favour. We cannot see things but as they are to be seen: to suppose that we first believe in the doctrine of free grace, and then, as the effect of it, perceive the evil of sin, and our just exposedness to divine wrath, is like supposing a man first to appreciate the value of a physician, and by this means to learn that he is sick. It is true the physician may visit the neighbourhood, or the apartments of one who is in imminent danger of death, while he thinks himself mending every day; and this circumstance may be held up by his friends as a motive to him to consider of his condition, and to put himself under his care. It is thus that the coming of Christ, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, were alleged as motives to repentance both to Jews and Gentiles. Repent, *for* the kingdom of heaven is at hand.—Repent ye *therefore*.—The times past of this ignorance God winked at; but *now commandeth all men every where to repent*.* But as it would not follow, in the one case, that the sick man could appreciate the value of the physician till he felt his sickness, neither does it follow in the other, that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ precedes

* Matt. iii. 2.—iv. 17.—Acts xvii. 30.

such a sense of the evil of sin, as involves the first workings of repentance toward God.

To argue as some have done, from the *motives* of repentance being fetched from the gospel, that it supposes their believing the gospel ere they could repent, proves too much; for it is not to repentance only, but to faith, that the coming of Christ's kingdom is held up as a motive: but to say that this supposes their belief of the gospel, is saying, they must believe in order to believing.

That *a conviction of sin* (whether it include the first workings of repentance or not) is necessary to faith in Christ, is a matter so evident, that those who have declaimed most against it, have not been able to avoid such a representation of things. It is remarkable, that when Mr. SANDEMAN comes to *describe* his "ungodly man," he always contrives to make him not only full of distress, but divested of all *self-righteous pride:* he represents him as conceiving that there are none more ripe for hell than he, and as having no hope but in the great propitiation."* Thus also Mr. ECKING, when *describing* a "mere sinner," represents him as one who "feels himself in a perishing condition, and is conscious that he deserves no favour." †

We must not say that repentance, or any degree of a right spirit, so precedes faith in Christ as to enter into the nature of it: but if we will but call

* Letters on Ther. and Asp. p. 46, 48. † Essays, p. 41.

the sinner by a few hard names, we may describe him in coming to the Saviour as sensible of his utter unworthiness, as divested of self-righteousness, and as ripe for hell in his own eyes! In short, we may depict him as the publican, who sought mercy under a humilating sense of his utter unworthiness to receive it, so that we still call him ungodly. And to this we have no objection, so that it be understood of the character under which he is justified in the eye of the Lawgiver: but if it be made to mean that he, at the time of his justification, is in heart an enemy of God, we do not believe it. If he be, however, why do not these writers describe him as an enemy ought to be described?—They teach us elsewhere, that "an attachment to self-righteousness is natural to man as depraved;" how then came these ungodly men to be so divested of it? Why do they not represent them as thinking themselves in a fair way for heaven; and that if God does not pardon them he will do them wrong? Such is the ordinary state of mind of ungodly men, or mere sinners, which is just as opposite to that which they are constrained to represent, as the spirit of the pharisee was to that of the publican.

Mr. M'Lean will tell us, that "this is that part of the scheme, whereby persons, previous to their believing in Christ, are taught to extract comfort from their convictions;"* but whatever Mr. M.

* Reply, p. 148.

may think or say, I hope others will give me credit when I declare, that we have no idea of any well grounded comfort being taken, antecedent to believing in Christ. The publican is described as *humbling himself* before God exalted him: but he did not derive comfort from this. If, instead of looking to the mercy of God, he had done this, it would have been a species of pharisaic self-exaltation. But it does not follow from hence, that there *was* nothing spiritually good in his self-abasement.

But Mr. M. "believes a person may be so convicted in his conscience, as to view himself *merely as a guilty sinner*, that is, as having no righteousness to recommend him to the favour of God; and that under such conviction, his sense of the evil of sin will not be confined to its *punishment;* but his conscience or moral sense will tell him that he deserves punishment at the hands of a righteous God." †

Mr. M'LEAN admits then of the necessity of conviction of sin, previous, in the order of things, to faith in Christ; only there is no holiness, and consequently no true repentance in it. I have allowed in Letter I. that many convictions are to be resolved into the mere operations of an enlightened conscience, and do not issue in true conversion. I may add, I consider all conviction of sin which

† Ibid. p. 149.

does not in its own nature lead to the Saviour, as of this description. It matters not how deep the distress of a sinner may be; so long as it is accompanied by an unwillingness to be saved by mere grace through a mediator, there is no holiness in it, nor any thing that deserves the name of repentance. An enlightened conscience, I allow, will force us to justify God and condemn ourselves on many occasions. It was thus in Pharoah when he said, "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." And this his sense of the evil of sin might not be "confined to its *punishment:*" his "conscience or moral sense might tell him, that he deserved punishment at the hand of a righteous God." So far then we are agreed. But if Pharoah had had a *just sense* of the evil of sin, it would not have left him where it did. There was an essential difference between what he saw by the terrors of God's judgments, and what Paul saw, when "sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful." Nor can I believe that any sinner was ever so divested of self-righteous hope, as to consider himself *a mere sinner,* who yet continued to reject the Saviour: for this were the same thing as for him to have *no ground* to stand upon, either false or true; but he who submits not to the righteousness of God, is, in some form or other, going about to establish his own righteousness.

There is, I apprehend, an important difference between the case of a person, who, whatever be his convictions, is still averse from giving up every claim, and falling at the feet of the Saviour, and that of one whose convictions lead him to take refuge in the gospel, *as far as he understands it*, even though at present he may have but a very imperfect view of it. I can clearly conceive of the convictions of the first as having no repentance or holiness in them, but not so of the last. I believe repentance has begun to operate in many persons of this description, who as yet have not found that peace or rest for their souls, which the gospel is adapted to afford.—In short, the question is, whether there be not such a thing as *spiritual conviction*, or conviction which proceeds from the special influence of the Spirit of God, and which in its own nature invariably leads the soul to Christ? It is not necessary that it should be known by the party, or by others, to be so at the time, nor can it be known but by its effects, or till it *has led* the sinner to believe in Christ alone for salvation. But this does not prove but that it may exist. And when I read of sin "by the commandment becoming exceeding inful,"—of our being "through the law, dead to he law, *that we might live unto God*,"—of the law eing appointed, as a schoolmaster, to bring us Christ, *that we might be justified by faith*,"—I n persuaded it does exist; and that to say all

spiritual conviction of sin is by means of the gospel, is antiscriptural and absurd.

In places where the gospel is preached, and where persons have long heard it, it is not supposed that they are necessarily first led to think of the law, and of themselves as transgressors of it; and then, being convinced of the exceeding sinfulness of sin by it, are for the first time led to think of Christ. No, it is not the order of time, but that of cause and effect, for which I plead. It may be by thinking of the death of Christ itself, that we are first led to see the evil of sin; but if it be so, this does not disprove the apostolic doctrine, that "by the law is the knowledge of sin." If the death of Christ furnish us with this knowledge, it is *as honouring the precept and penalty of the law.* It is still therefore by the law, as exemplified in him, that we are convinced.

"A spirit of grace and supplication" was to be poured upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in consequence of which, they were to "look upon him whom they had pierced, and mourn as for an only son, and to be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." * Is this mourning described as following their forgiveness; or as preceding it? As preceding it. It is true they are said first to "look upon him whom they had pierced;" but this view of the death of

* Zech. xii. 10.

the Saviour is represented as working only in a way of conviction and lamentation: the view which gave peace and rest to their souls follows upon their mourning, and is thus expressed—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."

Judge, my friend, and let the reader judge, whether this account accords with our first viewing God as just, and justifying us ungodly as we stand; and then beginning to love him, and to repent of our having sinned against him. Judge whether it does not represent things in this order rather:—First, "a spirit of grace and supplication" is poured upon the sinner—next, he is led to think of what he has done against the Lord and his Christ, and mourns over it in the bitterness of his soul—and then gets relief by washing, as it were, in the fountain of his blood. Such was doubtless the process under Peter's sermon.*

On the connection of repentance and faith, I am at a loss to make out Mr. M'Lean's sentiments. He says indeed that I know them; and suggests that I must have intentionally misrepresented them.† But if they be so plain, I can only say my understanding is more dull than he supposes; for I do not yet comprehend how he can make re-

* Acts ii. 37, 38.

† Reply, p. 36.

pentance, in all cases, a fruit of faith in Christ, and yet consider it as necessary to forgiveness. He acknowledges that "none believe who do not repent;" (*p.* 39.) and that repentance is "necessary to forgiveness." (36.) But forgiveness, though not the same thing as justification, is yet an essential part of it; if therefore he allow repentance to be antecedent to forgiveness, that is the same thing, in effect, as allowing it to be antecedent to justification, or that the faith by which we are justified includes repentance. Yet he makes faith to be such a belief as excludes all exercise of the will or affections, and consequently repentance for sin. He also considers repentance as an immediate effect of faith, (38.) and opposes the idea of any effect of faith being included in it as necessary, not merely as a procuring cause, but in the established order of things, to justification. But this, so far as I am able to understand things, is making repentance follow upon forgiveness, rather than necessary to it.

Mr. M'LEAN adds, "Though repentance ought to be urged upon all who hear the gospel; and though none believe it who do not repent; yet I strongly suspect that it would be leading us astray, to press repentance upon them *before*, and in order to their believing the gospel." (39.) And why does he not suspect the same thing of pressing the belief of the gospel before, and in order to their repentanec? If indeed the gospel were withheld from sinners, till

they actually repent; or if it were suggested that they should first become penitents, and then think of being believers, this would be leading them astray: and the same might be said on the other side. If exhortations to repentance were withheld, till the sinner had actually believed, or it were suggested that he should first become a believer, and then think of repenting, this would be as antiscriptural as the other. But why should we not content ourselves with following the examples of the new testament, *repent and believe the gospel?* As Mr. M'LEAN's placing faith before repentance, does not require him to avoid telling sinners of the evil nature of sin till they have believed, nor to consider them as believers while they are impenitent, why does he impute such consequences to me for placing repentance before faith?

Mr. M'LEAN refers to a passage in the preface to the first edition of *The gospel worthy of all acceptation*, as favouring these extravagant constructions. I had said, "No sort of encouragement or hope is held out in all the book of God, to any sinner *as such* considered." That which I meant at the time, was merely to disown that any sinner was encouraged to hope for eternal life without returning to God by Jesus Christ. Thus I explained it in my answer to *Philanthropos*, *p.* 3. but as I perceived the idea was not clearly expressed in the preface, and that the words were capable of an ill construction, I altered them in the second edition, and expressed

my meaning as follows: —"There is no dispute concerning who ought to be encouraged to consider themselves as entitled to the blessings of the gospel. Though sinners be freely invited to the participation of spiritual blessings, yet they have no interest in them, according to God's revealed will, while they continue in unbelief." I cannot consider Mr. M'LEAN's *other* references to the first edition, after a second was in his hand, as fair or candid; and *this* appears to me unfair and uncandid in the extreme.

It has been common to distinguish repentance into *legal* and *evangelical;* and I allow there is a foundation in the nature of things, for this distinction. The former arises from the consideration of our sin being a transgression of the holy, just, and good law of our Creator; the latter from the belief of the mercy of God as revealed in the gospel, and the consideration of our sin being committed notwithstanding, and even against it. But it appears to me, to have been too lightly taken for granted, that all *true* repentance is confined to the latter. The law and the gospel are not in opposition to each other; why then should repentance, arising from the consideration of them, be so opposite as that the one should be false and the other true?

If we wish to distinguish the false from the true, or that which needs to be repented of, from that which does not, we may perhaps with more propriety denominate them *natural* and *spiritual;* by the former

understanding that which the mere principles of unrenewed nature are capable of producing, and by the latter, that which proceeds from the supernatural and renovating influence of the Spirit of God.

Natural repentance thus defined, is sorrow for sin chiefly with respect to its consequences, accompanied, however, with the reproaches of conscience on account of the thing itself. It is composed of remorse, fear, and regret, and is often followed by a change of conduct. It may arise from a view of the law, and its threatenings, in which case it hath no hope, but worketh death, on account of there being nothing but death held out by the law for transgressors. Or it may arise from a partial and false view of the gospel, by which the heart is often melted under an idea of sin being forgiven, when it is not so; in this case it hath hope, but which being unfounded, it notwithstanding worketh death in a way of self-deception.

Spiritual repentance is *sorrow for sin as sin, and as committed against God.* It may arise from a view of the death of Christ, through which we perceive how evil and bitter a thing it is, and looking on him whom we have pierced, mourn as one mourneth for an only son. But it may also arise from the consideration of our sin being a transgression of the holy, just, and good law of God, and of our having dishonoured him without cause. Such a sense of the evil nature of sin, as renders it *exceeding sinful,* includes the essence of true repentance: yet

this in the apostle did not arise from the consideration of the gospel, but *of the commandment.* It was therefore *legal* repentance: yet, as its tendency was to render him "dead to the law" as a medium of justification, and to bring him to Christ *for life,* it was spiritual. It was repentance *unto life.*

The chief ground on which repentance toward God has been denied to precede faith in Christ in the order of nature, is, that no man can repent of sin till he entertain the hope of forgiveness.—Nay, it has been said, "No man can repent, unless he know himself to be of God; and as this cannot be known till he hath received Christ, faith must precede repentance." If the principle that supports this argument be true, we neither have, nor ought to have, any regard to God or man but for our own sake. But if so, the command ought not to have been, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself;" but, Thou shalt love thyself with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy God, and thy neighbour so far as they are subservient to thee. Moreover, if so, the world, instead of being greatly depraved, is very nearly what it ought to be; for it is certainly not wanting in self-love, though it misses the mark in accomplishing its object.

Some have allowed, that "it is our duty to love God supremely, whether he save us or not; but that nevertheless the thing is impossible." If it be

physically impossible, it cannot be duty: for God requires nothing in respect of obedience, but that we love him *with all our strength*. If it be only *morally* impossible, that is the same as its being so owing to the corrupt state of our minds. But we are not to suppose that God, in saving sinners, any more than in judging them, consults their depraved spirit, and adapts the gospel to it. On the contrary, it is the design of all that God does for us, to restore us to a right spirit. His truth must not bend to our corruptions; but our hearts must be "inclined to his testimonies." So far therefore as any man is renewed by the Spirit of God, so far is he brought to be of God's mind, and does what he ought to do. God's law is written in his heart.

Farther, If the principle that supports this argument be true, it will hold good in reference to men as well as God. And is it true, that a man who is under just condemnation for breaking the laws, and who has no hope of obtaining a pardon, ought not to be expected to repent for his crime, and, before he die, to pray God to bless his king and country? On this principle, all confessions of this kind are of necessity mere hypocrisy. Even those of the dying thief in the gospel, so far as they respect the justice of his doom from his countrymen, must have been insincere; for he had no hope of his sentence being remitted. What would an offended father say, if the offender should

require, as the condition of his repentance, a previous declaration of forgiveness, or even a willingness to forgive? A willingness to forgive *might* be declared, and it would heighten the criminality of the offender, if after this he continued hardened; but for him to *require* it, and to avow that he could not repent of his sin upon any other condition, would be the height of insolence. Yet all this is pleaded for in respect of God. "If I be a father, where is my honour!"

Besides, how is a sinner to "know that he is of God," otherwise than as being conscious of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? Till he is sorry at heart for having dishonoured God, he is not of God, and therefore cannot know that he is so.

If some have gone into extremes in writing of "disinterested love," as Mr. M'LEAN suggests,* it does not follow, that true religion has its origin in self-love. Most men who make any pretence to serious christianity will allow, that if sin be not hated *as sin,* it is not hated at all; and why we should scruple to allow, that if God be not loved *as God,* he is not loved at all, I cannot conceive. I am not surprised however, that those who have been so long, and so deeply imbued in a system, a leading principle of which is, "that godliness consists in love to that which first relieves us," should write in the manner they do.

* Reply, p. 149.

On some occasions however, Mr. M'LEAN himself can say as much in favour of "disinterested love," as his opponent, and can represent that which arises from "a mere principle of self-love," as being of no value. "There may be some resemblances of *repentance* (he says) in fear, remorse, and sorrow of mind, occasioned by sin, as in Cain, Judas, Felix, &c. But a mere principle of self-love will make a man dread the consequences of sin, while he has prevalent inclinations to sin itself. There is a difference between mere fear and sorrow on account of sin, and a prevalent hatred of it; between hatred of sin itself, and mere hatred of its consequences; between that sorrow for sin which flows from the love of God and of holiness, and that which flows from an inferior principle. Men may have even an aversion to some kinds of sin, because they interfere with others, or because they do not suit their natural constitutions, propensities, tempers, habits, age, worldly interests, &c. while they do not hate *all* sin universally, and consequently hate *no sin as such*, or from a proper principle." *

Yours, &c.

* Works, vol. II. p. 95.

LETTER VI.

ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND DISPOSITION.

My dear Friend,

You need' not be told, that this is a subject of prime importance in the Sandemanian system. It every where considers knowledge as the one thing needful, and disposition as its natural and proper effect.

Mr. M'LEAN represents me as maintaining that the understanding, or perceptive faculty in man, is directed and governed by his will and inclinations; and this he supposes to be the principle on which my arguments are principally founded; a principle which can only be true, he thinks, in cases where the original order of things is perverted by sin.* Whether these sentiments be just, or contain a fair statement of my views, we shall inquire as we

* Reply, p. 8, 9.

proceed: at present, I only observe, that the state of the will, or disposition, is, in Mr. M'LEAN's account, governed invariably by the understanding; or, if in any instance it be otherwise, it is owing to the disorder introduced by sin. I should not have supposed however, that sin could have perverted the established laws of nature. It certainly perverts the *moral* order of things, that is, (as Dr. OWEN represents it, to whom Mr. M. refers,) instead of the will being governed by judgment and conscience, judgment and conscience are often governed by prejudice. But there is nothing in all this subversive of the established laws of nature: for it is a law recognized both by nature and scripture, that the disposition of the soul should influence its decisions. A humble and candid spirit is favourable, and a proud and uncandid spirit is unfavourable to a right judgment.

"It is a maxim (says Mr. ECKING,) that has not yet been refuted, that the determination of the will must evermore follow the illumination, conviction, and notice of the understanding."* By the illumination, conviction, and notice of the understanding must be meant, either what the mind judges to be *right*, or what it accounts *agreeable*. If the will were always determined by the first, there could be no such thing as knowing the will of God and not doing it. But I suppose this will not be pretended.

* Essays, p. 54.

It must therefore be of the last that Mr. ECKING writes. His meaning must be, that the will evermore follows the mind's view of the object *as agreeable*. But is it certain that the viewing of an object agreeable is properly and perfectly distinct from chusing it? President EDWARDS conceived it was not, and therefore did not affirm that the will was *determined* by the greatest apparent good, but merely, that "*the will always is as the greatest apparent good, or as what appears most agreeable is.*"* This is not saying that the will is determined by the understanding: for as the same author goes on to prove, the cause of an object appearing agreeable to the mind may be "the state, frame, or temper of the mind itself." But so far as this is the case, the judgment is determined by the state of the mind, rather than the state of the mind by the judgment.

A great deal of confusion on this subject has arisen from confounding simple knowledge, pertaining merely to the intellectual faculty, with that which is compound, or comprehensive of approbation. The former is with propriety distinguished from whatever pertains to the state of the will; but the latter is not, seeing it includes it.

Mr. M'LEAN, speaking of certain characters, who had heard the gospel, says, "It is supposed that such men have now received some *information* which they had not before, both with respect to

* On the Will, Part I. Sect. II. p. 11.

their danger, and the remedy of it, and"—what? that their wills or dispositions are in that proportion changed? No, but "that they are hereby rendered quite *inexcusable* if they should neglect so great salvation; which neglect must now be the effect of perverseness and aversion, and not of *simple* ignorance. John iii. 19.—xv. 2, 25."* I do not say of Mr. M. as he did of me, when I was only reasoning upon the principles of my opponents, that "he can take either side of the question as he finds occasion:" but this I say, that when writing in favour of the calls of the gospel, he felt himself impelled to admit principles, which in his controversy on the other side he has quite lost sight of. The above statement appears to me to be very just: and as he here so properly distinguises *simple* ignorance from ignorance which arises from aversion or neglect; the one as tending to excuse, the other to criminate; he cannot consistently object to my distinguishing between *simple* knowledge, which barely renders men inexcusable, and knowledge *inclusive of approbation*, which has the promise of eternal life.

Simple knowledge, or knowledge as distinguished from approbation, is a mere natural accomplishment, necessary to the performance of both good and evil, but in itself neither the one nor the other. Instead of producing love, it often occasions an

* Thoughts on Calls, &c. p. 17.

increasing enmity, and in all cases renders sinners the less excusable. In this sense the term *knowledge*, and others related to it, are used in the following passages.—" The servant who *knew* his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.—When they *knew* God, they glorified him not as God.—If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye do them.—If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin.—If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both *seen and hated* both me and my Father." *

But knowledge is much more frequently used in the scriptures *as including approbation.* The Lord is said to *know* the righteous, and never to have *known* the workers of iniquity. To understand this of simple knowledge, would deprive God of his omniscience. As ascribed to men it is what is denominated *a spiritual understanding.* It is not necessary to an obligation to spiritual duties, but it is necessary, in the nature of things, to the actual discharge of them. It may be said of the want of this, " The Lord hath not given you eyes to see, and ears to hear, to this day," and that without furnishing any excuse for the blindness of the parties. It is the wisdom from above, imparted by the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit.

* Luke xii. 47.—Rom. i. 21.—John xiii. 17.—xv. 22, 24.

That knowledge in this sense of the term produces holy affections, is not denied. It is in itself holy, and contains the principle of universal holiness. It is that by which we discern the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which glory being beheld, assimilates us into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. But the question at issue respects knowledge in its simple and literal sense, or that which is purely intellectual, exclusive of all disposition; otherwise it would amount to no more than this, whether that which includes the seminal principle of holy affection, (namely *a sense of heart*) tends to produce it; which never was disputed.

The ground on which I am supposed to have proceeded is, "that the understanding, or perceptive faculty in man, is directed and governed by his will:" but this is a mistake. I ground no doctrine upon any theory of the human mind which I may have entertained; but on what I consider as the scriptural account of things; in which I find spiritual perception impeded by evil disposition, and promoted by the contrary.* Neither is the above a fair statement of my views. If what I have written implies any theory of the human mind, it is not that the understanding is in all cases governed by the will; but rather that they have a mutual influence on each other. I have allowed in my *Appen-*

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

dix, p. 207. that volitions are influenced by motives or considerations which exist in the view of the mind: and I should think it is equally evident on the other hand, that our judgments are, in a great number of instances, determined by a previous state or disposition of the. soul. In objects which do not interest the affections, the judgment may be purely intellectual, and the choice may naturally follow, according to its dictates; but it is not so in other cases, as universal experience evinces.

"But must it not be owned, (says Mr. M.) that so far as this is the case in man, it is an *irregular* exercise of his faculties, arising from the moral disorder of his lapsed nature, whereby judgment, reason, and conscience, are weakened, perverted, and blinded, so as to be subjected to his will, and corrupt inclinations?" (*p.* 8.) It must undoubtedly be owned, that the influence of an *evil* disposition in causing an erroneous and false judgment, is owing to this cause; and if that which I plead for, were what Mr. M. elsewhere represents it, viz. *a prejudice in favour of a report which renders the mind regardless of evidence,* (*p.* 67.) the same might be said of all such judgment. But how if the state of the will contended for should be that of a *deliverance from prejudice,* by which evidence comes to be properly regarded? It is not to the disorder introduced by sin, that we are to ascribe the general principle of the moral state or disposition of the soul having an influence on the judgment: for it is no less true

that a humble, candid, and impartial spirit influences the belief of moral truth, or truth that involves in its consequences the devoting of the whole life to God, than that a selfish and corrupt spirit influences the rejection of it. Surely it is not owing to the human faculties being thrown into disorder, that a holy frame of mind in believers enables them to understand the scriptures better than the best expositor! The experience of every christian bears witness, that the more spiritually minded he is, the better he is prepared for the discernment of spiritual things.

Mr. M'Lean thinks I have mistaken the meaning of the term *heart*, in applying it to the dispositions and affections of the soul, as distinguished from the understanding. (*Reply, p.* 10.) When such phrases as *a heart of stone, a heart of flesh, a hard and impenitent heart, a tender heart, a heart to know the Lord, &c.* occur, though they *suppose the intellectual faculty*, yet there can be no doubt, I should think, of their expressing the state of the will and affections, rather than of the understanding. I have no objection however to the account given of the term by Dr. Owen, that "it generally denotes the whole soul of man, and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all *one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing good or evil.*" The term may sometimes apply to what is simply natural; but it generally, as he says, denotes the principle of *moral* action, which being comprehended

in love, must in all cases, whether it relate to good or evil, include affection. And thus in his *Treatise on Justice*, Dr. OWEN observes, that "Assent is an act of the understanding only; but believing is an act of the heart, which in the scripture compriseth all the faculties of the soul as one entire principle of moral and spiritual duties. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.* Rom. x. 10; and it is frequently described by an act of the will, though it be not so alone. But without an act of the will, no man can believe as he ought. See John v. 40. i. 12. vi. 35. We come to Christ as an act of the will; and let whosoever will, come: and to be willing is taken for believing. Ps. cx. 3. And unbelief is disobedience. Heb. iii. 18, 19." *Chap. I. p.* 108.

Nay, Mr. M. himself acknowledges nearly as much as this. He says, "The scriptures always represent the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit as exerted upon the heart, which includes not only the understanding, but the will and affections, or the prevalent inclinations and dispositions of the soul." *Works, vol. II. p.* 91.

That disposition in rational beings presupposes perception, I never doubted; but that it is *produced* by it, is much easier asserted than proved. Knowledge is a concomitant in many cases where it is not a cause. If all holy disposition be produced by just perceptions, all evil disposition is produced by unjust or erroneous ones. Indeed this is no

more than Mr. M'LEAN, on some occasions at least, is prepared to admit. He tells us, that "the word of God represents the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of the mind with regard to spiritual things, as the source of men's alienation from the life of God, and of their rebelling against him." *p.* 77. Does he really think then, that the passages of scripture to which he refers,* mean simple ignorance? If not, they make nothing for his argument. Does he seriously consider the *blindness*, or *hardness* of heart, in Eph. iv. 18. as refering to ignorance *in distinction from aversion*, or as *including* it? † Can he imagine that the darkness in which Satan holds mankind, is any other than a chosen and beloved darkness, described in the following passages. "They *loved* darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.—The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed." John iii. 19. Acts xxviii. 27.

That voluntary blindness renders sinners estranged from God, I can easily understand, nor am I at any loss to conceive of its being "that by which Satan reigns, and maintains his power over the

* Eph. iv. 18, 19.—Acts, xxvi. 18.—Eph. vi. 12.—Col. i. 13.

† πώρωσις, PARKHURST observes, is from πωρόω, and signifies, *hardness*, *callousness*, or *blindness*. "It is not mere ignorance, (says Dr. OWEN,) but a stubborn resistance of light and conviction; an obdurate hardness, whence it rejects the impressions of divine truth." Disc. on the Holy Spirit, Book iii. Chap. 3.

minds of men:" but I do not perceive, in any of these facts, the proof of disposition having its origin in ignorance. Two friends, whom I will call *Matthew* and *Mark*, were one evening conversing on this subject, when the following sentiments were exchanged. All sin, said Matthew, arises from ignorance—Do you think then, said Mark, that God will condemn men for what is owing to a want of natural capacity? O, no, said Matthew, it is a *voluntary* ignorance to which I refer; a not *liking* to retain God in their knowledge. Then, said Mark, you reason in a circle. Your argument amounts to this; All sin arises from ignorance, and this ignorance arises from sin; or, which is the same thing, from aversion to the light!

If Mr. M'LEAN, or others, will maintain that sin is the effect of *simple* ignorance, (and this they must maintain, or what they hold is nothing different from that which they oppose,) let them seriously consider a few of its consequences, as drawn by some of our modern infidels. It is on this principle that Mr. GODWIN, in his treatise on *Political Justice*, denies the original depravity of human nature; explains away all ideas of guilt, crime, desert, and accountableness; and represents the devil himself as a being of considerable virtue! Thus he reasons—

"The moral characters of men originate in their perceptions. As there are no innate perceptions or ideas, there are no innate principles—The moral qualities of men are the produce of the impressions

made upon them, and THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ORIGINAL PROPENSITY TO EVIL." *Book I. chap.* 3.

Again, "Vice is nothing more than error and mistake, reduced to practice—Acting from an ill motive is acting from a mistaken motive—Under the system of necessity, (i. e. as held by him,) the ideas of GUILT, CRIME, DESERT, and ACCOUNTABLENESS, HAVE NO PLACE." *Book IV. Chap. IV.—VI. pp.* 254, 314.

Again, "Virtue is the offspring of the understanding.—It is only another name for a clear and distinct perception of the value of the object.—Virtue therefore is ordinarily connected with great talents.—CÆSAR and ALEXANDER had their virtues—They imagined their conduct conducive to the general good.—THE DEVIL, as described by MILTON, also WAS A BEING OF CONSIDERABLE VIRTUE!!! Why did he rebel against his Maker? Because he saw no sufficient reason for that extreme inequality of rank and power which the Creator assumed—After his fall, why did he still cherish the spirit of opposition? From a persuasion that he was hardly and injuriously treated—He was not discouraged by the inequality of the contest!" *Book IV. Chap. IV. Ap. No.* 1. *p.* 261.

Allowing this writer his premises, I confess myself unable to refute his consequences. If all sin be the effect of ignorance, so far from its being *exceeding sinful*, I am unable to perceive any sin-

fulness in it. It is one of the clearest dictates in nature, and that which is suggested by every man's conscience, that whatever he does wrong, if he know no better, and his ignorance be purely intellectual, or, as Mr. M'LEAN calls it, *simple*, that is, if it be not owing to any neglect of means, but to the want of means, or of powers to use them, it is not his fault.

The intellectual powers of the soul, such as perception, judgment, and conscience, are not that to moral action which the first wheel of a machine is to those that follow; but that which light and plain directions are to a traveller, leaving him inexcusable if he walk not in the right way.

But I shall be told that it is not for natural, but for spiritual knowledge, that Mr. M'LEAN pleads, as the cause of holy disposition. True: but he pleads for it upon the *general* principle of its being the established order of the human mind, that disposition should be produced by knowledge. Moreover, if spiritual knowledge should be found *to include approbation*, it cannot with propriety be so distinguished from it, as to be a cause of which the other is the effect: for to say that all disposition arises from knowledge, and that that knowledge *includes approbation*, is to reason in a circle, exactly as Matthew reasoned on all sin arising from ignorance, which ignorance *included aversion*.

That spiritual knowledge includes approbation in its very nature, and not merely in its effect, appears evident to me from two considerations.—First, It is the opposite of *spiritual blindness.* 2 Cor. iv. 4—6.—Eph. v. 8. But spiritual blindness includes in its very nature, and not merely in its effect, an aversion to the truth. Mr. ECKING (whose *Essays on Grace, Faith, and Experience,* have been reprinted by the friends of this system, as containing what they account, no doubt, an able defence of their principles,) allows "the inability of the sinner to *consist* in his loving darkness rather than light, and his disinclination to depend upon a holy sovereign God, and not in the want of rational faculties." Describing this inability in other words, he considers it as composed of "error, ignorance, and unbelief," in which he places the "disease" of the sinner, "THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE NATURAL MAN'S DARKNESS;" and the opposites of them, he makes to be "truth, knowledge, and faith, which being implanted, (he says,) the soul must be renewed." *pp.* 66, 67.* If Mr. E. understood what he wrote, he must mean to represent spiritual light as the proper opposite of spiritual darkness; and as he allows the latter, "in the very ESSENCE of it, to include aver-

* I have only the first Edition of Mr. E.'s Essays, and therefore am obliged to quote from it.

sion," he must allow the former, in the very essence of it, to include approbation. Secondly, The objects perceived are of such a nature, as to be known only by a *sense* of their divine excellency, which contains in it more than a simple knowledge, even an approbation of the heart. Those who have written upon the powers of the soul, have represented "that whereby we receive ideas of beauty and harmony, as having all the characters of a *sense*, an *internal sense*." * And Mr. ECKING, after all that he says against a principle of grace in the heart antecedent to believing, allows that "we must have a spiritual principle before we can discern divine beauties." † But the very essence of spiritual knowledge consists in the discernment of divine beauties, or the "*glory* of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." To speak of faith in Christ, antecedent to this, is only to speak at random. The reason given why the gospel report was not believed is, that in the esteem of men, the Messiah had "no form nor comeliness in him, nor beauty that they should desire him." † To say we must have a spiritual principle before we can discern divine beauties, is therefore the same thing in effect, as to say, we must have a spiritual principle before we can believe the gospel.

* CHAMBERS's Dict. Art. SENSE. † Essays, p. 67.

† Isa. liii. 1, 2.

I will close this letter by an extract from President EDWARDS's *Treatise on the Affections*, not merely as showing his judgment, but as containing what I consider a clear, scriptural, and satisfactory statement of the nature of spiritual knowledge.

"If the scriptures are of any use to teach us any thing, there is such a thing as a *spiritual, supernatural understanding* of divine things, that is peculiar to the saints, and which those who are not saints have nothing of. It is certainly a kind of understanding, apprehending, or discerning of divine things, that natural men have nothing of, which the Apostle speaks of, 1 Cor. ii. 14.—*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* It is certainly a kind of seeing or discerning spiritual things peculiar to the saints, which is spoken of, 1 John iii. 6. *Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* 3 John ii. *He that doth evil hath not seen God.* And John vi. 40. *This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.* Chap xiv. 19. *The world seeth me no more, but ye see me.* Chap. xvii. 3. *This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* Matt. xi. 27. *No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* John xii. 45.

He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. Ps. ix. 10. *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.* Phil. iii. 8. *I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* Verse 10. *That I may know him.* And innumerable other places there are all over the Bible, which show the same. And that there is such a thing as an understanding of divine things, which in its nature and kind is wholly different from all knowledge that natural men have, is evident from this, that there is an understanding of divine things which the scripture calls spiritual understanding: Col. i. 9.—*We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding.* It has already been shown, that that which is *spiritual*, in the ordinary use of the word in the new testament, is intirely different, in nature and kind, from all which natural men are, or can be the subjects of.

"From hence it may be surely inferred, wherein spiritual understanding consists. For if there be in the saints a kind of apprehension or perception, which is, in its nature, perfectly diverse from all that natural men have, or that it is possible they should have, till they have a new nature; it must consist in their having a certain kind of ideas or sensations of mind, which are simply diverse from all that is, or can be, in the minds of natural men. And that is the same thing as to say, that it consists in the sensations of *a new spiritual sense*, which the souls

of natural men have not; as is evident by what has been before, once and again observed. But I have already shown, what that new spiritual sense is, which the saints have given them in regeneration; and what is the object of it. I have shown, that the immediate object of it is, the supreme beauty and excellency of the nature of divine things as they are in themselves. And this is agreeable to the scripture: the apostle very plainly teaches, that the great thing discovered by spiritual light, and understood by spiritual knowledge, is the glory of divine things, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;* together with verse 6. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ:* and chap. iii. 18. *But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* And it must needs be so, for, as has been before observed, the scripture often teaches that all true religion summarily consists in the love of divine things. And therefore that kind of understanding or knowledge, which is the proper foundation of true religion, must be the knowledge of the *loveliness of divine things.* For doubtless, that knowledge which is the

proper foundation of *love*, is the knowledge of *loveliness*. What that beauty or loveliness of divine things is, which is the proper and immediate object of a spiritual sense of mind, was showed under the last head insisted on, viz. that it is the beauty of their moral perfection. Therefore it is in the view or sense of this, that spiritual understanding does more immediately and primarily consist. And, indeed, it is plain it can be nothing else; for (as has been shown) there is nothing pertaining to divine things, besides the beauty of their moral excellency, and those properties and qualities of divine things which this beauty is the foundation of, but what natural men and devils can see and know, and will know fully and clearly to all eternity.

"From what has been said, therefore, we come necessarily to this conclusion, concerning that wherein spiritual understanding consists; viz. That it consists in *a sense of the heart, of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of divine things, together with all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, that depends upon, and flows from such a sense.*

"Spiritual understanding consists primarily in *a sense of heart of that spiritual beauty.* I say, *a sense of heart;* for it is not speculation merely that is concerned in this kind of understanding; nor can there be a clear distinction made between the two faculties of understanding and will, as acting distinctly and separately, in this matter. When the mind is

sensible of the sweet beauty and amiableness of a thing, that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the idea of it: and this sensibleness of the amiableness, or delightfulness of beauty, carries, in the very nature of it, the sense of the heart; or an effect and impression the soul is the subject of, as a substance possessed of taste, inclination, and will.

"There is a distinction to be made between a mere *notional understanding*, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and *the sense of the heart*, wherein the mind does not only *speculate* and *behold*, but *relishes* and *feels*. That sort of knowledge, by which a man has a sensible perception of amiableness and loathsomeness, or of sweetness and nauseousness, is not just the same sort of knowledge with that, by which he knows what a triangle is, and what a square is. The one is mere speculative knowledge; the other sensible knowledge; in which more than the mere intellect is concerned; the heart is the proper subject of it, or the soul, as a being that not only beholds, but has inclination, and is pleased or displeased. And yet there is the nature of instruction in it; as he that has perceived the sweet taste of honey, knows much more about it, than he who has only looked upon, and felt of it.

"The apostle seems to make a distinction between mere speculative knowledge of the things of religion, and spiritual knowledge, in calling that

the form of knowledge, and of the truth; Rom. ii. 20. *Which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.*" The latter is often represented by relishing, smelling, or tasting; 2 Cor. ii. 14. *Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge, in every place.* Matt. xvi. 23. *Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.* 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3. *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* Cant. i. 3. *Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name* is as ointment poured forth; *therefore do the virgins love thee;* compared with 1 John ii. 20. *But ye have an* UNCTION *from the holy One, and ye know all things.*

" Spiritual understanding *primarily* consists in this *sense, or taste of the moral beauty of divine things;* so that no knowledge can be called spiritual, any further than it arises from this, and has this in it. But *secondarily*, it includes *all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, which depends upon, and flows from such a sense.* When the true beauty and amiableness of the holiness, or true moral good, that is in divine things, is discovered to the soul, it, as it were, opens a new world to its view. This shows the glory of all the perfections of God, and of every thing appertaining to the divine Being: for, as was observed before, the beauty of all arises from God's moral perfection. This shows the glory of all

God's works, both of creation and providence; for it is the special glory of them, that God's holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness, are so manifested in them; and without these moral perfections, there would be no glory in that power and skill with which they are wrought. The glorifying of God's moral perfections, is the special end of all the works of God's hands. By this sense of the moral beauty of divine things, is understood the sufficiency of Christ as a Mediator: for it is only by the discovery of the beauty of the moral perfection of Christ, that the believer is let into the knowledge of the excellency of his person, so as to know any thing more of it than the devils do: and it is only by the knowledge of the excellency of Christ's person, that any know his sufficiency as a Mediator; for the latter depends upon, and arises from the former. It is by seeing the excellency of Christ's person, that the saints are made sensible of the preciousness of his blood, and its sufficiency to atone for sin: for therein consists the preciousness of Christ's blood, that it is the blood of so excellent and amiable a person. And on this depends the meritoriousness of his obedience, and sufficiency and prevalence of his intercession. By this sight of the moral beauty of divine things, is seen the beauty of the way of salvation by Christ: for that consists in the beauty of the moral perfections of God, which wonderfully shines forth in every step of this method of salvation, from beginning to end.

By this is seen the fitness and suitableness of this way: for this wholly consists in its tendency to deliver us from sin and hell, and to bring us to the happiness which consists in the possession and enjoyment of moral good, in a way sweetly agreeing with God's moral perfections. And in the way's being contrived so as to attain these ends, consists the excellent wisdom of that way. By this is seen the excellency of the word of God: take away all the moral beauty and sweetness in the word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing. By this is seen the true foundation of our duty; the worthiness of God to be so esteemed, honoured, loved, submitted to, and served, as he requires of us, and the amiableness of the duties themselves that are required of us. And by this is seen the true evil of sin: for he who sees the beauty of holiness, must necessarily see the hatefulness of sin, its contrary. By this, men understand the true glory of heaven, which consists in the beauty and happiness that is in holiness. By this is seen the amiableness and happiness of both saints and angels. He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world; which is the fulness of all things, without which all the world is empty, no better than nothing, yea worse than nothing. Unless this is seen, nothing is seen, that is worth the seeing: for there is no other true excel-

lency or beauty. Unless this be understood, nothing is understood, that is worthy of the exercise of the noble faculty of understanding. This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of divinity, (if I may so speak,) the good of the infinite fountain of good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil; without which we ourselves had better never have been, and without which there had better have been no being. He therefore in effect knows nothing, that knows not this: His knowledge is but the shadow of knowledge, or as the apostle calls it, the form of knowledge. Well therefore may the scripture represent those who are destitute of that spiritual sense, by which is perceived the beauty of holiness, as totally blind, deaf, and senseless; yea, dead. And well may regeneration, in which this divine sense is given to the soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the blind eyes, and raising the dead, and bringing a person into a new world. For if what has been said be considered, it will be manifest, that when a person has this sense and knowledge given him, he will view nothing as he did before: though before he *knew* all things *after the flesh, yet henceforth he will know them so no more;* and *he is become a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new;* agreeable to 2 Cor. v. 16, 17.

"And besides the things that have been already mentioned, there arises from this sense of spiritual

beauty, all true experimental knowledge of religion; which is of itself, as it were, a new world of knowledge. He that sees not the beauty of holiness, knows not what one of the graces of God's Spirit is; he is destitute of any idea or conception of all gracious exercises of soul, and all holy comforts and delights, and all effects of the saving influences of the Spirit of God on the heart: and so is ignorant of the greatest works of God, the most important and glorious effects of his power upon the creature: and also is wholly ignorant of the saints as saints; he knows not what they are: and in effect is ignorant of the whole spiritual world.

"Things being thus, it plainly appears, that God's implanting that spiritual supernatural sense which has been spoken of, makes a great change in a man. And were it not for the very imperfect degree, in which this sense is commonly given at first, or the small degree of this glorious light that first dawns upon the soul; the change made by this spiritual opening of the eyes in conversion, would be much greater, and more remarkable, every way, than if a man, who had been born blind, and with only the other four senses, should continue so a long time, and then at once should have the sense of seeing imparted to him, in the midst of the clear light of the sun, discovering a world of visible objects. For though sight be more noble than any of the other external senses; yet this spiritual sense which has been spoken of, is infinitely more noble

than that, or any other principle of discerning that a man naturally has, and the object of this sense infinitely great and more important.

"This sort of understanding, or knowledge, is that knowledge of divine things from whence all truly gracious affections do proceed: by which therefore all affections are to be tried. Those affections that arise wholly from any other kind of knowledge, or do result from any other kind of apprehensions of mind, are vain!" *pp.* 225—232.

Yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

AN INQUIRY WHETHER, IF BELIEVING BE A SPIRITUAL ACT OF THE MIND, IT DOES NOT PRESUPPOSE THE SUBJECT OF IT TO BE SPIRITUAL.

My dear Friend,

Mr. SANDEMAN, and many of his admirers, if I understand them, consider the mind as passive in believing, and charge those who consider faith as an act of the mind, with making it a *work*, and so of introducing the doctrine of justification by a work of our own.

Mr. ECKING sometimes writes as if he adopted this principle, for he speaks of a person being "passive in receiving the truth." (*Essays, p.* 73.) In another place, however, he is very explicit to the contrary. "Their notion is absurd, (he says) who, in order to appear more than ordinarily accurate, censure and solemnly condemn the idea of believing being an *act* of the mind. It is acknowledged indeed, that very unscriptural sentiments have prevailed about *acts of faith*, when they are supposed

to arise from some previous principle, well disposing the minds of unbelievers toward the gospel. Yet if it be admitted possible for the soul of man to act, (and who will deny that it does?) there is nothing more properly an act of the mind, than believing a truth; in which first the mind perceives it; then considers the evidence offered to support it; and finally, gives assent to it. And can this comport with inactivity? We must either say then, that the soul acts in believing the gospel, or that the soul is an inactive spirit, which is absurd." (*Essays, p.* 98.) As Mr. E. in this passage not only states his opinion, but gives his reasons for it, we must consider this as his fixed principle; and that which he says of the truth being "passively received," as expressive not of faith, but of spiritual illumination *previous* to it. But if so, what does he mean by opposing a previous principle as necessary to believing? His acts of faith arise from spiritual illumination, which he also must consider as "well disposing the minds of unbelievers toward the gospel."

If there be any difference between him and them whom he opposes, it would seem to consist not in the *necessity*, but in the *nature* of a previous change of mind; as whether it be proper to call it a *principle*, and to suppose it to include *life* as well as light? He no more considers the mind as discerning and believing the gospel, without a previous change wrought in it by the Spirit of God, than

his opponents. Nay, as we have seen, he expressly, and, as he says, "readily acknowledges that we must have a spiritual *principle* before we can discern divine beauties." (*p.* 67.) But if a spiritual principle be necessary to discern divine beauties, it is necessary to discern and believe the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, for they are one and the same thing.

But the previous change which Mr. E. acknowledges, it will be said, is *by means of the word.* Be it so, yet it cannot be by the word *as spiritually discerned and believed,* for spiritual discernment and belief are supposed to be the effect of it.

Mr. E. says indeed, that "the hinge upon which the inquiry turns is, *what* is that principle, and *how* is it implanted?" But this is mere evasion: for let the principle be *what* it may, and let it be implanted *how* it may, since it is allowed to be necessary "before we can discern divine beauties," and of course before we can actively believe in Christ, the argument is given up.

The principle itself he makes to be "the word passively received:" but as this is supposed to be previous to "the discernment of divine beauties," and to the soul's actively believing in Christ, it cannot of course have been produced by either: and to speak of the word becoming a spiritual principle in us, before it is either understood or believed, is going a step beyond his opponents. I have no doubt of the word of God, when it is once un-

derstood and believed, becoming a living principle of evangelical obedience. This I conceive to be the meaning of our Lord, when he told the woman of Samaria, that "whosoever should drink of the water that he should give him, (that is, of the gospel,) it should be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." But for the word to become a principle before it is actively received, or, to use the language of Peter, before we have "purified our souls by obeying it,"* is that of which I can form no idea, and I suppose neither did Mr. ECKING.

As to the second part of what he calls the hinge of the inquiry, viz. *how* this principle is implanted? he endeavours to illustrate it by a number of examples taken from the *miracles* of Christ, in which the word of Christ certainly did not operate on the mind in a way of motive presented to its consideration; but in a way similar to that of the Creator, when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Such is manifestly the idea conveyed by the words in John v. 25. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." To such an application of the word I have no objection. That for which I contend is, that there is a change effected in the soul of a sinner, called in scripture "giving him eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand"—"a

* 1 Pet. i. 22.

new heart, and a right spirit"—"a new creation," &c. &c.—; that this change is antecedent to his actively believing in Christ for salvation; and that it is not effected by motives addressed to the mind in a way of moral suasion, but by the mighty power of God.

Mr. M'LEAN allows faith to be a *duty*, or an *act* of obedience. But if so, this obedience must be yielded either in a spiritual, or in a carnal state. If the former, it is all that on this subject is pleaded for. If the latter, that is the same thing as supposing that the carnal mind, *while such*, is enabled to act spiritually, and that it thereby becomes spiritual.

To this purpose I wrote in my *Appendix, pp.* 204, 205; and what has Mr. M'LEAN said in reply? Let him answer for himself. "This is a very unfair state of the question so far as it relates to the opinion of his opponents, for he represents them as maintaining, that the Holy Spirit causes the mind, *while carnal*, or before it is spiritually illuminated, to discern and believe spiritual things; and then he sets himself to argue against this contradiction of his own framing, as a thing impossible in its own nature, and as declared by the Holy Spirit to be so. 1 Cor. ii. 14. Were I to state Mr. F.'s sentiment thus, 'The Holy Spirit imparts to the mind, *while carnal*, a holy susceptibility and relish for the truth, would he not justly complain that I had misrepresented his view, and that he did not mean that the mind could possess any holy susceptibility while it

was in a carnal state; but only that the Holy Spirit, by the very act of imparting this holy susceptibility and relish for the truth, removed the carnality of the mind. But then this explanation applies equally to the other side of the question; and surely it appears at least as consistent with the nature of things, and as easy to conceive, that the Holy Spirit should *in the first instance* communicate the light of truth to a dark carnal mind, and thereby render it spiritual, as that he should *prior* to that impart to it a holy susceptibility and relish for the truth." *

Now, my dear friend, I intreat your close attention, and that of the reader, to this part of the subject, for here is the hinge of the present question.

I am accused of framing a contradiction which my opponents do not hold. They do not hold then, it seems, that the Holy Spirit causes the mind, *while carnal*, to discern and believe spiritual things. Spiritual illumination precedes believing; such an illumination too as removes carnality from the mind, renders the soul spiritual, and so enables it to discern and believe spiritual things. Where then is the difference between us? Surely it does not consist in my holding with a previous principle as necessary to believing, for they profess to hold what amounts to the same thing. If there be any difference, however, it must lie in the *nature* of that

* Reply, p. 7.

which is communicated, or in the *order* in which it operates. And as to the first, seeing it is allowed to remove carnality and to render the soul spiritual, there can be no material difference on this head. With respect to the second, namely, the *order* of its operations, Mr. M. thinks that the communication of the light of truth to a dark carnal mind, whereby it is rendered spiritual, furnishes an easy and consistent view of things.—To which I answer, If the carnality of the mind were owing to its darkness, it would be so. But Mr. M. has himself told us a different tale, and that from unquestionable authority. "Our Lord, he says, asks the Jews, *why do ye not understand my speech*, and gives this reason for it, *even because ye cannot hear my word*—that is, cannot endure my doctrine." *Works, Vol. II. p.* 110.

Now if this be just, (and who can controvert it?) it is *not* easy to conceive, how light introduced into the mind, should be capable of removing carnality. It is easy to conceive of the removal of an effect by the removal of the cause, but not of a cause by a removal of the effect.

But whatever difference may remain as to the *order* of operation, the idea of a *previous* principle is held by Mr. M. as much as by his opponent. Only call it "divine illumination, by which the dark and carnal mind is rendered spiritual," and he believes it.

In endeavouring to show the unfairness of the contradiction which I alleged against him, Mr. M. loses himself and his reader, by representing it as made to *the act of the Holy Spirit*, in imparting spiritual light to the soul while carnal; whereas that which I alleged against him respected *the act of the creature* in discerning and believing spiritual things, while such. If God's communicating either light or holiness to a dark and carnal mind be a contradiction, it is of Mr. M.'s framing, and not mine: but I see no contradiction in it, so that it be in the natural order of things, any more than in his "quickening us when we were dead in trespasses and sins;" which phraseology certainly does not denote that we are dead and alive at the same time! The *contradiction* alleged consisted in *the carnal mind's being supposed to act spiritually*, and not to its being *acted upon* by divine influence, let that influence be what it might. It would be no contradiction to say of Tabitha, that life was imparted to her *while dead:* but it would be contradiction to affirm, that while she was dead God caused her to open her eyes, and to look upon Peter!

Mr. M'Lean has, I allow, cleared himself of this contradiction, by admitting the sinner to be made spiritual through divine illumination, *previous* to his believing in Christ; but then it is at the expence of the grand article in dispute, which he has thereby given up; maintaining the idea of a previous

principle, or of the soul's being rendered spiritual, antecedent to its believing in Christ, as much as his opponent.

The principal ground on which Mr. M., Mr. E., and all the writers on that side the question, rest their cause is, the use of such language as the following.—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever."—"Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*."—"I have begotten you *through the gospel*." *

On this phraseology, I shall submit to you and the reader two or three observations:—

First, a being *begotten*, or *born again by the word*, does not necessarily signify a being regenerated by *faith* in the word. Faith itself is ascribed to the word as well as regeneration: for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:" but if we say faith cometh by the word *believed*, that is the same as saying that it cometh by itself. Mr. M. has no idea of the word having any influence, but as it is believed: † yet he tells us, that faith is "the *effect* of the regenerating influence of the Spirit and word of God." ‡ But if faith be the effect of the word *believed*, it must be the effect of itself. The truth is, the word may operate as an inducement to

* 1 Pet. i. 23.—Jam. i. 18.—1 Cor. iv. 15.

† Reply, pp. 16—34. ‡ Ibid. p. 113.

believe, as well as a stimulus to a new life when it is believed.

Secondly, the terms *regeneration, begotten, born again, &c.* are not always used in the same extent of meaning. They sometimes denote the whole of that change which denominates us christians, and which of course includes repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; and in this sense the foregoing passages are easily understood. But the question is, whether regeneration, or those terms by which it is expressed in the scriptures, such as being begotten, born again, quickened, &c. be not sometimes used in a stricter sense. Mr. M. confining what I had said on the *subject* of regeneration, as expressed by being *begotten, born again, &c.* to the *term* itself, is "confident it bears no such meaning in the sacred writings." *p.* 17. But if a being born again, which is expressive of regeneration, be sometimes used *to account for faith*, as a cause accounts for its effect, that is all which the argument requires to be established. If it be necessary to be born again *in order to* believing, we cannot in this sense, unless the effect could be the means of producing the cause, be born again by believing. Whether this be the case, let the following passages determine.

John i. 11—13. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: who

were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." I can conceive of no reason why the new birth is here introduced, but to *account* for some receiving Christ, or believing on his name, while others received him not.—CALVIN appears to have ordinarily considered regeneration in the *large sense* as stated above, and therefore speaks of it as an *effect* of faith. Yet when commenting on this passage, perceiving that it is here introduced *to account for faith*, he writes thus —"Hereupon it followeth, first, that faith proceedeth not from us, but that it is a fruit of spiritual regeneration, for the Evangelist saith (in effect) that no man can believe unless he be begotten of God; therefore faith is an heavenly gift. Secondly, That faith is not a cold and bare knowledge: seeing none can believe but he that is fashioned again by the Spirit of God. Notwithstanding it seemeth that the Evangelist dealeth *disorderly* in putting regeneration before faith, seeing that it is rather an *effect* of faith, and therefore to be set after it." To this objection he answers, that "both may very well agree;" and goes on to expound the subject of regeneration as sometimes denoting the producing of faith itself, and sometimes of a new life *by* faith.

John iii. 3. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." On this passage Dr. CAMPBELL, in his notes, is very particular, proving that by the kingdom or reign of God, is meant that of Messiah in this world; and that οὐ δύναται

(*cannot*) denotes the incapacity of the unregenerate to discern and believe the gospel. The import of this passage is, in his apprehension, this—"The man who is not regenerated, or born again of water and Spirit, is not in a capacity of perceiving the reign of God, though it were commenced. Though the kingdom of the saints on the earth were already established, the unregenerate would not discern it, because it is a spiritual, not a worldly kingdom, and capable of being no otherwise than spiritually discerned. And as the kingdom itself would remain unknown to him, he could not share in the blessings enjoyed by the subjects of it.—The same sentiment occurs in 1 Cor. ii. 14."

1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Mr. M. in his *Discourses on the Parable of the Sower*, says, "It is a doctrine clearly taught in the scriptures, that none have a true understanding of the gospel, but such as are taught of God by the special illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. We are expressly told, that "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. And in answering an objector who asks, "What particular truth or sentiment is communicated to the mind by the enlightening influence of the Ho-

ly Spirit, and which unenlightened men can have no idea of," Mr. M. says, "It is not pleaded that any truth or sentiment is communicated to the mind by the Spirit, *besides what is already clearly revealed in the word;* and the illumination of the Spirit IS TO MAKE MEN PERCEIVE AND UNDERSTAND THAT REVELATION WHICH IS ALREADY GIVEN, IN ITS TRUE LIGHT." *

Mr. M.'s object through this whole paragraph seems to be, to prove that the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit *is necessary in order to our understanding the scriptures;* but if so, it cannot be *by* the scriptures as understood that we are thus illuminated, for this were a contradiction. It cannot be by any particular truth or sentiment, revealed any more than unrevealed, that we possess "eyes to see, ears to hear, or a heart to understand" it. If the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit consisted in imparting any particular truth or sentiment to the mind, even that which is revealed in the scriptures, where would be the *mystery* of the operation? Instead of being compared to the operations of the wind, of which *we know nothing but by its effects,* † it might have been ranked among the operations of motives as suggested by man to man, or at least, as put into

* Sermons, p. 78, 80, 81.

† Such is the meaning of John iii. 8. according to CAMPBELL, and all other expositors that I have seen.

the mind by the providence of God so ordering it, that such thoughts should strike and influence the mind at the time.* But this would not answer to the scriptural accounts of our being quickened who were dead in sins, by the *power* of God; even by "the *exceeding greatness of his power, according to that which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.*"

Mr. M. has taken great pains to show the absurdity of my reasoning on this subject; yet the sum of it is this, *That which is necessary in order to understanding and believing the word, cannot be by means of understanding and believing it.*

All true knowledge of divine things is, no doubt, to be ascribed to the word as the objective cause, the same way as corporeal perception is ascribed to light. We cannot see without light; neither can we understand or believe spiritual things but by the word of God. But the question does not relate to what is objective, but subjective; or, if I might speak in reference to what is corporeal, not to light, but discernment. Mr. Ecking speaks of light shining into a dark room, and of the absurdity of supposing there must be some principles of light in this room, which disposed it to receive that which shone into it.† But if by the light he mean the gospel, he should rather have compared it to

* Ezra vii. 27.

† P. 68.

light shining upon a blind man, and have shown the absurdity, if he could, of supposing it necessary for his eyes to be opened ere he could discern or enjoy it. There is nothing in a dark room to resist the light, but that is not the case with the dark soul of a sinner. "The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth (or, as CAMPBELL renders it, *admitteth*) it not."

Though I cannot think with Mr. E. that the word of God becomes a spiritual principle in us till it is actively received, yet I allow that it is productive of great effects. The understanding and conscience being enlightened by it, many open sins are forsaken, and many things done in a way of what is called religious duty. And though I have no notion of directing sinners to a course of previous humiliation, nor opinion of the efforts of man toward preparing himself for the reception of divine grace; yet I believe God ordinarily so deals with men, as gradually to beat down their false confidences, and reduce them to extremity, ere they are brought to embrace the gospel. Such things are not necessarily connected with faith or salvation. In many instances they have their issue in mere self-righteous hope; and where it is otherwise, they are to faith and salvation, as I have said before, but as the *noise* and the *shaking* of the dry bones, to the *breath of life.*

Moreover, the word of God produces still greater and better effects *when it is believed.* In them that

believe "it worketh effectually." When the commandment comes to a soul in its spirituality, it gives him to perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and when the gospel comes not in word only, but in power, it produces mighty effects. It is the power of God unto salvation *to every one that believeth.* It operated before to the "pulling down of strong holds," and the casting down of many a vain "imagination;" but now it "bringeth every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ." It is thus that we "know the truth, and the truth (as known) makes us free." If once we are enabled to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it changes us into the same image, begets and excites holy affections, and produces every kind of gracious exercise.

The gospel is the mould into which the mind of the believer is cast, and by which it is formed. The statement of Dr. OWEN, as quoted by Mr. ECKING, is very just and scriptural. "As the word is in the gospel, so is grace in the heart; yea, they are the same things variously expressed. Rom. vi. 17. As our translation doth not, so I know not how, in so few words, to express that which is so emphatically here insinuated by the Holy Spirit. The meaning is, that the doctrine of the gospel begets the *form, figure, image,* or *likeness* of itself in the hearts of them that believe: so they are cast into the *mould* of it. As is the one, so is the other. The principle of grace in the heart, and that in the word, are

as children of the same parent, completely resembling and representing one another. Grace is a living word, and the word is figured, limned grace. As we have heard, so have we seen and found it; such a soul can produce the duplicate of the word, and so adjust all things thereby," &c.*

All this describes the effect of the word on those *who believe it:* but the question is, how we come to believe it? Dr. OWEN has elsewhere attempted to solve this difficulty, by proving that a principle of spiritual life is communicated to the sinner in regeneration, antecedent to believing. *Disc. on the Holy Spirit, Book III. Chap.* 1. He doubtless considered these things as consistent with each other; and though Mr. ECKING, in making the quotation, appears to consider them as contradictory, yet while he admits that "we must have a spiritual principle before we can discern divine beauties," the same contradiction, if such it be, attaches to himself.

I allow, with Dr. OWEN, that the Spirit of God makes use of "the reasons, motives, and persuasive arguments which the word affords, to affect the mind; and that converted persons are able to give some account of the considerations whereby they were prevailed upon." But I also think, with him, that "the *whole* work of the Spirit in our conversion does not consist herein; but that there is a real

* On the 130th Psalm, pp. 162—170, in ECKING'S Essays, pp. 77—79.

physical work, whereby he imparts spiritual life to the souls of all who are truly regenerated." *On the Spirit, Book III. Chap.* 5. *Sec.* 18.

Mr. M'LEAN rejects the idea of *physical influence*, and seems to confound it with something corporeal or mechanical.* If I understand the term *physical* with respect to influence, it is opposed to moral. That influence is denominated moral, that works upon the mind by motives, or considerations which induce it to this or that; and all beyond this is physical and supernatural. When God created the soul of man, originally, in righteousness and true holiness, I suppose it must be allowed to have been a physical work. Man certainly was not induced by motives to be righteous any more than to be rational: yet there was nothing corporeal or mechanical in it. It is thus that I understand Dr. OWEN in the passage just quoted, in which, while he admits of the use of moral suasion, he denies that the *whole* work of conversion consists in it; and I should think Mr. M. could not, even upon his own principles, maintain the contrary. For whatever motives or considerations the word of God may furnish in a way of moral suasion, yet he holds with the necessity of a divine supernatural influence being superadded to it, by which the mind is illuminated, and rendered spiritual. But if divine influence consist in any thing distinct from the

* Works, p. 84.

influence of the word, it must be supernatural and physical. The party is also equally unconscious of it on his principles as on mine: he is conscious of nothing but its effects. He finds himself the subject of new views and sensations; but as to knowing whence they came, it is likely he thinks nothing of it at the time, and is ready to imagine that any person, if he would but look into the Bible, must see what he sees so plainly taught in it. He may be conscious of ideas suggested to him by the word, and of their effect upon his mind; but as to any divine influence accompanying them, he knows nothing of it.

Mr. ECKING represents "the inability or spiritual death of sinners as *consisting in disinclination*, or loving darkness rather than light." And this disinclination he ascribes to *ignorance* and *unbelief*; from whence he argues, "If the removal of the effect is by removing the cause, it is reasonable to suppose, that this is the way in which God works upon the human mind." *p.* 66. That the removal of the effect is by the removal of the cause, I allow; but what authority had Mr. E. for making ignorance and unbelief the cause of spiritual death? Spiritual death *consists in* ignorance and unbelief, no less than in disinclination. It consists in *sin*;* and if ignorance and unbelief are sins, they are of the essence of spiritual death. It is true they are

* Eph. ii. 1.

productive of other sins, and may be considered as growing near to the root of moral evil: but unless a thing can be the cause of itself, they are not the cause of *all* evil.—Before we ascribe spiritual death to ignorance, it is necessary to inquire whether this ignorance be voluntary, or involuntary? If *involuntary*, it is in itself sinless, and to represent this as the cause of depravity, is to join with GODWIN in explaining away all innate principles of evil, and indeed all moral evil and accountableness from among men. If *voluntary*, the solution does not reach the bottom of the subject; for the question still returns, what is the cause of the voluntariness of ignorance, or of the sinner's *loving* darkness rather than light? Is this also to be ascribed to ignorance? If so, the same consequence follows as before, that there is no such thing as moral evil or accountableness among men.

Mr. M'LEAN has stated this subject much clearer than Mr. ECKING. He may elsewhere have written in a different strain, but in the last edition of his *Dissertation on the influences of the Holy Spirit*, he attributes ignorance and unbelief to hatred, and not hatred to ignorance and unbelief. "Our Lord (he says) asks the Jews, *why do ye not understand my speech?* And gives this reason for it, *even because ye cannot hear my word*—that is, cannot endure my doctrine. Their love of worldly honour, and the applause of men, is given as a reason why they could not believe in him. John

v. 44. He traces their unbelief into their HATRED both of him and his father." John xv. 22, 24.*

Nothing is more evident, than that the cause of spiritual blindness is in the scriptures ascribed to disposition. "Light is come into the world; but men *love darkness* rather than light, because their deeds are evil.—They say unto God, depart from us, for we *desire not* the knowledge of thy ways.—Being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, BECAUSE OF THE BLINDNESS, (*hardness* or *callousness,*) OF THEIR HEART.—Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word."† But if, as Mr. M'LEAN acknowledges, the cause of both ignorance and unbelief is to be traced to *hatred;* and if, as Mr. ECKING says, "effects are removed by the removal of the cause," I scarcely need to draw the consequence—that though in a general sense it be true that we are regenerated *by* believing the gospel, yet in a more particular sense it is equally true, that we are regenerated *in order to it.*

It is somewhat extraordinary that Mr. M'LEAN, after allowing pride and aversion to be the great obstructions to faith, should yet deny the removal of them to be necessary to it. He will allow some sort of conviction of sin to be necessary to believing in

* Works, Vol. II. p. 110.

† John iii. 19.—Job xxi. 14.—Eph. iv. 18.—John viii. 43.

Christ; but nothing that includes the removal of enmity or pride, for this were equal to allowing repentance to be necessary to it: but if enmity and pride be not removed, how can the sinner, according to our Lord's reasoning in John viii. 43, v. 44, understand or believe the gospel? If there be any meaning in words, it is supposed by this language, that in order to understand and believe the gospel, it is necessary to "endure" the doctrine, and to feel a regard to "the honour that cometh from God." To account for the removal of pride and enmity as *bars to believing by means of believing*, is, I say, very extraordinary, and as inconsistent with his own concessions as it is with scripture and reason: for when writing on spiritual illumination, he allows the dark and carnal mind to be thereby rendered spiritual, and so enabled to discern and believe spiritual things.*

Yours, &c.

* Reply, p. 7.

LETTER VIII.

AN INQUIRY, WHETHER THE PRINCIPLES HERE DEFENDED AFFECT THE DOCTRINE OF FREE JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

My dear Friend,

You are aware that this subject has frequently occurred in the foregoing letters; but being of the first importance, I wish to appropriate one letter wholly to it. If any thing I have advanced be inconsistent with justification by faith alone, in opposition to justification by the works of the law, I am not aware of it; and on conviction that it is so, should feel it my duty to retract it. I know Mr. M'LEAN has laboured hard to substantiate this charge against me; but I know also, that it belongs to the adherents of the system * to claim

* I do not mean to suggest that Mr. M'LEAN's *system* is precisely that of Mr. SANDEMAN. The former, in his "Thoughts on the Calls of the Gospel," has certainly departed from it in many things, particularly in respect of the sinner's being justified antecedent to any "act, exercise, or advance" of his mind toward Christ; and on

the exclusive possession of this doctrine, and to charge others with error concerning it on very insufficient grounds. You may remember, perhaps, that Dr. GILL was accused of self-righteousness by Mr. SANDEMAN, on the ground of his being an anti-pædobaptist!

A large part of that which Mr. M'LEAN has written on this subject, is what I never meant to oppose; much of what he imputes to me is without foundation; and even where my sentiments are introduced, they are generally in caricature.

I have no doubt of the character which a sinner sustains antecedent to his justification, both in the account of the Lawgiver of the world, and in his own account, being that of *ungodly*. I have no objection to Mr. M.'s own statement, that God may as properly be said to justify the ungodly, as to pardon the guilty. If the sinner at the instant of justification be allowed *not to be at enmity with God*, that is all I contend for; and that is in effect allowed by Mr. M. He acknowledges, that the apostle "does not use the word *ungodly* to describe the *existing character* of an actual believer." † But if so, as no man is justified till he is an actual

which account Mr. S. would have set him down among the *popular preachers*.* But he has so much of the system of Mr. S. still in his mind, as often to reason upon the ground of it, and to involve himself in numerous inconsistencies.

* See Letters on Ther. and Asp. vol. II. p. 481. Note.

† Reply, p. 123.

believer, no man is justified in enmity to God. He also considers faith, justification, and sanctification as coeval, and allows that no believer *is* in a state of enmity to God.* It follows, that as no man is justified till he believes in Jesus, no man is justified till he ceases to be God's enemy. If this be granted, all is granted for which I contend.

If there be any meaning in words, Mr. SANDEMAN considered the term *ungodly* as denoting *the existing state of mind* in a believer, at the time of his justification: for he professes to have been at enmity with God, or, which is the same thing, not to have "begun to love him," till he was justified, and even perceived that he was so.† It was this notion that I wished to oppose, and not any thing relative to the character under which the sinner is justified. Mr. M.'s third question, namely, "Whether justifying faith respects God as the justifier of the ungodly?" was never any question with me. Yet he will have it, that I "make the apostle by the term ungodly to mean godly." He might as well say, that when I allow pardon to respect men as guilty, and yet plead for repentance as necessary to it. I make repentance and guilt to be the same thing.

I am not aware of any difference with Mr. M. as to what constitutes a godly *character*. Though

* Reply, p. 43. † Epis. Cor. p. 12.

faith is necessary to justification, and therefore, in the order of nature, previous to it, yet I have no objection to what he says, that it does not constitute a godly *character* or *state* previous to justification.* And whatever I have written of *repentance* as preceding faith in Christ, or of a *holy* faith as necessary to justification, I do not consider any person as a penitent or holy *character*, till he believes in Christ, and is justified. The holiness for which I plead antecedent to this, is merely incipient; the rising beam of the sanctification of the Spirit. It is no more than the spirituality which Mr. M. considers as produced by divine illumination, previous, or in order to believing;† and all the consequences that he has charged on the one, might with equal justice be charged on the other.

Nor am I aware of any difference in our views respecting *the duties of unbelievers:* if there be any however, it is not on the side that Mr. M. imagines, but the contrary. Having described the awakened sinner as "convinced of guilt, distressed in his mind on account of it, really concerned about the salvation of his soul, and not only earnestly desiring relief, but diligently labouring to obtain it, according to the directions given him, by the exercise of holy affections and dispositions," he adds, "All this I admit may be previous to faith in Christ, and forgiveness through him. *And will*

* Reply, p. 145. † Ibid. p. 7.

Mr. FULLER *deny this is the repentance he pleads for in order to forgiveness?*" * MOST CERTAINLY HE WILL. Had this been what he pleaded for, he had been justly chargeable with the consequences which Mr. M'LEAN has attempted to load him with. But it is not. I cannot but consider this question as a proof that Mr. M. utterly mistook my sentiments on this part of the subject, as much as I did his in another, in consequence of having considered him as the author of a piece called *Simple Truth.* I have no more idea of there being any holiness in the exercises which he has described, than he himself has. I might add, *nor quite so much:* for notwithstanding what he has here advanced, in his *Thoughts on the Calls of the Gospel* he does not keep clear of unregenerate works being somewhat good, or at least that they are not *all* and *altogether* sinful.† If this be compared with what I have written on *total depravity* in *Essays, p.* 54-81, it will be seen who holds, and who holds not, with the holiness of the doings of the unregenerate.

But whether I deny this to be the repentance which I plead for as necessary to forgiveness, or not, Mr. M. plainly intimates that *it is all the repentance which* HE *allows to be so.* In all that he has written therefore, acknowledging repentance to be

* Reply, p. 148. † See vol. II. of his Works, p. 63, 64.

necessary to forgiveness,* he only means to allow that a few graceless convictions are so: and in contradiction to the whole current of scripture, even to those scriptures which he has produced and reasoned from, in his *Thoughts on the Calls of the Gospel,* still believes that sinners are forgiven prior to any repentance but that which needs to be repented of.

The difference between us, as to the subject of this letter, seems chiefly to respect the nature of faith, whether it include any exercise of the will; and if it do, whether it affect the doctrine of free justification.

Mr. M. acknowledges faith as a principle of sanctification to be holy: it is only *as justifying* that he is for excluding all holy affection from it.† But if it be holy in relation to sanctification, it must be holy *in itself;* and that which is holy in itself, must be so in every relation which it sustains. It is not one kind of faith that sanctifies, and another that justifies; but the same thing in different respects. To represent faith sanctifying as being holy, and faith justifying as having no holiness in it, is not viewing the same, but a different thing in different respects.

For a specimen of Mr. M.'s manner of writing on this subject, you will excuse my copying as

* Reply, pp. 36—42. † Ibid. p. 97.

follows;—"An awakened sinner asks, what must I do to be saved? An apostle answers, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* But a preacher of the doctrine I am opposing, would have taught him another lesson. He might indeed, in compliance with scripture language, use the word *believe;* but he would tell him, that in this case it did not bear its usual sense; that it was not the assent of his understanding, in giving credit to the testimony of the gospel, but a *grace* arising from a *previous* spiritual principle, and including in it a number of *holy affections* and *dispositions* of heart, all which he must exercise and set a working, in order to his being justified; and many directions will be given him how he is to perform this. But this is to destroy the freedom of the gospel, and to make the hope of a sinner turn upon his finding some virtuous exercises and dispositions in his own heart, instead of placing it directly in the work finished by the Son of God upon the cross. In opposition to this, I maintain that whatever virtue or holiness may be supposed in the nature of faith itself, as it is not the ground of a sinner's justification in the sight of God, so neither does it enter into the consideration of the person who is really believing unto righteousness. He views himself not as exercising virtue, but only as a mere sinner, while he believes on him that justifieth the ungodly, through the atonement." *pp.* 98, 99.

You will not expect me to answer this. It is a proof how far a writer may misunderstand, and so misrepresent his opponent; and even in those things wherein he understands him, describe him in caricature. I will only apply a few of the leading traits in this picture, to Mr. M.'s own principles. —"A preacher of this doctrine, instead of directing a sinner to believe in Christ, and there leaving it, would tell him, that faith was an assent of his *understanding*, a grace arising from a previous *divine illumination*, by which he becomes spiritual, and which he must therefore first be possessed of, and thus set him a working in order to get it, that he may be justified. But this is to deny the freeness of the gospel, and to make the hope of a sinner turn upon his finding some *light within* him, instead of placing it upon the finished work of the Son of God upon the cross. In opposition to this, I maintain that whatever illumination may be supposed necessary to believing, and whatever spiritual perception is contained in the nature of it, as it is not the ground of a sinner's justification in the sight of God, so neither does it enter into the consideration of the person who is really believing unto righteousness. He views himself not as divinely illuminated, but merely as a sinner, believing in him who justifieth the ungodly, through the righteousness of his Son."

Mr. M., when writing in this strain, knew that I had said nearly the same things; and therefore

that if he were opposing me, I had first opposed myself. He even quotes almost a page of my acknowledgments on the subject.* But these are things, it seems, which I only "sometimes seem to hold." Well, if Mr. M. can prove, that I have *any where*, either in the piece he was answering, or in any other, directed the sinner's attention to the workings of his own mind, instead of Christ, or have set him a *working*, (unless he please to give that name to an exhortation to forsake his way, and return to God, through Jesus Christ,) or have given him any *directions* how to work himself into a believing frame; then let all that he has said stand against me. But if not, let me be believed when I declare my utter disapprobation of every thing of the kind.

But Mr. M. has another charge, or rather *suspicion* against me. "Mr. FULLER admits (he says) that faith does not justify, either as an *internal* or *external work*, or *holy exercise*, or as being *any part* of that which is imputed unto us for righteousness; and did not other parts of his writings appear to clash with this,—I should rest satisfied. But I own that I am not without a suspicion, that Mr. F. here only means, that faith does not justify *as the procuring cause or meritorious ground* of a sinner's justification; and that while we hold this point, we may include as much virtue and holy exercise of the will

* Reply, p. 100.

and affections as we please, without affecting the point of justification, as that stands entirely upon another ground, viz. the righteousness of Christ.—But it must be carefully observed, that the difference between us *does not respect the meritorious procuring* cause of justification, but the *way* in which we receive it." *—

Be it according to this statement, (and I have no objection to say that such *is* the whole of my meaning,) yet what is there in this that clashes with the above acknowledgments, or with free justification? There may be a "difference between us," which yet may not affect this doctrine. But let us hear him through.—

"The scriptures abundantly testify that we are *justified by faith*, which shows that faith has some concern in this matter." True.—"And Mr. FULLER admits, that justification is ascribed to faith, merely as that which *unites to Christ*, for the sake of whose righteousness alone, we are accepted." Very good. "Therefore, the only question between us is this: Does faith unite us to Christ, and so receive justification through his righteousness, *merely in crediting* the divine testimony respecting the sufficiency of that righteousness alone to justify us; or does it unite us to Christ, and obtain justification through his righteousness, by virtue of its being a *moral excellency*, and as including the

* Reply, p. 100.

holy exercise of the will and affections? The former is my view of this matter; the latter, if I am not greatly mistaken, is Mr. FULLER's." *p.* 101.

It is some satisfaction to find our differences on the important doctrine of justification reduced to a single point. Allowing my sentiments to be fairly stated, and though I should not express them just in these words, yet I certainly do consider a holy faith as necessary to unite us to a holy Saviour, the question is, whether this sentiment clashes with the foregoing acknowledgments, or with the doctrine of free justification? It lies on Mr. M. to *prove* that it does so. Let us hear him.—" I hold that sinners are justified through Christ's righteousness, *by faith alone*, or purely in believing that the righteousness of Christ, which he finished on the cross, and which was declared to be accepted by his resurrection from the dead, is alone sufficient for their pardon and acceptance with God, however guilty and unworthy they are. But in opposition to this, the whole strain of Mr. FULLER's reasoning tends to show, that sinners are not justified by faith *alone*, but by faith working by love, or including in it the holy exercise of the will and affections; and this addition to faith he makes to be that qualification in it, on which the fitness or congruity of an interest in Christ's righteousness depends. (*Ap. p.* 183, 184.) Without this addition, he considers faith itself, whatever be its grounds or object, to be an empty unholy, speculation, which requires no in-

fluence of the Spirit to produce it. (*p.* 128.) So that if what is properly termed *faith*, has, in his opinion, any place at all in justification, it must be merely on account of the holy exercises and affections which attend it." *pp.* 101, 102.

Such is Mr. M.'s *proof* of my inconsistency with my own acknowledgments, and with the freeness of justification.

Let it be remembered, in the first place, that the difference between us, by Mr. M.'s own acknowledgment, does not respect the *meritorious* or *procuring cause* of justification. All he says, therefore, of "the righteousness of Christ as finished, and declared to be accepted by his resurrection from the dead, being alone sufficient for our pardon and acceptance with God, however guilty and unworthy we are," belongs equally to my views, as to his own: yet immediately after these words, he says, "but in *opposition* to this, Mr. F. &c." as if these sentiments were exclusively his own. The difference between us, belongs to the nature of justifying faith. He considers the sinner as united to Christ, and so as justified, by the mere assent of his understanding to the doctrine of the cross, *exclusive of all approbation of it:* whereas I consider every thing pertaining to the understanding (when the term is used exclusive of approbation,) to be either merely natural, or a "seeing and hating of Christ, and the Father." Nor is approbation a mere effect of faith, but enters into its essence:

it is believing, but it is believing *with the heart;* which all the labours of Mr. SANDEMAN and his disciples have not been able to prove means only the understanding. We may believe many things without approving them: but the nature of the objects believed, in this case, renders cordiality essential to it. It is impossible, in the nature of things, to believe the gospel without a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of the suitableness and glory of the Saviour, which does not merely *produce*, but *includes* approbation of him. To "see no form nor comeliness in him," is the same thing as to be an unbeliever; and the contrary is to be a believer.

But I shall notice these remarks of Mr. M. a little more particularly.—

First, By the manner in which he has introduced them, it must appear to the reader, that I had not fully declared my mind on this subject, and that Mr. M. in detecting my errors, was obliged to proceed on the uncertain ground of "suspicion:" yet he could not have read the very pages on which he was animadverting,* without having repeatedly met with the most express avowals of the sentiment; such as the following—"Whatever is pleaded in behalf of the holy nature of faith, it is not supposed to justify us as *a work*, or *holy exercise*, or as being *any part of that which is accounted unto us for righteousness;* but merely as that which UNITES TO CHRIST, for the sake of whose

* Appendix, pp. 182—184.

righteousness alone we are accepted." — Again, "Living faith, or faith that worketh by love, is necessary to justification, not as being the ground of our acceptance with God; not as a virtue of which justification is the reward; but as that without which *we could not be* UNITED TO A LIVING REDEEMER." Yet with these passages before his eyes, Mr. M. affects to be at a loss to know my sentiments; he "suspects" I maintain holy affection in faith as necessary to union with Christ!

Secondly, If the difference between us has no respect to the *meritorious or procuring cause of justification*, as Mr. M. allows it has not, then why does he elsewhere tell his reader, that "he thinks Mr. F. means to plead for such a *moral fitness* for justification, as that wherein the virtue of the party commends him to it; or in which he is put into a good state, as a fit or suitable testimony of regard to the moral excellency of his qualifications or acts." *p.* 104. I know not what Mr. M. may think, but I should consider this as making faith the *procuring cause or meritorious ground* of justification: for what is the meritorious ground of a blessing, but that in consideration of which it is bestowed?

Thirdly, If it is not sufficient that we ascribe the meritorious or procuring cause of justification to the work of Christ, unless we also exclude all holy affection from the nature of faith, as uniting us to him, how is it that Mr. M. has written as he has on the *Calls of the Gospel?* He seems to have

thought it quite enough for *him* to disavow repentance or faith as making any part of our justifying righteousness, though the same disavowal on *my* part gives him no satisfaction. "Did Peter (he asks) overturn the doctrine of free justification by faith, when he exhorted the unbelieving Jews to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out? Does he there direct them to *any part of that work which Christ had finished for the justification of the ungodly*, or lead them to think that their faith, repentance, or conversion were to *make an atonement for their sins?*" Again, "Cannot the wicked be exhorted to believe, repent, and seek the Lord, and be encouraged to this by a promise of success, without making the success to depend on *human merit?* Are such exhortations and promises always to be suspected of having a dangerous and self-righteous tendency? Instead of taking them in their plain and simple sense, must our main care always be to guard against some supposed self-righteous use of them, till we have explained away their whole force and spirit, and so distinguished and refined upon them, as to make men more afraid to comply with than to reject them, lest they should be *guilty of some exertion of mind or body, some good disposition or motion toward Christ, which is supposed to be the highest wickedness, and a despising of the work of Christ?*" *

* See Works, Vol II. pp. 39. 55, 56.

If there be any meaning in words, M. M. here most decidedly contends for repentance, faith, and conversion, which must be allowed to include holy affection, being necessary, in the established order of things, to mercy, pardon, &c. which must also be allowed to include justification.

Fourthly, With respect to *fitness*, I think, with Mr. M. that there is a "peculiar suitableness in faith to receive justification, and every other spiritual blessing, purely of grace." *p.* 106. *It is of faith that it might be of grace.* And this peculiar suitableness consists in its being of the nature of faith, to *receive* the blessings of grace as God's free gifts through the atonement, instead of *performing* any thing in the way of being rewarded for it. Thus it is properly opposed to the works of the law. But it does not follow, that in order to this there must be no "good disposition or motion toward Christ," in our believing in him. On the contrary, if faith were mere knowledge, exclusive of approbation, it would not be adapted to receive the doctrine of the gospel; it would be either unholy, or at best merely natural. If the former, instead of receiving, it would be certain to reject the heavenly doctrine; and if the latter, there would be no more suitableness to receive it, than there is in the wisdom of this world to receive the true knowledge of God. A holy faith is necessary to receive a holy doctrine, and so to unite us to a holy Saviour.

The *fitness* that I plead for in God's justifying those, who cordially acquiesce in the gospel way of salvation, rather than others, and which Mr. M. considers as inconsistent with free justification, (*Reply, p.* 103.) is no other than the fitness of wisdom, which, while it preserves the honours of grace, is not inattentive to those of righteousness. Had it been said, Though the wicked forsake *not* his way, *nor* the unrighteous man his thoughts; and though he return *not* to the Lord, yet will he have mercy upon him, *nor* to our God, yet will he abundantly pardon—we should feel a want of fitness, and instantly perceive, that grace was here exalted at the expence of righteousness. He that can discern no fitness in such connections but that of *works and rewards*, must have yet to learn some of the first principles of the oracles of God.

Fifthly, With respect to justification *by faith alone*, Mr. M. appears to have affixed a new sense to the phrase. I have always understood it to mean justification by a righteousness *received*, in opposition to justification by a righteousness *performed*, according to Gal. iii. 11, 12. "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live *by faith*. And the law is not of faith: but *the man that doeth them* shall live in them." In this sense, justification by *faith alone* applies to my views of the subject as well as his: but the sense in which he uses the phrase is very nearly akin to that in which James uses it

when speaking of faith as "dead, being alone." We are indeed justified by *faith alone;* but not by a faith *which is alone.*

Mr. M. is in the habit of speaking of that holiness which I conceive essential to the nature of faith, as something "added" to it, or as being something "more" than faith: but he might as well say that a cordial rejection of the gospel is something "more" than unbelief. In like manner, he seems to consider the phrase, *faith which worketh by love,* as expressive of what faith *produces posterior to its uniting us to Christ:* whereas it is of the nature of faith, in its very *first* existence in the mind, to work, and that in a way of love to the object. It is also remarkable, that Paul speaks of faith which *worketh by love* as availing to justification; while circumcision or uncircumcision availed nothing.* Faith, hope, and charity have, no doubt, their distinctive characters; but not one of them, nor of any other grace, consists in its being devoid of holy affection. This is a common property belonging to all the graces, is coeval with them, and essential to them. Whatever we may possess, call it knowledge, or faith, or what we may, if it be devoid of this, it is not the effect of special divine influence, and therefore not a fruit of the Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit *is Spirit.*"

* Gal. v. 6.

Lastly, If union with Christ were antecedent to all holy affection, it would not be what the scriptures represent it; namely, an union of spirit. "He that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit.*"* Union of spirit must include congeniality of disposition. Our heart must be as Christ's heart, or we are not one with him. Believing in him with all the heart, we from hence, according to the wise and gracious constitution of the gospel, and not in reward of any holiness in us, possess a revealed interest in him, and in all the benefits arising from his obedience unto death. He that *hath the Son hath life.* Such appears to be the order of things as taught us in the scriptures, and such the connection between faith and justification. If union with Christ were *acquired* by faith, and an interest in him were bestowed in *reward* of it, it would indeed be inconsistent with free justification: but if the necessity of a holy faith arise merely from the nature of things; that is, its fitness to unite us to a holy Saviour; and if faith itself be the gift of God, no such consequence follows: for the union, though we be active in it, is in reality formed by him who actuates us, and to him belongs the praise. OF HIM *are ye* IN *Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written,* HE THAT GLORIETH, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD.†

* 1 Cor. vi. 17. † 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

Mr. M. has written much about God's justifying the *ungodly;* but while he allows that the term is not descriptive of *the existing character* of a believer, I have no dispute with him. He admits that when Christ is said to *die for the ungodly*, the term includes many who *at the time were saints*, only he died not for them *as saints;* (*p.* 115.) and this I readily allow. The examples of Abraham and David were not introduced by me to prove them to have been godly characters for many years prior to their justification; but that the examples of their faith being taken not from their first believing, while yet it respected God as the justifier of the ungodly, the doctrine of free justification could not require that the party should at the time be at enmity with God.*

Mr. M. has also written much about the state of *an awakened sinner.* As he had disowned his being the subject of any *holy affection*, I concluded he must be "an hard-hearted enemy of God." This was stated not from a want of feeling toward any poor sinner, but to show whither the principle led. Mr. M. answers:—"I have not the least idea that a hard-hearted enemy of God, while such, *can* either receive or enjoy forgiveness; but I distinguish between such a state of mind, and that of an awakened self-condemned sinner; and also between

* On this subject I beg leave to refer the reader to Discourse XXII. of my work on Genesis.

the latter, and a real convert who believes the gospel, has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and is possessed of holy affections." *p.* 151. Is there a medium then between holy affection and hard-hearted enmity? If so, it must be something like neutrality. But Christ has left no room for this, having declared, "He that is not with me is against me." Let a sinner be alarmed as much as he may, if he have no holy affection toward God, he must be a hard-hearted enemy to him. Such, I believe, are many awakened sinners, notwithstanding all their terrors, and such they will view themselves to have been, if ever they come to see things as they are. There are others, however, who are not so, but whose convictions are spiritual, like those of Paul, who saw "sin, through the commandment, to be exceeding sinful," and who "through the law became dead to the law, that he might live unto God." Convictions of this kind lead the sinner to Christ. They may not be distinguishable at the time, either by himself or others, and nothing but the *effects* may prove the difference: yet an essential difference there is.

Mr. M. refers to the case of the jailor. I know not what was his conviction of the evil of sin, nor when he became the subject of holy affection. But be it when it might, he was till then an hard-hearted enemy of God. The case to which writers on Mr. M.'s side the question more frequently refer, is, that of the self-condemned publican;

but antecedent to his going down to his house justified, he "humbled himself," and that in a way of *holy* though not of *joyful* affection.

According to Mr. M. there is a state of mind which is not the effect of renewing grace, and therefore contains nothing truly good, but which is nevertheless *necessary*, and *sufficient* to prepare the sinner for receiving the forgiveness of his sin. A hard-hearted enemy of God *cannot* receive or enjoy gospel forgiveness; but a sinner under terrors of conscience, though equally destitute of all regard for God as the other, *can*.

Far be it from me to impeach Mr. M.'s integrity. I doubt not but he thinks, that in writing his *Reply* he was engaged in refuting error. Yet if his own words are to be believed, he does not know, after all, but that he has been opposing the truth. "Whether such convictions as issue in conversion differ *in kind* from others, (he says,) I WILL NOT TAKE UPON ME TO DETERMINE." *p.* 151. That is, he does not know but that it may be so, and that there is such a thing as spiritual conviction, a conviction of the *evil* of sin, antecedent to believing in the Saviour, and subservient to it. But this is the same in effect as saying, he does not know whether that which he has been opposing throughout his performance, may not, after all, be true! "But I am certain of this, (he adds,) that it would be very unsafe to build up any in an opinion of their possessing holiness, merely upon the ground of their

convictions, while they come short of a real change, and do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That conviction of sin and its desert, which is subservient to faith in Christ, will never lead a person to think that it is any part of his holiness; for such a thought would be as opposite to the nature of his conviction, as his feeling a disease would be to his thinking himself whole."—Very good; but against what is it directed? nothing advanced by his opponent. It is however manifestly against the scope of his own performance. The tendency, though not the design, of these remarks is, to show that there *is* a "difference in kind" between some convictions and others, and a marked one too.—"That conviction of sin and its desert, which is subservient to faith in Christ, will never lead a person to think that it is any part of his holiness:" but (he might have added) *that* conviction of sin, which is not subservient to faith in Christ, will. Graceless convictions generally, if not always, become objects of self-admiration. Here then Mr. M. not only determines that *there is a difference* between some convictions and others, but specifies wherein that difference consists. It never occurred to the self-condemned publican, that there was any thing good or holy in his "humbling himself" before God. Our Lord, however, held it up as *being* so, and recommended it as an example to others.

I shall conclude this letter with a few remarks on *qualifications.* This is a term on which Mr.

SANDEMAN and his followers have plentifully declaimed. It conveys to me the idea of something which *entitles* the party to a good, or *fits* him to enjoy it. With respect to entitling us, I suppose there is no dispute. The gospel and its invitations are our title to come to Christ for salvation. And with respect to fitting us, there is nothing of this kind that is pleadable, or which furnishes any ground of encouragement to the sinner that he shall be accepted. It is not any thing prior to coming to Christ, but coming itself, that has the promise of acceptance. All that is pleaded for is, the necessity of a state of mind suited, in the nature of things, to believing, and without which no sinner ever did or can believe; and which state of mind is not self-wrought, but the effect of regenerating grace.

Mr. SANDEMAN represents sinners as saying to preachers, "If you would preach the gospel to us, you must tell us something fit to give us joy as we presently stand, unconscious of any distinguishing *qualification*." That the mind, at the time when it first receives gospel comfort, may be *unconscious* not only of every distinguishing qualification, but of being the subject of any thing truly good, I allow; for I believe that is the first true comfort, which arises from the consideration of *what Christ is*, rather than of what *we are toward him*. But to be "unconscious" of any thing truly good, and actually destitute of it, are two things:

and so is its being necessary *in the nature of things* to our enjoying the consolations of the gospel, and its being so *as a qualification* entitling, or in some way recommending, us to the divine favour. To conceive of a sinner who is actually hardened in his sins, bloated with self-righteous pride, and full of opposition to the gospel, receiving joy "presently as he stands," is not only conceiving of rest for the soul without coming to the Saviour for it,* but is in itself a contradiction. Mr. M'LEAN acknowledges as much as this. "I have not the least idea (he says) that a hard-hearted enemy of God, while such, *can* either receive or enjoy forgiveness." † Conviction of sin then, whether it have any thing holy in it or not, is *necessary*, not, I presume, as a qualification recommending the sinner to the divine favour, but as that, without which believing in Jesus were in its own nature impossible. Such are my views as to the necessity of a new heart, ere the sinner can come to Christ. The joy that an unregenerate sinner can receive "presently as he stands," is any thing but that which is afforded by the good news of salvation to the chief of sinners.

Yours, &c.

* Matt. xi. 29. † Reply, p. 150.

LETTER IX.

ON CERTAIN NEW TESTAMENT PRACTICES.

My dear Friend,

THAT there are serious christians who have leaned to the Sandemanian system, I have no doubt; and in people of this description I have seen things worthy of imitation. It has appeared to me, that there is a greater diligence in endeavouring to understand the scriptures, and a stricter regard to what they are supposed to contain, than among many other professors of christianity. They do not seem to trifle with either principle or practice in the manner that many do. Even in those things wherein they appear to me to misunderstand the scriptures, there is a regard toward them which is worthy of imitation. There is something even in their rigidness, which I prefer before that trifling

with truth, which often passes under the name of liberality among other professing christians.

These concessions, however, do not respect those who have gone entirely into the system, so as to have thoroughly imbibed its spirit; but persons who have manifested a considerable partiality in favour of the doctrine. Take the denomination as a whole, and it is not amongst them you can expect to see the christian practice of the new testament exemplified. You will find them very punctilious in some things; but very defective in others. Religion, as exhibited by them, resembles a rickety child, whose growth is confined to certain parts: it wants that lovely uniformity or proportion, which constitutes the beauty of holiness.

Some of the followers of Mr. SANDEMAN, who formed a Society in his life-time in St. Martin's-le-Grand, London, and published an account of what they call their *christian practices*, acknowledge that the command of washing one another's feet is binding "only when it can be an act of kindness to do so;" and that though there be neither precept nor precedent for *family-prayer*, yet "it seems necessary for maintaining the fear of God in a family." They proceed however to judge those, who insist on family-prayer and the first day sabbath, *while they disregard the feasts of charity, the holy kiss*, &c. as persons "influenced to their religious practices, not by the fear of God, the authority of Christ, or the spirit of truth." It is easy to see from hence, what

kind of christian practice that is by which these people are distinguished.*

A punctilious adherence to the letter of scripture is in some cases commendable, even though it may extend to *the tithing of mint and cummin;* but in others, it would lead you aside from the mind of Christ; and to pursue any thing to the neglect of *judgment, mercy, and the love of God,* is dangerous in the extreme.

It has long appeared to me, that a great many errors have arisen from applying the principle which is proper in obedience to *positive institutions,* to *moral obligations.* By confounding these, and giving to both the name of *ordinances,* the new testament becomes little more than ritual, and religion is nearly reduced to a round of mechanical exercises.

The distinction of obedience into *moral* and *positive,* has been made by the ablest writers of almost every denomination, and must be made if we would understand the scriptures. Without it we should confound the eternal standard of right and wrong, given to Israel at Sinai, the sum of which is the love of God and our neighbour, with the body of "carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation." We should also confound those precepts of the new testament

* I have not seen this pamphlet, but have taken a few quotations from it, contained in BACKUS's "Discourse on Faith and its Influence."

which arise from the *relations* we sustain to God and one another, with those that arise merely from the *sovereign will* of the Legislator, and could never have been known but for his having expressly enjoined them. Concerning the former, an inspired writer does not scruple to refer the primitive christians to that sense of right and wrong, which is implanted in the minds of men in general; saying, "Whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."* But concerning the latter, he directs their whole attention to the revealed will of Christ: —"Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances* as I delivered them unto you.—I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, &c."†—The one is commanded because it is *right*; the other is right because it is commanded. The great principles of the first are of perpetual obligation, and know no other change than that which arises from the varying of relations and conditions; but those of the last may be binding at one period of time, and utterly abolished at another.

We can clearly perceive, that it were inconsistent with the perfections of God not to have required

* Phil. iv. 8. † 1 Cor. xi. 2, 23.

us to love him and one another, or to have allowed of the contrary. Children also must needs be required to obey their parents; "for this is *right.*" But it is not thus in positive institutions. Whatever wisdom there may be in them, and whatever discernment in us, we could not have known them, had they not been expressly revealed; nor are they ever enforced as being in themselves *right*, but merely from the authority of the Lawgiver. Of them we may say, had it pleased God, he might, in various instances, have enjoined the opposites; but of the other we are not allowed to suppose it possible, or consistent with righteousness, for God to have required any thing different from that which he has required. The obligation of man to love and obey his Creator must have been coeval with his existence; but it was not till he had planted a garden in Eden, and there put the man whom he had formed, and expressly prohibited the fruit of one of the trees on pain of death, that he came under a *positive* law.

The use to be made of this distinction in the present controversy, is, *to judge in what cases we are to look for express precept or example, and in what cases we are not to look for them.* Mr. Braidwood very properly observes, "That which is morally good in its own nature, is a bounden duty, although it should not be particularly commanded nor exemplified in all the word of God."* In

* Letters, &c. p. 42.

obedience of this description there is not that need of minute rules and examples as in the other; but merely of *general* principles, which naturally lead to all the particulars comprehended under them.

To require express precept or example, or to adhere in all cases to the literal sense of those precepts which are given us, in things of a moral nature, would greatly mislead us. We may, by a disregard of that for which there is no express precept or precedent, omit what is manifestly right; and by an adherence to the letter of scriptural precepts, overlook the spirit of them, and do that which is manifestly wrong.

If we will do nothing without express precept or precedent, we must build no places for christian worship, form no societies for visiting and relieving the afflicted poor, establish no schools, endow no hospitals, nor contribute any thing toward them, nor any thing toward printing or circulating the holy scriptures. Whether any person who fears God would, on this ground, consider himself excused from these duties, I cannot tell: it is on no better ground, however, that duties of equal importance have been disregarded; especially those of *family-prayer*, and the *sanctification* of the Lord's day.

In Mr. SANDEMAN's time it was allowed, that "though there were neither precept nor precedent for *family-prayer*, yet it seemed necessary for maintaining *the fear of God in a family*." But

this concession being at variance with more favourite principles, seems to have meant nothing. It is said, that family-prayer has long been disregarded by many who drink the deepest into the doctrine. With them, therefore, the maintaining of "the fear of God in a family," seems to be given up. This fact has operated much against the denomination, in the esteem of serious christians; by whom they are considered as little other than a body of worldly men. Of late the system has been *improved.* Instead of owning, as formerly, that "the fear of God seemed to require this duty," it is now held to be *unlawful*, provided any part of the family be unbelievers, seeing it is holding *communion* with them. On the same principle, unbelievers, it is said, are not allowed to join in public prayer and praise, unless it be in an adjoining room, or with some kind of partition between them and the believers. In short, it is maintained, that "We ought only to join in prayer and praise with those, with whom we partake of the Lord's supper."* Such are the consequences of confounding things moral with things positive or ceremonial.

We have no account of any particular injunctions given to Abraham respecting the ordering of his family. God had said to him in general, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," and which, as to things of this nature, was sufficient. "I know

* See Braidwood's Letters, pp. 31—46.

Abraham, saith the Lord, that HE WILL command his children, and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment." Can a child be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, when it never hears its parents pray for it? Paul would not have eaten the Lord's supper with the ship's company; but he made no scruple of "giving thanks to God in presence of them all," at a common meal; and this, I presume, without any partition between his company and theirs, or so much as a mental reservation in respect of the latter. To join with unbelievers in what is *not their duty*, is to become partakers of other men's sins: but to allow them to join with us in what *is their duty*, is not so. The believer is not at liberty to join in the prayer of unbelief: but the unbeliever is at liberty, if he can, to join in the prayer of faith. To deny him this, were to deny him the right of becoming a believer, and of doing what every one ought to do. We ought to pray for such things as both believers and unbelievers stand in need of: if the latter unite with us in desire, it is well for them; if not, the guilt remains with themselves, and not with us.

The *sanctification* of the Lord's day is said to be very generally disregarded among the admirers of this system. Having met, and kept the *ordinances*, they seem to have done with religion for that day, and feel at liberty to follow any amusement or worldly occupation during the remainder of it.

This is christian liberty; and the opposite is pharisaism!

So far as relates to its being the day appointed for christian worship rather than the seventh, that is to say, so far as it is *positive*, the keeping of it is amply supported by scripture precedent; but as to keeping the day *holy* to the Lord, this, being *moral*, is left to be inferred from general principles. This is the case as to the *manner* of attending to all positive institutions. No injunctions were laid on the churches with respect to their keeping the Lord's supper in a *holy* manner; yet in the neglect of this lay the sin of the church at Corinth. And the reasoning which the apostle uses to convince them of their sin applies to the case in hand. He argues from the ordinance of breaking bread being THE LORD'S supper, that turning it into their OWN supper was rendering it null and void:* and by parity of reasoning it follows, from the first day of the week being THE LORD'S DAY, that to do OUR OWN work, find OUR OWN pleasure, or speak OUR OWN words on that day, is to make it void. Of the first he declared, *This is not to eat the Lord's supper;* and of the last he would, on the same principle, have declared, *This is not to keep the Lord's day.*

* I am aware that THEIR OWN SUPPER has been understood as referring to the LOVE FEASTS; but the reasoning of the Apostle seems to me to admit of no such meaning. How could he accuse them of making void the Lord's supper, if it were not the Lord's supper that they were eating?

If, on the other hand, we do every thing that is commanded in the new testament, according to the *letter* of the precept, we shall in many cases overlook the true intent of it, and do that which is manifestly wrong.

The design of our Lord's precepts on prayer and alms-giving (Matt. vi. 1—6.) is to censure a spirit of *ostentation* in these duties; but a strict conformity to the letter of them would excuse us from all *social* prayer, and *public* contributions.

The design of the precept, "Resist not evil; but if a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also," is to prohibit all private or selfish resentment, and to teach us that we ought rather to suffer wrong, than go about to revenge an injury. Who does not admire the conduct of the noble Athenian, who, in a council of war held for the common safety of the country, when the Spartan chief menaced him with his cane, cried, "STRIKE; BUT HEAR ME!" Such, in effect, has been the language of the martyrs of Jesus in all ages; and such is the spirit of the precept. But to contend for a literal compliance with it, were to reflect on the conduct of Christ himself, who when smitten before the high priest, did not so exemplify it, but remonstrated against the injury.

If the design of our Lord, in forbidding us to "lay up treasures upon earth,"* were absolutely,

* Matt. vi. 19.

and in all cases, to prohibit the increase of property, it was his design to overthrow what the scriptures acknowledge as a dictate of nature, namely, the duty of parents to provide for their children.* True it is, that men may hoard wealth in order to enrich and aggrandize their families, to the neglect of present duty toward the poor and toward the cause of God: but this is the *abuse* of the principle, and ought to be corrected, and not the principle itself destroyed. Only let our own interest, and that of our children, be pursued *in subordination to God*, and *in consistency with other duties*, and all will be right. The contrary practice would load the industrious poor, and prevent their ever rising above their present condition, while it screened the indolent rich, who might expend the whole of their income in self-gratification, provided they did not increase their capital.

Nor can any good reason be given, that I know of, why we should understand this precept as prohibiting in all cases the increase of property, any more than that of "selling what we have, and giving alms," as absolutely forbidding us to *retain* it. To be consistent, the advocates of this interpretation should dispose of all their property, and distribute it among the poor. In other words, they should abolish all distinctions of rich and poor, so

* 2 Cor. xi. 14.

far as concerns themselves; not only of the *very* rich and *very* poor, but all distinction whatever, and be perfectly on an equality. When they shall do this, they will at least prove themselves to be sincere, and impart a weight to their censures against others, which at present they do not possess.

It was not our Lord's design in this partial manner to lop off the branches of a worldly spirit; but to strike at the root of it. To "lay up treasures on earth," denotes the *desire* of amassing wealth, that we may be great, and shine, or in some way consume it upon our lusts; and herein consists the evil. There is as great a difference between a character who acts on this principle, and one whom God prospereth in the path of duty, and in the full exercise of benevolence toward all about him, as between one who engages in the chase of worldly applause, and another, who, seeking the good of those around him, must needs be respected and loved.

The evil which arises from such interpretations, whatever may be their tendency, does not consist in throwing civil society into a state of disorder; for though men may admit them in theory, yet they will contrive some method of practically evading them, and reconcile their consciences to it. The mischief lies in the hypocrisy, self-deception, and unchristian censures upon others, to which they give occasion.

Much has been spoken and written on "observing *all things* which Christ hath commanded us," and on the authority of *apostolic example*. Both are literally binding on christians in matters of positive institution, and in things moral the spirit or design of them is indispensible: but to enforce a literal conformity in many cases, would be to defeat the end, and reduce obedience to unmeaning ceremony.

In eastern countries, *the washing of the feet* after the toils of a journey was a common and necessary refreshment; and our Lord, to teach his disciples "in love to serve one another," took upon himself the humble office of a servant, and washed their feet; enjoining upon them to do that to one another, which he had done to them. But to conform to this custom where it is not practised, nor considered as necessary to be done by any one, is to defeat the end of the precept, by substituting a form in the place of a humble and affectionate service. We may wash the saints' feet, and neglect to dry their clothes, or to administer necessary comfort to them when cold and weary. If in commands of this nature no regard is to be had to times, places, and circumstances, why do Sandemanians allow it to be binding, "*only* when it can be an act of kindness to do so?"

It was customary in the East, and is still so in many countries, for men to express affection to

each other by *a kiss;* and the apostles directed that this common mode of salutation should be used religiously. But in a country where the practice is principally confined to the expression of love between the sexes, or at most among relations, it is much more liable to misconstruction and abuse; and being originally a human custom, where that custom ceases, though the spirit of the precept is binding, yet the form of it, I conceive, is not so.

For a man to have his *head uncovered* was once the commonly received sign of his authority, and as such was enjoined:* but with us it is a sign of subjection. If therefore we be obliged to wear any sign of the one or of the other in our religious assemblies, it requires to be reversed.

The apostle taught that it was a shame for a man to wear *long hair* like a woman; not that he would have concerned himself about the length of the hair, but this being a distinctive mark of the sexes, he appealed to *nature* itself against their being confounded; that is, against a man's appearing in the garb of a woman.†

In the primitive times, christians had their *love feasts:* they do not appear, however, to have been a divine appointment, but the mere spontaneous expressions of mutual affection; as when "breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat

* 1 Cor. xi. 7. † 1 Cor. xi. 13—16.

with gladness and singleness of heart." While these feasts were conducted with propriety, all was well; but in time they were abused, and then they were mentioned in language not very respectful; "These are spots in *your* feasts of charity."* Had they been of divine institution, it was not their being abused that would have drawn forth such language. The Lord's supper was abused as well as they: but the abuse in that case was corrected, and the ordinance itself reinculcated.

These brief remarks are intended to prove, that in the above particulars Mr. SANDEMAN and his followers have mistaken the true intent of Christ and his apostles. But whether it be so or not, the proportion of zeal which is expended upon them is far beyond what their importance requires. If, as a friend to believers' baptism, I cherish an overweening conceit of myself, and of my denomination, confining the kingdom of heaven to it, and shutting my eyes against the excellencies of others, am I not carnal? The Jews, in the time of Jeremiah, thought themselves very secure on account of their forms and privileges. Pointing to the sacred edifice, and its divinely instituted worship, they exclaimed, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these:" † but were they not carnal? In how many ways, alas, are poor blind mortals addicted to err!

* Jude 12. † Jer. vii. 4.

When the reflecting christian considers what contentions have been kept up about things of this nature, what divisions have been produced, and what accusations have been preferred against those who stand aloof from such strifes, as though they *did not so much as profess to observe all things which Christ hath commanded*, he will drop a tear of pity over human weakness. But when he sees men so scrupulous in such matters, that they cannot conscientiously be present at any worship but their own, yet making no scruple of joining in theatrical and other vain amusements, he will be shocked, and must needs suspect something worse than weakness; something which "strains at a gnat, but can swallow a camel;" something, in short, which, however good men may have been carried away by it, can hardly be conceived to have had its origin in a good man's mind.

Yours, &c.

LETTER X.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE APOSTLES PROCEEDED, IN FORMING AND ORGANIZING CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

My dear Friend,

You need not be told of the fierce disputes which were first agitated by the leaders of this denomination, and which have since extended to others as well as those who chuse to be called after their names, concerning the order, government, and discipline of gospel churches. To write upon every minute practice found in the new testament, would be to bewilder ourselves and perplex the subject. If we can ascertain the *principles* on which the apostles proceeded in all they did, it will answer a much better purpose.

Far be it from me to contend for an Erastian latitude in matters of church government and discipline, or to imagine that no divine directions are left us on the subject, but that the church must be modelled and governed according to circumstances.

This were to open a door to every corruption that human ingenuity and depravity might devise. But on the other hand, it is no less wide of the truth to consider the whole which is left us as a system of *ordinances*, or *positive institutions*, requiring in all cases the most literal and punctilious observance. Such a view of the subject, among other evil consequences, must introduce perpetual discord; seeing it aims to establish things from the new testament which are not in it.

It may be thought that in reasoning thus I adopt the principles of the *episcopalians* against the *puritans*, who denied the necessity of express precept or precedent from the scriptures, which the others pleaded for. Had episcopalians only denied this in respect of moral duties, I should have thought them in the right. It certainly is not necessary that we should have express precept or precedent for every duty we owe to our neighbours, but merely that we keep within the general principle, of doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us. And the same may be said of various duties toward God. If in our thoughts, affections, prayers, or praises, we be influenced by *love* to his name, though his precepts will be our guide as to the general modes in which love shall be expressed, yet we shall not need them for every thing pertaining to particular duties. When Josiah, on hearing the book of the law read to him, "rent his clothes and wept," it was not in conformity with any particular

precept or precedent, but the spontaneous effusion of love. The question between the episcopalians and the puritans did not relate to moral obligations, but to "rites and ceremonies" in divine worship, which the church claimed a "power to decree." Hence it was common for them to urge it upon the puritans, that if their principles were fully acted upon, they must become antipædobaptists, or, as they called them, Anabaptists:* a proof this, not only that in their judgment there was neither precept nor precedent in the scriptures in favour of pædobaptism, but that it was in matters of *positive institution* that they claimed to act without either.

The question is, On what principles did the apostles proceed in forming and organizing christian churches, *positive*, or *moral?* If the former, they must have been furnished with an exact model or pattern, like that which was given to Moses in the mount, and have done all things according to it: but if the latter, they would only be furnished with *general principles*, comprehending, but not specifying, a great variety of particulars.

That the framing of the tabernacle was positive there can be no doubt; and that a part of the religion of the new testament is so, is equally evident. Concerning this the injunctions of the apostle are minute and very express. "Be ye followers (imitators) of me, as I also am of Christ.—In this I

* Preface to Bishop SANDERSON's Sermons, Sec. 23.

praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances* as I delivered them unto you.—For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."* But were we to attempt to draw up a formula of church government, worship, and discipline, which should include any thing more than *general outlines*, and to establish it upon express new testament authorities, we should attempt what is impracticable.

Doubtless the apostles acted under divine direction: but in things of a moral nature, that direction consisted not in providing them with a model or pattern, in the manner of that given to Moses, but in furnishing them with general principles, and enduing them with holy wisdom to apply them as occasions required.

We learn from the Acts and the Epistles, that the first churches were congregations of faithful men, voluntarily united together for the stated ministration of the word, the administration of christian ordinances, and the mutually assisting of each other in promoting the cause of Christ; that they were governed by bishops and deacons of their own choosing; that a bishop was an overseer, not of other ministers, but of the flock of God; that the government and discipline of each church was within itself; that the gifts of the different members were so employed, as to conduce to the welfare of the

* 1 Cor. xi. 1, 2, 23.

body; and that in cases of disorder, every proper mean was used to vindicate the honour of Christ, and reclaim the party.—These, and others which might be named, are what I mean by *general principles*. They are sometimes illustrated by the incidental occurrence of examples (and which in all *similar cases* are binding:) but it is not always so. That a variety of cases occur in our time, in which we have nothing more than general principles to direct us, is manifest to every person of experience and reflection. We know that churches were formed, officers chosen and ordained, and prayer and praise conducted with "the understanding," or so as to be understood by others: but in what particular manner they proceeded in each, we are not told. We have no account of the formation of a single church, no ordination service, nor any such thing as a formula of worship. We are taught to sing praises to God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but have no inspired tunes. We have accounts of the election of church-officers; but no mention of the mode of proceeding, or how they ascertained the mind of the church. If we look for express precept or example for the removal of a pastor from one situation to another, we shall find none. We are taught however, that for the church to grow unto an holy temple in the Lord, it requires to be "fitly framed together." The want of *fitness* in a connection therefore, especially if it impede the growth of the spiritual temple, may justify a removal.

Or if there be no want of fitness, yet if the material be adapted to occupy a more important station, a removal of it may be very proper. Such a principle may be misapplied to ambitious and interested purposes; but if the increase of the temple be kept in view, it is lawful, and in some cases attended with great and good effects.

This instance may suffice instead of a hundred, and serves to show, that the forms and orders of the new testament church, much more than of the old, are founded on the reason of things. They appear to be no more than what men possessed of the wisdom from above, would, as it were instinctively, or of their own accord, fall into, even though no specific directions should be given them.

That such were the principles on which the apostles proceeded, is manifest from their own *professions*, or from the *general precepts* which they addressed to the churches. These were as follows: —"Let all things be done *to edifying*.—Let all things be done *decently, and in order*.—Follow after the things that *make for peace*, and things wherewith *one may edify another*." Whatever measures had a tendency to build up the church of God, and individuals in their most holy faith, these they pursued. Whatever measures approved themselves to minds endued with holy wisdom as fit and lovely, and as tending, like good discipline in an army, to the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, these they followed, and inculcated on the churches. And however

worldly minds may have abused the principle, by introducing vain customs under the pretence of *decency*, it is that which, understood in its simple and original sense, must still be the test of good order and christian discipline.

The discipline of the primitive churches occupies no prominent place in their character. It is not that ostentatious thing, which, under the name of an "ordinance," has become of late a mere bone of contention. It was simply the carrying into effect the great principle of brotherly love, and the spirit with which it was exercised was that of long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and meekness.

The way in which the apostles *actually proceeded* in the forming and organizing of churches, corresponds with these statements. When a number of christians were assembled together in the days of Pentecost, they were the first christian church. But at first they had no deacons, and probably no pastors, except the apostles: and if the *reason* of things had not required it, they might have continued to have none. But in the course of things new service rose upon their hands, therefore they must have new servants* to perform it; for, said the apostles, "It is not *reason* that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables: wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of

* A DEACON, as well as a minister, means a SERVANT.

honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." In this proceeding we perceive nothing of the air of a ceremony, nothing like that of punctilious attention to forms, which marks obedience to a positive institute; but merely the conduct of men endued with the wisdom from above; servants appointed when service required it, and the number of the one proportioned to the quantity of the other. All things are done "decently and in order;" all things are done "to edifying."

In the course of things, the apostles, who had supplied the place of bishops or pastors, would be called to travel into other parts of the world, and then it is likely the church at Jerusalem would have a bishop or bishops of their own. As the number of deacons was regulated by the work to be done, so would it be by bishops, both in this and in other churches. A large church, where much service was to be done, required seven deacons; and where they abounded in numbers and spiritual gifts, there might be a plurality of pastors. With respect to us, where the *reason* of the thing exists, that is, where there are churches whose numbers require it, and whose ability admits of it,* it is still

* I say, *whose ability admits of it:* for there is equal proof from the new testament that they who "preach the gospel should live of the gospel," as there is of a plurality of elders. But the zeal for the latter has not always been accompanied by a zeal for the former. If the term elder must be understood to be not only a term of office, but of the pastoral office exclusively, and a plura-

proper: but for a small church to have more pastors than one, is as unnecessary as to have seven deacons. Such a rule must favour idleness, and confine useful ministers from extending their labours. To place two or three in a post which might be filled by one, must leave many other places unoccupied. Such a system is more adapted for show, than for promoting the kingdom of Christ.

It may serve to illustrate and simplify the subject, if we compare the conduct of the apostles with that of a company of *missionaries* in our own times. What indeed was an *apostle* but an inspired missionary? Allowing only for ordinary christian missionaries being uninspired, we shall see in their history all the leading characteristics of apostolic practice.

Conceive of a church, or of a society of christians out of a number of churches, or of "any two agreeing together," † as undertaking a mission among the heathen. One of the first things they would attend to would be, the selection of suitable

lity of them be required, why is not a plurality of them supported? The office of elder in those churches which are partial to this system, is little more than nominal: for while an elder is employed like other men in the necessary cares of life, he cannot ordinarily fulfil the duties of his office. "No man that warreth in this warfare, (unless it be in aid of a poor church) ought to entangle himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

† Matt. xviii. 19.

missionaries; next they would instruct them in the things necessary to their undertaking; and after this, send them forth to preach the gospel.—Such exactly was the process of our Lord toward his apostles. He first selected them; then, during his personal ministry, instructed them; and after his resurrection gave them their commission, with a rich effusion of the Holy Spirit to fit them for their undertaking.

The missionaries, on arriving at the place of action, would first unite in social prayer and fellowship; and this would be the first christian church. —Thus the apostles and those who adhered to them, first met in an upper room for prayer, preparatory to their attack on the kingdom of Satan; and this little band of "about an hundred and twenty," formed the first christian church: and when others were converted to Christ and joined them, they are said to be "added to the church."

Again, the first missionaries to a heathen country could not be chosen by those to whom they were sent, but by him or them who sent them; nor would their influence be confined to a single congregation, but, by a kind of parental authority, would extend to all the societies that might be raised by means of their labours. It would be different with succeeding pastors, who might be raised up from among the converts; they would of course be chosen by their brethren, and their authority be confined to them who elected them.—

Thus the apostles were not constituted such by the churches, but received their appointment immediately from Christ; nor was their authority limited to any particular church, but extended to all. In this they stand distinguished from ordinary pastors, who are elected by the churches, and whose authority is confined to the churches that elected them.

Again, The first missionaries to a heathen country would be employed in the *planting* of churches, wherever proper materials were found for the purpose; and if the work so increased upon their hands as to be too much for them, they would depute others, whom God should gift and qualify, *like-minded* with themselves, to assist them in it. Some one person at least of this description, would be present at the formation and organization of every church, to see to it that all things were done "decently and in order." And if there were any other churches in the neighbourhood, their elders and messengers would doubtless be present, and, to express their brotherly concurrence, would join in it.—Thus the apostles planted churches; and when elders were ordained, the people chose them, and they, by the solemn laying on of hands, invested them with the office:* and when the work increased upon their hands, they appointed such men as *Timothy* and *Titus* as *evangelists*, to "set things in order" in their stead.† In these ordina-

* Acts xiv. 23. † 2 Tim. ii. 2.—Tit. i. 5.

tions a Paul or a Titus would preside, but the other elders who were present would unite in brotherly concurrence, and in importuning a blessing on the parties—and hence there would be the "laying on of the hands of the presbytery" or elders.

I may add, though it does not immediately respect any question here at issue, If the first missionaries, and those appointed by them, planted churches, set them in order, and presided at the ordination of elders, *it was not because the same things would not have been* VALID if done by others, but because they would not have been DONE. Let but churches be planted, set in order, and scripturally organized, and whether it be by the missionaries or succeeding native pastors, all is good and acceptable to Christ.—And such, I conceive, is the state of things with respect to the apostles and succeeding ministers. The same things which were done by the apostles, were done by others appointed by them; and had they been done by elders whom they had *not* appointed, provided the will of Christ had been properly regarded, they would not have objected to their *validity*. This is certainly true in some particulars, and I see not why it should not in all. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus, "that he might charge some that they taught no other doctrine:" but if the Ephesian teachers had been themselves attached to the truth, neither Paul nor Timothy would

have been offended with them for having superseded their interference. He also left Titus in Crete, to "set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city;" but if the Cretians themselves had had sufficient wisdom and virtue to have regulated their own affairs by the word of God, I believe their order would not have been reckoned disorder. Had there been elders already ordained amongst them, competent to assist in the ordination of others, if we may judge from the general tenor of apostolic practice, instead of objecting to the validity of their proceedings, both Paul and Titus would, though absent in the flesh, have been with them in the spirit, "joying and beholding their order, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ."

The sum is, that church-government and discipline are not a body of ceremonies; but a few general principles and examples, sufficient for all practical purposes, but not sufficient to satisfy those, who in new testament directions expect to find an old testament ritual. It is not difficult to perceive the wisdom of God in thus varying the two dispensations. The Jewish church was an army of soldiers, who had to go through a variety of forms in learning their discipline: the christian church is an army going forth to battle. The members of the first were taught punctilious obedience, and led with great formality through a variety of religious evolutions: but those of the last, (though they also must

keep their ranks, and act in obedience to command whenever it is given, yet) are not required to be so attentive to the mechanical as to the mental, not so much to the minute observation of forms, as to the spirit and design of them. The order of the one would almost seem to be appointed for order's sake; but in that of the other the utility of every thing is apparent. The obedience of the former was that of children; the latter, of sons arrived at maturer age.

As our Saviour abolished the Jewish law of divorce, and reduced marriage to its original simplicity; so, having abolished the form and order of the church as appointed by Moses, he reduced it to what, as to its first principles, it was from the beginning, and to what must have corresponded with the desires of believers in every age. It was natural for "the sons of God," in the days of Seth, to assemble together, and "call upon the name of the Lord;" and their unnatural fellowship with unbelievers brought on the deluge. And even under the Jewish dispensation, wicked men, though descended from Abraham, were not considered as Israelites *indeed*, or *true* citizens of Zion. The friends of God were then the "companions of those that feared him." They "spake often one to another," and assembled for mutual edification. What then is gospel church-fellowship but godliness ramified, or the principle of holy love reduced to action? There is scarcely a precept on the subject of church

discipline, but what may in substance be found in the proverbs of Solomon.

It does not follow from hence, that all forms of worship and church government are indifferent, and left to be accommodated to times, places, and circumstances. The principles or general outlines of things are marked out, and we are not at liberty to deviate from them; nor are they to be filled up by worldly policy, but by a pure desire of carrying them into effect according to their true intent: to which may be added, that so far as they are exemplified in the new testament, it is our duty in similar cases to follow the example.

It does follow however, that scripture precedent, important as it is, is not binding on christians in things of a *moral nature*, unless the REASON of the thing be the same in both cases. Of this, proof has been offered in Letter IX. relative to the washing of the feet, the kiss of charity, &c. It also follows, that in attending to *positive institutions* neither express precept nor precedent is necessary, in what respects the *holy manner* of performing them, nor binding in regard of mere *accidental circumstances*, which do not properly belong to them. It required neither express precept nor precedent to make it the duty of the Corinthians, when meeting to celebrate the Lord's supper, to do it *soberly and in the fear of God*, nor to render the contrary a sin. There are also *circumstances*, which may on some occasions accompany a positive institution, and not on others;

which being therefore no part of it, are not binding. It is a fact, that the Lord's supper was first celebrated with *unleavened bread;* for no leaven was to be found at the time in all the Jewish habitations: but no mention being made, either in the institution, or in the repetition of it by the apostle, we conclude it was a mere accidental circumstance, no more belonging to the ordinance than its having been in "a large upper room." It is a fact too, that our Lord and his disciples sat *in a reclining posture* at the supper, after the manner of sitting at their ordinary meals; yet none imagine this to be binding upon us. It is also a fact with regard to the *time,* that our Saviour first sat down with his disciples, on the evening of the *fifth* day of the week, the "night in which he was betrayed;" but though that was a memorable night, and is mentioned by the apostle in connection with the supper, yet no one supposes it to be binding upon us; especially as we know it was afterwards celebrated on the first day of the week by the church at Troas.

Much has been advanced however in favour of the *first* day of the week, as the time for the celebration of the Lord's supper, exclusively, and of its being still binding on christians. A weekly communion might, for any thing we know, be the general practice of the first churches: and certainly there can be no objection to the thing itself; but to render it a term of communion, is laying bonds in things wherein Christ hath laid none. That

the supper was celebrated on the first day of the week by the church at Troas, is certain; that it was so *every* first day of the week, is possible, perhaps probable, but the passage does not *prove that it was so;* and still less, as Mr. Braidwood affirms, that "it can *only* be dispensed on that day."* The words of the institution are, "*As often* as ye eat," &c. without determining *how often*. Those who would make these terms so indeterminate as not to denote *frequency*, and consequently to be no rule at all as to time, do not sufficiently consider their force. The term "often," we all know, denotes frequency; and "*as* often," denotes the degree of that frequency; but every comparative supposes the positive. There can be no degree of frequency where frequency itself is not. It might as well be said that the words, "*How much* she hath glorified herself, *so much* torment give her," † conveys no idea of Babylon having glorified herself more than others, but merely of her punishment being proportioned to her pride, be it much or little.

The truth appears to be, that the Lord's supper ought to be frequently celebrated; but the exact time of it is a circumstance which does not belong to the ordinance itself.

Similar remarks might be made on *female* communion, a subject on which a great deal has been written of late years, in the baptismal controversy.

* Letters, p. 44. † Rev. xviii. 7.

Whether there be express precept or precedent for it, or not, is of no consequence: for the distinction of sex is a mere *circumstance* in no wise affecting the qualifications required, and therefore not belonging to the institution. It is of just as much account as whether a believer be a Jew or a Greek, a slave, or a free man; that is, it is of no account at all: "For there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; but all are one in Christ Jesus." Express precept or precedent might as well be demanded for the parties being tall or low, black or white, sickly or healthy, as for their being male or female.

To accommodate the spirit of new testament practice to the fluctuating manners and inclinations of men, is certainly what ought not to be: but neither can it be denied, that many of the apostolic practices were suited to the state of things at the time, and would not have been what they were if circumstances had been different. To instance in their proceedings on the *seventh* and *first* days of the week.—It is well known, that in preaching to the Jews and others who attended with them, they generally took the *seventh* day of the week:* the reason of which doubtless was, its being the day in which they were to be met with at their synagogues. Hence it is, that on the *first* day of the week so little is said of their preaching to unbeliev-

* Acts xiii. 42.—xviii. 4.—xvi. 13.

ers, and so much of the celebration of christian ordinances, which are represented as the specific object of their coming together.* But the same motive that induced the apostles to preach to unbelievers chiefly on the *seventh* day of the week, would, in our circumstances, have induced them to preach to them on the *first*, that being now the day on which they ordinarily assemble together. In countries where christianity has so far obtained, as for the legislature to respect the first day of the week as a day of rest, instead of having now and then an individual come into our assemblies, as the primitive churches had, and as churches raised in heathen countries must still have, we have multitudes who on that day are willing to hear the word. In such circumstances, the apostles would have preached both to believers and unbelievers, and administered christian ordinances, all on the same day. To frame our worship in things of this nature after apostolic example, without considering the reasons of their conduct, is to stumble in darkness, instead of walking as children of the light. Yet this is the kind of apostolic practice by which the churches have been teazed and divided, the great work of preaching the gospel to the ungodly neglected, and christianity reduced to litigious trifling.

If the practice of Christ and his apostles be in all cases binding upon christians, whether the reason of

* 1 Cor. xi. 20.—Acts xx. 7.

the thing be the same or not, why do they not eat the Lord's supper with unleavened bread, and in a reclining posture? And why do they not assemble together *merely* to celebrate this ordinance, and that on a Lord's day *evening?* From the accounts in 1 Cor. xi. 20. and Acts xx. 7. two things appear to be evident.—First, That the celebration of the Lord's supper was the *specific object* of the coming together, both of the church at Corinth, and of that at Troas. The former came together (professedly) "*to eat the Lord's supper;*" the latter are said to have "come together *to break bread.*" Secondly, That it was on the *evening* of the day. This is manifest, not only from its being called the Lord's *supper,* but from the Corinthians making it their *own supper,* and from its being followed at Troas by a sermon from Paul, which required "lights," and continued till "midnight."

I do not mean to say, that the church at either Corinth or Troas had no other worship during the first day of the week than this; but that this was attended to as a distinct object of assembling, and after the other was over.

It may be thought, that these were mere *accidental circumstances,* and therefore not binding upon us. It does not appear to me, however, that we are at liberty to turn the Lord's supper into a breakfast. But if we be, and chuse to do so, let us not pretend to a punctilious imitation of the first churches.

It is well known to be a peculiarity in Sandemanian societies, not to determine any question by a *majority*. They, like the first churches, must be *of one mind;* and if there be any dissentients who cannot be convinced, they are excluded. Perfect unanimity is certainly desirable, not only in the great principles of the gospel, but in questions of discipline, and even in the choice of officers; but how if this be unattainable? The question is, whether it be more consistent with the spirit and practice of the new testament, for the greater part of the church to forbear with the less, or, Diotrephes-like, to cast them out of the church; and this for having, according to the best of their judgments, acted up to the scriptural directions? One of these modes of proceeding must of necessity be pursued; for there is no middle course; and if we loved one another with genuine christian affection, we could not be at a loss which to prefer. The new testament speaks of an election of seven deacons, but says nothing on the mode of its being conducted. Now considering the number of members in the church at Jerusalem, unless they were directed in their choice by inspiration, which there is no reason to think they were, it is more than a thousand to one that those seven persons, who were chosen, were not the persons whom every individual member first proposed. What then can we suppose them to have done? They might discuss the subject till they became of one mind; or,

which is much more likely, the lesser number, perceiving the general wish, and considering that their brethren had understanding as well as they, might peaceably give up their own opinions to the greater, "submitting one to another in the fear of God." But supposing a hundred of the members had said as follows:—'Without reflecting on any who have been named, we think two or three other brethren more answerable to the qualifications required by the apostles, than some of them: but, having said this, we are willing to acquiesce in the general voice.'—Should they or would they have been excluded for this? Assuredly the exclusions of the new testament were for very different causes!

The statements of the society in St. Martins-le-Grand on this subject, are sophistical, self-contradictory, and blasphemous. "Nothing (say they) is decided by the vote of the *majority*. In some cases, indeed, there are dissenting voices. The reasons of the dissent are thereupon proposed and considered. *If they are scriptural*, the whole church has cause to change its opinion; *if not*, and the person persists in his opposition to *the word of God*, the church is bound to reject him." But who is to judge, whether the reasons of the dissentients be scriptural or not? the *majority* no doubt, and an opposition to their opinion is an opposition to *the word of God!*

Humility and love will do great things toward unanimity; but this forced unanimity is the highest refinement of spiritual tyranny. It is a being compelled to believe as the church believes, and that not only on subjects clearly revealed, and of great importance; but in matters of mere opinion, in which the most upright minds may differ, and to which no standard can apply. What can he, who "exalteth himself above all that is called God," do more, than set up his decisions as *the word of God*, and require men on pain of excommunication to receive them?

Yours, &c.

LETTER XI.

OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

My dear Friend,

You are aware, that the admirers of Messrs. Glass and Sandeman generally value themselves on their "clear views of the gospel, and of the nature of Christ's kingdom;" and I doubt not but they have written things concerning both, which deserve attention. It appears to me however, that they have done much more in detecting error than in advancing truth; and that their writings on the kingdom of Christ relate more to what it is not, than to what it is. Taking up the sentence of our Lord, "My kingdom is not of this world," they have said much, and much to purpose, against worldly establishments of religion, with their unscriptural appendages; but, after all, have they shown what the kingdom of Christ *is;* and does their religion, taken as a whole, exemplify it in its genuine sim-

plicity? If writing and talking about "simple truth" would do it, they would not be wanting: but it will not. Is there not as much of a worldly spirit in their religion as in that which they explode, only that it is of a different species? Nay, is there not a greater defect in what relates to "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," amongst them, than will often be found in what they denominate Babylon itself?

A clear view of the nature of Christ's kingdom, would hardly be supposed to overlook the Apostle's account of it. The kingdom of God, he says, is "not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." * From this statement, we should expect to find the *essence* of it placed in things moral, rather than in things ceremonial; in things clearly revealed, rather than in matters of doubtful disputation; and in things of prime importance, rather than in those of but comparatively small account. We certainly should not expect to see the old error of the Pharisees revived, that of "tithing mint and rue, to the neglect of judgment, mercy, and the love of God."

We should also expect the most eminent *subjects* of this kingdom would be men, who, while they conscientiously attend to the positive institutions of Christ, abhor the thought of making them a substitute for sobriety, righteousness, and godli-

* Rom. xiv. 17.

ness; men who need not a special precept for every duty: but, drinking deeply into the law of love, are ready, like the father of the faithful, to obey all its dictates.

And as the kingdom of God consists in *peace*, we should expect its most eminent subjects to be distinguished by that dove-like spirit, which seeks the things which make for peace. They may indeed be called upon to contend for the faith, and that earnestly; but contention will not be their element; nor will their time be chiefly occupied in conversing on the errors, absurdities, and faults of others. Considering *bitter zeal and strife in the heart* as belonging to the wisdom that descendeth not from above, but which is earthly, sensual, and devilish,* they are concerned to lay aside every thing of the kind, and to cherish the spirit of a new-born babe.

Finally, The *joys* which they possess in having heard and believed the good news of salvation, may be expected to render them dead to those of the world; so much so at least, that they will have no need to repair to the diversions of the theatre, or other carnal pastimes, in order to be happy; nor will they dream of such methods of asserting their christian liberty, and opposing pharisaism.

Whether these marks of Christ's subjects be eminently conspicuous among the people alluded

* James iii. 14, 15.

to, those who are best acquainted with them are able to determine; but so far as appears from their writings, whatever excellencies distinguish them, they do not consist in things of this nature.

It is remarkable, that the Apostle, after representing the kingdom of God as being "not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," adds, "for he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."* This not only shows what the prominent features of Christ's kingdom are, but affords a striking contrast to the kingdom contended for by Sandemanians; which, instead of recommending itself to both God and man, would seem rather to have been copied from the religion of that people, who "pleased not God, and were contrary to all men."

The substitution of forms and ceremonies for the love of God and man, is one of the many ways in which depravity has been wont to operate. What else is paganism, apostate judaism, popery, and many other things which pass for religion? And whether the same principle does not pervade the system in question, and even constitute one of its leading features, let the impartial observer judge. If it does not place the kingdom of God in meat

* Rom. xiv. 18, 19.

and drink, it places it in things analogous to them, rather than in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

It is true, the forms contended for in this case are not the same as in many others, being such only as are thought to be enjoined in the scriptures. That many of them arise from a misunderstanding of the scriptures, I have endeavoured to show in a former letter; but, whether it be so, or not, if an improper stress be laid upon them, they may be as injurious as though they were not scriptural. When the brazen serpent became an idol, it was as pernicious as other idols. The tithing of herbs, though in itself right, yet being done to the neglect of "weightier matters," became the very characteristic of hypocrisy.

It has been said, that obedience to the least of God's commands cannot be unfriendly to obedience to the greatest; and if it be genuine, it cannot; but to deny the possibility of the great things of God's law being set aside by a fondness for little things, is to deny the fact just referred to, and discovers but a slender acquaintance with the human heart; which certainly can burn in zeal for a ceremony, when, as to the love of God and man, it is as cold as death.

If the nature of Christ's kingdom were placed in those things in which the Apostle places it, the government and discipline of the church would be considered as *means* and not as *ends*. The design

of order and discipline in an army is to enable it to encounter the enemy to advantage; and such was the order and discipline of the primitive churches. It was still, peaceable, and affectionate; without parade, and without disputes. It consisted in all things being done to edifying, and in such an arrangement of energies, as that every gift should be employed to the best advantage in building up the church, and attacking the kingdom of Satan. But is this the order and discipline of which so much has of late been written? Surely not! From the days of GLASS and SANDEMAN until now, it does not appear to have been their *object* to convert men to Christ from amongst the ungodly, but to make proselytes of other christians. And is this to understand the true nature of Christ's kingdom? If there were not another fact, this alone is sufficient to prove that their religion, though it may contain a portion of truth, and though godly men may have been misled by it, yet, taken as a whole, is not of God. There is not a surer mark of false religion, than its tendency and aim being to make proselytes to ourselves, rather than converts to Christ.*

That there is neither tendency in the system, nor aim in those who enter fully into it, to promote the kingdom of Christ, is manifest, and easily accounted for. They neither expect, nor, as it would seem,

* Acts xx. 30.

desire its progress; but even look with a jealous eye on all opinions and efforts in favour of its enlargement; as though, should it be greatly extended, it must needs be a kingdom of this world! This I am aware is a serious charge: but it does not originate with me. Mr. BRAIDWOOD, of Edinburgh, who must be allowed to have the best opportunities of knowing the system and its adherents, and who cannot be supposed to write under the influence of prejudice, seeing he acknowledges he has "learned many things from the ancient writings of this class of professing christians, in relation to the simple doctrine of the gospel, and the nature of Christ's kingdom:"—Mr. BRAIDWOOD, I say, writes as follows:—"I feel it incumbent on me to warn the disciples of Jesus against that state of mind, which makes them slow to believe the prophecies relating to the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom."—"It is remarkable that some gentile christians now show a disposition toward the Jews, similar to that, which, in the apostolic age, the Jews manifested toward the gentiles, namely, *a dislike to their salvation!* It is truly mortifying to reflect, that the greater number of those who indulge this state of mind, are persons much instructed in the knowledge of the gospel, and of the things concerning the kingdom of God. They call it a *Jewish notion*, to expect an extensive influence of the word of God among all nations. The very opposite is the fact; for the apostle Paul, describing his country-

men, says, *They please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak unto the gentiles that they might be saved.* And even *believing* Jews were not very willing to acknowledge the first gentile converts, and were surprised when they heard that God had also granted to the gentiles repentance unto life. But the Apostle thus describes the spirit by which he regulated his own conduct; *I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

"The freeness of divine grace, its sovereignty, its opposition to the most darling inclinations of the human heart, the spiritual and heavenly nature of Christ's kingdom—all these have been used as arguments against the conversion of the Jews, or any signal prosperity of the gospel among the gentiles! And they whose heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, and for the nations, is, that they may be saved, are accused of ignorance of the gospel, and of wishing to see a corrupt faith prevail, especially if they dare to express a hope that their prayers will be answered!"

It would seem from hence to be the interest of this class of professing christians, that the world and the church should continue what they are. They glory in the latter being few in number: if therefore any considerable part of mankind were to embrace even what they account the truth, they would have nothing left, in comparison, whereof to glory!

Mr. BRAIDWOOD addresses the party on whom he animadverts as follows:—"Will the purest and simplest views that can be entertained of the truth concerning Jesus, have any tendency to make us less concerned about the salvation of men, and more anxious to darken the things revealed in the scriptures, concerning the success of the gospel among all nations? No, my friend, let us beware of imputing to the gospel a state of mind which so ill accords with its genuine influence, and which can only arise from *prejudice, and from mistaken views of the Messiah's kingdom.* That glorious kingdom, instead of dying away, as some have supposed, like an expiring lamp, before the advent of its eternal king, shall break in pieces and *consume all opposing kingdoms, and shall stand for ever,* although its own subjects, acting consistently, use no carnal weapons." *

The writer to whom these excellent remarks are addressed, signs himself *Palæmon.* I know not who he is; but as the signature is the same as that affixed to Mr. SANDEMAN'S *Letters on Theron and Aspasio,* I conclude he is, and wishes to be thought, a Sandemanian. Mr. BRAIDWOOD calls him his "friend," and speaks of his being "mortified" by these his erroneous sentiments, as though he had a feeling for Palæmon's general creed, or that "instruction in the knowledge of the gospel, and of

* Letters on a variety of Subjects, pp. 28, 30.

the things concerning the kingdom of God," which he and others had received. For my part, without deciding upon the state of individuals, I am persuaded that these people, with all their professions of "clear views," "simple truth," and "simple belief," have imbibed a corrupt and dangerous system of doctrine.

Palæmon, whoever he is, would do well to *examine himself whether he be in the faith;* and were I in Mr. BRAIDWOOD's place, I should feel it to be my duty to re-examine what I had "learned from the ancient writings of this class of professing christians, relative to the simple doctrine of the gospel, and the nature of Christ's kingdom;" and to ask myself, what I had asked my friend, *Whether that* CAN *be pure and simple truth, which is productive of such effects?*

Yours, &c.

LETTER XII.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SYSTEM COMPARED WITH THAT OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

My dear Friend,

You are aware that doctrines, whether true or false, if really believed, become principles of action. They are a mould into which the mind is cast, and from which it receives its impression. An observant eye will easily perceive a *spirit* which attends different religions, and different systems of the same religion; which, over and above the diversities arising from natural temper, will manifest itself in their respective adherents. Paganism, mahometism, deism, apostate judaism, and various systems which have appeared under the name of christianity, have each discovered a spirit of their own; and so has christianity itself. Thus it was from the beginning: those who received "another doctrine," received with it "another spirit;" and hence we are told of "the spirit of truth, and the

spirit of error:" he that had the one was said to be "of God," and he that had the other "not of God." *

I hope it will be understood, that in what I write on this subject there is no reference to individuals, nor any wish to judge men indiscriminately by the names under which they pass, nor any desire to charge the evils which may belong to the system, on all who have discovered a partiality in its favour, or who have defended particular parts of it. I shall only take a brief review of the spirit which is of God, and compare that of Mr. SANDEMAN, and the generality of his admirers, with it.

First, The spirit of primitive christianity was full of the *devout and the affectionate.* Of this there needs little to be said in a way of proof, as the thing is evident to any one who is acquainted with the Bible. The psalms of David are full of it; and so is the new testament. Primitive christianity was the religion of *love.* It breathed grace, mercy, and peace, on all that loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Among such it would not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoaking flax. Its faithfulness was tempered with brotherly kindness. It had compassion for the ignorant, and them that were out of the way; and while siding with God against the wicked, it wept over them, and was willing to do or suffer any thing, if by any

* 2 Cor. xi. 4.—1 John iv. 6.

means it might save some of them. But is this Sandemanianism? You will scarcely meet with *terms* expressive of devotion or affection, in any of its productions, unless it be to hold them up to ridicule. It appears to be at war with all devotion and devout men. Its most indignant opposition and bitterest invectives are reserved for them. Its advocates would have you think indeed, that it is *blind* devotion, like that of the Pharisees, at which they sneer: but where are we to look for that which is *not* so, and with which they are *not* at war? Is it to be found out of their own connections? Every thing there which has the appearance of religion, is pharisaism. It must therefore be amongst themselves, if any where. But if the spirit of *love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, &c.* prevail in their assemblies, it is singular that the same spirit should not appear in their writings. Who that has read them will say, that their general tendency is to promote the love of either God or man? Toward worldly men indeed, who make no pretence to religion, the system seems to bear a friendly aspect: but it discovers no concern for *their* salvation. It would seem to have no tears to shed over a perishing world; and even looks with a jealous eye on those that have, glorying in the paucity of its numbers!

Whether the advocates of this system perceive the discordance between their own spirit and that of David, or whatever is the reason, it is common for

them to apply to Christ a great deal of what he manifestly wrote of his own devout feelings. Christ, it seems, might be the subject of devotion, without any danger of self-righteous pride; but we cannot, and therefore must have little or nothing to do with it.

It is amongst people of this description that religious *feelings* and *affections* are ordinarily traduced. There are, no doubt, many enthusiastic feelings, which have no true religion in them. There is such a thing too as to make a saviour of them, as well as of our duties. But we must not on this account exclude the one, any more than the other. President EDWARDS, in his *Treatise on Religious Affections*, has proved beyond all reasonable contradiction, that the essence of true religion lies in them. In reading that work, and Mr. SANDEMAN'S *Letters*, we may see many of the same things exposed as enthusiastic: but the one is an oil that breaketh not the head; the other an effusion of pride and bitterness. The first, while rejecting what is naught, retains the savour of pure, humble, and holy religion: but the last, is as one who should propose to remove the disorders of the head by means of a guillotine.

It has been observed, that every religion, which, instead of arising from love to the truth, has its origin in *dislike* or *opposition*, even though it be to error, will come to nothing. You may sometimes see the principal inhabitants of a village fall out with the clergyman, perhaps on account of some

difference on the subject of tythes, and proceed to build a place for dissenting worship: also dissenting congregations themselves will sometimes divide from mere antipathy to the preacher, or from offence taken at some of the people: but did you ever know such undertakings productive of much good? When we adhere to a system of religion from opposition to something else, we do not so much regard it for what it *is*, as for what it is *not*. Whatever good therefore there may be in it, it will do us no good, and we shall go on waxing worse and worse. It is remarkable, that the SADDUCEES, according to PRIDEAUX, professed, at their outset, *the strictest adherence to the written word, utterly renouncing the traditions of the elders, which the Pharisees had agreed to hold.* In a little time however they rejected a great part of the word itself, and its most important doctrines, such as the resurrection and a future life. This was no more than might have been expected; for the origin of the system was not *attachment* to the word, but *dislike* to the Pharisees.

How far these remarks apply to the religion in question, let those who are best acquainted with it judge. It doubtless contains some important truth, as did Sadduceanism at its outset; but the spirit which pervades it, must render it doubtful whether this be held for its own sake, so much as from *opposition* to other principles. If truth be loved for its own sake, it will occupy our minds irrespective of the errors which are opposed to it, and whether they exist, or

not. But by the strain of writing and conversation which prevail in this connection, it would seem as if the supposed absurdities of others were the life of their religion, and that if they were once to cease, their zeal would expire with them. It is the vulture, and not the dove, that is apparent in all their writings. Who will say that Mr. SANDEMAN sought the good of his opponents, when all through his publications, he took every opportunity to hold them up to contempt; and with evident marks of pleasure to describe them and their friends as walking in *a devout path to hell?* The same is manifestly the spirit of his followers, though they may not possess his sarcastic talents. But are these the weapons of the christian warfare? Supposing FLAVEL, BOSTON, the ERSKINES, &c. to have been bad men, was this the way to deal with them? Is there no medium between flattery and malignity?

Mr. SANDEMAN would persuade us, that Paul was of his "temper."* Paul was certainly in earnest, and resisted error wherever he found it. He does not treat those however, who build on a right foundation, though it be a portion of what will be ultimately consumed, as enemies to the truth.† And in his conduct, even to the enemies of Christ, I recollect no sarcastic sneers, tending to draw upon them the contempt of mankind, but every thing calculated to do them good. If however it were not

* Epis. Cor. p. 9. † 1 Cor. iii. 11—15.

so, he must have practised differently from what he wrote. "The servant of the Lord," he says in his epistle to Timothy, "must not *strive* (as for mastery); but be *gentle* unto all men; in *meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves: if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Paul would have instructed and intreated those whom Mr. SANDEMAN scorned.

There is a *calmness*, I acknowledge, in the advocates of this doctrine, which distinguishes their writings from the low and fulsome productions of the English antinomians. But calmness is not always opposed to bitterness: on the contrary, it may be studied for the very purpose of concealing it. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his sayings were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords."

The only thing that I know of which has the appearance of love, is, that attachment which they have to one another, and which they consider as *love for the truth's sake.* But even here there are things which I am not able to reconcile.—Love for the truth's sake unites the heart to every one *in proportion as he appears to embrace it:* but the nearer you approach to these people, provided you follow not with them, so much the more bitter are their invectives.—Again, Love for the truth's sake takes into consideration its practical effects. It was truth *embodied* in the spirit and life, that excited

the attachment of the apostle John. "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children *walking in the truth.*" * But that which excites their love seems to be the "clear views," which they conceive their friends to entertain above other professing christians.—Once more, Love, be it for the sake of what it may, will so unite us to one another, as to render separation painful, and lead to the use of all possible means of preventing it. But such is the discipline of those who drink into these principles, that they can separate men from their communion in considerable numbers, for differences which others would consider as objects of forbearance, with little or no apparent concern. I can reconcile such things with self-love; but not with *love for the truth's sake.*

Secondly, The spirit of primitive christianity was a spirit of *meekness and humility.* Of this Christ himself was the great pattern; and they that would be his disciples, must "learn of him who was meek and lowly of heart." They were unbelievers, and not christians, who *trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* He that would be wise, was required to become a fool, that he might be wise. The apostle Paul, notwithstanding his high attainments in the knowledge of Christ, reckoned himself as knowing nothing comparatively, desiring above all things *that "he might know him,* and

* 2 John iv.

the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable unto his death." If any man *thought that he knew any thing*, he declared that he knew nothing yet as he ought to know. But is this the spirit of the system in question? One of the first things that presents itself, is a pretence to something very nearly akin to infallibility; an imposing air in all its decisions, tending to bear down timid spirits, especially as the sincerity, and consequently the christianity, of the party is suspended upon his entirely yielding himself up to it.

If it be necessary to become fools that we may be wise, how are we to account for those "clear views of the gospel," of which these people boast? They have given abundant proof, that they account *others* fools who do not see with them; and they may account *themselves* to have been such, till they imbibed their present principles: but if any symptoms have appeared of their being fools in their own eyes *from that time forward*, they have escaped my observation. Instead of a self-diffident spirit, which treats with respect the understanding of others, and implores divine direction, no sooner have these principles taken possession of a man, than they not only render him certain that he is in the right, but instantly qualify him to pronounce on those who follow not with him, as destitute of the truth.

We may be told however, that there is one species of pride, at least, of which the system cannot be sus-

pected, namely, that of *self-righteousness;* seeing it is that against which its abettors are constantly declaiming. But he that would know the truth must not take up with mere professions. If a self-righteous spirit consist in *trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others;* I see not how they are to be acquitted of it. A self-righteous spirit, and its opposite, will be allowed to be drawn with sufficient prominency in the parable of the pharisee and the publican. The question is, which of these characters is exemplified, by those who enter fully into the Sandemanian system? Is it the publican? Look at it: I am aware that he is the favourite of the party, and so he is of other parties; for you never heard of any who were the professed advocates of the pharisee; but are they of the *spirit* of the publican? Rather, are they not manifestly of the spirit of the pharisee, who looked down with scorn upon his fellow worshipper?

Mr. Braidwood, referring to a late publication by one of this class of professing christians, who calls himself *Simplex*, writes as follows:—"The work referred to seems intended chiefly to show how much *Simplex*, and they who agree with him, *despise others*, and how far they *alone* are from *trusting to themselves that they are righteous.* This their apparent inconsistency, their confident assertions when no proof is given, their unfeeling and indiscriminate censures, which therefore cannot be always just, and their fearless anathemas against all

who follow not with them, prevent them from obtaining a hearing, not only from those whom they might be warranted to consider as false professors, but from disciples of Christ, who need to be taught the way of God more perfectly. And in this also they glory!

"If they would suffer an exhortation from a fellow sinner, I would entreat them to recollect, that the pharisee praying in the temple, disdained the publican, while the publican disdained no man, and had nothing to say except what regarded himself and THE MOST HIGH.—*God be merciful to me a sinner.* They will never successfully combat self-righteousness, till they themselves become *poor and of a contrite spirit.* The most effectual way to condemn pride, is to give an *example* of humility.

"Self-abasement corresponds with the humbling doctrine of Christ crucified: while the indulgence of an opposite spirit, in connection with clear views of the freedom and sovereignty of divine grace, presents a most unnatural and unedifying object—the publican turning the chase upon the pharisee, and combating him with his own weapons! Nay, he who professes to account himself the chief of sinners, having once begun to imitate an example so repugnant to the genuine influence of the doctrine for which he contends, now proceeds to attack all who come in his way—self-condemned publicans, not entirely of his own mind, as well as proud pharisees, avowing their impious claims upon the

Divine Being. May we not ask, *Who art thou that judgest?*" *

As to Mr. BRAIDWOOD's allowing them to possess "clear views of the freedom and sovereignty of divine grace," I do not understand how such views can accompany, and still less produce, such a spirit as he has described; but with regard to the spirit itself, it is manifestly drawn from life, and is of greater effect than if he had written a volume on the subject.—Whether his observations do not equally apply to that *marked separation* of church-members from others in public worship, said to be practised of late in Ireland, and to which he refers in page 32, let those who have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, judge.

Lastly, The spirit of primitive christianity was *catholic and pacific*. Its language is, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.—As many as walk by this rule, (that is, the cross of Christ,) peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.—All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both their's and our's, Grace be unto them, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

There were cases, in which the apostles and first christians were obliged to withdraw even from *brethren* who walked disorderly; but this would give

* Letters on various Subjects, &c. Introduction.

them pain. And if the disordered state of the christian world at present, render it necessary for some of the friends of Christ to withdraw from others, it must needs, to a truly good man, be a matter of deep regret. It will be his concern too, to diminish the breach rather than widen it; and to consider the things wherein he agrees with others, and, as far as he conscientiously can, to act with them. If we see a person, or a community, who, instead of such regret, is generally employed in censuring all who follow not with them, as enemies to the truth; and, instead of acting with them in things wherein they are agreed, are studious to render the separation as wide as possible, and glory in it—can we hesitate to say, this is not christianity?

There is a zeal which may properly be denominated *catholic*, and one which may as properly be denominated *sectarian*. It is not supposed that any man, or body of men, can be *equally* concerned in promoting Christ's interest in all places. As our powers are limited, we must each build the wall, as it were, over against our own houses. Nor are we obliged to be *equally* concerned for the prosperity of all religious undertakings, in which the parties may be, in the main, on the side of Christ. It is right that we should be most interested in that, which approaches the nearest to truth and true religion. But true catholic zeal will, nevertheless, have the good of the universal Church of Christ for its grand object, and will rejoice in the prosperity

of every denomination of christians, *in so far* as they appear to have the mind of Christ. Those who builded the wall against their own houses, would not consider themselves as the only builders, but would bear good will to their brethren, and keep in view the rearing of the *whole wall*, which should encompass the city. As it is not our being of the religion of Rome, nor of any other which happens to be favoured by the state, that determines our zeal to be catholic; so, it is not our being of a sect, or party of christians, or endeavouring with christian meekness and frankness to convince others of what we account the mind of Christ, that gives it the character of sectarian. It is *a being more concerned to propagate those things wherein we differ from other christians, than to impart the common salvation.* Where this is the case, we shall so limit the kingdom of heaven to ourselves, as nearly to confine our good wishes, prayers, and efforts, to our own denomination, and treat all others as if we had nothing to do with them in religious matters, but in a way of censure and dispute. Wherein this kind of zeal differs from that of the Pharisees, that compassed sea and land to make proselytes, but who, when made, were turned to them rather than to God, I cannot understand.

It is remarkable, that notwithstanding all which has been written by the advocates of this system about a free gospel to the ungodly, they do not seem to have much to do in labouring for the con-

version of men of this description. Their principal attention, like that of the Socinians, seems directed toward religious people of other denominations, and from them their forces have been mostly recruited. This may not have been universally the case, but, from every thing that I have seen and heard, it is very generally so: and if this do not betray a zeal more directed to the making of proselytes to themselves, than of converts to Christ, it will be difficult to determine what does.

The zeal of the apostles was directed to the correction of evils, the healing of differences, and the uniting of the friends of Jesus Christ: but the zeal produced by this system appears to be of a contrary tendency. Wherever it most prevails, we hear of most bitterness, contention, and division.

It may be said, this is no more than was true of the gospel itself, which set a man at variance with his father, his mother, and his nearest friends;* and relates not to what it *causes*, but what it *occasions* through the corruptions of men. The words of our Lord, however, do not describe the bitterness of believers against unbelievers, but of unbelievers against believers, who, as Cain hated his brother, hate them for the gospel's sake.

It has been said, that "the poignancy of Mr. SANDEMAN's words arises from their being true." The same might be said, and with equal justice, of

* Matt. x. 34—36.

any other "bitter words," for which men of contemptuous spirits know how to "whet their tongues." If the doctrine which Mr. SANDEMAN taught were true, it would do good to them that believed it. It certainly produces its own likeness in them; but what is it? Is it not "trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others?" Is it not descrying the mote in a brother's eye, while blinded to the beam in their own?

There is a very interesting description given in the epistle of James, of two opposite kinds of *wisdom*. The first is represented as coming "from above;" the last as "coming *not* from above," but as being "earthly, sensual, and devilish:" that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; this works "bitter zeal, and strife in the heart:" "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, and in making peace," by the one: but by the other is produced "confusion, and every evil work." Yet these last are supposed to "glory;" but in glorying they "lie against the truth."* Without wishing to ascribe either to bodies of people indiscriminately, there is enough said to enable us to form a judgment of *things* by the effects which they produce.

To conclude.—It is no part of my design to vindicate or apologize for the errors of other denomi-

* James iii. 13—18.

nations. The christian church is not what it was at the beginning; and though every body of christians are not equally corrupt, yet none is so pure, but that if its character were reported by the great Head of the church, he would have "somewhat against" it. But whatever errors or evils may be found in any of us, it is not this species of reform, even if it were universally to prevail, that would correct them. On the contrary, if we may judge from its effects during the last fifty years, it would lead the christian world, if not to downright infidelity, yet to something that comes but very little short of it.

I am

Your affectionate

Friend and Brother,

ANDREW FULLER.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 32—line 17. for *maintaining* read *maintain.*
——178———15. for *ritual* read *a ritual.*