

REMARKS
ON A TREATISE,
ENTITLED,
THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION
OR,
THE OBLIGATIONS OF MEN FULLY TO CREDIT, AND
CORDIALLY
TO APPROVE WHATEVER GOD MAKES KNOWN.
BY ANDREW FULLER.

WHEREIN
THE NATURE OF SPECIAL FAITH IN CHRIST IS CONSIDERED,
AND SEVERAL OF MR. F'S MISTAKES POINTED OUT:
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

BY WILLIAM BUTTON.

EPH. 2:8, *BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND
THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES: IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.*

GAL. 3:12, *THE LAW IS NOT OF FAITH.*

TITUS 1:1, *ACCORDING TO THE FAITH OF GOD'S ELECT.*

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PREFACE.

Mr. Thomas Goodwin, in his address to the reader, annexed to his discourse on the true nature of the gospel, observes, "It concerns every minister of the gospel to put a stop to any opinion which hath the least tendency to Arminianism. We are not as idle spectators, to stand by with patience to see the truths of the gospel either openly invaded, or secretly supplanted, but as long as we are able to frame a thought, or hold a pen, it is our duty to make a vigorous opposition." This consideration, together with the pressing solicitations of some intimate friends, have been the occasion of these letters being presented to the public.

That Mr. Fuller's sentiments, which lead to *general* calls, invitations, and exhortations, have led some aside from the truth, is what he himself seems tacitly to acknowledge, when he says, "It ought to be confessed too, that too many of those who have dealt in addresses to unregenerate sinners, have sadly neglected the very spirit and glory of the gospel. In such addresses perhaps it has been too common likewise to go aside from the scriptural intent of them, and to dabble in Arminianism" (p. 167). Now I wish ever to hold, vindicate and propagate, that which has not the least tendency to lead persons astray from the spirit and glory of the gospel, and which has the greatest tendency to carry entirely off from Arminianism, yea, even from so much as dabbling in it.

I am sorry to find what is advanced in Mr. F.'s treatise seems to gain so much ground, as it appears to me to be opposite to scripture and experience, and tends to overthrow the distinguishing and glorious doctrines of the gospel, which he himself expresses a regard for. Yet I wonder not at its prevailing, as it is exceedingly pleasing to human nature to be informed of its dignity, and very gratifying to proud man to be told he *can* believe if he *will*, for "the cannot consists in a will not," says Mr. F. (p. 71). It is too humbling, too degrading to tell a sinner, he has neither *will* nor *power* to believe. Those who maintain his *natural ability* will be sure to please the ear of men in general, and so gain what is much sought after in the present day, *Popularity*.

I understand it has been said by some strenuous advocates for Mr. F. and his sentiments, that his book is unanswerable. To such I expect to appear contemptible, but that I must bear as well as I can. Whether I have answered it or not, I cannot be of their opinion. I think Mr. F.'s doctrine has been confuted long ago by Brine, Wayman, and others who have written directly on the subject. And I think there are persons even in this day of error, who, did they think it worth their while, could easily set aside Mr. F.'s reasoning, specious as it may appear to many. If I have not *answered*, I still am satisfied that I have *attempted* to answer. If I am not able (and I freely confess I am not) to defend the truth as it deserves to be defended, and as

many others are able to defend it, yet I think it my duty to do it as well as I can, and am encouraged from this consideration that, “if there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”

There are those who, warmly espousing Mr. F.’s cause, have been pleased to say, they hope his book will cure some of their *Gillism* and *Brinism*. To such I beg leave to say, I am ashamed of their contemptuous manner of speaking of those great and good men, *Gill*, and *Brine*, whose characters and works ought ever to be revered and esteemed by all who call themselves Christians. Great and mighty men in Israel fell when they fell; and few, very few, of their piety, eminency and usefulness are left behind. They were set for the defence of the gospel, and they defended it well. Yes, God made each of them “*a defenced city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall,*” against the adversaries of truth; and they stood firm to the last. O that thousands more were raised up like them. I trust there are some yet remaining, who are too bad of the disease of *Gillism* and *Brinism* (if it be a disease) to be cured; and I wish the persons alluded to may live and die as worthy of those men whose gospel principles they seem to despise.

The Critic’s censure I expect not to escape, and indeed I am sensible my performance will not bear the Critic’s eye. All I can say on this head is, I wrote not even with an attempt to please him. My view is, I hope, the glory of God, the exalting the riches of free grace in the sinner’s salvation, and the establishing plain Christians in the truth. I have therefore only given a plain scriptural account of things, and have contented myself with appealing to common sense, without much reasoning on the subjects treated of. And have, in order to confirm my ideas, made use of a variety of quotations from different authors well known by Christians in common. It may perhaps be thought there are too many of these: but in this I have only trodden in the footsteps of Mr. F. himself, who takes up several pages in citations from the works of others. I meant therefore, lest any should think I stood alone, to shew that I have as great and good human authorities on my side as he has on his. Though after all, the Bible alone I wish to make the rule of my faith and practice. I would call no man—Master on earth, but acknowledge one master even Christ.

I hope the reader will not have reason to find fault with the spirit and temper in which these letters are written. I have endeavoured to write calmly and coolly, without warmth and heat, though I confess I found myself considerably hurt at some insinuations thrown out by Mr. F. against those who differ from him, and at his representing to the world, those consequences as following their doctrine which do not follow; what I refer to, the reader will find noticed hereafter.

The whole I desire to leave in the hands of God, intreating (if it be his pleasure) a blessing may accompany it, that it may answer the purposes designed.

And should the candid reader on the perusal receive any profit, let him give the glory to God, to whom it will be alone due.

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Page 4 line 2 *for* are his words, *read* are nearly his words
P 22 l 20 dele purposely. Line 25 for “does” read “do”
P 24 l 10 from the bottom *for* truth read “trust”
P 25 penult. For “dictates” read “dictate”
P 64 l 8 for “love” read “loved.”
And other mistakes are left to the reader’s candor.

Letter I.

Dear Sir,

The Treatise you mentioned in a late conversation, I have since seen. It is intitled “The Gospel of Christ worthy of all Acceptation, or the Obligations of Men fully to credit, and cordially to approve whatever God makes known; wherein is considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of those where the Gospel comes in that Matter. By Andrew Fuller.”

I have read it deliberately, and paid particular attention to the several remarks therein, concerning Faith, as a duty incumbent on all wherever the Gospel comes. What I have to say upon it is this: In my opinion his reasoning is not just, his arguments are by no means conclusive, and I am sorry such a publication as this is sent forth into the world. I am concerned for *truth*, and for the *peace* of Jerusalem; and cannot help thinking this Treatise an attack on the former, and as having a great tendency to interrupt the latter.

I am surprised at Mr. F.’s assertion in the preface, p. 8. “It might be safely affirmed, that if the doctrines of grace are in danger, it is not from the principles here maintained, but from their opposites.” I doubt not, but this safe affirmation, may be clearly proved a false position.

Mr. F. “verily believes the cause in which he here engages is in the main, the cause of God and Truth” (p. 6). I differ very much in opinion, for, I view it as the cause of man and error. I verily believe it is subversive of the faith, and opposite to reason and scripture. To say that special faith, the faith of God’s elect, which is a new covenant blessing, the peculiar gift of God to his chosen, is a requirement to me strange, inconsistent, and untrue.

The author of this Treatise, it seems, expected some one would call his assertions mistakes, and therefore he thus speaks, “Let him however, not barely call them mistakes, but prove them so, by solid, scriptural evidence” (p. 12). This is what I shall attempt to do.

But before I proceed to the body of his book, I have a further remark or two to make on the preface: And first, Mr. F. sets out with telling the world “he had formerly entertained different sentiments” (p. 1). How far different he does not say, I hope the stages and revolutions of Mr. F.’s faith will not be so various and different as Dr. Priestly’s who frankly acknowledges in the early period of his life, he was a Calvinist of the strictest sect, at the age of twenty he commenced an Arian, and continued in that persuasion till he was about five or six-and-thirty, when he again changed his opinion, and became a Socinian (Letters to Dr. Horsley). I perceive he is of different sentiments from that gentleman at present, and I trust the

Lord will preserve him for ever from Socinian delusion. It is good that the heart be established with grace.

The reason of Mr. F.'s publishing his alteration of sentiments, was, it seems, because "he wrote his thoughts out, lent the MS. to several ministers and other persons, the greater part of whom requested him to print" (pref. p. 6). 'Tis pity he did not keep his thoughts to himself; he knew this point had been discussed years ago; and it has been to the joy of thousands of God's children that the controversy had been laid aside, as it only tended to create animosity, ruffle the spirits of good men, and cause divisions in the church of Christ. Mr. F. himself acknowledges he "has been sometimes ready to weep, from an expectation of hard thoughts, and perhaps hard words from several of those with whom he could rejoice to spend his days in cordial friendship" (pref. p. 6). If this was his expectation, why did he write? Why did he publish? Why should he trouble Israel, why make the hearts of the righteous sad? Why take such a method as tends to excite hard thoughts, and to draw out hard words from his friends? In answer to this, it is said, "the cause in which I engage is the cause of truth and righteousness" (p. 6). But that with me remains to be proved. What is here written in defence of this cause, so far from convincing me of the justness of this declaration, it has been the means of more fully establishing me in the belief of the erroneous and unrighteousness of it. It has led me to think of the subject more than ever, and the more I think of it, the less I am inclined to embrace the sentiment; my reasons I shall hereafter give.

Mr. F. affects to write with candour, and indeed in the general there is an appearance of it. I wish this had appeared throughout. But I am sorry to say I now and then perceive him assume an air of importance, not altogether becoming; here and there a reflection is scattered on those who differ from him, which is not very decent; and I wish I was not obliged to contradict an assertion in pref. p. 11. "I hope I need not add there is nothing personal in what is written." I think there is in p. 11 of the book, where after he has given his definition of faith, he adds, "'tis possible some may pronounce upon it with an air of positivity; this is no more than a man may have, and go to hell notwithstanding." This I consider as a personal attack on that excellent and judicious man, Mr. Brine, whose works praise him in the gates, for these are nearly his words (Mot. To L. and U. p. 28), though Mr. F. has artfully concealed from whence he quoted them.

In answer to some who might suggest, it was hardly liberal to animadvert on the writings of those who are incapable of answering, Mr. F. replies, "had there been any other writers on the subject, but those of that description, that part had been omitted; besides, though authors are mortal, their publications are in a sense immortal" (pref. p. 11). True, but then surely such animadversions ought to be

particularly candid, and free from personal reflection. But the attack just mentioned is far from being so.

Besides this, there is a most unworthy reflection (at least it appears so to me) cast on those who differ from Mr. F.'s sentiments concerning faith. After attacking the Arminians, he adds, "others, that err as much on the opposite side, seem willing that God should have all the praise for the good; but then they are determined as well, eh shall have all the blame for the bad, for they will have none of it" (p. 7). The persons here alluded to, I conceive to be those who with me think the reason why many believe not, is, because they are not predestinated to eternal life, for as many as are so do believe, Acts 10:48, and our Lord gives this as a reason of unbelief, in John 10:26. Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, and because this is our sentiment we are here charged with *blaming* God. This is illiberal; we believe the Lord dispenses the blessings of his grace, and faith amongst the rest, according to his sovereign good will and pleasure, that he is the absolute proprietor of his own grace; that he gives it when, and where, and to whom he pleases; but are we to be considered as *blaming* God for not bestowing these blessings on all? We disdain the thought. There were, it seems, in the Apostle's days, some who drew such an unjust conclusion from his doctrine, which made him with earnestness reply to the adversary, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." No, instead of blaming God for not bestowing special faith on all, we adore his sovereignty, and admire his grace in bestowing it on any. Were I disposed to return the attack, I might ask, who casts the most blame on God, Mr. F. who asserts, it is the duty of all men to believe with a special faith, with that faith which is peculiar to the elect, which is out of their power to obtain, and the want of it is the cause of damnation; or we who believe that because this faith is a new covenant blessing, peculiar to the elect, none will be condemned by God for the want of it? But I forbear, as I am persuaded Mr. F. does not by any means intend to cast any blame on the Divine Being, however his sentiment may appear to carry that in it. I should have been glad if he had spared this invective.

After what I asserted at the beginning, I cannot be ranked in that class of people referred to in the last page of the preface. "As to others, who think they know enough already, and that every opposition to their sentiments must of course be subversive of the faith, these will probably be forward to pass sentence without condescending to give it a reading:" and adds, "concerning these I only say, as such kind of sentences are no honour to a cause when given in its favour, so neither are they any dishonour when given on the contrary." A home stroke to those who will not condescend to read Mr. F.'s book. But suppose there are some persons, who choose to keep close to their Bibles, and will have nothing to do with controversial writings, and therefore do not see meet to lay out eighteen pence for Mr. F.'s book;

they are fully satisfied with the scriptural account of special faith; they see it is the gift of God, and not a duty; they have a humble and good hope this blessing is bestowed on them; they give evidence of it in their lives and conversation, and adore the grace which has thus distinguished them from others. They perhaps have equal penetration into the scriptures with Mr. F. and think, after serious enquiry, close examination, and mature deliberation, that this doctrine of faith is of man, and subversive of the true faith. May not they say so, although they have not read, and do not think proper to read what Mr. F. has said on the subject? I think they may, without justly incurring the character of thinking they know enough already, and of being such whose words are not worth attending to.

I am glad Mr. F. has explained what he means by the term “saving faith,” which so often occurs in his Treatise. I know it is a common phrase, but I own, I am not fond of it, because, as Dr. Gill observes, “it seems to derogate and detract from the glory of Christ, who is the only Saviour, and to carry off the mind from the object of faith to the act of it” (Gill’s Serm. And Tracts, v. f. p. 74). But as Mr. F. says, “whenever I use the term saving, as applied to faith, I do not mean that faith is the *cause* of salvation, but barely what accompanies it.” I shall say no more on that head.

Thus, Sir, in the general you have my ideas of this late publication. In my next letter I intend to inform you *wherein* I differ, and *why* I differ from the author of it. Shall now only add, I know what is there advanced is too much of the doctrine of the day, and he who opposes, must not expect the popular cry of Hear him, hear him. Be that as it may, the Lord grant you and I may be rooted and built up in Christ, and stablished in the faith, abounding therein with thanksgiving, and beware lest any man spoil us through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, and not after Christ.

I remain
Yours.

Letter II.

Dear Sir,

In my last I made some remarks on the preface annexed to Mr. Fuller's late publication. I shall now take the liberty of entering on the first part of his book, wherein he represents the importance of his subject, and gives us his idea and definition of faith. I observe he begins with this question, "What shall I do to be saved?" and adds, this "is certainly a question of vast importance to a fallen creature." I agree with him, and a proper answer to that question, I think, is of vast importance also. Dr. Owen begins his gospel grounds, and evidences of the faith of God's elect, in the same manner, and observes, "This question being once raised in the conscience, an answer must be returned to it." Now, adds the Doctor, "the real answer which men return to themselves is according to the influence which their minds are under from one or other of the two divine covenants, that of works, or that of grace; and these two covenants taken absolutely are inconsistent, and give answers in this case that are directly contradictory to one another: so the apostle declares, Rom. 10. The one says as in ver 5. The man that doeth the works of the law shall live by them: this is the only way whereby you may be saved: the other wholly saves this return, and puts it all on faith in Christ Jesus" (Owen's Evid. p. 7), as ver 6, 9. The righteousness, which is of faith, speaks on this wise, Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ down from above; or, who shall descend into the deep? That is, to bring Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved, and this was the answer Paul and Silas gave the jailer when in the utmost distress, he put the question. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

But now it remains to be asked, what is that faith with which salvation is connected. To describe this has puzzled the minds, and employed the pens of numbers: and after all, I suppose, it has not, and cannot be fully unfolded. The grace of faith, and the life of faith, are both mysterious; and perhaps some who have attained the greatest degrees of it, and who live the most by it are the least able to describe it. The Lord grant you and I may grow more in the grace, and live more the life of faith. I am persuaded I cannot wish either you or myself a greater blessing.

However, though this is a subject which I confess I am not able fully to unfold to your view yet some ideas may be formed of it from scripture. And having that blessed volume in my hand, with my eyes and heart directed to the Holy Spirit (to

whom I would wish continually to look) for the opening of my understanding; I shall attempt to give you some account of my views of this subject, and with Mr. F. “to enquire whether this be incumbent on every creature where the gospel is preached, or whether it is not” (p. 3).

I agree with Mr. F. in p. 2. “To enjoin that on man which God hath not enjoined, is to act without warrant, and would be cruelty to our own species, as it subjects them to charge of abundance of guilt, of which, God knows, they have enough in the breach of what he has enjoined.” Thus, I think, Mr. F. has acted without warrant, and that cruelty he mentions I do apprehend he has been guilty of.

But to begin with the matter of faith, for as Mr. F. observes, “in order to come at a clear and distinct view of things, it may be proper, that what is meant by faith should be particularly stated, defined and explained” (p. 4). And here I must own with him I do not think a believing our personal interest in Christ, which is commonly called assurance, is essential to true faith. No. I believe with Mr. Polhill, “all true believers have not assurance. Scripture and experience manifest it; there are lambs which are gathered into the arms, and laid in the bosom of free grace, yet know not where they are. There are little ones, babes in Christ, which can only hang on the breast, and are not grown up into the reflections and joys of faith; the poor in spirit, the mourners, the hungry and thirsty after righteousness, mentioned in the 5th chapter of Matthew, are all of them true believers, blessed ones, and heirs of the promises, and yet all of them are without any glimpse of assurance; the poor in spirit, all in rags of unworthiness and self-nothingness, as if he had no title to the kingdom; the mourners weeping, and desolate like Hagar in the wilderness, with her bottle spent, as if there were no well of comfort near them; the hungry and thirsty, like men in a famine, drooping and fainting away in fits of foul emptiness, as if there were no such thing as hidden manna for them. It is very observable in the Canticles, that Christ takes notice of the tender grape just at its first appearing: the very first opening and budding forth of faith is welcome to him; if the wine be but in the cluster, if there be but faith in desire, Christ saith, Destroy it not; the blessing of Abraham is in it; out of this little grain of mustard-seed heaven will grow; in this smoking flax there’s a divine spark; though the smoke of doubts and temptations muffle it up in security, it will break out at last into flames of love and joy; in infant believers assurance is not to be expected, because of their primordial weakness; and in well grown believers it may be suspended, because of God’s infinite sovereignty in the dispensing thereof as he pleaseth” (Polhill’s Precious Faith, p. 137, 138). Excuse this long quotation. I think it is a fine description of, and holds forth great encouragement to a weak believer. It appears very evident from scripture, that many are the subjects of faith who yet walk in darkness and see no light, and that they

may have great faith too, who are far from enjoying a comfortable sense of interest in the love and favour of Christ. Witness the woman of Canaan and others.

But now to attend to what it is. Mr. F. thinks no better definition can be given of true faith, than “the belief of the truth” (p. 10). He adds, probably this will at first sight be thought a very low and defective definition (p. 11). I own I am one of those who think so, and not only at first sight, but on after sight, after the most close thought, and serious enquiry, and after the strictest attention to all he has said on the subject.

I think a forecited author’s definition much better: “Precious faith is a grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby the heart *supernaturally* illuminated, doth so believe the testimony of God in the sacred scriptures, as in a way of trust or dependence to resign and yield up itself unto Jesus Christ as mediator, and in and through him unto God, according to his word” (Polhill’s Precious Faith). Mr. F. represents faith as man’s act and duty, without any mention of *supernatural* illumination and assistance. By supernatural illumination, I mean that which is above nature in its best estate. I cannot express my ideas better than in Mr. Polhill’s words, p. 11. “It is an illumination above nature subjectively, and not objectively only; it is a thing above reason, and all its improvements made upon external objects. God must shine into the heart, there must be light upon light, supernatural upon natural, or else there is no faith.”

Mr. F. thinks his definition of faith as “the belief of the truth” must be just, because he says it is the definition the Holy Ghost himself has given” (p. 10) 2 Thess. 2:13. But remark how this belief of the truth is connected with the sanctification of the Spirit; only attend to the whole verse. “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through *sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.*” Now let me appeal to you, Sir, whether this does not carry in it the ideas just mentioned, the necessity of a supernatural and spiritual light, in order for faith. What is this sanctification of the spirit, but a spiritual and supernatural life communicated to the soul, a spiritual and supernatural light conveyed to the understanding, a spiritual and supernatural bias wrought in the will, a spiritual and supernatural turn given to the affections--in short, being created a-new in Christ Jesus by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit? Then, and not before, will there be true and special faith in the soul. I am fully of Mr. Toplady’s mind, “that if once the feeling or inward perception of God’s Spirit, as a convincer of sin, and of righteousness, and of sanctification, were to be excluded from faith, there would presently be an end of all vital religion, and the power of godliness, would take its flight from that day forward” (Toplady’s Sermon on the Creed of Devils, p. 69).

“It is,” says Dr. Goodwin, “from the Holy Ghost, the spirit of Christ given to us, and so working above the power of nature, and in that respect he is called the spirit of wisdom and revelation; as also elsewhere the spirit of faith, 2 Cor. 4:13” (Vol. 2 of his works, p. 58). But though the Doctor considers faith as above the power of nature, he does not consider it as destroying reason, neither do I. He says, (and I wish this to be particularly observed) “I will only give you a caution, that I may not be misunderstood; for as this is a great truth, so I would clear it from mistakes: the light of faith doth not destroy reason, but makes use of it, subordinates reason to itself, restoreth, rectifies it, and then useth it; even as reason makes use of sense, though the acts of reason, the thoughts of a man in a rational soul are clean differing to what he hath in the sensitive soul, yet reason makes use of sense; and thus the Holy Ghost makes use of all the rational discourses and descriptions of Christ in the word; makes use of the letter of the word, but by them conveys those spiritual thoughts of Christ, which all that letter cannot hold forth to a man: and as I said afore, if the angels from heaven should come and preach Jesus Christ to us, should, with all their pencils, go and paint out what knowledge they have of Jesus Christ, they could not beget one such sight of Christ in the heart, as the Holy Ghost doth when he comes to work faith; and yet the apostle tells us it comes by hearing, and in hearing; the more rationally the preacher discourseth out of the word, and lays open the meaning thereof in a rational way, so much the better, because it is suited to the minds of men; yet where the Holy Ghost works faith, he conveys a light beyond all that reason, though he makes use of that reason too: this word of God hath an harmony of reason in it, and if a man would open a place of scripture, he should do it rationally, he should go and consider the words before, and the words after; but yet still if the Holy Ghost comes not with a further light than all this rational opening of the word affords, a man will never believe, for faith is a fight beyond it; the Holy Ghost useth motives to move you to holy duties, but then he comes with a power joined with those motives beyond the moral force of them; he useth signs out of your own hearts to comfort you, but he comes with a light over and above those signs; for if you should stick there, you would never have comfort; so he useth reason; he destroyeth it not, but subordinateth it” (Goodw. Works, vol. 4. part 2. p. 7).

I am, respectfully,
Yours.

Letter III.

Dear Sir,

My last concluded with a long quotation from Dr. Goodwin, wherein he considers faith as the fruit of a supernatural illumination of the spirit, which I wrote you as an answer to what I think a defective definition of faith given by Mr. F. who describes it as a “belief of the truth.”—I shall now attend to what is further advance on this subject. And here let me observe, Mr. F. as if conscious himself this definition will not do as it stands, goes about to explain what he means by this belief of the truth. Yet after all his explanation, I confess it is to me quite unsatisfactory, and at last he drops short of the thing itself. He tells us that “to avoid obscurity, he shall attempt more fully to explain the terms.” And, “first, it is not supposed but there may be a cold assent to many of the general truths of Christianity; so far as that a man may obtain the character of being orthodox, and may really think himself a believer, yea, and may be able to defend those truths for which he is an advocate with clearness and energy; and yet be destitute of saving faith” (p. 22). Well then, what is it? Why, it is said, “By belief then I understand, and I think the apostle understands, a *cordial reception* of the truth as it is in Jesus” (p. 12); and speaking of truth, he says thus, “by truth I do not mean, and I think the apostle does not mean, barely such general truths of the Gospel, as that there was such a person as Jesus Christ—that he was born at Bethlehem—lived and wrought miracles in Judea—that there is an eternal election, a particular redemption, etc.—But by truth I mean, (and I think the apostle means the same) to include with the aforementioned doctrines, their qualities or properties, which make a great, and an essential part of the truth” (p. 23). And elsewhere he observes, “it appeared to me, we had taken carnal men too much upon their word, when they told us, they believed the word. I doubted not, but that they might believe many things concerning Jesus Christ, and his salvation; but they only amount to their simple *existence*, without taking in their adhering qualities.—Now what constitutes the gospel is *good news*; but whatever faith a wicked man may have in it as a *piece of news*; he hath none in the *goodness* of it” (preface, p. 4&5).

Such is the explanation of the belief of the truth, a *cordial reception of the truth*, and a believing the gospel to be *good* as well as true. This latter idea is exactly the same with the Leicestershire farmer’s account of faith; he says, “I would define the faith of the gospel thus: It is the evidence which God has given, admitted in a person’s mind, that the things reported in the scripture concerning Himself and Son, are *true* and *good*.” And again, “To be a believer in a full scriptural sense of the word, is to be persuaded from proper evidence, that gospel things are *true*, and that they are, as described in the gospel, *good*” (Gosp. Mag. For May, 1773). You

see Mr. F. has exactly adopted the idea, and almost the words of that gentleman, whoever he might be.—Now let us a little examine it; and will you give me leave to ask you, Sir, what you think of the faith of Devils? You know, they are said to believe. James 2:19. For my part I freely own, that what a late writer asserts, appears to me a fact, viz., “That the Devils are incomparably more orthodox, than nineteen in twenty of our modern divines” (Toplady’s Sermon on the Creed of Devils, p. 65). That they believe the truth, I think cannot be denied. That they believe there is a God, the apostle James declares. That they believe Christ to be the Son, the holy one of God, appears evident from their own declaration, Mark 1:24. In short, that the Bible is the word of God, and that the gospel is *news*, and *good news* too of salvation for the chief of sinners, is what they are thoroughly convinced of; and that this salvation is brought home to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, is what they have demonstrable and mortifying evidence of in the loss of their subjects; and therefore can but believe it. Yes, they do believe the *truth*; they do not only believe the gospel as a *piece of news*, but believe the *goodness* of it for others, though not for themselves.—What think you of the faith of the departed wicked? I am apt to think, however erroneous they might be in their sentiments on earth, they believe the truth in hell. It is a query to me, whether there be an Arian, Socinian, or Arminian there.—What think you of the faith of Simon Magus, in Acts 8:13 it is said, Simon himself believed also. Who did he believe? And what did he believe? In the preceding verse we are told that Philip preached the things concerning the kingdom of God; and I suppose he preached the *truth* as it is in Jesus. It appears then, it was Philip the Evangelist, and the truth he preached that was believed by Simon, who was yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

But perhaps, in reply to this, Mr. F. may say, what is all this to the purpose; none of these *cordially* and *heartily* received the truth; it is nothing but “cold assent.” To this I reply, I only brought these instances to shew that the definition of faith as first given, viz. “*a belief of the truth*,” is not sufficiently clear, there is a defect in it.—I now proceed to his amendment or addition, “*a cordial reception of the truth*:” now let us see if this be a full description; I think not. If we look into Luke 4:16-30, we find an account of our Lord’s entering the Synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath day; that he opened the book of the prophet Isaiah, and read that admirable passage, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hat sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised: to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” We are informed, the blessed Jesus, the glorious Messiah, opened these words, and said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” What was the effect this excellent discourse had on

their minds? Why we are told “the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him” with serious attention and earnest expectation, “and all bare him witness,” were ready to set their seal to the truth of what he said, the evidence he gave being so clear; and moreover, it is added, and “wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” They were amazed at the manner in which he spake, as well as the matter he delivered; they could not deny the evidence he gave of his being the Messiah; they were constrained to embrace his doctrine, yea, and *cordially* to receive his testimony, which none can deny was truth. Yet after all this, it seems they were strangers to true, special faith in Christ, as appears by their after conduct. Does not this prove Mr. F.’s definition of faith defective? Here were a number of persons who believed the truth which Christ spake, believed it to be *good, cordially* and *heartily* received it, so as to be charmed with it, for they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, yet being weighed in the balances, they were found wanting.

It is not then a believing the truth, a cordial reception of the truth, so as to be affected with it, simply speaking, which is special faith. Such a cordial reception indeed as flows from supernatural light, life, and love being conveyed into the soul by the Holy Spirit is true faith. But it evidently appears from this instance, as well as from the stony ground hearers, who received the word with joy, Mat. 13:20, that there may be a cordial reception of the truth without special faith. Something more than a bare cordial reception is necessary to denominate a person a true believer. It is such a reception of the truth as transforms the soul into the image of Christ, 2 Cor. 3:18, “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.” It is such a belief of the truth or the divine testimony concerning Christ, that brings Christ into the soul, Eph. 3:18, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;” and to use the words of another, “It requires the agency of the Eternal Spirit, the mighty power of God, to imprint the truth upon the soul, so as to make the man possess it, and form it into a vital principle in his heart” (Gosp. Mag. For Aug. 17. 27); and then from this vital principle the soul acts, as one expresses it in a letter to a Christian friend, “Faith is the gift of God, and it grows not in nature’s garden, or in the heart of a man by nature; but is a grace created in the soul by the Holy Spirit of God, at the time of regeneration; and believing is the act of this principle, or the soul’s acting toward Christ, and God in him, according to this principle of grace wrought in the heart, to which it is enabled by the Almighty Power of God” (Gosp. Mag. For Feb. 1772). And Mr. Charnock, in his sermon on unbelief, which Mr. F. is so fond of, and of which he speaks so highly in p. 74, thus expresses himself, “Faith is to be considered in two ways; as it is an assent to the revelation of God, or as it is a special instrument of apprehending, and laying hold on Christ for justification,

etc. In the first sense, faith is a virtue we are obliged to by the light of nature. In the second it is *purely an evangelical grace*" (Charnock's Works, v. 2. p. 647).

I consider faith, or rather the Spirit of God through faith, giving the soul possession of the truth revealed, agreeable to Heb. 11:1, Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, i.e., "it gives these things a substance or subsistence in the mind, by substantiating and realizing them to the mind, and impressing them upon the heart," so that when a person truly believes, the gospel is written in and upon the heart, engraven upon the mind, so as to become the principle of a person's actions. Mr. F. seems to hint at something of this when he says, "now truth in existence is *reality*, and if so, to believe the truth is to realize it, or to consider it as *real*, that is, to consider it *as it is*, which has a real effect upon the heart and conduct" (p. 20) I own I like this better than any thing he has said about faith. But he afterwards seems to go off from his own description when he asks, "Is it the duty of every man who hears the solemn realities of religion to consider them as *real*, that is, to consider them as they are, or is it not?" (p. 21). Undoubtedly it is. But this is not to the point; even according to his own definition, the question should stand thus, Is it the duty of every man, so to *realize* the truth as that it shall have a real effect on his *heart* and *conduct*? Or in other words, Is it an unregenerate man's duty to impress the truth on his mind, to make it enter his heart, and to make it abide there, so that it shall powerfully influence every faculty of his soul, and every action of his life? If so, it is his duty to do what God claims as his prerogative, and promises as a special blessing to his own people, Jer. 32:39, 40. "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me"; and Heb. 8:10, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

I agree with Mr. F. when he says, there is "a necessary connection between faith and practice" (p. 16). I think whatever true faith is, the truth believed has taken such possession, such hold of that soul, that it cannot but shew itself in the life, for "faith without works is dead," James 2.20. Does the scripture declare "nothing is so odious, nothing so dangerous as sin;" he who has real faith, and is under its influence, so possess that truth that he must necessarily hate and forsake evil. Does the Bible inform us, no Saviour is so suitable, none so precious, none so excellent in every view as the Lord Jesus Christ; he who has special faith, so possesses that truth in his soul, it makes such an impression on his heart, that he cannot but find an actual outgoing of his soul towards him in a way of love, trust, and obedience.

But I cannot agree with him when he draws this conclusion; "The necessary connexion there is between faith and practice induces me to think it *impossible* for a wicked man while such to believe the aforementioned truths" (p. 16); and as a proof thereof, he adds, "men believe various things in the world to be odious and others

dangerous; that arsenic will poison them or fire burn them; and they act accordingly, they make it their constant endeavour to shun them” (p. 16); but does not Mr. F. know that some people, though they believe arsenic will poison them, yet they take it, and for that very purpose? And does not Mr. F. know that there is an unnatural practice which yet prevails in some parts of the empire of Indostan, of the Gentoo wives burning themselves on their husband’s funeral pile? And even in this Christian land, how many who believe the knife, the sword, the pistol, the water, will be their death, yet, instead of shunning, purposely make use of them for this horrid purpose. I have also heard this pertinent question asked, “Do not men in general believe they shall die, yea, really, cordially and heartily believe it? But do they “act accordingly?” or do not the judgment and practice of the generality of mankind contradict each other? And did not Felix believe Paul when he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come? Yes, he believed, and he trembled; his conscience was awakened and alarmed, accused him of injustice and intemperance, and he dreaded the thought of a final judgment. What then? Did he act accordingly? Though he firmly believed the truth, and had a strong conviction of the evil of his conduct, did he forsake his evil ways and thankfully adhere to Paul? No. He dismissed him, he wanted to hear no more, he was for lulling his conscience asleep, and making it quiet and easy; though he knew he was pursuing evil, he yet would persist in it, though our author says, “human nature cannot pursue evil as evil” (p. 17). Where true special faith is given indeed, that man cannot but hate and forsake evil. The truth possesses his soul and influences his conduct; but a man may believe the truth, and yet persist in evil.

I must now conclude.

And remain

Yours.

P 24 l 10 from the bottom *for* truth read “trust”

P 25 penult. For “dictates” read “dictate”

Letter IV.

Dear Sir,

I cannot help noticing what is said in p. 27, speaking of the distinction between believing Christ, and believing *in* Christ. Mr. F. says, "It seems to suppose that a person may really believe Christ, and yet not believe *in* Christ, or, which is the same thing, not *trust in him* for salvation. This appears to me impossible" (p. 27). I am surprised at this. Surely there is a great difference between the one and the other. The one is the duty of all, the other the peculiar privilege of some, even of God's elect. And the very scriptures cited to prove there is no difference, seem to me clearly to point out there is. John 3:36, He that believeth *on* the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth in him. The former part of the verse describes the true believer. He who through the supernatural illumination of the spirit doth so believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, as in a way of trust and dependence to resign himself up to, and rely upon him for life and salvation, he has everlasting life: he really possesses it. Now this is the peculiar privilege of a child of God.—The other part of the verse describes the criminal unbeliever. For, observe, I have no doubt but there is an unbelief which is criminal, and that is, where there is a want of due reverence and attention to the words of Christ, and a positive act of rejecting him as the Messiah and Saviour, in direct opposition to the full evidence he gave of his mission. Observe, it is not said, he that believeth not *on* the Son, etc. No, it is not for want of special faith he is condemned, but because he believes not what he says, though he gives the most undeniable evidence of his being sent of God, and that what he says is truth. Certainly, if a man will not believe what Christ the Son of God says is true; if he treats the gospel as an idle tale which hath such "evident and indelible characters of its divine original," he is worthy of condemnation, and shall be condemned, as Mr. Charnock expresses it. "A gospel that hath been propagated with a glorious success, confirmed by a train of miracles, acknowledged in the writings of heathens that lived in the primitive times, witnessed by the blood of martyrs, and those of the wiser and learned sort, who could not all surely be a parcel of melancholy fools! Shall this have no better a reception than if it were a mere romance, and an impertinent fable?" (Charn. Works, vol. 2. p. 657). Certainly those who give it no better a reception, shall be severely punished. To believe what God has declared in his word, to believe this glorious revelation which God has given, is undoubtedly the duty of all where the gospel comes: the evidence of its being God's word is so strong, so clear and plain; and to reject it, is base and wicked. To believe what the Lord Jesus Christ says, who is the Son of God, and truth itself, and whose discourses bear such a stamp of divine authority, is

unquestionably incumbent on all, and to reject and despise him and his words, deserving of God's hot displeasure and his fearful indignation. This is what natural light and reason dictate. But what has this to do with believing *on* Christ, or special faith in him, which is supernatural and the special gift of God, according to Mr. F.'s own words, "peculiar to the elect" (p. 1).

Mr. F. quotes another scripture of the same import with the former, 1 John 5:20, "He that believeth *on* the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." You see the same distinction is here made as in the former passage between believing *on* Christ and believing Christ and God, though Mr. F. cannot see this distinction. You may here observe, who it is that hath made God a liar. It is not said he who believes not *on* the Son, but he who believes not the *record* God hath given of his Son. That is, as one expresses it, practically to slight, contemn, despise, reject or willfully neglect the word of God, and the record therein contained. But for a soul not to enjoy what God has not given, or not to be what God has not made him, does not make God a liar; and the dispute is not, whether that unbelief which is condemned in the scripture, be the work of men, and a wicked work? But whether a person not having a blessing, which never was given him, nor ever was in his power to obtain, be the wicked work intended" (Johnson's Faith of God's Elect, p. 171).

Let me now invite your attention to what is said in p. 28. "This view of faith seems to be plain and easy, and does not *embarrass our minds with a number of words without ideas.*" A handsome compliment to those who do not think Mr. F.'s account of faith so plain and easy as he does! Give me leave just to quote a few definitions others have given, and then to ask your opinion whether his reflection of "embarrassing the mind with a number of words without ideas" be just. Shall I call to your mind Mr. Polhill's description of it, which I mentioned in my second letter; "precious faith is a grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby the heart supernaturally illuminated, doth so believe the testimony of God in the sacred scriptures, as in a way of trust or dependence to resign and yield up itself unto Jesus Christ as mediator, and in and through him unto God according to his word" (Precious Faith, p. 6). Does he embarrass the mind with a number of words without ideas? Again, let me cite Perkins; "faith is a gift, whereby we apprehend Christ and his benefits" (Perkins's Works, vol. 2. p. 240). Does this good man embarrass our minds with a number of words without ideas?—Shall here also give you an extract from a confession of faith drawn up and signed by three Protestant bishops, and seven eminent clergymen, who were imprisoned in London for the gospel, shortly after the coronation of Mary. They say thus, Faith is not only an opinion, but a certain persuasion wrought by the Holy Ghost, which doth illuminate the mind, and supple

the heart, to submit itself unfeignedly to God.” This was signed by Coverdale, bishop of Exeter, Farrar, bishop of St. David’s, Hooper, bishop of Worcester and Gloucester, with Taylor, Philpot, Bradford, Crome, Sanders, Rogers, and Lawrence (Toplady’s Hist. Proof. v. 1. p. 328, and v. 2., p. 384). Do these excellent men embarrass our minds with a number of words without ideas?—Dr. Gill, speaking of faith, says, “special and spiritual faith, to which salvation is annexed, is not of a man’s self, it does not owe its original to the creature—it is not of the law of works; for as the law is not of faith, so neither is faith of the law;—it is a blessing of the covenant of grace; the operation of the spirit of God; he produces it by his mighty power in the soul; he enlightens the mind, reveals the object, brings near Christ, his righteousness and salvation, and enables the sensible sinner to look to him, lay hold on him, and receive him as his saviour and redeemer” (Gill’s Serm. And Tracts, v. 1. p. 75-76). Does the Doctor here embarrass our minds with a number of words without ideas? I think these definitions are short and full, they are not, it is true, quite so concise as Mr. F.’s, which contains but five words, “*the belief of the truth;*” but then they are more *full*, and in my opinion much easier comprehended. Indeed this gentleman himself is obliged to employ several pages to explain his meaning, being sensible, I presume, such a definition could not be readily understood, and that people in common were very likely to remain in the dark about it. The foregoing accounts are self-evident, they are at once, without “embarrassing our minds with a number of words,” convey to us true and beautiful ideas, and, it appears to me, give us such ideas, that clearly demonstrate it cannot be the *duty* of unregenerate men to believe with a special faith in Christ. If the mind must be supernaturally illuminated—if it is a new covenant blessing—a special gift of God peculiar to the elect—wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost in the heart—consists in an apprehension and reception of Christ, and such an apprehension and reception as transform the soul into his image and likeness, and make him closely adhere to him for ever, and issue in everlasting life—surely it is absurd to the last degree to say it is the duty of all men to have it.

But respecting their duty in this matter, I shall be led more particularly to treat of in my next, when I propose giving you my sentiments of the second part of Mr. F.’s book. I shall now only in the general say, that if this faith be the duty of man, and required by the law, it is then undoubtedly a *work*; and when the apostle says, Eph. 2:8, By grace ye are saved, through faith, we must consider him as joining grace and works together, contrary to the general tenor of his epistles, which is to set for the freeness and the riches of grace in the salvation of sinners; as in Rom. 4:16 he says, “It is of faith that it might be by grace:” but if faith is a duty (and so a work) the apostle should rather have said, It is of faith that it might be by works; but since faith is a blessing of the covenant of grace, a fruit of electing grace, and the

operation of the spirit of grace, there is a propriety and beauty in the apostle's words.

I shall now conclude this epistle with the just observation of a late writer, "That the religion of Jesus Christ stands eminently distinguished, and essentially differenced, from every other religion that was ever proposed to human reception, by this remarkable peculiarity: that, look abroad in the world, and you will find that every religion, except *one*, puts you upon doing something in order to recommend yourself to God. A *Mahometan* expects to be saved by his works. A *Papist* looks to be justified by his works. A *Free-willer* hopes for salvation by his works, compliances, endeavours and perseverance. A *Pagan*, if he believes that there is a future state, expects to be happy hereafter, by virtue of the supposed good he does, and of the evil he leaves undone. A *Mystic* has the same hope, and stands on the same sad foundation. It is only the religion of Christ which runs counter to all the rest, by affirming that we are saved, and called with an holy calling, *not* according to our works, but according to the Father's own purpose and grace, which was (not sold to us on certain conditions to be fulfilled by ourselves, but was) *given* us in Christ before the world began" (Toplady's Serm. on James 2:19, p. 49-50).

The Lord grant this religion may be more and more precious to both you and me.

I am

Yours.

Letter V.

Dear Sir,

I am now come to the second part of Mr. Fuller's book, "containing the arguments to prove faith in Christ the incumbent duty of men in general, under the sound of the Gospel;" and after what I have said respecting faith, as well as from considering the several parts of holy writ, and especially those portions of it, which he mentions as proofs of his hypothesis, I am obliged to deny his

First Proposition, which is, that "*Faith in Christ is commanded in the Scriptures to unconverted Sinners*" (p. 37). By faith being commanded I take for granted is meant that it is *enjoined*; it is an *injunction* or *compulsive precept*, which I confess, I think is a great mistake. That believing sometimes bears the appearance of a command is what I readily grant: but that it is always where it bears that appearance to be considered as an *injunction* is what I cannot allow.—You know, Sir, and Mr. F. must know, that every command in scripture is not to be thus understood. For instance, when the Jewish nation is affectingly represented by an infant cast out into the open field to the loathing of its person, and the Lord says, Ezek. 16:6, When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, *live*, yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, *live*. You cannot, I think, consider this as an injunction, but such a command as carries in it and conveys blessing itself, even life. So our Lord speaking of the gospel in John 12:50 says, "I know that his commandment is life everlasting;" now we are not from hence to consider the gospel as a law, containing precepts, (Mr. F. himself does not—p. 57), but when it is here called a commandment which is life everlasting, I suppose it must be thus denominated, because by it the Holy Spirit speaks and commands spiritual life into the soul of a dead sinner, which life is an everlasting one.—and sometimes that which bears the appearance of a command, is nothing more than a direction or an encouragement, as Isa. 51:17, "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury." I presume this is not to be understood in the light of a *precept*, but as a precious word of consolation and a cheering direction to hope and rejoice in the Lord because he had, as in ver. 22, taken out of her hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of his fury, and adds, thou shalt no more drink it again. So I apprehend we are to understand the words of Paul and Silas to the Jailor, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This does not appear by the context so much a command as a word of direction and comfort. The poor man had his eyes just opened to see his wretchedness and misery, and cries out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Do? Said the good men, you have nothing else to do, but venture your soul on Jesus: if you cast yourself on him you are safe:

there is hope for you, be encouraged, both you and yours if you believe on him shall be saved.

Thus also the words of Christ to his disciples in John 14:1 are to be understood. "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, *believe also in me.*" This I think very evidently appears to be a direction and encouragement, and not so much to carry in it an injunction and command. He had been telling them many discouraging things they should meet with, and particularly informing them of his departure; this greatly affected them; he saw it, and his bowels yearned over them, and therefore he thus addresses them, Let not your hearts be troubled; don't be overwhelmed with sorrow; ye believe in God; I know ye do; ye believe him to be faithful and true: faithful in keeping covenant, and true in accomplishing all the promises he has made: Ye may also with equal confidence, repose in me: Yes, believe in me, when I tell you, though I go away, it is to prepare a place for you, and I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also. Cheering words, containing a kind direction and heavenly encouragement.

And let me add, that some of those scriptures cited by Mr. F. related to nothing more than to Christ as the promised Messiah, whom it was the duty of the Jews to have acknowledged, the evidence of his mission being so full and clear: and their refusing to acknowledge him in that capacity, in opposition to the most undeniable evidence, was practical and criminal unbelief.

It is for want of making these distinction, I apprehend, Mr. F. and others have run into mistakes, and misunderstood various passages of scripture.

I shall now proceed to examine those scriptures which are brought to support his first proposition. He begins with

Psal. 2:12. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way (p. 37). I fully acquiesce in the declaration of this psalm's having respect to the Messiah, and that these words relate to the enemies of Christ, and unregenerate sinners. But that this "kissing the Son denotes a spiritual act, and is of the very essence of true saving faith," as Mr. F. asserts (p. 38), is what I can by no means allow. Kissing denotes sometimes nothing more than civil homage and subjection, as in 1 Sam. 10:1, where we are told Samuel anointed Saul and kissed him, which was not, I presume, a spiritual act, but nothing more than a token of allegiance and loyalty, and expressive of reverence and respect, because of the high office he was advanced unto; and "it is the custom of the Indians to this day for the subjects to kiss their kings" (Dr. Gill's Expos. on Psal. 2:12); now this was certainly the duty of kings and judges, and all wheresoever this glorious Messiah, the Son of God came, to reverence and respect him, to express their firm belief of his being that great Personage, so long prophesied of and expected, who gave such an undeniable evidence of his being so; who had divine authority stamped in very legible characters upon him; and if they

refused to acknowledge him it should issue in their destruction.—Mr. F. seems to build much on the latter part of the verse, “Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,” and says, “now putting their trust in him, and kissing him seem nearly akin, both having the promise of bliss annexed” (p. 39). This seems to me very far from being just; kissing the son and trusting him are widely different. The one is an incumbent duty, the other a peculiar privilege and blessing. The easy and natural sense of the words seems to be this, Kiss the Son, reverence him, respect and worship him; this is your duty, for he is my Son, he is the great Messiah; the glorious king I have long promised: I have sealed him, this you may easily perceive, and if ye refuse to acknowledge him, ye shall perish in your sinful ways. Then after the duty of men in general is pointed out, as a matter very distinct comes in the next words, as words of great encouragement to those whose peculiar privilege it is to venture their souls on him; who not only acknowledge and reverence him as the Messiah, but also believe in him for pardon, peace, righteousness and eternal life, as the only saviour of sinners, these are blessed, yea, “Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

The next scripture mentioned is Jer. 6:16. “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; but they said, we will not walk therein” (p. 39). That the persons here addressed are wicked, unregenerate sinners is granted—that the ways they are to stand in and see, and the old paths they are to ask for, may mean the ordinances and commandments of God, I think is probably: and that the good way may have reference to Christ, I will not deny: But what is all this to the purpose? Why Mr. F. seems to lay a stress upon the exhortation “walk in that good way,” which he says “can be nothing short of true faith in him, seeing it is promised that they had so done, they should have found rest for their souls” (p. 40). But suppose this walking in the good way does mean true faith in Christ, yet do you not perceive this way must be discovered to them first? They were to stand and see, look out and enquire: that is, diligently attend the means, and when it was the good pleasure of God to shew them the good way; when the Holy Spirit should enlighten their dark understandings, and discover to them their wretched state, and shew to them the good and only way of salvation, it was their duty to walk therein.—It was their duty to enquire for it, but I should suppose not their duty to walk in it till they had found it. And I suppose also they could not find it to purpose, till it was discovered to them. Then they would walk in it, and ought to walk in it, and to seek no other. This sense of the passage (and I hope it is not a forced one) sets aside the sentiment of faith being the duty of the unregenerate. All the duty of the unregenerate here pointed out, is their diligently waiting on public ordinances. I say *diligently*, in opposition to what Mr. F. intimates respecting those who differ from

him, "Here (says he) they were enjoined to *stand* and *see*, not barely to *attend* public ordinances, and *lie in the way*, as some express themselves" (p. 40). We don't say, Sir, they are *barely to attend* in a careless and indifferent manner, and *lie in the way* in an indolent posture, indulging themselves in sloth and sleep, as he insinuates, though he knows better. We say it is the duty of sinners to attend the means *constantly* and *diligently*, with a who can tell but the blessing of the Lord may be conveyed through these channels. And when the blessing comes, when the Holy Ghost opens the eyes of sinners to see their sin and danger, and shews them the good way Christ, then it becomes their duty to walk in him; and this their duty they will readily attend to, under the influences of the same Spirit.

Mr. F. having produced these two scriptures from the old testament, now proceeds to the new; and here expresses himself very positively, thus, "In the new testament we find true saving faith enjoined upon unregenerate sinners, as plain as words can possibly express it" (p. 40). The first words which are to him so very plain are in

John 12:36, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." But I think a little examination into the context, will shew these are not to the purpose, and demonstrate that Mr. F.'s misunderstanding and misapplication of these words, is owing to his not observing the distinct modes of speech made use of in holy writ. These are evidently words of direction to enquiring people. Our Lord is here speaking not as a lawgiver, but in a ministerial way. He had just entered Jerusalem: many attended him both Jews and Greeks: they made enquiries respecting his doctrine, and person. He had been speaking of his death: they were stumbled at it, and they said, v. 34, "we have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever," referring, I suppose, to such passages that speak of the perpetuity of his priesthood, and the eternal duration of his kingdom; and so they ask; how sayest thou, the son of man must be lifted up? This seems inconsistent with scripture, and they further ask, "Who is this son of man?" In reply to the last question, he tells them, this son of man was the light of the world; and then goes on to shew them the importance of believing and walking in him. This light (says he) is for a little while with you, and this is what I have to say, and wish you to notice it, who are thus inquisitive for knowledge: that if ye would wish to be children of light, and to give evidence ye are so, it is absolutely necessary that ye believe in the light, and walk while ye have the light, otherwise darkness will certainly come upon you. Or if we consider it as an address to the audience in general, then viewing him as speaking in a ministerial way, his words were (as one expresses it) "persuasive, by way of admonition; to move his audience to make the best improvement in their power, of the opportunity they were favoured with. For they did enjoy his preference with them, who is the true light; and had the light of the gospel

published amongst them. And then the admonition was, to receive Christ and his gospel, according to that light in which he had revealed himself to them: And not to believe in a light which God had not afforded them: or to receive Christ internally, while he had only been revealed externally. It was to believe in that light which they actually had; and had the Jewish nation taken that advice, they had (in a national way) continued to be the children of light. For God did not root them out of their habitation, because they were not blessed with saving faith; but because they rejected the Messiah, and despised the record which God gave of his Son” (Johnson’s Faith of God’s Elect, p. 145). If we take the words in the former sense, they appear to contain a ministerial admonition, and not a compulsive precept; a direction to enquiring persons, and not a command to the multitude in general; an information of what is essentially necessary to evidence them children of light, and not a command to make themselves so. If we take them in the latter sense, they only contain an exhortation to act agreeable to the light they had. View them in either way, they will not prove what Mr. F. wishes them to prove, the duty of all to believe with a special faith.—At present shall only add

I remain

Yours.

Letter VI.

Dear Sir,

Having noticed three scriptures brought by Mr. Fuller to prove special faith is commanded, I proceed to a fourth, John 6:29. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”—That Mr. F. should bring this as an argument for his favourite sentiment is to me astonishing, since it appears directly against him.—He observes they contain an answer to a question; viz. What shall we do that we might work the works of God? v. 28. To which question our Lord answers, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent:” “which (says Mr. F.) if it be a pertinent answer to the question asked (and no doubt but it is so) it is as if he had said, This is what you must do if you think to please God; this is the first duty incumbent upon you in that great work of labouring for that which endureth to everlasting life, and without which it will be impossible with any other labour whatsoever to please God” (p. 41).

Let me first remark here if this believing on Christ be the *first duty* incumbent in the great work of labouring for that which endureth to everlasting life, is it not somewhat strange, that our Lord should direct to labouring first, as he does, v. 27, and doesn't tell them of the *first* duty incumbent on them, till they ask for it; till they by their question draw it out of him? Surely this was acting in a manner (to use Mr. F.'s own words) “far from his usual pertinency” (p. 43). But certainly this answer of our Lord's is directly against Mr. F. It is as if he had said, What must ye do to work the works of God? I tell you plainly, there is nothing you can do that can be acceptable and well pleasing to God till you have faith, and that faith is of his operation; “this is the work of God, that ye believe:” and then he goes on to speak more largely of this believing in him in the following verses. Speaking of himself as the bread of life, which was to be fed upon in a spiritual manner by faith, he says ver. 35, “He that cometh to me shall never hunger: and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” He further informs them, ver. 36. that they had seen him, but had not believed on him, and then points out who will believe, and who only, v. 37. “All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me.” This doctrine of electing love and distinguishing grace offended the Jews, and we are told, ver. 41, “they murmured at him;” which made Christ reply, v. 43, “Murmur not among yourselves;” what I tell you is a fact: the doctrine I have delivered is truth; that faith is the work of God; that none will have it but those whom the Father has given me, and I now further add, “no man *can* come unto me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him,” ver. 44. How very clear and plain from the whole context does it appear, that this special faith is no duty, but the work of God, and a blessing designed only for those

whom the Father hath given to Christ; and to suppose men will be damned for the want of it, is cruel and shocking.

The next passage quoted by Mr. F. is, John 5:21, “It is the Father’s will that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father” (p. 43). To adopt Mr. F.’s own words in answer to a quotation from Mr. Brine; “Perhaps it would puzzle a common reader to discern any declaration of the necessity of faith” (p. 43), and much more to discern the duty of faith in this passage. It must be very evident to every one who reads it in connection with the preceding verses, that our Lord is there asserting and proving his equality with the Father, and that nothing more is intended than that the same divine reverence, adoration and honour, should be given to him as to the Father. And the honour here referred to is the honour due to him in the character of a judge, and not of a saviour, for they are closely connected with v. 22, “For the Father judgeth no man (i.e., without the Son) but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father:” that is, in that capacity: yes, and all men shall be obliged to honour him too, by bowing their knees before him at the last day in judgment. Now for Mr. F. to say “this passage not only proves Christ’s equality with the Father, but the obligations of mankind to believe in him” (p.43) appears to me “a most unwarrantable force put upon it.”

I go on to p. 44, where Mr. F. says “wicked men are commanded to *seek* the Lord while he may be found, and that in the character of the God of grace, promising mercy, and abundance of pardon to them that seek him, Isa. 55:6-7.—Arminians quote this passage as a proof there is a day of grace, which, if men improve, they may enjoy the favour of God; but if they let it slip, if it be once elapsed, there is no more opportunity of meeting with him. To whom Dr. Gill thus replies, “They are an exhortation to public worship, signified by seeking the Lord, and calling upon him; the time for which with the Jews was on the seventh day of the week, and with us Christians on the first, these being times in which he might be found, it became the Jews of old, and us now, to attend public ordinances, in expectation of meeting with God” (Cause of God and Truth p. 42). And this I think is a sufficient answer to Mr. F.

It is further observed, Simon Magus was exhorted to pray to the Lord for pardon of sin. Who denies it? Prayer is a natural and moral duty binding on all men. But what has this to do with special faith? Why, says Mr. F. “spiritual blessings, all will allow, cannot be found but in the way of faith in Christ.” That is true; but they may be *sought after* in the use of means without that faith: and that is all which is here exhorted to, not to find or to get pardon of sin, but to pray for it.

The next scriptures is Rom. 9:31, 32, “Israel hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? *Because they sought it not by faith*, but as it were by the

works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling stone.” Now, says Mr. F, “ought they not to have sought it by faith? Why then are they blamed because they did not? Did they right and what they ought to do in stumbling at that stumbling stone? Why then are they in so doing said to be disobedient?” (p. 45).

By faith here is meant, not the grace, but the doctrine of faith, the gospel; as appears clearly by its being opposed to the law, and this was the stumbling stone at which they stumbled, as we are expressly told in 1 Pet. 2:8, “which stumble at the word being disobedient.” Taking the words in this view, I thus answer Mr. F.’s questions. The doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ being clearly revealed in the gospel, they ought to have received it, and were to blame for treating it with contempt; but I will not say they ought to have received this righteousness by special faith, or that they ought to have been clothed with it, nor do I find them any where blamed for being destitute of it. No, all they are blamed for is, for not receiving the *doctrine*, and not because they did not receive the thing itself.

“To these (says Mr. F.) might be added such passage of scripture as command men to put their *trust* in the Lord, and blame them for the contrary practice” (p. 45). But to trust in the Lord is a natural duty, as God is infinitely benevolent, all-sufficient in his power, inviolable in his truth, and invariable in his faithfulness, he ought to be trusted, the light of nature and reason declare it. But what has this to do with evangelical trust, and special faith in Christ? Ps. 4:5 is here produced, “offer the sacrifices of righteousness; and put your trust in the Lord.” To which is added, “a trust connected with the sacrifices of righteousness, must be a spiritual trust” (p. 46). But what are these sacrifices of righteousness? Why, says an excellent commentator, “things righteously gotten, for the Lord hates robbery for a burnt-offering, Isa. 61:8. Some respect may be had to the unrighteous acquisitions of Absalom and his men (on the occasion of whose rebellion this psalm is supposed to have been penned) and who were now in possession of Jerusalem, and of the altars of the Lord, and were sacrificing on them; in which they gloried, and to which this is opposed” (Dr. Gill on the passage). Now it may be considered as an address to these men, and so carries in it a sharp rebuke for their conduct in presenting robbery for a burnt-offering, and in trusting in it when they had done. Though I rather think it is an address of David’s to the good men who were with him, and abode with him in this time of trouble; and the first part of the verse contains advice, not to act as their enemies had done, offer what was unrighteously gotten, but to offer sacrifices of righteousness; and the latter part is an encouraging direction what to do in this season of distress. Don’t, as if he had said, be cast down, the Lord (as is observed in ver. 3) has set apart him that is godly for himself, the Lord will hear when I call upon him.” Therefore wait upon him, put your trust in him, be of good courage, he

shall strengthen your hearts, and deliver both you and me out of all our troubles. This passage then will not at all apply to Mr. F.'s point. I mean it will by no means bear him out in his doctrine of spiritual trust and special faith being commanded to wicked and unregenerate men.

Mr. F. says, p. 46, "It is certainly impossible in the nature of things, that any one should really trust in Christ until he is really dead to the law, that is, till he ceaseth to trust in himself; but surely that does not prove that he ought not to leave the one and cleave to the other. Is it not every one's duty to be dead to the law? Surely, since man has broke the terms of the first covenant, it is not now his duty to expect life from it." That man ought not to expect life by the law, since God has declared, and his own conscience must tell him, he has broken it; and that as Christ is so plainly revealed to be the only Saviour, that he ought not to expect life and salvation from any other quarter, is what I readily grant. "The mysteries of redemption by Christ (says Mr. Brine) are expressed in language which is not above the capacities of men; and therefore they are able to perceive the *truth* of those mysteries, though they are not capable of understanding the *real* nature of them without an additional supernatural revelation, or illumination of the mind is graciously vouchsafed to them" (Motives to Love and Unity, p. 40); and that men ought to pay a reverential regard to the truths of the gospel, and not reject them as idle tales, is what must be allowed. But what then? Does it follow that men in general *ought*, that it is their duty to trust in Christ for salvation, by special faith, an a divine and steady confidence? I think not. "But," says Mr. F. "every man has a warrant *so* to trust in Christ" (p. 47): and where is it? Why, two scriptures are brought; "that declaration, whosoever will, let him come" (says our author) "is a sufficient one." But this encouragement surely is limited—it is whosoever *will*: now all have not a will; therefore it is not a warrant for every man.—The next text mentioned is, "and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." This, says Mr. F. "is another as sufficient;" but is not this limited to the elect, who are by efficacious grace brought and made willing to come? "All that the Father hath given me shall come, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." Here's election asserted; here is the certainty of the call of the elect declared, "*they shall come*;" and here is the encouragement for all those who do come; "they shall in no wise be cast out." But where is the warrant to call *every* man to come? I confess, I have not penetration enough to discover it.

But I think, Sir, I have said enough on Mr. F.'s first proposition. I mean, I have made use of words enough, whether the arguments are sufficient to set it aside I must leave you to judge.

I now remain

Affectionately yours.

Letter VII.

Dear Sir,

Give me leave now to make a few remarks on Mr. Fuller's **Second Proposition**; which is this, "*Every man is bound cordially to receive and heartily to approve whatever God reveals*" (p. 49). If Mr. F. means by receiving, no more than crediting, I agree with him. But if he means by receiving, a possessing, or receiving into the heart, I very much disagree with him. God reveals the glorious doctrine of adoption: I think every man ought to credit it; but I do not think every man is bound to receive the spirit of adoption. God reveals Christ as the only way of salvation: I think every man ought to credit it; but I cannot think every man is bound to have Christ in him, the hope of glory. Yet this is what Mr. F. advances when he says, "it is every one's duty to believe in him with a saving faith;" for as I told you in Letter 3rd, true faith brings Christ into the soul, and transforms the soul into the image of Christ. Such a reception of Christ whom God reveals, I cannot for a moment imagine every man is bound to. Mr. F. asks, p. 50, "Is he at liberty to think unjustly concerning him, to prefer his idols before him; or set up another way of salvation than that which God hath appointed in opposition to him?"—He further adds, "to imagine that they *ought not* to think so much as a *good thought* of him, but are *right* in judging him to have *no form nor comeliness, nor beauty that they should desire him*, one should think must shock every sentiment of love and loyalty in an upright heart." I am astonished at Mr. F.'s insinuation here, against those who differ from him. He knows it was never asserted, or even imagined by them, that men *ought* to think unjustly of Christ—prefer their idols before him—set up another way of salvation in opposition to God—and that they *ought not*—to think so much as a *good thought* of him—but are *right* in judging him to have no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty.—He knows to the contrary, for he has read what Mr. Brine asserts in his motives to Love and Unity among Calvinists, viz. that, "An opposition to and rejection of God's appointed way of salvation by Jesus Christ as unfit, yea, as folly, is in the heart of every unregenerate man, and for this he stands righteously condemned by the first covenant: for that covenant requires men not only to believe those truths which God reveals; but also that they are worthy of himself, or becoming his goodness, holiness, and wisdom" (Motives to Love and Unity, p. 32). Now after Mr. F. has seen this declaration, which, I suppose, expresses the sentiments of those in general who oppose his ideas of faith; for him to throw out to the world such a false representation of their ideas, as in the words just cited, is *illiberal, and very unbecoming*. There are several intimations of this kind in a very few pages. Mr. F. endeavours to set those who differ from him in the most disagreeable light, as though their sentiments led them to imagine the sinner "does

right in disapproving God's plan, and in not being willing that God should be glorified in the highest, their lusts crucified, and their pride abased," etc. But such intimations are not worthy an answer, and therefore I leave them.

Considering the gospel as a glorious revelation of God, and evidently stamped with divine authority, I do think every man is bound cordially to receive it, and heartily to approve of it, as a revelation worthy of himself: for the pure, holy and good law of God by no means allows, but condemns all disregard and opposition to its glorious author and giver. But as neither law nor gospel give any intimation that true special faith in Christ is the duty of all men, I do not think those who are destitute of it shew, on account thereof, any disregard to the authority of God, and therefore are not condemned for the want of it.

Having given you my sentiments on this head, and informed you how far I agree with Mr. F. and how far not, I proceed to the **Third Proposition**, which is this: "*The gospel, though it be no law, but a message of pure grace, yet virtually requires such an obedience to it, which includes saving faith*" (p. 57).

And here are two things offered in proof of this. The first is, The nature of the gospel: "it is an *embassy*, an embassy of peace, publishing a way wherein God can and will make peace with sinners on terms infinitely honourable to himself and advantageous to them" (p. 58). I cannot help saying I think here is a capital mistake. For the gospel does not appear to me to be a publication of a way wherein God *can* and *will*, but a publication of a way wherein he *has* made peace; what else means the apostle, when he says, 2 Cor. 5:18, "All things are of God, who *hath* reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" and again, ver. 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." The work is done. And this is the sum and glory of the gospel; and to preach the gospel, is to publish and proclaim peace and reconciliation made by the blood of the cross, as the fruit of everlasting love, and the ancient settlements in the council and covenant of peace, and not a proposing peace to men on certain conditions to be performed by them, or an "offering through Christ, a reconciliation to the world, and promising them who would believe in him an absolution from their past offences," as Dr. Whitby expresses it (Quot. From Whitby in Dr. Gill's Cause of God and Truth, 4to, p. 40), and as Mr. F.'s words seem to intimate.—Much stress is laid on the last clause of v. 20, "Be ye reconciled to God;" and no less than five pages taken up in endeavouring to prove it an address to unregenerate sinners; and after all I think he is very far from establishing his point. It is acknowledged by Mr. F. that "this passage of scripture has been though totally inapplicable to the subject, because it is supposed to be *an address to the church at Corinth*, who were considered by the apostle as believers; and therefore it is thought must mean a being reconciled to *providence*, or to the *discipline* and *ordinances* of Christ, or something of that

nature, and so can have nothing to do with unregenerate sinners” (p. 60). I own I am fully of that mind, and am not displeased to find Calvin (Instit. B. 3. ch. 4. sect. 27), Gill (Expos. on the Text), Perkins (Vol. 3. p. 301 of his Works), Hussey (Oper. of Grace, but no Offers, p. 270 and 341), and others of the same opinion.—That the apostle is addressing the church at Corinth I think is plain, and such who were reconciled, as ver. 18, God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus. Christ. So again ver. 21, the apostle assigns as a reason why he would have them reconciled, *for* he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.—Now the apostle must consider these persons as believers, or he could not say Christ was made sin for them. And when he considered them in this view as believers, as persons reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, as those for whom Christ had been made sin, and who had been made the righteousness of God in him, he could but consider it right to exhort, persuade and beseech them to be reconciled to all the dispensations of divine providence towards them, as they might rest satisfied all the Lord’s dealings with them would issue well ;and that if they were afflicted as he and the rest of the apostles were, yet (saith he) in chap. 4:17, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And though while we are in this tabernacle we groan, being burdened, yet we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, chap. 5:1.”—These considerations reconcile *us* to all the dispensations of providence, however afflictive, and we as ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, from the consideration of what he has done for you in his grace, to be reconciled to all he does in his providence.—Or else, as Mr. Hussey intimates, it is to be considered as an exhortation to be reconciled to the orders of God’s house: “These Corinthians were not come clean out from occasional conformity with the Pagan world; as is manifest in the next chapter, ver. 15-18, and as in a former epistle he had noticed some abuses and irregularities amongst them, at or before the Lord’s supper, so he writes to them here that they might be ashamed and mind their conduct, as if he had said, now saints, you see your relation, learn your duty. Be reconciled to the king in the orders of his house” (Oper. of Grace, p. 343). And in another place he observes, the “text speaketh evidently of the new creature’s act, in reference to Christ as king in his own throne at Zion, and to be the absolute master of church government and gospel holiness, and good orders in his house, which (its known) the Corinthians, when Paul wrote to ’em, needed enough;” and he adds, “Now faith and order must not be parted, and if souls are under the blood of Christ, and yet do not honour the scepter, we must speak to these as new born, after another manner than we must speak to such sinners as are not begotten by his blood, and with the apostle must say

to saints, Be you reconciled to Christ; but how to Christ?—to Christ as Lord, as well as reconciled to Christ as priest” (Ibid. p. 269).—Upon the whole it does appear clear to me that, as Calvin expresses it, “The embassy which Paul so honourably extolleth, I beseech you in the name of God, be ye reconciled to God, is not directed to *strangers*, but to them that had been already regenerate” (Institut. B. 3. ch. 4. sect. 27).

I cannot help just noticing here what Mr. F. observes, p. 64, that probably one thing which has contributed to cause this passage to be misunderstood is the supplement *you*, which the translators have put three times in the 20th verse; which, he says, “might have been better without them; or if it must have been supplied, the word *men* might have better conveyed the apostle’s idea.” Mr. F. should have said, it would have better conveyed *his* idea: and if the supplement had but been *unregenerate men*, it would still have been stronger, and so conveyed his idea still better; but I suppose Mr. F. thought a proposal of such a supplement would have been too barefaced. I now leave this part by observing the long, laboured harangue of 5 pages, and the wish to alter the supplement, shews to what shifts Mr. F. is put in order to make this text suit his purpose.

I now proceed to the second proof of the Third Proposition, which is, that faith is called *obedience*, “They are described as *obeying* the gospel, obeying the truth and obeying Christ.” Now, says Mr. F., “It is generally supposed, that nothing deserves the name of obedience, but what is a conformity to some duty. If therefore faith were not their duty previous to believing, that believing could not with propriety be termed obedience” (p. 59). To which I answer, the passages referred to by Mr. F. none of them prove faith to be an act of obedience, they only shew that obedience is the fruit of faith. The passage in Rom. 1:5, “By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith,” must, I think, to every common understanding, clearly appear to point out the grand design of the gospel ministry, which is (through the blessing of the Holy Spirit) to bring men to obedience to Christ, the object of faith, and to the doctrine of faith. And when faith is produced in the soul, evangelical obedience follows; faith must be prior to obedience, I mean evangelical and acceptable obedience; for without faith it is impossible to please God. “Those acts of holy obedience (says an excellent writer) which the subjects of supernatural faith yield unto God, are fruits of that faith, and accompany it: but they are not that faith itself; or, that faith does not consist in acts of obedience, though acts of obedience flow from that excellent grace” (Animadversions upon the Letters on Theron and Aspasio, p. 34).—_But, says Mr. F. sinners are punished for disobedience; and produces two texts, 2 Thess. 1:8-9, “Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of the Lord.”—And 1 Pet. 4:17, “what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”—To which I reply, there is a reverential and obedient attention due to the gospel, as a revelation from God, stamped with divine authority, and every way worthy of himself; and where this is neglected, as it was by the unbelieving Jews, who despised and rejected it as folly, and not worthy of their attention, as well as by sinners in every age, it undoubtedly aggravates their sin, and will increase their punishment. But what has this to do with special faith, or with that evangelical and spiritual obedience of heart and life, which flows from the grace of faith in the soul?—However, as I have before given my thoughts on this subject, I take leave of the Third Proposition, and hope, Sir, you are satisfied with what has been said, and that you are convinced by this time, Mr. F. is entirely mistaken in his assertion, “That the gospel, though it be no law, but a message of pure grace, yet virtually requires such an obedience to it, which includes saving faith.”

I remain
Yours.

Letter VIII.

Dear Sir,

Give me leave now to enter on the **Fourth Proposition**, which is worded thus, “*The want of faith in Christ is ascribed in the scriptures to men’s depravity, and is itself there represented as a heinous sin*” (p. 65).—This wants proof. The scriptures appear to me to ascribe the want of faith to the *sovereign will and purpose of God*, and *the natural incapacity of man*, and therefore surely man is no more chargeable with criminality in not believing, than he is in not being elected, redeemed, or regenerated.

Is it not expressly said, John 10:26, “Ye believe not, *because ye are not of my sheep;*” how very plain are these words. How clearly do they prove the grand reason of these persons not having faith, was, their not being predestinated and chosen to happiness. Thus speaks Mr. Henry, on the passage, “you are not designed to be my followers, you are not of those that were given me by my Father to be brought to grace and glory. You are not of the number of the elect, and your unbelief, if you persist in it, will be a certain evidence you are not.” Had they been elected, they would, they must have believed, agreeable to Acts 13:48. “As many as were ordained to eternal life believe;” from which it appears that faith is the fruit, effect, and consequence of election, or in other words, that electing love is the grand cause, the glorious spring and source of faith, and non-election the reason of a sinner’s not believing. Therefore, as none will be condemned for not being elected, so none will be condemned for not having special faith: It is cruelty to men, it is dishonourable to, and casting the most unworthy reflection on God to suppose it.

Another reason is, man’s *natural incapacity*.—How very clearly revealed is this. Sacred writ every where abounds with passages to this purpose. That is no inconsiderable one in John 6:55. “No man *can* come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him.”—Does not this seem to strike you at once, that our Lord is here representing man’s natural inability? That he has no more *power* than *will* to come? Mr. F. indeed says, “the *cannot* itself consist in a *will not*,” or, “in other words, in the want of a *heart* to come to Christ, with a settled aversion to him;” and he moreover adds, “the inability of men to come to Christ is doubtless by this expression represented as being *total*, which we never deny” (p. 70); what inconsistency is here! First, this gentleman asserts all the inability of man lies in his *will* and then immediately says, he never denied the inability of man being *total*. Surely, Sir, every one must see who reads Mr. F.’s book, that throughout he is attempting to prove his inability is but *partial*: that it all lies in the will.—All I contend for is the *total* inability of man to believe. Mr. F. says, this is what he never

denied, and yet fills up 196 pages which tend to the contrary. How he can clear up this inconsistency I am at a loss to determine. I must leave it to himself.

I cannot help quoting here a passage from Mr. Brine, which is full to the purpose: “Two things are true of us all in a natural state: one is, that we cannot come to Christ: the other is, that we will not come to him. Say some, *our cannot consists in a will not*; but it is a very great mistake; they are distinct things, and not the same. We cannot, as we are destitute of a principle of life; and we will not as we are the subjects of vicious habits, which determine us against such an act. I am sorry to find any to confound things that are so manifestly distinct, with a view to give countenance to what may with far less danger be given up, than that of our natural inability to act faith on Christ; what opinion soever requires the denial of our want of power to believe, to support it, ought eternally to sink; for true it is, we are *dead*, and cannot act spiritually, no, not in the least degree” (Sermon at Ordination of Mr. John Ryland, p. 16).

I shall now proceed to observe, our Lord says, men *cannot* come except the father draw them. That is sufficient for me.—And the apostle Paul is of the same mind with his divine master, 1 Cor. 2:14. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; neither *can* he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.” Now if there be any meaning in words, man’s natural incapacity is here asserted. By the natural man we are undoubtedly to understand the unregenerate man, and the wise philosopher too, the scribe, the disputer of this world, which the apostle mentions in the preceding chapter, ver. 20, the man of the brightest parts, of the highest attainments in nature, of the greatest natural abilities. The person here spoken of, says Dr. Owen, “is one that hath all that is or can be derived from the first Adam, one endowed with a rational soul, and who hath the use and exercise of all its rational faculties” (Owen on the Spirit, p. 217). This man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, that is, the glorious mysterious of the everlasting gospel, the hidden wisdom, as the apostle calls it in verse 7, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. These things he receives not, that is, in the love of them. Does not give them a place in his heart: for they are foolishness unto him, they appear absurd, ridiculous, and contrary to reason: neither *can* he know them. He is but a *natural* man; these things are *spiritual*, and so are *spiritually* discerned. He wants a capacity, a principle suited to the objects revealed, which is absolutely necessary for the reception of them, and this he is destitute of, being but a *natural* man, and therefore he *cannot* as such know them. Such a view had Calvin; these are his words, “The natural man *cannot* perceive those things that are of the spirit of God: they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually judged. Whom doth he call natural? Even him that stays upon the light of nature. He, I say, comprehendeth

nothing in the spiritual mysteries of God. Why so? Is it because by slothfulness he neglecteth it? Nay, rather although he would travel never so much, he can do nothing, because forsooth they are spiritually judged. What meaneth that? Because being utterly hidden from the sight of man, they are opened by the only revelation of the spirit: so that they are reckoned for folly where the spirit of God giveth light:" and of the same mind was Dr. Goodwin; after quoting these words of the apostle he thus comments on them, "All cometh to this, that there must be a new principle put into the understanding of a man, not only a new light come in, but a new principle, if you would have this man understand spiritual things aright; and that this is the scope I quote this place for,--that the understanding must be altered, a new principle must be put into it, a new habit, as we call it; all the expressions do carry it to that sense; for, first he saith, if he be not made spiritual, he cannot receive spiritual things, that is, he wants a *capacity*. It is such a phrase as if you would speak to a deaf man, you will say, he cannot receive what you say, for he wanteth a faculty of hearing. If you bring a blind man into the sun, he cannot receive the light of it, for he wants a natural faculty so to do. He expresseth it in a way of nature, he is not capable of it, which argueth, I say, a want of a principle whereby to do it, and not only so, but he saith in the following words, he cannot know them; he wants a *power*, for the apostle speaks suitably here to philosophical principles. That as we say in philosophy, nothing can work but it must have a principle of working, a man cannot see without the faculty of seeing: so this man wants a faculty of knowing spiritual things, therefore he cannot know them" (Goodwin's Works, Vol. 1. p. 323)

That human depravity, that ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, aversion to God, and the like, often prevent a sinner's attending to the gospel, which the Holy Spirit makes use of as a mean to convey faith into the hearts of his people, for faith cometh by hearing, Rom. 10:17, and that these things are of a criminal nature is certain; but what then? Does this prove faith a duty, and the want of it a sin, for which man shall be damned? By no means; so far as human depravity prevails man is criminal, and the things aforementioned prevailing are certain evidences of the person's being destitute of special faith; but to say that these things are an "*absolute bar to faith*," as Mr. F. does, p. 67, is a great mistake, neither these things, nor a thousand more worse things, if worse can be named, shall be an "absolute bar" to any elect soul's believe.

Shall add no more at present, but that

I am

Ever yours.

Letter IX.

Dear Sir,

It is high time to come to the **Fifth Proposition**, which is expressed thus: “*God has threatened and inflicted the most awful punishments on men for their not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ*” (p. 74).—The first passage brought in proof is Mark 16:16. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” I think the quotation Mr. F. makes from Mr. Brine, is indeed a sufficient answer to this text, viz. “As it is not inferable from that declaration, that the faith of believers is the procuring cause of their salvation, so it is not to be inferred from thence that the want of that special faith in unbelievers is the procuring cause of their damnation. That declaration contains in it the descriptive characters of those who are saved, and of those who are damned; but it assigns not special faith to be the procuring cause of the salvation of the former, nor the want of it to be the procuring cause of the damnation of the latter” (Motives to L. and U. p. 31, 32). Mr. F. however, says in answer, “If this mode of reasoning were admitted, should not we find it very difficult to prove anything being evil from the threatenings of God against it? Yea (saith he) it might in time be rendered doubtful whether *sin itself* is the procuring cause of men’s damnation” (p. 75). I am astonished at such a conclusion being drawn from what I think good argument.—Mr. F. here quotes a variety of passages of scripture, and then applying Mr. Brine’s reasoning, he imagines he has entirely set it aside: but I think he has utterly failed. Says Mr. F. “we are told Ps. 147:6, The Lord lifteth up the meek, he casteth the wicked down to the ground; but it might be said, as the meekness of the former is not the procuring cause of his being lifted up, so it cannot be from hence inferred that the wickedness of the latter is the procuring cause of his being cast down. Again in Ps. 145:20 we read, The Lord preserveth all that love him; but the wicked will he destroy. But it might be said, as the love of the one is not the procuring cause of his preservation, so it cannot be proved from hence that the wickedness of the other is the procuring cause of his destruction. That these declarations contain only the descriptive characters of those who are saved, and of those who perish” (p. 75 and 76). To which I answer, it is a fact, that these passages only contain the descriptive characters of the saved and lost, as the first cited does; but then shall we say it is difficult to prove wickedness evil, and sin the procuring cause of damnation? No; though these scriptures do not declare it, there are others which positively do, as Ps. 107:33, 34, “He turns rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground, a fruitful land into barrenness, *for the wickedness* of them that dwell therein.” Prov. 13:6, “Wickedness overthroweth the sinner.” Isa. 57:17, “*For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him;*” and the apostle

says plainly, Rom. 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." From hence it appears clear, that it is Mr. F.'s reasoning, and not Mr. Brine's, that falls to the ground. We have no occasion to go to those passages of scripture which contain only a descriptive character of those who are damned to prove sin is the cause of damnation, since there are plenty of scriptures which positively assert it; but where is the scripture which positively asserts a want of special faith to be the cause of damnation?—Where? Why Mr. F. thinks he has found it. It is John 3:18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, *because* he hath not believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God." This text he seems to exult in, and with it to triumph over all his opposers. "The passage (says he) which was last considered, was thought to prove nothing; because, though it declared that he that believeth not should be damned, yet it did not assign the want of faith as the procuring cause of damnation; but that cannot be pleaded here. Here is expressly said, such are condemned *because* they have not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (p. 77). But this passage, like the other, contains nothing more than a descriptive character of persons who are not, and who are condemned. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but I presume his believing on him is not the cause of his not being condemned, but his union to Christ, and being interested in his obedience and death is what secures him from condemnation. And his believing is no more than an evidence of his union and interest in him: so the not believing, or continuing in unbelief, is an evidence of a person's not being in Christ and so of his being under condemnation. Great stress indeed is laid on the word *because*, which is put in capitals, and is considered as a very strong proof that his unbelief is the cause of condemnation; but if Mr. F. has no better argument than this to support his cause, it must sing, for this will not bear up. In John 16:27, the same word is used, where Christ addressing his disciples says, "The Father himself loveth you, *because* ye have loved me." Now, as has been observed by a late writer, "this cannot be understood of their love being any foundation, or moving cause of the Father's love, to which the words of the apostle John had been a direct contradiction, I John 4:10, Not that we loved God, but he loved us. But through their love to Christ; or, because they loved Christ, it appeared the Father had loved, and drawn them to his Son, by the cords of his everlasting love, we loved him because he first loved us" (Johnson's Faith of God's elect, p. 163-164). Now then as in the one place the love of the disciples (though the word *because* is before it) is nothing more than an evidence of interest in the Father's love; so in the other, the want of special faith (though the word *because* is before it) is nothing more than an evidence of being under condemnation. And in the next verse our Lord informs us of the cause of condemnation; "and this is the condemnation,"—that is the cause of it (not that they had not special faith) but that though light was come into the world,

even the glorious Messiah, the sum and substance of the types, shadows, and prophecies, yet they loved darkness rather than light, that is, the greater part of them, as Dr. Gill expresses it, “preferred the darkness of the ceremonial law, and the Mosaic dispensation, and even the traditions of the elders, before the gospel revelation made by Jesus Christ.” They persisted in opposing and rejecting the Messiah, and all his sayings, because their deeds were evil; all which is indeed cause enough for condemnation, without adding thereto the want of special faith, which it had not pleased God to bestow upon them.

As to the next scripture, Luke 19:27, “But those mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me,” it is nothing to the purpose. Our Lord is there evidently speaking of himself as the king Messiah, whom I have all along supposed the Jews ought to have received, having sufficient testimony of his being sent of God; and their rejecting of him was a very sufficient reason for their being slain before him.

The last text quoted to support this fifth proposition is 2 Thess. 2:10-12, where the coming of antichrist is said to be “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Now, says Mr. F., “This plainly intimates, that their not *receiving the love of the truth*, or, which is the same thing, not believing with such a faith as that to which salvation is promised, is here assigned as the *cause* of their being given up of God, and carried away with all deceivableness of unrighteousness—of God’s sending them strong delusions that they should believe a lie, and be damned” (p. 79). I have here to observe that what Mr. F. asserts to be *plainly* intimated, doth not appear altogether so plain to me. The sense of the text seems to be this: That antichrist should come, as is expressed, with all deceivableness or righteousness; but then his deceptions should only have place in them that *perish*, or those and those only should be finally deceived by him. He would deceive, if possible, the very elect; but that is impossible. They are only the non-elect, the reprobates, that shall be totally seduced, here spoken of as those that perish; but then it might be asked, who are these? How shall they be known? By what shall they be made manifest? Whence shall it appear there are such persons who shall utterly perish? Why, says the apostle, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. This is the grand evidence of interest in salvation; and those who have it not are evidently of that number who perish. And for this cause, viz. their being in a perishing state, already in a state of condemnation as sinners, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that is, God shall (according to his sovereign will) give them up to

judicial blindness and hardness of heart, leaving them to their own hearts' lusts, whereby they would become the willing followers of antichrist, embracing his absurd doctrines and wicked practices, that they all might be damned who give evidence of their lost condition in that they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Viewing the words thus, what can you perceive in them to prove "God has threatened and inflicted the most awful punishments on men for their not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ."—Leaving what I have written on this fifth proposition to your candid perusal—

I remain

Most cordially

Yours.

Letter X.

Dear Sir,

I am now come to the **sixth proposition**, which is expressed in these words, “*Seeing other graces, or spiritual dispositions, with which salvation is connected, are represented as the duties of men in general, there is no reason why faith should not be the same.*”

Here Mr. F. proceeds to determine the meaning of spiritual acts, and spiritual dispositions, and says, “the scripture appears to me by the term *spiritual*, when applied to the dispositions of the mind, to mean *truly holy*, as opposed to *carnal*,” and further adds, “whenever applied to the dispositions of the mind; *spiritual* stands opposed to *carnal*; and that in the *criminal* sense of the word.” Here is a mistake, for *spiritual* in 1 Cor. 2:14 is opposed to *natural*. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, etc., why? Because they are spiritually discerned.” That passage has been largely considered in Letter 8. Mr. F. says further, “It appears to me that the scripture knows nothing of *natural* holiness as distinguished from *spiritual* holiness. That it knows of one kind of *real* holiness, and that is conformity to the holy law of God.”

That there is a difference between *natural* and *spiritual* holiness, I think a little consideration will evince. *Natural holiness* was what Adam possessed in paradise, it was what he was created with, it was his very nature, and, had he stood, the same holiness would have been conveyed by natural generation to his posterity: not so *spiritual holiness*. It is natural to no man; it never was; it is far above nature; it flows from union to Christ; and the immediate efficacious and distinguishing operations of the holy spirit on the heart, whereby the sinner is brought into a glorious conformity to the image of the son of God, to which he was predestinated, 1 Cor. 1:30, 2 Cor. 3:18, Rom. 8:29.—*Natural holiness* consists in a conformity to the holy law of God. *Spiritual holiness* consists in a conformity to the law and gospel too: natural holiness was liable to be lost, and was lost.—But spiritual holiness never was liable to be, never was, never can be lost.—natural holiness might have been, and would have been conveyed by natural generation, to the posterity of Adam, had he stood: no so spiritual holiness.

I cannot help quoting here a few passages from Dr. Owen’s excellent discourse on the Holy Spirit, who sets this matter in a much clearer light than I am capable of. “It is alleged (says he) that religion before the entrance of sin and under the gospel is one and the same, and therefore there is no difference between the duties of obedience required in the one and the other: And it is true that they are so far the same, as that they have the same author, the same object, the same end, and so also had the religion under the law, which was therefore so far the same with

them. But that they are the same as to all the acts of our obedience, and the manner of their performance, is a vain imagination. Is there no *alteration* made in religion by the *interposition* of the person of Christ to be incarnate, and his mediation? No augmentation of the object of faith? No change in the abolishing of the old covenant, and the establishment of the new; the covenant between God and man being that which gives the especial form and kind unto religion; the measure and denomination of it? No alterations in the principles, aids, assistances, and whole nature of our obedience unto God? The whole mystery of godliness must be renounced, if we intend to give way unto such imaginations” (Owen on Spirit, p. 461). He observes again, “that which principally differenceth *evangelical holiness*, with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ, from all other *natural* or *moral* habits or duties, and whereby he is made sanctification unto us, is, that from him, his person as our head, the principle of *spiritual* life and holiness in believers is derived; and by virtue of their union with him, real supplies of spiritual strength and grace, whereby their holiness is preserved, maintained, and increased, are constantly communicated unto them” (ibid. p. 450).—And further speaking of Christ’s being made unto us sanctification, he says, “He is so, because the rule and measure of holiness unto us, the instrument of working it in us, is his word and doctrine, which he taught the church as the great prophet of it. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The inbred dictates of the light and law of nature, in their greatest purity, are not the rule or measure of this holiness; much less are these rules and maxims, which men deduce, partly right, and partly wrong from them, of any such use; nor is the written law itself so. It is the rule of original holiness, but not the adequate rule of that holiness, whereunto we are restored by Christ; neither are both these in conjunction, the dictates of nature, and the law written, the instrument of working holiness in us: but it is the doctrine of the gospel, which is the adequate rule and immediate instrument of it” (ib. p. 445).

I shall add no more on this head, especially as Mr. F. soon gives it up, by saying, “If this (that is the distinction between natural and spiritual holiness) however plain it may appear to me, should not be universally allowed, I may go upon a more undisputed ground” (p. 81). And what ground is this? Why says Mr. F., “The criterion by which I shall all along judge of what are spiritual dispositions, will be their having the promise of spiritual blessings. Whether these dispositions be incumbent on carnal men, let us now enquire.” Mr. F. has before given us his idea of spiritual dispositions: he says they are *truly holy*, as opposed to carnal, p. 80.

But I think this is not a sufficient definition of them; as a person may have truly holy dispositions, and yet not spiritual ones; I mean *evangelically spiritual*. For instance, Adam in a state of innocence, had truly holy dispositions; he loved, feared, and worshiped God, and his disposition so to do was truly holy; yet not

evangelically spiritual. In a sense indeed they were spiritual, as the object he so loved, feared, and adored was God, who is a spirit; and as they were dispositions created in his holy soul, yet at the same time, they were not spiritual in a gospel sense.—What then, you will say, do you mean by spiritual dispositions? I answer, such dispositions as are the consequence of spiritual life, infused into the soul, which life (to use the words of another) “as unto the special nature of it, is specified and discerned from a life of any other kind, in that the fullness of it is communicated to the Lord Jesus Christ as mediator, Col. 1:19. And from his fullness we do receive it, John 1:16, and the fountain of this life being in God, and the fullness of it laid up in Christ Jesus for us: he communicates the power and principle of it unto us, by the Holy Ghost. Rom. 8:11. But yet he doth it so, as to derive it unto us from Jesus Christ. Eph. 4:15-16. For he is the life, and without him or power communicated from him, we can do nothing. John 15:5” (Owen on spirit, B. 3. ch. 4). Such a life had not Adam, and consequently had not the dispositions which accompany that life, nor could he perform those acts which such a life, and such dispositions, must necessarily precede. This is a life, and these are dispositions which flow only from sovereign grace and new covenant love, and are designed for, and given only to the elect.

In order to prove spiritual dispositions are incumbent on carnal men it is observed “the law is expressly said to be spiritual” (p. 81). This is true, and Dr. Gill in the words quoted by Mr. F. gives us the reason why it may be called so, viz. “because it comes from the spirit of God, and reaches to the spirit of man; it requires truth in the inward parts; spiritual service and obedience, etc.—These last words *spiritual service and obedience*, Mr. F. has put in capitals, because I suppose he imagines this sentence expresses his own sentiments; but he is mistaken, for the Doctor afterwards explains what he means by the law, requiring *spiritual service and obedience*, viz. “a serving it with our minds; a worshipping God in spirit and in truth, a loving him with all our hearts and souls, as well as a performance of all the outward acts of religion and duty” (Expos. on Rom. 7:14). The Doctor does not mean by this expression, that the law requires those spiritual principles, dispositions, and acts, which flow from a spiritual life from Christ Jesus, being infused into the soul. He tells us plainly what are his ideas respecting the law’s requiring faith in answer to this question, “whether faith is a duty of the moral law, or is it to be referred to the gospel?”—To which he replies, “that as the law, is not of faith, so faith is not of the law. There is a faith indeed, which the law requires, and obliges to, namely, faith and trust in God, as the God of nature and providence: for as both the law of nature, and the law of Moses, shew there is a God, and who is to be worshiped, they both require a belief of him, and trust and confidence in him, which is one part of the worship of him enjoined therein: moreover, the law obliges

men to give credit to any revelation of the mind and will of God he has made, or should think fit to make unto them at any time; but as for special faith in Christ as a Saviour, or a believing in him to the saving of the soul, this the law knows nothing of, nor does it make it known. This kind of faith neither comes by the ministration of it, nor does it direct to Christ, the object of it, nor give any encouragement to believe in him on the above account” (Body of Div. Vol. 2. p. 599).

That the law is spiritual, as it reaches the spirit, and requires of man love to God with all his heart, soul, and spirit, is granted; and so far as man drops short of the requirements of the moral law, he is brought under condemnation. And this may serve as an answer to Mr. F.’s questions in p. 84, “Is any internal religion now required of men towards God, or is it not? Are they obliged to worship God with their bodies only? And is it right that their hearts should be far from him?” I reply, the law requires the heart, it calls for sincerity and truth; and therefore hypocrisy and pretence cannot be right: nay, such service is condemned by the law. But what are these quotations to the purpose? Why, it is asked “wherein do these dispositions differ from those which are spiritually good?” (p. 84). I have already answered this, and I say again, those dispositions which are spiritually good, are what flow from a spiritual life infused into the soul; which life is derived from Christ, and is communicated by the Holy Ghost. Such a life, man has not by nature, such a life man never had in innocence; and therefore such dispositions cannot be required of him. These dispositions the law does not demand; they are only what the gospel bestows, or, in other words, what the spirit through the gospel communicates. The apostle in Rom. 7:6 says, “but now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in *newness of spirit*, and not in the *oldness of the letter*.”

Now if, as Mr. F. asserts, the same spiritual “good dispositions which are *bestowed* by the gospel, are *required* by the law, and are incumbent on men in general” (p. 86), there is no propriety in Paul’s words; for according to this, when these dispositions are bestowed on a man, he does but act as he originally acted; he does only what the law requires, and consequently serves in the *oldness of the letter*. According to Mr. F., there is “no alteration made in religion, by the interposition of the person of Christ, to be incarnate and his mediation: no change in the abolishing of the old covenant, and the establishment of the new: no alteration in the nature of our obedience:” which seems very contrary to the inspired writer, who expressly says of himself and other believers, “we serve in *newness of spirit*, and not in the *oldness of the letter*.”

On the whole, if spiritual dispositions, which lead to spiritual obedience, differ from *natural* and *truly holy* dispositions, and were what Adam never had (as I shall endeavour more clearly to shew by and by) nor what the law requires, and are what

no man would ever have possessed, had it not been for the undertaking of Christ, and work of the Holy Spirit, who bestows them in a way of sovereign and distinguishing grace on the elect only, I conclude they are not incumbent on unregenerate men, nor are they any where represented as the duties of men in general; and consequently there is no reason to assert that *special faith* is required of all men.

I conclude at present, wishing Mr. Fuller, you, and myself may be at last found partakers of that spiritual life, and those spiritual dispositions, which flow from the glorious fullness of Christ, and by which the church itself becomes the fullness of him that filleth all in all, Eph. 1:23.

I remain,

Yours.

Letter XI.

Dear Sir,

I shall now, by your leave, make a few remarks on the **third part** of Mr. F.'s book, wherein some objections to his scheme are considered; he thinks he has sufficiently answered them; I think not. He begins with observing, "These objections *originated* with *Arminius*, or his followers, and have been answered long ago, by the Calvinists in their writings against them" (p. 109). By which he would insinuate to his readers, all who oppose his ideas of faith, are *Arminians*. But I make no doubt, Sir, you at once see the fallacy of this, and with me conclude it needs no refutation.

I proceed to these objections: the first is, "Concerning the Nature of that Divine Principle which Adam Possessed" (p. 112)

This objection has been stated, says Mr. F. in the following manner, "the holy principle con-natural to Adam, and con-created with him, was not suited to live unto God, through a mediator: that kind of life was above the extent of his powers, though perfect; and therefore, as he in a state of integrity, had not a capacity of living unto God, agreeable to the nature of the new covenant, it is apprehended that his posterity, while under the first covenant are not commanded to live unto God, in that sort, or in other words, to live by faith on God, through a mediator" (Mot. to L. and U. p. 40, 41). This is a quotation from Mr. Brine; Mr. F. endeavours to set aside this objection, by attempting to prove that there is no *essential* difference between the principle of Adam in innocence, and that in believers, which I confess I think is very extraordinary. Dr. Owen, whom Mr. F. often cites, as one on his side the question, differs greatly from him on this subject; he considers there is a very material difference between the one and the other. His words are these, "the principle of this life (meaning the life of Adam in innocence) was wholly and entirely in man himself. It was not the *effect* of another cause, of that which was without him, namely, the goodwill and power of God; but it was left to grow on no other root but what was in man himself. It was wholly implanted in his nature, and therein did its springs lie. Actual excitations by influence of power from God it should have had; for no principle of operation can subsist in an independence of God, nor apply itself unto operation without his concurrence. But in the life whereunto we are renewed by Jesus Christ, the fountain and principle of it is not in ourselves but in him, as one common head unto all that are made partakers of him; he is our life, *Col. 3:3*, and our life (as to the spring and fountain of it) is hid with him in God; for he quickeneth us by his spirit, *Rom. 8:10*, and our spiritual life, as

in us, consists in the vital actings of this spirit of his in us, for without him we can do nothing, *John 15:3*. By virtue hereof we walk in newness of life, *Rom. 6:4*, we live therefore hereby; yet no so much we as Christ liveth in us, *Gal. 2:20*.—He goes on to add, there is a difference between these lives, with respect unto the object of their vital acts. For the life which we now lead by the faith of the son of God, hath sundry objects of its actings, which the other had not: for whereas all the actings of our faith and love, that is, all our obedience, doth respect the revelation that God makes of himself and his will unto us: these are now *new revelations* of God in Christ, and consequently new duties of obedience required of us”(Owen on the Spirit, p. 241, 242).

But how does Mr. F. proceed to establish his point? Why thus, “observe, says he, particularly, 1. The spirit and conduct of Adam in innocence were nothing more nor less than an entire conformity to the moral law of God. 2. The spirit and conduct of Jesus Christ so far as he was the model after which we are formed, were nothing more nor less than an entire conformity to the same divine law. 3. The spirit and conduct of Christians, so far as they are formed after the image of Christ, must be the same, and if so, then how does it appear that their principles should be essentially different?” (p. 117, 118). Let us a little examine this. In the first place, he observes the spirit and conduct of Adam in innocence were nothing more nor less than an entire conformity to the moral law of God. This I grant. The law was then unbroken. But in the second place Mr. F. says, the spirit and conduct of Jesus Christ, so far as he was the model after which we are formed, were nothing more nor less than an entire conformity to the same divine law; and goes on to observe, “Christ went to the end of the law for righteousness, but it does not appear that he went any farther. The superiority of his obedience to that of Adam’s while innocent, laid not in his doing more than the law required; but in the dignity of his person” (p. 117). But is not the obedience of Christ far superior to Adam’s? Does not his being declared to be the end of the law for righteousness suppose it? Yes, it certainly does imply that there is a glorious superiority in it. Did not Christ do more than Adam? Was Adam the end of the law, in the sense Christ was? Could he possibly be so? Verily, no. Christ was the end of a broken law. Adam never was, never could be; Christ was the end, the fulfilling end of the law, as he had a nature conformable to it; so indeed was Adam.—Christ was the end of the law, by the conformity of his life to all its precepts; so indeed was Adam in innocence.—But further, Christ was the end of the law; not only in fulfilling the commandments, but also in the penalty of it, by his sufferings and death; all which is imputed for righteousness to every one that believeth; this is what Adam did not, could not be. Christ suffered (as Mr. Maclaurin in his admirable sermon on the law magnified by the redeemer, expresses it) “*a total execution of the law*. It is not needful to insist to shew, that this is

singular; no other punishment of creatures can be called such. The law is put in execution properly, when all that is threatened is accomplished. Those who are in hell will never have to say that which he said on the cross, "it is finished." It is of him only that can be said, *Dan. 9*, that he made an end of sin, of the punishment of it. He died unto sin," as the apostle expresses it once, *Rom. 6*. "Every wicked man dies for sin. Though we distinguish between a violent and natural death, yet the natural death of every wicked man that dies in unbelief as an execution of divine wrath; he dies for sin. But to die to sin is to put away that burden of sin, which brought death upon us" *Heb. 9:26* (Maclaurin's Serm. on *Isa. 42:21*). Such was the obedience of Christ. Surely then there is a material difference between Adam's conformity to the law, and Christ's being the end of the law for righteousness. Certainly there is a superiority not only in the dignity of his person, but in the obedience itself.

I cannot help but just observing, that I think Mr. F. has mistook the principal meaning of *Psal. 40:8*, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart," which he brings as a proof that the spirit and conduct of Jesus Christ, so far as he was the model after which we are formed, were nothing more nor less than an entire conformity to the moral law.—I do not think the moral law is that which is immediately referred to there, though that may be included. I am ready to imagine, the law there meant is the law concerning the work and office of Mediator, and the particular injunction and command he received of his father to lay down his life and offer up his soul a sacrifice for sinners, which is particularly mentioned in *John 10:17-18*, "Therefore doth my father love me, because I lay down my life," etc. "This commandment have I received of my Father." It is true, the Lord Jesus Christ throughout his life yielded obedience to God, as he was made of a woman, made under the law; but the highest act of obedience to God was his laying down his life; which was the particular and especial command of the Father, and was what rendered him as Mediator so peculiarly acceptable to him. *Therefore* doeth my Father love me. Therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. And therefore, says God, "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death."

I apprehend also Mr. F. has not given the sense, or however the *whole* sense of *Jer. 31:33*, which he quotes in the same page, when he says, "The spirit and conduct of Christians, so far as they are formed after the image of Christ, must be the same; that is, nothing more nor less than an entire conformity of the moral law." For, adds he, "It is not any new law, but the same divine law that is written on their hearts in regeneration, as was written on Adam's heart in his state of innocence."—That the law God promises to put into the inward parts, and write in the heart of his people

includes the moral law, I don't dispute; that he influences the mind to obedience, that he disposes the heart to pay a regard to this law at regeneration, and makes the believer willing to take it as the rule of his life, is a fact. But is this *all* which is meant here? I think not. But that it includes also what the apostle calls the law of the mind, in *Rom. 7:23*, by which I suppose, with Dr. Gill, is meant "the principle of grace wrought in his mind, called the law of it, because it was the governing principle there, which reigns, and will reign in every regenerate person through righteousness unto eternal life, though the law of sin opposes all its force and power against it" (Expos. on *Rom. 7:23*). I would take in all these in that great new covenant promise, and especially as the apostle uses the word in the plural number when he quotes the passage in *Heb. 8:10*, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my *laws* into their mind, and write *them* in their hearts; and I will be to them a God; and they shall be to me a people."—Taking the words in this sense, (and I think it is a just one) it appears the believer possesses more than Adam in innocence, and that his spirit and conduct are more than a conformity to the moral law, notwithstanding Mr. F. ventures to assert to the contrary.

And pray why is it we read of the believer's being predestinated to be *conformed to the image of his Son*.—and, as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the *image of the heavenly*—and why does the apostle speak of *Christ* being formed in the Galatians—and of *Christ* dwelling in the heart by faith, in the Ephesians—if there is no essential difference between the principles in Adam and that in believers? Surely, when Paul speaks of being conformed to the image of *God's Son*, he means more than a being conformed to the image of *Adam*.—Surely he means to intimate that our state by grace is far superior to our state by nature. Dr. Owen tell us, "It was the old pelagian figment, that what we have by nature we have by grace" (Owen on the Spirit, p. 452).

In page 118, it is said, "The *terms* by which our conversion to God is expressed, imply a similarity between the principles lost by sin, and those produced by grace." And Mr. F. begins "first, with observing, we are then said to *return* to God: but how this could be is difficult to conceive, if the state into which we are brought at conversion essentially differs from that which we were in previous to our departure from God." I answer, it is true, at conversion a sinner returns to God; but I apprehend it is equally true he returns with such a principle as he never had previous to his departure: let it be observed, that prior to conversion there must be *regeneration*. A distinction is here necessary, though that distinction Mr. F. has passed unnoticed. IT has been said, and I think with truth, "Regeneration precedes, and may be considered as the foundation and spring of conversion and sanctification. For that is the principle from which both arise. Grace as a principle

of spiritual acts is first communicated, and from that proceeds all acts of a holy spiritual nature, both internal and external. Neither of the latter can be, until the first is wrought. And when that is effected, both the latter certainly follow. In the first, we are merely passive, in conversion and sanctification we are active” (Brine on various subjects, p. 126). And it has also been observed by another, “*Regeneration* is a spiritual change, *conversion* is a spiritual motion. In regeneration there is a power conferred: Conversion is the exercise of this power. In regeneration there is given us a principle to turn; conversion is our actual turning; that is, the principle whereby we are brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace” (Charn. Works, vol. 2. p. 70). And this principle Adam in innocence never had, he never needed it: it is something *new*, and only given to the elect of God, and the want of it will never be the cause of the condemnation of sinners.

As to the terms used in *Titus 3:5*, the *washing* of regeneration, and the *renewing* of the Holy Ghost, mentioned in the same page, I am ready to grant, they suppose man to be in a polluted state, and that at regeneration the soul is restored to a state of purity, but question, whether this regeneration does not mean more than a restoration of man to his original state; I think it does; why else are such phrases as these made use of to describe it?—the *new* man—a *new* heart—a *new* spirit—a *new* creature?—If the believer is a partaker of no other principle than Adam lost by sin, then he is only restored to his *old* state. It is not a *new* man—a *new* heart—a *new* spirit—a *new* creature that he is the subject of and is made,—but it is the *old* man—the *old* heart—the *old* spirit—and the *old* creature restored.—I don’t imagine that a sinner at regeneration has a *new* soul, but I believe that grace makes such a change in the soul, as that there is a difference, and a *very essential* difference between his former and his present state: Yea, between what he as a believer enjoys, and what Adam possessed. I think at the resurrection the same body that dies will be raised, but I think the state in which it will rise will be more than *circumstantially*, it will be *essentially* different from that in which it was laid in the grave. “It is sown in *corruption*, it is raised in *incorruption*; it is sown in *dishonour*, it is raised in *glory*; it is sown in *weakness*, it is raised in *power*; it is sown a *natural* body, it is raised a *spiritual* body.” Now I say, here is an essential difference, except corruption and incorruption; dishonour and glory; weakness and power; natural and spiritual are *essentially* the same.

You shall hear what good old John Bunyan says on this subject. His words are these: “Adam’s state even in innocency, seems to crave for help; wherefore it is manifest that state is short of that we attain by the resurrection of the dead; yea, for as much as his need required earthly help, ‘tis apparent his condition was not heavenly: The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. *Adam in his first estate was not spiritual*: That was not first which is

spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual. Wherefore those that think it enough to attain to the state of Adam in innocency, think it sufficient to be mere *naturalists*; think themselves well, without being made spiritual: yea, let me add, they think it safe standing by a covenant of works; they think themselves happy, though not concerned in a covenant of grace; they think they know enough, though ignorant of a Mediator, and count they have no need of the intercession of Christ.

“Adam stood by a covenant of works; Adam’s kingdom was an earthly paradise; Adam’s excellency was, that he had no need of a Saviour; and Adam’s knowledge was ignorant of Jesus Christ: Adam in his greatest glory wanted earthly comforts: Adam in his innocency was a mere natural man” (Bunyan’s Works, vol. 1. p. 12).”

I conclude this part of the subject, in the words of Mr. Charnock, “As grace excels nature, and Christ surmounts Adam; so much more excellent is the state of a Christian, a real Christian above that of a man. Can there be a greater excellency than to have a divine beauty; a formation of Christ, a proportion of all graces, suited to the imitable perfections of God? Man is an higher creature than others, because he hath an higher principle; a life or reason is more noble than of sense. To live by sense, is to play the part, and live the life of brutes; to live by reason, is to live the life of a man: But he that lives by the spirit, lives the life of God, answers the end of his creation, useth his reason, understanding, will, affection for God, by whom they were first bestowed; acts more nobly, lives more pleasantly, than the greatest angel could do without such a principle. A new creature doth exceed a rational creature, considered only as rational, more than a rational doth a brute” (Charn. Works, vol. 2. p. 110).

Mr. F. sums up all under this head, by saying, “The only question to which the whole ought to be reduced is this; whether *supreme love to God*, would not necessarily lead a fallen creature, who has the gospel preached to him, to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and his way of salvation” (p. 120). I answer, supreme love to God will lead a man to embrace any revelation God makes of himself, but it will not, it cannot lead a man to embrace what God does not reveal.—Supreme love to God would not lead a heathen to embrace Christ in any sense, because Christ is not revealed even in an external manner.—Supreme love to God would have led the Jews to embrace Christ as the Son of God, and the Messiah, because they had an external revelation of him as such; and because they did not do so, our Lord said, “I know you, that you have not the love of God in you,” *John 5:42-43*. But supreme love to God would lead no fallen creature to embrace Christ in a way of special faith without Christ being revealed, and revealed in an *internal* manner by the Holy Ghost. There is no true believing without revelation, without evidence. Supreme

love to God doesn't bind a man to any such faith. God doesn't require any such faith.—Whether this be a sufficient reply to the question, I leave with you to determine.

I remain,
Yours.

Letter XII.

Dear Sir,

I shall now proceed to another objection which Mr. F. attempts to answer, arising from the **divine decrees**. He thus states it: “Since it is allowed on all hands that the blessings of grace, and faith among the rest, are all sovereign and free gifts through Christ—are what he dispenses according to his own purpose and grace, given to his elect in Christ Jesus before the world began—Since it is allowed that God never determined to bestow special grace upon the non-elect, it has, from these considerations, been thought a very great absurdity, and what imputes mockery to the Holy One, and has been represented as a thing impossible that God should require men to believe in Christ. It has been suggested that this makes it men’s sin, and the ground of their punishment that they have not that which God never designed to give them—that they might be equally blamed for not being elected or redeemed, as for not having faith in Christ, since the latter is equally a spiritual blessing as the former.”

Mr. F. acknowledges that “at first sight this will seem to be very formidable;”—and notwithstanding what he has said, it appears formidable still. It is said, “If it prove any thing, it will prove too much; for instance, it will prove, that it is not the duty of the non-elect at all to seek after the salvation of their souls, or once to care, or even be concerned about it.” But that’s a mistake, it proves no such thing: for in as much as we know not who are and who are not the elect, it is the duty of every one wheresoever the gospel of salvation comes, to be concerned to seek, enquire, and ask, what hope, what evidence have I of being interested in this salvation? Besides, there are express commands to all to be concerned, as *Luke 13:24*, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; that is, use all means, search the scriptures, attend on the preaching of the word constantly and diligently; pray for a blessing on it, examine whether ye have entered in or not.

Mr. F. further says, “The destruction of Pharaoh was determined of God to be at the time, place, and manner in which it actually came to pass; and yet, who will say that he ought not to have taken the counsel of Moses, and let the people go?” (p. 125). But Pharaoh had an *express command* to let them go; therefore he was undoubtedly criminal in not doing it. So it may be said of the rest of the instances produced; and therefore these are nothing to the purpose.

I believe with Mr. F. “the decrees of God were never designed for, nor can they be made any rule of human action. The commands of God are the sole rule of this” (p. 126). But though God’s decree is not the rule of our conduct to him, it is the rule of his conduct to us; and can it be supposed he has decreed to leave some destitute of faith, and yet decreed and determined to condemn them for the want of

it? Such conduct cannot, I think, be imputed to the Divine Being, without charging him with a cruelty that must shock every human feeling. No: God has decreed only to punish for sin, for the breach of his commands; and as there is no command for special faith, as we have endeavoured to prove, therefore no one shall be condemned for the want of it.

It is observed, “that God’s not giving that holiness to fallen man which his law requires, and which they have lost, be that what it may, is not their sin; but yet all must allow it is their sin that they have it not” (p. 131). But why is it so? Because they once had it in Adam. Not so faith, or any spiritual disposition, as I have already observed, therefore there is no argument in this. As several other things under this head have already been spoken to in one or other of my letters, I shall leave it, and proceed to a third objection raised, and endeavoured to be set aside; which is,

Concerning **Particular Redemption**.

“It has been thought (says Mr. F.) a great absurdity to suppose that God can have made it the duty of any man to believe in Christ for the salvation of the soul, or that he can have promised salvation to him on his so believing, when all the while his salvation was not the end for which he died” (p. 132).

Suppose a minister when he ascended the pulpit was to address his audience thus: Men, brethren and fathers, I am commissioned from my Divine Master to inform you all, ye are fallen creatures; ye have all sinned and come short of the glory of God; the whole world is become guilty before God; but I have also, by his authority, to tell you, there is an eternal redemption obtained by the blood of Christ: that redemption is *particular*, Christ died only for a certain number, even for as many as are ordained to eternal life. Faith in Christ is absolutely necessary to salvation; that faith is a special blessing peculiar to the elect; none *shall* or *can* have it but those for whom Christ shed his precious blood. Nevertheless this faith with which salvation is connected is required of you all, whether Christ died for your salvation or not; therefore *believe, get this faith*, or you will be damned for the want of it. Should you not think such an address strange, inconsistent and absurd to the last degree? I confess I should. Mr. F. says, “it is allowed, that if it were essential to true saving faith to claim personal interest in Christ’s death, this objection would be unanswerable;”—but he who has faith, has a personal interest, whether he can claim it or not; therefore the objection is equally unanswerable on this ground; for it is making it the duty of all to have that which is an undoubted evidence of personal interest, whether they have that interest or not, which appears to me very absurd and ridiculous.

It is further said, “It is certain that trust is in many cases warrantable and incumbent on a *bare possibility*” (p. 133). But Mr. F. makes faith warrantable and incumbent where there is an *impossibility*. If Christ had died for every one, if

redemption was universal, and so all mankind put in a possible state of salvation, the case would be different; but the truth is, that it is *impossible* for all mankind to be saved; it is *impossible* that any besides those for whom Christ died should be saved: therefore to make faith incumbent on all, is to make it incumbent not on a bare *possibility*, but on an *impossibility*; the propriety of which I cannot see.

The several authors quoted on this article I venerate; but though I esteem them as great and good, I do not consider them infallible. It has been often with truth said, the best of men are but men. As they are dead and gone to heaven, I shall not animadvert on the quotations made. I have to do with none but Mr. F. and shall therefore immediately proceed to a fourth objection stated and replied to; namely,

Concerning Men's Being under the Covenant of Works. (p. 139)

What is here said seems to be in answer to what Mr. Brine has advanced in his *Motives to Love and Unity among Calvinists*; who asserts, that the law which was given in the form of a covenant to Adam, does not require faith in Christ for salvation, and that, "till a man through the law is dead to the law, he hath no warrant to receive Christ as a saviour, or to hope for salvation through him; conviction of sin, a sense of misery as justly deserved, and despairing of relief from the law and works of it, in order of nature, at least, precede the first act of faith on Christ for salvation" (*Motives to Love and Unity*, p. 39).—In reply to this Mr. F. says, "though none but believers *are* dead to the law, yet it is what every sinner *ought to be*" (p. 141). If by being dead to the law is meant no more than barely not expecting salvation by it, I think every fallen creature wherever the gospel comes, ought to be so dead; because it is clearly revealed, it is positively asserted "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight," *Rom. 3:20*.—But if by being dead to the law is closely connected with, and include in it, a feeling sense of wretchedness and just desert of misery, and also a living to God, as the apostle intimates it is in *Gal. 2:19*, that is, a living a spiritual life, which life is received from Christ; a living a life of faith on the Son of God, as Paul said he died, *Gal. 2:20*, then, I think, it is not all men's duty, but is a special privilege and blessing bestowed only on those who are ordained to eternal life.

As to the law's requiring faith and every spiritual disposition is what I cannot allow. Mr. Charnock very justly observes, "If the law commanded faith in relation to the object Christ crucified, it must then acquaint us with Christ crucified. It would be an unreasonable law to enjoin an act about such an object, and never discover one syllable of that object to us" (*Charn. Works*, vol. 2. p. 603); and another writer has very justly observed, "The law and the works of it are directly *opposite* to *grace* and *faith* in a redeemer. It makes not the least comfortable discovery to a miserable sinner; it knows nothing of pardoning mercy; it says not a word about atoning blood: being the formula of that covenant which was made with

man in a state of innocence, it makes not the least abatement in point of duty; nor the least provision in a way of mercy, in case of failure. Perfect obedience is its constant demand; an obedience personal and perpetual; whatever mercy the sinner wants, whatever blessings God bestows, is provided in another covenant, are dispense in another way” (Booth’s Death of Legal Hope, p. 13). But as I have already considered what Mr. F. has to say respecting spiritual dispositions being required of all, in Letter 10. I shall dismiss this head, and proceed to

The Work of the Holy Spirit (p. 144).

Mr. F. observes under this head, that there are many people, “when we talk of faith, and other spiritual exercises being the duty of men, it seems to them as if we meant to derogate from the honour of the spirit’s work.” I own I am one of them that think Mr. F.’s sentiments tend to lessen, depreciate, and in some sense to render unnecessary the spirit’s work. Though I won’t say I think he means to do so, especially as he says, “If this is indeed the tendency of our principles, let them be discarded;” but if the inability of man be only *partial*, as Mr. F.’s sentiments certainly imply, although he is unwilling to acknowledge it, and says, “we constantly affirm it is real and *total*” (p. 146); but what he means by this, or how he can make it out, I confess I cannot conceive; for if it be *simply a moral inability*, as he repeatedly declares, why, surely, it must be *partial*; and in that view the work of the Holy Spirit is certainly lessened. More honour must redound to his name, and more glory to his grace, in brining a sinner to believe whose inability is both moral and natural, which is what *we* affirm; and therefore Mr. F. does us an injury when he represents us as saying, man’s inability is *simply natural*. We say no such think. That man has an *aversion* to every thing spiritually good, and that *aversion* is criminal we maintain, and so on that account we say the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary, and it appears glorious in removing that *aversion*. So far we agree with Mr. F. and all of his sentiments; but we say that a natural man is *utterly unable* to do anything spiritually good; that is, as a natural man he has a *natural inability*. He must have a *new* heart, a *new* spirit, there must be a *new creation* in his soul, of what was never there before ere he can perform *spiritual acts*. This natural inability is what Mr. F. denies; and in so doing I cannot but think he lessens, depreciates, and in some sense renders unnecessary the work of the Holy Spirit.

I proceed now to the sixth objection:

Of the Necessity of a Divine Principle, in order to Believing. (p. 149).

Thus it is stated by Mr. F. “It has often been objected to this effect; it is impossible to believe in Christ without having a *principle* of faith created in the heart. Now as it is God’s work to create that principle, till that work is affected, it cannot be any man’s duty to believe in Christ; that is (says he) it cannot be the duty of any man to have or exercise a principle which he has not.” But here Mr. F. draws

a wrong inference. We don't say it cannot be the duty of any man to have or exercise a principle which he has not; but that it cannot be the duty of any man to have or exercise a principle which he has not, and which he *never had* in any state whatever; a principle which Adam never lost, because he never possessed it, and a principle which God never designed we should have. The objection thus stated, let Mr. F. answer if he can.—I shall add no more at present, but that

I am respectfully

Yours.

Letter XIII.

Dear Sir,

I shall now proceed to a few general reflections which are added:--And, says Mr. F. if the foregoing principles be just, then,

1st, “The law of God, or the rule of man’s obligation, is what the scriptures affirm *exceeding broad*” (p. 153)

And I hope the principles I have advanced don’t contradict this assertion. Let them be for ever discarded if they do. I believe the law to be *exceeding broad*; that it extends to thoughts, words and actions; that it requires all moral perfection; that it condemns original as well as actual sin; that it requires universal, perpetual, and constant obedience to its precepts; and cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But don’t let us make it broader than it is; broader than God has made it. Don’t let us make it require that which the Lord never meant it to require, which man was not able to perform in innocence; and don’t let us make it curse and condemn a poor sinner for the want of that which God never granted, and never meant to grant him; I mean special faith in Christ Jesus. This is ‘acting without warrant, this is behaving with cruelty to our own species, as it subjects them to a charge of abundance of guilt, of which, God knows, they have enough in the breach of what he has enjoined,’ as well as it is reflecting on our wise, just and good Creator, Preserver and bountiful Benefactor.

2. “Then the depravity of man is very great” (p. 154).

Here Mr. F. very wrongly says, “The contrary supposition makes the inability of man to be no part of his depravity, but *altogether innocent* in its nature.” But surely if we believe as we do, that man’s inability is both moral and natural, we are far from making that inability *altogether innocent*. So far as man discovers an *aversion of heart* to all moral good, yea, so far as there is an *aversion* to Christ and divine things, so far he is criminal, for he ought not to *despise* if he can’t embrace them: that utter aversion we maintain as fully as Mr. F. and so equally believe the depravity of human nature very great; and we certainly lay man much lower than he does, who thinks, if the aversion of the heart be but removed, then man as *power* to believe, and to perform every spiritual act at once. We say, that even supposing the aversion removed, man is still utterly unable of himself to believe with a special faith in Christ, or to perform any spiritual act, without power is given him from God; and herein appears “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to the working of his might power.” Here’s power required to remove the aversion of the heart; power required to implant or infuse a spiritual principle, and power required to draw forth that principle into action; for as Christ says, “without me ye can do nothing.” But alas, to lay man so very low hurts human

pride, the aversion of heart to this shews as much as any thing the depravity of human nature. Man loves to hear what a noble creature he is; and I think Mr. F.'s principles tend greatly to gratify that pride with which human nature so much abounds.

3. "Then the grace of God in our salvation must be *free*, must be *great* indeed" (p. 155). It certainly is, according to Mr. F.'s sentiments. But I appeal to you, Sir, I leave it to your impartial judgment, which represents the grace of God *most free* and *most great*, Those who think when the aversion of heart is removed the work is done, no more need to be performed to bring a sinner to believe; or we who assert that not only the aversion of heart is removed, but a *new* principle, and *new* dispositions are given at regeneration? Which most exalts the grace of God, such who imagine the believer is only restored to what he was at first, to the enjoyment of the same principles and the same life he before had; or those who think a poor sinner, when he becomes a new creature, becomes what he never was, is possessed of a principle, and enjoys a life *far superior* to what even Adam possessed in paradise? Surely, Sir, if the former be *grace*, the latter must be *grace indeed*; yea, it must shew forth in a peculiar manner what the apostle frequently calls the *exceeding riches of his grace*.

4. "Then there is free and full encouragement for any poor sinner to come off from all his self-confidence, and venture his soul upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation" (p. 162).

But what kind of encouragement is there in saying; if you *will* you can believe; if you *will* you *can* possess a spiritual principle; if you *will* you can perform spiritual acts, etc. for the *cannot* itself consists in a *will not*, says Mr. F. (p. 71). I say what kind of encouragement will this afford to a poor soul, who with the great apostle is constrained to say, "To *will* is present with me; but how to *perform* that which is good I *find not*," Rom. 7:18. I think very poor encouragement indeed: nay, I think very great discouragement. It is the way to make the hearts of those sad, whom God would not have made sad,--and strange kind of encouragement, methinks, that must be, to tell poor sinners, that to believe with a special faith in Christ is their duty, a duty incumbent on them all; though it is a blessing that is peculiar to and shall only be bestowed on the elect; yet, whether they are elect or not, it is their duty, and they will be condemned for not doing it. God does not mean to give it to all, he has only designed it for some; but that makes no difference, whether he means to favour them with it or not, they *ought* to have it; and if they have it not, they shall be damned for the want of it. If this is all "the free and full encouragement to poor sinners" Mr. F. and those of his sentiments, have to hand forth to them, I think we may with propriety adopt Job's words to his friends, "*miserable comforters are ye all.*"

Fifthly and lastly, “Then calls, warnings, invitations, expostulations, threatenings, and exhortations, even to the unregenerate, are perfectly consistent” (p. 163).

This crowns the whole. Now we are come to the sum of the whole matter. At length we are arrived at the grand cause, occasion and intent of this long treatise. It is to encourage general calls, invitations, and exhortations.—That sinners ought to be warned is what I don’t deny; but then they should be both warned and taught, as the apostle says *in all wisdom*, Col. 1:28.—That they should be told of their lost state and condition, warned of the wrath to come, and the danger they are in of it, is certainly incumbent on every minister of Jesus Christ, that so they may be pure from the blood of all men.—That they should be taught the only way of salvation, the importance of being found in Christ, of being washed in his blood, clothed with his righteousness, and the necessity of being born again, and of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, is undoubtedly right, and they are highly blameworthy who do not so teach; and that sinners should be exhorted to pray, read, hear, and the like, and that constantly and seriously, is, I acknowledge, part of the ministerial work; but as to calls, invitations, and exhortations to special faith and spiritual acts, appears surely, after what has been said, to be inconsistent with scripture and common sense.

Mr. F. seems to think some have gone too far; for he says, “It is not intended to vindicate all the language that has been addressed to unconverted sinners;” and then adds, “though it be the duty of every man to be perfectly holy, yet it would be very strange for any one of us thus to address another, Be perfectly holy *now this moment*” (p. 164). But if to be perfectly and spiritually holy; if to believe with a special faith in Christ; if to perform spiritual acts, be duties incumbent on all; surely, the *sooner* they are performed the better. Why should Mr. F. object to saying, “Do these duties *now*, *this moment*, I own I cannot see the propriety of such an objection. If it is right to exhort at all to these things, why not exhort to do their duty immediately? Surely, if it is not their duty *now this moment*, it is not their duty at all: or may the sinner, when thus exhorted to these duties, be justified in saying, “Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I’ll do them.”

Mr. F. again says, “It ought to be confessed too, that too many of those who have dealt in addresses to unregenerate sinners, have sadly neglected the very spirit and glory of the gospel. In such addresses, perhaps, it has been too common likewise to go aside from the scriptural intent of them, and to dabble in Arminianism” (p. 167). I hope Mr. F. will attend to this observation. I verily think it a just one, and truly I cannot but think Mr. F.’s present sentiments the high road to Arminianism; by his own acknowledgement here they tend that way.

Mr. F. tells us, that upon his principles, the ministers of the gospel may be said to have their work plain before them (p. 166); and speaks of *shackles* he felt himself encumbered with before the alteration of his sentiments (pref. p. 1). And again says, “many a worthy minister, whose principles have been unfriendly to addressing sinners, has felt himself perplexed with his *shackles* in the presence of a numerous auditory” (p. 167). What is meant by these *shackles*, I pretend not to say. But if *truth* and *consistency* be the *shackles* referred to, the Lord grant I may ever be thus *shackled*.—I am sorry to see such an unbecoming sneer at those ministers who are *cautious* and afraid of falling into inconsistencies, as well as at those people who take heed what they hear; his words are these, “at other times however the goodness of his heart has prevailed against the badness of his system: he has forgot his creed, burst his bonds, and (O unpardonable crime) addressed himself to the consciences of his carnal auditors. For this some of his critical hearers hath censured him, as legal and inconsistent, but God hath blessed it to the salvation of souls” (ibid). Should we not take heed how and what we preach, and how and what we hear? Surely such conduct is laudable, except inconsistencies are right. But it seems as if a few inconsistencies were but trifles with Mr. F. if he can but get rid of what he calls his *shackles*. But I own I prefer being *bound* with the *truth* to a being *loosed* to advance *inconsistent things*; I enjoy the greatest liberty and satisfaction in such bonds; I walk most at liberty, when I am bound by my master’s precepts. The closer I attend to his word, the more I walk at large.

Mr. F. speaks of a “vast fund of *wit*, such as it is, which has been exercised in exposing to ridicule the practice of free addresses to unconverted sinners. The conduct of such ministers, (says he) has been frequently compared to that of a man that should call *to the dead to come forth*” (p. 176); and again he observes, “publications abound in representing the absurdity of calling the blind to look, the deaf to hear, and the dead to rise” (p. 173). By this “*vast fund of wit, such as it is,*” here spoken of, I suppose Mr. F. means to intimate it is wit without sense; for which compliment, I think, in the name of my brethren, I ought to thank him. [Whether any reference is had here to Mr. John Ryland, Jr., I will not say; but it is certain he ridicules these addresses in a very sarcastical manner, and ascribes them to *Arminius*. These are his words:

“Arise ye dead,” *Arminius* cries,
“Arise ye dead in sin;
“Unstop your ears, uncloseth your eyes
“And a new life begins.

“Why will ye die, ye wretched souls?”
(Ye dead) “why will ye die?”

“Quicken, and make your spirits whole,
“To life eternal fly.”

(As Baal’s worshippers of old,
Begg’d, pray’d, and cry’d aloud,
Cutting their bodies, as we are told,
To move a fancied God,)

Before the idol, man, he’ll fall,
And pompously declare,
Tho’ slightly damag’d by the fall,
How great his powers are.

“Rise, noble creature, man, arise,
And make yourself alive;
“Prepare yourself to mount the skies,
“For endless glory thrive.”
Serious Essays, p. 104]

However, be the *wit* what it may, I confess it does appear to me that such addresses as Mr. F. is an advocate for, does appear equally absurd, as for a man to call to the dead to come forth; for the apostle expressly says of the unregenerate, they are *dead*. In reply to this it is asked, “What is it to be dead in sin, but to be sinfully dead? What but to be utterly void of all desire after God, and heart to act for him? And is there nothing criminal in that?” (p. 175). A just answer to this is given by Mr. Wayman. “It was man’s sin to destroy a moral life; but it is not man’s sin that he hath not a spiritual one. It is God’s eternal grace that vies life” (Further Enquiry, p. 101).

As to calling the *blind* to look, and the *deaf* to hear, Mr. F. says, “The very language which we have so often heard and seen ridiculed as if it were the first-born of absurdities, *look ye blind*, and *hear ye deaf*, is no other than the language of God himself.” Isa. 42. 18 (p. 177). Dr. Gill sufficiently answers this, “The purport of the exhortation is, that they would make use of their external hearing and sight, which they had, that they might attain to a spiritual hearing and understanding of divine things: for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, Rom. 10:17. To hear the gospel preached, and to look into the scriptures and read the word of God, are the means of attaining life and knowledge in spiritual things; and these are within the compass of natural men, who are internally deaf and blind” (Expos. on Isa. 42:18).

Mr. F. seems to avail himself of the numbers he has on his side, and of their great success in conversion. "I believe (says he) that in almost all the remarkable seasons of conversion that we have ever known or heard of, these have been the means that have been generally used. If we look at the great works which God hath wrought by Luther, Calvin, Latimer, Knox, Bunyan, Elliot, Edwards, Brainerd, Tennent, Whitefield, and numberless others of our reformation champions, we shall find they all went forth in the use of these weapons." But what are the numbers, what has success to do in the proving the truth of a religion or doctrine? Does Luther's success prove consubstantiation a truth? Does Calvin's success prove infant baptism a scripture ordinance? Does Bunyan's success prove open communion right?—But I cannot methinks better answer Mr. F. on this head, than by citing a quotation Dr. Stennet makes in a late publication, from Archbishop Tillotson. Suppose, I say with the Archbishop, "we were by much the fewer, so hath the true church of God often been, without any the least prejudice to the truth of their religion. What think we of the church in Abraham's time, which, for ought we know, was confined to one family, and one small kingdom, that of Melchisedec, king of Salem? What think we of it in Moses's time, when it was confined to one people wandering in a wilderness? What of it in Elijah's time, when besides the two tribes that worshipped at Jerusalem, there were in the other ten but 7000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal? What in our Saviour's time, when the whole Christian church consisted of twelve apostles and seventy disciples, and some few followers beside? How would Bellarmine have despised this little flock, because it wanted one of his goodliest marks of the true church, universality and splendour? And what think we of the Christian church in the height of Arianism and Pelagianism, when a great part of Christendom was over-run with errors, and the number of the orthodox was inconsiderable in comparison with heretics? But what need I urge these instances? As if the truth of a religion were to be estimated and carried by the major votes: which, as it can be an argument to none but fools, so I dare say no honest and wise man ever made use of it for a solid proof of the truth and goodness of any church or religion. If multitude be an argument that men are in the right, in vain then hath scripture said, Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; for if this argument be of any force, the greater number never do wrong" (Stennet's answer to Addington's Christian reasons for baptizing Infants, 2nd part. p. 271).

As to the distinction between natural and moral ability, with which Mr. F. closes his treatise, I pass unnoticed, as I have already in my letters given you my sentiments plainly on that head.—I now close, expressing a wish that neither you nor I may be carried away from the truth, however popular error may be. The sentiment advanced in this piece I think a great error, as it is big with absurdity, inconsistent with the particular and glorious doctrines of grace, tends too much to

exalt human nature, leads to Arminianism, dealt out cruelty to our poor fellow sinners; is distressing to saints, and dishonouring to God, as it naturally leads men to cast the most unworthy reflections on his conduct. These things I have attempted to prove, and shall now conclude in the words of the apostle,” Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your heart and *stablish* you in every *good* word and work.

I remain,

Yours.