

THE DOCTRINES OF GOD'S EVERLASTING
LOVE
TO HIS ELECT,
AND THEIR ETERNAL UNION
WITH CHRIST
TOGETHER WITH SOME OTHER TRUTHS,
STATED AND DEFENDED,

In a Letter to Dr. Abraham Taylor.

SIR,

Having had the happiness of hearing, and since of reading, your two Discourses, Of the Insufficiency of Natural Religion (See Lime Street Lecture, ed.); I cannot but express a satisfaction with your method of treating the argument; nor would you have heard from me in this public manner, had you not, in your performance, fallen foul on some of your friends, whilst you was engaging with the common adversary.

When I heard your first discourse on this subject, I observed a paragraph which gave me some uneasiness. I determined to take notice of it to you, as I had opportunity and knowing I should be present when you condescended to submit your discourses to the correction of some friends, I purposed humbly to offer some reasons for either dropping or altering the paragraph; but, to my great satisfaction, I found myself under no necessity of doing it. The passage I refer to being omitted in reading, I concluded from hence, that upon a revisal of your discourses, you had seen reason in your own mind to strike it out but, since reading your sermons, now made public, I find it stands, and, if I mistake not; with some additional keenness and severity: your reason for this you best know. Your words are these: "It has been said, that during the times of our civil commotions, there was little preached up but faith in Christ; and that the duties of morality were little insisted on: it is certain that some

ignorant enthusiastic preachers insisted then much on eternal union with Christ, and that sin could do a believer no harm; but all wise and thoughtful men abhorred such immoral conceits."

What I have to complain of in this passage, is as follows: I. The lameness and impertinence of it. You observe, "It has been said, that during the times of our civil commotions, there was little preached up but faith in Christ, and that the duties of morality were little insisted on." One would have expected that you would have given an answer to this charge, and it looks as if you had designed it, by your making mention of it, but you neither grant nor deny it; and, instead of doing either, as you ought to have done, you put off the objection, by saying, "that some ignorant enthusiastic preachers insisted then much on eternal union with Christ, and that sin could do a believer no harm." Things which are not in the charge, and no way to your purpose to make mention of. Without taking upon me to be a dictator to you, you might have with truth allowed, that during those times, faith in Christ was very much preached up, though not to the exclusion of moral duties; and, with a great deal of justness, you might have observed, that the power of godliness very much prevailed; that the duties of religion were much practiced; that the Lord's day was strictly and religiously observed; that social worship was attended on constantly; that family and closet-devotion were kept up with much strictness; and that morality, in all its branches, was in a very flourishing condition in those times, when faith in Christ was so much insisted on. This I am very sensible you are capable of observing; but you chose rather to fling at the doctrine of eternal union with Christ, and to introduce that in an awkward way, and by joining it with a disagreeable notion of sin's doing a believer no harm, to draw an odium upon some good men in those times, whom you call "ignorant enthusiastic preachers," and through them to strike at some who are now in being.

II. It does not appeal' to me matter of fact, that in those times eternal union with Christ, and that sin could do a believer no harm, were much insisted on, as you say. I know not, indeed, what acquaintance

you may have with the pulpit performances of those times. For my own part I can only judge of their preaching by what they have printed; and, I presume, that if these doctrines are any where to be met with, they are to be found in the writings of such, who, in those times, were branded for Antinomians; such as Eaton, Saltmarsh, Simpson, Town, Richardson, and Crisp; whose writings I have carefully perused, and find no reason to conclude that those doctrines were much insisted on, as you say. By reading the works of these authors, I have been confirmed in the truth of an observation made some years ago, by the learned Hoornbeeck: "For I perceive, says he, while heads of doctrine are made up by the adversaries, rather than the authors themselves, out of their dissertations, books, and sermons, that sometimes their sense is not sufficiently taken, nor happily expressed; and that both here and there a great deal, indeed, is said, but not much to the purpose; and that they either do not understand, or mistake the thing in dispute." As to the doctrine of eternal union with Christ, however consistent it may be with some principles of theirs, I do not perceive that they take any notice of it; and some of them seem to have no notion of it, but tread in the common beaten path of union by the Spirit of Christ, and faith in Christ.

Eaton, in his Honey-Comb of Free Justification, has these words: "Christ will have no foul leprous members united and made one with him; and therefore he first washeth us in his own blood, and makes us clean from all our sins, and then knits and unites us as fit members into his ownself. The order also and natural dependence of these benefits (that is, justification and union) upon one another, confirm the same; for we cannot be knit into Christ before we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us: the Holy Ghost comes not to dwell in us before we be reconciled to God; and we are not reconciled to God before we have all our sins abolished out of God's sight, but when all our sins are abolished, and we made perfectly holy and righteous, from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely, then the Holy Ghost comes and dwells in us, and knits and unites us, as fit members, into the blessed body of Jesus Christ; then we are, by the wedding garment

alone of Christ's righteousness, made, above our sense and feeling, fit brides for so glorious a Bridegroom." And in another place, he has these words: "This union and conjunction then is the cause that I am separated from myself, and translated into Christ and his kingdom, which is a kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace, joy, life, salvation, and glory; yea, by this inseparable union and conjunction, which is through faith, Christ and I are made, as it were, one body in spirit."

Simpson, another of those men who were called Antinomians in those times, expresses himself on the subject of union after this manner, when he is speaking of the use of faith in justification: "So that by faith, says he, though we are assured of God's love in the first place, yet we are not only assured, but likewise Christ is applied unto us; we are united unto him, and do enjoy all things in him, and receive all good things from him." And in another place; "A believing man is bone of the bone, and flesh of the flesh, and one spirit with the Lord Jesus: there is a close and near union and application of Christ to the soul by faith."

Saltmarsh says nothing in what I have seen of his, concerning eternal union; and what he says of union itself, is not very intelligible; yet it seems as though he had no other notion of being in Christ, or of being united to Christ, but by faith. He observes; "That the pure spiritual and mystical fountain of the mortification of sin, is the being planted together in the likeness of Christ's death, our old man being crucified with him. {Ro 6:6} Our union with Christ our Head, our Righteousness, our Vine." And, a little after, he has these words: "Now that power wherein we are perfectly mortified, is our union with Christ, our being planted in the fellowship of his death, &c. and that wherein we are imperfectly, or in part mortified, is in that transformed nature, or spiritual nature, the body of sin being in a believer, more or less, till he lay down this body and take it up a more glorious one; so as a believer is to consider himself dead to sin, only in the fellowship of Christ's death mystically, and to consider himself only dying to sin in his own nature spiritually: so as in Christ he is only complete, and in himself imperfect at the best.

We are complete in him, saith the apostle, {Col 2:10} yet there is such a power and efficacy, and mighty working in this mystical union and fellowship with Christ, that he shall find sin dying in him from this, the Spirit working most in the virtue of this." And in another place, he says; "A believer hath a twofold condition, in Christ, in himself; yet he ought ever to consider himself in Christ by faith, not in himself." And elsewhere he observes: "The word says, that we are complete in Christ, and righteous in Christ; but when I repent, or love, or obey, I believe, I am in Christ; and therefore my love, and repentance, and obedience, is such as I may believe, though not in themselves, yet in him to be good and spiritual."

Town, another writer of those times, who was much charged with Antinomianism, says nothing of eternal union, but has many expressions in his writings, which shew that he had no other notion of union, but by the Spirit of God, and by the grace of faith, in one of his books he has these words: "The righteousness of faith unites them, that is, the saints, to Christ, their Lord, head and Governor, that so henceforth they may be led by his free Spirit and swayed by the scepter of his kingdom." And in the same treatise, he asks, "Where doth the law speak a syllable of our conjunction and union with Christ through faith, whereby Christ and the believer become one body in spirit?" And in another place; "By faith we being united and married to Christ, do by him bring forth fruits to God, even perfect obedience imputatively, and inchaotive holiness through the operation of his Spirit, received by the ministry and doctrine of faith, and not of the law." Though, in another passage in the same book, he makes the ordinance of water baptism to be the saints union with, and insition (grafting) into Christ. His words are these: "That ordinance, speaking of baptism, is a true, spiritual, and real engraving of them into Christ, {1Co 12:13} so that faith is but the revelation of what was secret and hid before, or an evident testimony, and lively and comfortable apprehension and application in the conscience of the person of what was conferred and made his before;" that is, if I understand him, in baptism. In another of his books, he has these expressions: "Let the poor sinful, miserable, and

lost soul, first be united and married to him, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead, and in whom she is then complete, wanting nothing, {Col 2:9-10} then tell of duties." Again, "If you do truly good works, you do them in Christ, abiding in him, {Joh 15:4} in whom you are alive, and walk continually by faith.-Now the soul cannot walk in Christ, nor have union with him, save by faith." Once more, "Can man's nature be changed, says he, till he be united and engrafted into Christ, the true Vine?

And doth not virtue come by that insition and union?" And in some pages after, "It is by the Spirit that the soul cometh to union with Christ." And, in another of his treatises, he has these words "Faith cometh by hearing, and after faith comes actual union."

The only writers, in the times referred to, that I have met with, who assert even union before faith, are Richardson, and Crisp, who yet speak not a word of eternal union; neither do they, or the writers above-mentioned, professedly treat of the doctrine of union in any sense, but only take notice of it as it falls in their way. I read their books with greedy expectation of frequently meeting with the doctrine of eternal union, in hopes of finding arguments for the confirmation of it, and of receiving more light into it, which I believe to be an eternal truth. Eternal union was so far from being a subject much insisted on in those times, as you say, that I do not find it was insisted on at all.

As to the notion of sin's doing a believer no harm, Eaton, Saltmarsh, Simpson, and Town, say nothing of it; nor have they any thing like it, that I have met with, in their writings; and I could easily fill up whole pages with passages out of them in which they express their abhorrence and detestation of sin, and their great regard to a holy life and conversation.

Richardson and Crisp are the only writers, in those times, that I have observed to make use of any expressions of this kind. As for Richardson, he has but one single passage which looks any thing like this notion, that sin does a believer no harm; which is this: "If all things work together for our good, then, says he, all falls, pains, diseases, crosses, afflictions, &c. do us no hurt, but work for our

good; all things work for our good." {Ro 8:28} And yet this is no more than what many sound divines have said, who never were charged with Antinomianism; when they assert, that all things, even the sins of God's people, are overruled by a kind and good Providence for their good, as their afflictions and crosses are; and by falls into sin doing no hurt, he means the hurt of punishment, as is evident from the whole of his reasoning and argument in that place. He clearly hints, in many places, at the hurt that comes by sin, with respect to a believer's peace and comfort, the damage it does to others, and the dishonor it brings to God; "Be afraid to sin, says he, and use means to prevent it; consider God hath forbidden it. {Ro 6} Consider sin in the nature of it, in the root and fruit of it: it is the price of blood; there is no true sweetness in sin, no contentment no satisfaction in it, why you should desire it? it fills the soul with wounds, sorrow, bitterness, shame; let experience speak." And, in another place, he says: "We should be afraid to sin, 1. because it is forbidden by God. 2. It is dishonorable to him. 3. It encourageth others to sin. 4. It will fill our souls with sorrow to sin against so loving a Father and to dishonor him, &c. Having sinned, if but in the least measure, we should be so fain from covering it with any pretence or excuse, that we should abhor it, and ourselves for it, with the greatest detestation?"

And elsewhere he says; "Be sure ye allow yourself in no sin, but in the strength of God hate and abhor, with the greatest indignation, all sin, and the appearance of it; it is better to die than to sin. There is that which accompanieth sin, which strikes at a believer's peace and comfort; it will damp, straiten, and oppress the soul; it will hinder their comfort, joy, and peace in God, unless God doth wonderfully strengthen their faith in him; we find by experience, that sin is a test to our faith and comfort, it having often unsettled and disquieted us in our peace and comfort, though we ought not to be so."

Crisp is the only writer that expresses himself freely and largely on this subject:, and with the least guard; and yet when he says, that "believers need not be afraid of their sins, his meaning is not, that they need not be afraid of sins committed, as Hoornbeeck, Witsius,

and Chaunecy, have justly observed; and when he says, that "the sins of believers can do them no hurt: by hurt he means, the hurt of punishment, penal evil, or the penal effects of sin which believers are freed from, and therefore shall never enter into a state of condemnation, Christ having bore their sins, and made satisfaction to justice for them; but then he speaks of sin, in its own nature, as odious and dreadful to believer's, and of bitterness and evil, as the certain fruits of it. The Doctor, I verily believe, used these expressions in a sound sense, and with a good design; not to encourage persons in sin, but to relieve and comfort the minds of believers, distressed with sin; yet, I must confess, I do not like the expressions, but am of opinion they ought to be disused.

And now surely, Sir, this single author's using of this expression, and that not in the gross and vile sense of it, cannot be sufficient to bear you out, in saying, that sin is doing a believer no harm, was much insisted on in those times: I can hardly think you have any reference to Archer's book, called Comfort for Believers about their Sin and Troubles; in which the author exhorts believers not to be oppressed and perplexed for their sins: though he acknowledges that godly sorrow and true shame become them, and says, that till they have it, God will not own them. He asserts in so many words, "that we may safely say, that God is, and hath an hand in, and is the author of the sinfulness of his people." (Horresco referens!) and what is enough to make one shudder at the reading of, he says, that "all the sins which believers are left to, they are through and because of the covenant of grace left to them; and the covenant implies a dispensation of sinning to them, as well as other things:" And adds, "By sins are they as much nurtured and fitted for heaven, as by any thing else." All which is blasphemous, vile and abominable; and for which if I mistake not, the book was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. I say, I can hardly think you can have reference to this author; for though he asserts this notion in the grossest sense, and in the vilest manner, yet it unhappily falls out for you, that this man was not for eternal union, but for union by faith; he frequently

observes, that faith immediately unites to Christ, and is the bond of union to him, and what brings the Holy Ghost into the soul.

If you had this author and his book in your eye, you should rather have said, that "union by faith, and sin's doing a believer no harm, were much insisted on in those times." But, III. What I have further to complain of, is your joining the harmless doctrine of eternal union with that hurtful one, as it may be taken, of sin's doing a believer no harm. You could have no other view, than to bring the doctrine of eternal union into disgrace, and an odium upon the asserters of it, as if there was a strict connection between these two, and as if those who espoused the one, held the other. The notion of sin's doing a believer no harm, was never a received tenet of any body or society of Christians among us; no, not even those who have been called Antinomians. It is not the sentiment of those who are branded with the name in this day. I am well informed, that some churches, who are despised as Antinomian, have cast some out of their communion, for holding this notion in the gross sense of it. I wish some churches, that reckon themselves more orthodox, would shew a like zeal against Arianism, and in the behalf of Christ's proper Deity. There are, indeed, I hear, a scattered scandalous set of persons in the Fen Country, the disciples of one David Culey, who was cut off from a church in Northamptonshire, and was infamous for his blasphemy and scandalous life, who have imbibed this notion, and live answerably to it, but are disregarded by all persons of seriousness and sobriety. It was not a general received notion of those who are called Antinomians, a little before or during the time of our civil commotions. Dr. Crisp is the only person that speaks it out, and yet not in the gross sense of it, as has been observed. All that their adversaries have said of them, is not too relied on; such unworthy writers as Edwards and Paget, I give no credit to. Mr. Crandon speaks of some Antinomians in Somersetshire, with whom he was acquainted, and he gives us a catalogue of their sentiments; but nothing like this is taken notice of by him: nay, it does not appear that the Antinomians in Germany, the follower of Islebius Agricola, from Luther's account of them, held any such notion. Sledian, in his

Commentaries, takes notice of them, and of their tenets. His short account of them is this: "This year, that is, 1538, sprung up the sect of them who are called Antinomians; they say, that repentance is not to be taught out of the decalogue, and oppose those who teach, that the gospel is not; to be preached, but those whose hearts are first shaken and broken by the preaching of the law: they also assert, that whatever a man's life may be, and how impure soever, yet is he justified, if he only believes the promises of the gospel." This last assertion of theirs is somewhat ambiguous, and may seem to favor this notion, of sin's doing a believer no harm, as this author has delivered it: if his meaning is that they held that a man may be justified by faith in the gospel-promise, without sanctification; or though he allows himself in a continued impurity of life, this is a contradiction to the grace of God; but if his meaning is that they held that a man may be truly justified by faith in Christ, though his former life has been never so impure; this is a truth of the gospel, and gives no countenance to this doctrine. Of all that I have met with, none more roundly assert it than Eunomius, and his followers, who lived in the fourth century. "It is reported of this man, that he was such an enemy to good manners, that he should assert that the commission of any sin whatever, and a continuance therein, could not hurt any one, if he was but a partaker of that faith which was taught by him." This man was a disciple of Aetius, whose followers were called from him Aetians; of whom Epiphanius writes, that they were unconcerned about holiness of life, or any of the commands of God, and spoke very slightly of sin.

Iraeneus has a passage concerning the Valentinians, which comes up to this notion; it is this: "As that which is earthly cannot partake of salvation, for they say it is incapable of it; so again, that which is spiritual, by which they mean themselves, cannot receive corruption, by whatsoever actions they may be concerned in. Just as gold being put into dirt, does not lose its beauty, but retains its nature, nor can it receive any hurt from the dirt: so they say, that they may be concerned in some material actions, and not be at all hurt, or lose the spiritual substance: hence the most perfect of them

do all those things which are forbidden, without any manner of fear." And then instances eating things sacrificed to idols, attending on the worship of the heathens, frequenting the theatres, and indulging themselves in all fleshly lusts. The Gnostics, Carpocratians, Saturninians, Basilidians, with many others, embraced such-like impure notions: which, it is probable, they received from Simon Magus, the Father of heresies, who allowed those who believed in him and his Helena, to live as they list! These things I take notice of, to shew by whom this tenet has and has not been received; and, to support the justness of my complaint against you, in joining the doctrine of eternal union with it, when they never went together, as I can learn, or were ever received by the same persons.

IV. I observe that you call the doctrine of eternal union, as well as that of sin's doing a believer no harm, an immoral conceit. I do not well know what you mean by an immoral conceit; every imagination of the thoughts of the heart being only evil, is an immoral conceit; all sinful lusts in the mind are so: When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth, sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. {Jas 1:15} An immoral conceit, properly speaking, I apprehend, is the first motion, thought, and imagination of sin rising up in the mind; how this is applicable to the doctrine of eternal union, I see not: but, I suppose, your meaning is, that the doctrine of eternal union is a conceit and fiction of some men's brains, which has a tendency to promote immorality, and encourage persons in it. That it is no conceit, which has its foundation only in the fancy and imagination of some men, but a truth contained in the sacred scriptures, I hope to make appear. Was it a mere conceit, why you should reckon it an immoral one, I know not; if it is a conceit, it is an harmless one; nor can it be reasonably thought to have a tendency to promote immorality and profaneness any more than the doctrine of eternal election has, by which the holiness of God's people is infallibly secured unto them; for God has chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love. {Eph 1:4} Now how persons can be in Christ, chosen in him, and yet not united to him, or how there

can be an eternal election of persons in Christ, and yet no eternal union of them to him, is what I do not understand; and as eternal election secures the holiness of the saints, so does eternal union. It is because Christ has loved them with an everlasting love, and by loving them, has united them to himself, and become the Head of them, and one with them, therefore he has given himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; {[Tit 2:14](#)} and does also send down his Spirit into their hearts, to renew and sanctify them; to implant grace in them, to enable them to perform good works, in which he has before ordained that they should walk, and to hold on in faith and holiness to the end. Redemption from sin, the sanctification of our hearts, all the good works done in faith, and perseverance in grace to the end, are the fruits and effects of eternal union to Christ. In what sense then it is an immoral conceit, or how it tends to promote immorality, you would do well to tell us, or acknowledge that you have abused it.

V. You call the persons who, you say, insisted much on eternal union, "ignorant, enthusiastic preachers." One would have thought you might have spared this severe reflection, for the sake of some, who have asserted an eternal union, that are above your contempt, and very far from any just charge of ignorance and enthusiasm. Dr. Goodwin speaks of an election-union, a virtual and representative one, which the elect have in Christ before the foundation of the world: "As in the womb, says he, head and members are not conceived apart, but together, as having relation to each other; so were we and Christ (as making up one mystical body unto God) formed together in the eternal womb of election." Again, "Were you so chosen in Christ, as that God never purposed you a being but in Christ, and then gave you this subsistence in Christ, never casting a thought upon you out of him; then reckon of no other being but what you have in Christ. Reckon not of what you have in honour, or what you are in greatness or parts; but reckon of what you were in him, before this world was, and of all the spiritual blessings wherewith he then blessed you; and likewise of what you are now in him, by an

actual union, as then by a virtual and representative one." And in another place, "We were one with Christ before the world was: there is one way of union then; Jesus Christ in the human nature cometh down and represents us, doth what we have to do; here is now another way of union; Why? This is the reason; for we were one with Christ, by his undertaking for us only from everlasting; but we were one with him, by an active representation, when below on earth." And elsewhere he says: "There is a threefold union with Christ; the first is relative, whereby we are said to be his, and he ours; as you know he is called our husband, and the church is called his wife; and before husband and wife company together there is such a relation made by marriage; and the husband may be in one place, and the wife in another, so that there can be no communion between them and yet be man and wife; so is the union between Christ and you as complete in the relation, before he acts any thing upon you, though he be in heaven, and you on earth, as if you were in heaven with him."

And so in another part of his works; he makes union to Christ to be before the Spirit, or faith, or any grace is given: His words are these: "Union with Christ is the first fundamental thing of justification, and sanctification, and all: Christ first takes us, and then sends his Spirit; he apprehends us first; it is not my being regenerate that puts me into a right of all those privileges; but it is Christ takes me, and then gives me his Spirit, faith, holiness, &c. It is through our union with Christ, and the perfect holiness of his nature, to whom we are united, that we partake of the privileges of the covenant of grace." Witsius says, the elect "are united to Christ, -1. In the eternal decree of God.-2. By the union of the eternal compact, in which Christ was constituted, by the Father, the Head of all those who are to be saved.-3. By a true and real union, but what on their part is only passive, they are united to Christ when the Spirit of Christ first lays hold on them, and infuses a principle of new life;" And a little after adds; "Moreover, since faith is an act flowing from a principle of spiritual life, it is plain, that it may be said in a sound sense, that an elect man may be truly and really united to Christ before actual faith." It is evident,

that he allows not only an union to Christ in God's eternal purpose, but a federal union with him from eternity, as the Head of the elect. Now for the sake of these men and others that might be named, you might have forbore the heavy charge of ignorance and enthusiasm; and if not for the sake of them, yet surely for the sake of your own Father, who asserts an eternal representative union of the elect with Christ, and that in a book of which you yourself was the editor. His words are these "It must, indeed be granted, that God, from eternity, decreed to justify elect sinners through Christ: and that as none but they are ever justified, so all that were decreed for justification are certainly justified. It must also be granted, that God, from eternity, entered into a covenant of grace with Christ, as the Head of elect sinners; wherein Christ as their surety, undertook for their justification.-It must likewise be granted, that there was a gift of all grace made to Christ for elect sinners, as he was their Head and Surety from eternity. {2Ti 1:9} It must be farther granted, that all elect sinners had a representative union with Christ from eternity. When Christ was chose as their Head, they were chose together with him, as his members." In another page (Ibid. p. 19), he says: "Believers may, with the greatest delight and comfort, take a survey of their justification, in the different gradations, or progressive steps of it. God decreed their justification, and they had a representative union with Christ, as their Head and Surety, from eternity. This lays such a sure foundation for their justification, as cannot be overturned by the joint power of men and devils: they had a legal union with Christ, and were federally justified in him when he rose from the dead. This gave them a fundamental right to justification: they are actually united to Christ when they believe, and are then actually justified." You see that all wise and thoughtful men do not abhor eternal union as an immoral conceit: if you say that these men plead for a real and actual union by faith, you cannot deny that they also assert an union before faith, yea, an eternal union in some sense; whereas you have reproached it, as an immoral conceit, and the preachers of it, as ignorant and enthusiastic, without any exception or explanation. You would do well to explain your sense, and clear

yourself. For my own part, I should not greatly care to be reckoned ignorant, and especially enthusiastic, and yet think I may, in a safe and sound sense, insist upon the doctrine of eternal union.

And now, Sir, if it would not be thought tedious, I would freely give you my sentiments concerning the doctrine of union. I am persuaded we shall not differ about the persons who are united to Christ, that these are God's elect, and they only; nor about the nature of the union itself, that it is an union of the whole persons, souls and bodies, of God's people to the whole person of Christ; though it is not a personal union, that is, such an one as the union of the divine and human natures in Christ; that it is real, solid, substantial, and not imaginary; that it is complete and perfect, and not gradual, or brought about by degrees, but finished at once, as our justification is; that it is exceeding close and near, and indissoluble, of which there can be no separation. What we are most likely to differ about, is, when God's elect are united to Christ, and what is the bond of their union to him. It is generally said that they are not united to Christ until they believe, and that the bond of union is the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on ours. I am ready to think that these phrases are taken up by divines, one from another, without a thorough consideration of them. It is well, indeed, that Christ is allowed any part or share in effecting our union with him; though one should think the whole of it ought to be ascribed to him, since it is such an instance of surprising love and grace, than which there cannot well be thought to be a greater. Why must this union be pieced up with faith on our part? This smells so prodigious rank of self, that one may justly suspect that something rotten and nauseous lies at the bottom of it. I shall therefore undertake to prove, that the bond of union of God's elect to Christ, is neither the Spirit on Christ's part, nor faith on their part.

1. It is not the Spirit on Christ's part. The mission of the Spirit into the hearts of God's elect, to regenerate, quicken, and sanctify them, to apply the blessings of grace to them, and seal them up to the day of redemption, and the bestowing of his several gifts and graces

upon them, are in consequence, and by virtue of a previous and antecedent union of them to the Person of Christ.

They do not first receive the Spirit of Christ, and then by the Spirit are united to him; but they are first united to him, and, by virtue of this union, receive the Spirit of him. To conceive otherwise, would be as preposterous as to imagine, that the animal spirits, which have their seat in the head, should be communicated to, and diffused throughout the several parts of the body, without union to the head, or antecedent to an union, and in order to effect it; as this would be justly reckoned an absurdity in nature, so is the other no less an absurdity in grace. A person is first joined, glued, closely united to Christ, and then becomes one Spirit with him; that is, receives, enjoys, and possesses in measure, the same Spirit as he does, as the members of an human body do participate of the same spirit the head does, to which they are united: he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit. {1Co 6:17} The case is this; Christ, as the Mediator of the covenant, and Head of God's elect, received the Spirit without measure, that is, a fulness of the gifts and graces of the Spirit: These persons being united to Christ, as members to their Head, do, in his own time, receive the Spirit from him, though in measure. They are first chosen in him, adopted through him, made one with him, become heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; and then, as the apostle says, Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. {Ga 4:6} Besides, the Spirit of God, in his personal inhabitation in the saints, in the operations of his grace on their hearts, and in the influences of his power and love on their souls, is the evidence, and not the bond of their union to God or Christ, and of their communion with them: For hereby we know, says the apostle John, {1Jo 3:24} that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

And in another place, {1Jo 4:13} Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. There is, indeed, an union which the Spirit of God is the efficient cause of; but this is not an union, of God's elect to the Person of Christ, but an union of believers one with another in a church-state; which the

apostle designs, when he says, For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. { 1Co 12:13 } The bond of this union is peace and love; hence the saints are exhorted to walk with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. { Eph 4:2-3 }

2. Neither is faith the bond of union to Christ. Those who plead for union by faith, would do well to tell us whether we are united to Christ, by the habit or principle of faith implanted, or by the act of faith; and since there are different acts of faith, they should tell us by which our union is, and whether by the first, second, third, &c. acts of believing. If we are united to Christ by the habit or principle of faith infused, then our union is not by faith on our part; because faith, as a principle or habit, is a gift of grace, of the operation of God, and which Christ is the author and finisher of. And if we are united to Christ by faith, as an act of ours, then we are united to Christ by a work, for faith, as an act of ours, is a work; and if by a work, then not by grace; for, if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. { Ro 11:6 }

I have often wondered that our divines should fix upon the grace of faith to be the bond of union to Christ, when there is nothing in it that is of a cementing and uniting nature: it is not a grace of union but of communion. Had they pitched upon the grace of love, as the bond of union, it would have appeared much more plausible; for love is of a knitting and uniting nature; it is the bond of friendship among men; it was this which knit the soul of Jonathan to the soul of David, so that he loved him as his own soul. This is the bond of union of saints one with another: their hearts are knit together in love. Hence charity or love is called the bond of perfectness. { Col 2:2; 3:14 } It was this which so closely joined and cemented the hearts of the first Christians one to another, insomuch that the

multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul. {Ac 4:32} Had our divines, I say, fixed upon this grace, as the bond of union to Christ, it would have looked more feasible, and might perhaps, have been the means of leading them into the truth of the matter.

Some, indeed, tell us, that we are united to Christ by faith and love; but then they do not consider love as a part of the bond of union, but only as an evidence of that faith by which we are united; or their meaning is, that that faith by which we are united to Christ, is a faith that works by love. Dr.

Jacomb indeed, having treated of a mystical union between Christ and his people, the bond of which he makes to be the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on theirs, and of a legal union between Christ and believers, the ground of which is Christ's suretyship, speaks of a moral union between them, the bond of which is love, even "a mutual, reciprocal, hearty love between Christ and believers; he loves them, and they love him, and by virtue of this mutual love, there is a real and close union betwixt them." And besides him, the learned Alsted is the only divine I have met with, who makes the bond of union to be the mutual love of Christ and his people. "This union, says he, is the mutual love of Christ and believers, or a mutual obligation of Christ and believers, to love one another." Now though there is something of truth in this, yet it is not the naked, pure, and unmixed truth of the matter; for it is not our love to Christ, but his love to us, which is alone the real bond of our union to him; he loves his people, and by loving them, unites them to himself: and this is the ground and foundation of all their communion and fellowship with him, both in grace and glory.

Faith is no uniting grace, nor are any of its acts of a cementing nature. Faith indeed, looks to Christ, lays hold on him, embraces him, and cleaves unto him; it expects and receives all from Christ, and gives him all the glory; but then hereby a soul can no more be said to be united to Christ, than a beggar may be said to be united to a person to whom he applies, of whom he expects alms, to whom he keeps close, from whom he receives, and to whom he is thankful.

Faith is a grace of communion, by which Christ dwells in the hearts of his people, which is an act (of) fellowship, as a fruit of union, by which believers live on Christ, receive of his fulness, grace for grace, and walk on in him as they have received him. Union to Christ is the foundation of faith, and of all the acts of believing, as seeing, walking, receiving, &c. A man may as well be said to see, walk, and receive without his head, or without union to it, as one can be said to believe, that is, to see, walk, and receive in a spiritual sense, without the head, Christ; or as an antecedent to union to him, or, in order to it. To talk of faith in Christ before union to Christ, is a most preposterous, absurd, and irrational notion.

Faith is the fruit and effect of union, even of what is commonly called vital union. Faith stands much in the same place in things spiritual, as reason does in things natural. There must first be an union of the soul and body of man, before he can be said to live; and there must be life in him before there can be reason, or the exercise of it; man must first become a living soul, before he can be a reasonable one; so there must be an union of the soul to Christ before it can spiritually live; and there must be a principle of spiritual life before there can be any faith, or the exercise of it. Now as reason and the exercise of it, is a second remove from the union of the soul and body; so is faith, and the exercise of it, a second remove from a person's union to Christ. There must be first a vital union to Christ, before there can be any believing in him. This is fitly and fully exemplified in the simile of the vine and branches, which Christ makes use of to express the union of his people to him: Abide in me, and I in you, says he, {Joh 15:4-5} as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. Now faith is a fruit of the Spirit, which grows upon the branches, that are in Christ the Vine; but then these branches must first be in the vine, before they bear this fruit; for the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit. {Pr 12:12} The branches of the wild olive tree must first be engrafted into the good olive tree, become one with it, and so partake of the root and

fatness of it, before they can bring forth good fruit. Could there be the fruit of faith in Christ's people before their union to him, then the branches would bear fruit without the vine, without being in it, or united to it, contrary to our Lord's express words. From the whole, it may safely be concluded, that union to Christ is before faith, and therefore faith cannot be the bond of union; no, not on our part. Vital union is before faith. There always was a fulness of life laid up and reserved for all those who were chosen in Christ; there was always life in Christ the Head for all his members, which he, when it pleases him, in regeneration, communicates to them, and implants in them, though there is no activity or exercise of this life until they believe.

The everlasting love of God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the bond of the elect's union to the sacred Three. What may be said of the three divine Persons in general, is true of each of them in particular. They have all three loved the elect with an everlasting love, and thereby have firmly and everlastingly united them to themselves. Christ has loved them with an everlasting and unchangeable love, whereby his heart is knit unto them as Jonathan's was to David. He loved them as his own soul, as his own body, and the members of it. This is that cement which will never loosen, that union knot which can never be untied, that bond which can never be dissolved, from whence there can be no separation; for who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded, says the apostle, {Ro 8:35,38-39} that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. There are several unions which arise from or are branches of this everlasting love-union, which are all antecedent to our faith in Christ. 1. There is an election-union in Christ from everlasting: God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. This Eph 1:4 is an act and instance of everlasting love, by which the persons chosen are considered in Christ, and one with him. Christ was chosen as an head, his people as members with him.

Nothing is more commonly said by those who are esteemed sound divines, than this: Now how Christ can be considered as an head, and the elect as members of him in this eternal act of election, without union to him, is hard to conceive.

Arminius and his followers, the Remonstrants, have frequently urged the text now mentioned in favor of election from faith foreseen, and their argument upon it is this: "None are chosen to salvation but in Christ; none are in Christ but believers, who are engrafted into Christ, and united to him by faith, therefore none are chosen to salvation, but those who are believers in sin Christ, are engrafted into him, and united with him." For they had no other notion of being in Christ, but by faith; like some others, who yet would be thought to be far from being in their scheme. But then, among other replies, they have been told by the Anti-Remonstrants, "That it is certain that we are chosen and regarded in Christ before we were believers; which is fully proved from several places of scripture, which plainly make it appear, that the elect have some existence in Christ, even before they believe; for unless there had been some kind of union between Christ and the members, Christ would not have been their head, nor could he have satisfied for them." 2. There is a legal union between Christ and the elect from everlasting: they are one in a law-sense, as surety and debtor are one; the bond of this union is Christ's suretyship, which is from everlasting, and in which Christ engaged, as a proof of his strong love and affections to his people. He is the surety of the better Testament, the egiuov, that drew near to God the Father in the name of the elect, substituted himself in their place and stead, and laid himself under obligation to pay their debts, satisfy for their sins, and procure for them all the blessings of grace and glory. This being accepted of by God, Christ and the elect were looked upon, in the eye of the law, as one person, even as the bondsman and the debtor, among men, are one, in a legal sense; so that if one pays the debt, it is the same as if the other did it. This legal union arising from Christ's suretyship-engagements, is the foundation of the imputation of our sins to Christ, and of his satisfaction for them, and

also of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, and of our justification by it. Christ and his people being one, in a law-sense, their sins become his, and his righteousness becomes theirs. 3. There is a federal union between Christ and the elect from everlasting. As they were considered as one, he as head, and they as members, in election; they are likewise considered after the same manner in the covenant of grace.

Christ has a very great concern in the covenant; he is given for a covenant to the people; he is the Mediator, Surety, and Messenger of it. It is made with him, not as a single person, but as a common head, representing all the elect, who are given to him, in a federal way, as his seed and posterity. What he promised in the covenant, he promised for them, and on their account; and what he received, he received for them, and on their account. Hence grace is said to be given to them in him before the world began; {[2Ti 1:9](#)} and they are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. {[Eph 1:3](#)}

4. There is a natural union between Christ and his people; for both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; that is, of one nature; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. {[Heb 2:11](#)} This is an union in time, but is the effect of Christ's love before time; Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. {[Heb 2:14](#)} The nature he assumed is the same with that of all mankind, but was taken to him with a peculiar regard to the elect, the children, the spiritual seed of Abraham, who are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Now this natural union, which is the fruit of Christ's everlasting love, is antecedent to the faith of New Testament saints. 5. It is sufficiently evident, that there is a representative union between Christ and the elect, both from everlasting and in time, which is independent on, and prior to their believing in him. He represented them as their head in election, and in the covenant of grace, as has been already observed; and so he did, when upon the cross, and in the grave, when he rose from the

dead, entered into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. Hence they are said to be crucified with him, dead with him, buried with him, risen with him, yea, to be made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Now all these several unions take their rise from, and have their foundation in, the everlasting love of Christ to his people; which is the grand original, strong and firm bond of union between him and them, and is the spring of all that fellowship and communion they have with him in time, and shall have to all eternity. It is from hence that the Spirit of God is sent down into our hearts to regenerate and renew us, and faith is wrought in our souls by the Spirit.

Faith does not give us a being in Christ, or unite us to him; it is the fruit, effect, and evidence of our being in Christ and union to him. It is true, indeed, that God's elect do not know their being in Christ and union to him, until they believe; then what was before secret is made manifest; and because things are sometimes said to be, when they are only manifested to be, hence the people of Christ are said to be in Christ, when they are made new creatures; if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. {2Co 5:17} Being a new creature, does not put a man into Christ, but is the evidence of his being there; and without which he neither knows, nor ought he to profess himself to be in Christ: And so likewise, in another place, it is said, If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. {Ro 8:9} He may be one of his chosen and redeemed ones, though he has not the Spirit of Christ as yet; but he cannot know this until he has the Spirit of Christ; for no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, that is, his Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. {1Co 12:3} The apostle Paul takes notice of some that were in Christ before him; {Ro 16:7} all God's elect were chosen together in Christ, not one before another: They had all together a being in him; but this in conversion is made known to one before another. There are different manifestations of union to different persons, and to the same persons at different times; for which Christ prays, when he says, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me; and the glory which

thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. {Joh 17:21-23} The full manifestation of it will be in heaven, when the saints shall be with Christ where he is, and behold his glory, and enjoy uninterrupted communion with him, as the fruit of their eternal union to him.

I should now, Sir, have closed this letter, were it not for a passage in your discourse Of the Doctrine of Grace as it Encourageth Holiness; in which, I apprehend, you have poured much contempt on several valuable and excellent truths of the gospel: I will repeat your words, and take leave to make some few strictures on them. They are these: "There have been some, who, by their life and conversation, have shewed, that they were far from being enemies to holiness, who have amused themselves with fancies about God's loving and delighting in his elect, while they were in a state of nature; of his seeing no sin in his people, and good works not being necessary to salvation; and who have been forward to condemn pressing men to duty, as legal preaching; and to speak of exhorting to repentance, mortification, and self-denial, as low and mean stuff."

I. I observe that you esteem the doctrine of God's loving his elect, while in a state of nature, a fancy; and that those who hold this doctrine do but amuse themselves with a fancy. I must beg leave to say, that if it is a fancy, it is a scriptural one: I would not willingly say or write any thing that is contrary to the purity and holiness of God, or has a tendency to embolden vicious persons in a course of sin and wickedness; and yet cannot help saying, that the doctrine of God's everlasting, unchangeable, and invariable love to his elect, through every state and condition into which they come, is written as with a sunbeam in the sacred writings. 1. God's love to his elect is not of yesterday; it does not begin with their love to him, We love him, because he first loved us. {1Jo 4:19} It was bore in his heart towards them long before they were delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. It does not commence in time, but bears date from eternity, and is the

ground and foundation of the elect's being called in time out of darkness into marvelous light: I have loved thee, says the Lord to the church, with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee; {Jer 31:3} that is in effectual vocation.

Many are the instances which might be given in proof of the antiquity of God's love to his elect, and as it is antecedent to their being brought out of a state of nature. God's choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world, was an act of his love towards them, the fruit and effect of it; for election presupposes love. His making an everlasting covenant with his Son, ordered in all things, and sure, on account of those he chose in him; his setting him up as the Mediator of the covenant from everlasting; his donation of grace to them in him before the world began; his putting their persons into his hands, and so making them his care and charge, are so many demonstrative proofs of his early love to them; for can it ever be imagined that there should be a choice of persons made, a covenant of grace so well formed and stored, a promise of life granted, and a security made, both of persons and grace, and yet no love all this while? 2. The love of God to his elect is unchangeable and unalterable; it is as invariable as his own nature and being; yea, God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. {1Jo 4:16} Hence it is that the blessings of his grace are irreversible, because they are gifts of him, who is the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. Hence also it is that the salvation of God's elect does not stand upon a precarious foundation, as it would, if his love changed as theirs does; but he is the Lord, who changes not, and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.

The several changes the elect of God pass under, through the fall of Adam, and their own actual transgressions make no change or alteration in the love of God. The love of God makes a change in them when he converts them, but no change or alteration is made in God's love; that does not admit of more or less; it cannot be said to be more ardent and intense at one time, than at another, it is always invariably the same in his heart. Love produced a wonderful and

surprising change in him, who was afterwards the great apostle of the Gentiles, and of a blaspheming, persecuting, and injurious Saul, made a believer in Christ, and a preacher of the everlasting gospel: but then this produced no change in God, nor in his love. God sometimes changes the dispensations of his providence to his people, but he never changes his love; he sometimes hides his face from them, and chides them in a fatherly manner; but at all times he loves them: he loves when he rebukes and chastens, and though he hides his face for a moment from them, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them; for he has said, The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. {[Isa 54:10](#)} There is, indeed, no sensible manifestation of God's love to his elect before conversion, or while they are in a state of nature; and it must be allowed, that the manifestations of it to their souls after conversion, are not always alike; and that God's love appeal's more evident in some instances and acts of it, than in others; yet still this love as in his own heart, is unchangeably and invariably the same, as it needs must be, if he is God. Since then God's love to his elect is from everlasting, and never changes upon any consideration whatever, why should God's love to his elect, while in a state of nature, be accounted a fancy, and those who maintain it, be represented as amusing themselves with a fancy? 3. There are instances to be given of God's love to his elect, while they are in a state of nature: I have already observed some instances of it to his elect, from eternity. I will just mention one or two instances of it to them in time, and which respect them, while in a state of nature. Christ's coming into this world, and dying in the room and stead of the elect, are, at once, proofs, both of his own and his Father's love to them; God so loved them, as to give his only begotten Son; and Christ so loved them as to give himself for them, in a way of offering and sacrifice for their sins; at which time they were considered as ungodly, as being yet sinners, as enemies in their minds, by wicked works, and without love to God: for the apostle says, {[Ro 5:6,8,10](#)} When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the

ungodly. God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; for if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Now certainly these persons were in a state of nature, who are said to be "without strength, to be ungodly, sinners, and enemies;" and yet God commended his love towards them, when and while they were such, in a matchless instance of it: and so the apostle John makes use of this circumstance, respecting the state of God's elect, to magnify, to set off, and illustrate the greatness of God's love: {1Jo 4:10} Herein is love, says he, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. From whence it may strongly be concluded, that God loved his people while in a state of nature, when enemies to him, destitute of all grace, without a principle of love to him, or faith in him. Again, the quickening of God's elect, when dead in trespasses and sins, the drawing of them to Christ with the cords of powerful and efficacious grace in effectual vocation, are instances of his special grace and favor, and fruits and effects of his everlasting love to them. God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. {Eph 2:4-5} The time of the effectual vocation of God's people being come, fixed in his everlasting counsels and covenant, it is a time of open love to their souls, and that time becomes a time of life; for seeing them wallowing in their blood, in all the impurities of their nature, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, he says unto them, when in their blood, live; yea, when in their blood he says unto them, live. The spirit of God, as an instance of God's love, is sent down into their hearts in order to begin, carry on, and finish a work of grace, when he finds them in a state of nature, dead in sin, devoid of all grace, impotent to all that is spiritually good: We ourselves also, says the apostle, {Tit 3:3-6} were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another, but, when the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared; not by works of

righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. If God did not love his elect, while in a state of nature, they must for ever remain in that state, since they are unable to help themselves out of it; and it is only the love, grace and mercy of God, which engage his almighty power to deliver them from thence.

There are three gifts and instances of God's love to his people before conversion, which are not to be matched by any instance or instances of love after conversion; the one is the gift of God himself to them in the everlasting covenant; which covenant runs thus: I will be their God, and they shall be my people: The other is the gift of his Son, to suffer and die in their room and stead, and so obtain eternal redemption for them the third is the gift of his Spirit to them, to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

And now what greater instance is there of God's love to his people after conversion? If the heavenly glory, with all the entertaining joys of that delightful state, should be fixed upon, I deny it to be a greater instance of God's love, than the gift of himself, his Son, and Spirit; and, indeed, all that God does in time, or will do to all eternity, is only telling his people how much he loved them from everlasting; all is but as it were, a comment upon, and an opening of that ancient act of his; nor has this doctrine any tendency to licentiousness, or to discourage the performance of good works. The consideration of this, that God loved me before I loved him, nay, when I was an enemy to him that his thoughts were employed about my salvation, when I had no thoughts of him, nor concern for myself, lays me under ten thousand times greater obligations, to fear, serve and glorify him; than such a consideration as this, that he began to love me when I loved him, or because I have loved him, can possibly do. Why then should this doctrine be accounted a mere fancy, which has so good a foundation, both in the word of God, and in the experience of his people; and the maintainers of it traduced as amusers of themselves with fancies?

II. Perhaps you will say, it is not merely the notion of God's loving his elect in a state of nature, but his loving them so as to delight in them, while in that state, that you condemn as a fancy, and the defenders of it, as amusing themselves with a fancy; since you join love and delight together, when you express yourself so freely on this head. There is a distinction which you may imagine will help you, which is that of a love of pity and benevolence, and of complacency and delight; with the first of these, say some, God loved his elect before conversion, and while in a state of nature, but not with the latter. It is an idle and ill grounded distinction of some ignorant, trifling, popish schoolmen, which some of our grave divines have been fond of, and have used, when they have thought it would serve their purpose; though it is subversive of the very nature and perfections of God, and represents him as altogether such an one as ourselves, subject to change; that his love, like ours, alters, and by degrees increases, and, from a love of pity and benevolence, passes into a love of complacency and delight; it supposes that God first views his elect in a miserable state and condition, with whose misery he is touched, and is filled with bowels of compassion and pity towards them, which occasion some velleities (a mere wish not accompanied by actions) or wishes in his mind for their good; and these rise up at length into resolutions and purposes to do them good; which when he has, at least in some measure, executed, his affections glow, his love grows more ardent, and issues in complacency and delight. If this is not to make God changeable, and bring him down into the rank of mutable creatures, I know not what is. I could tell the friends of this distinction, though it may be no news to them, and perhaps they may find their account in it, that these same popish schoolmen have distinguished the love of God into amor ordinativus, a love in ordination, purpose and design, and into amor collativus, a love in gift, which is actually bestowed. This may suit well enough with the divinity of some men, who seem to be ready to give into such schemes as these; that God's love to his elect, before conversion, is only a purpose to love them when they are converted; that eternal election, is only a decree to elect persons

in time; that the everlasting covenant is made with persons when they believe, of which faith, repentance and sincere obedience, are the conditions; and that there is no reconciliation of God's elect to him before faith; that the sufferings and death of Christ only make God reconcilable, but not reconciled; with such-like things as these, which I am almost tempted to call low and mean stuff. It is high time that these distinctions about the love of God, with that of an antecedent and consequent one, were laid aside, which so greatly obscure the glory of God's unchangeable love and grace. It must be an odd sort of love among men, that is separate from delight in the object loved. The philosopher tells me, that benevolence is properly neither friendship nor love; and that as benevolence is the beginning of friendship, so delight and pleasure, at the sight of the object, is the beginning of love; and that no man can be said to love, who is not first delighted with the form or idea of the object. Indeed, I cannot see that that can be love, which is without any delight in the object said to be loved: if a man should say to his wife, I love you well, I wish you well and am willing to do you all the good offices I am able: but, at the same time, I can take no delight in your person, nor pleasure in your company; would not this be esteemed a contradiction to his expressions of love to her? So if a father should say to his child, I wish you well, I pity you in what you do amiss, and I design to do something for you, which may be for your good, but I can take no delight and pleasure in you as a child of mine; what kind of love would this be thought to be? The same may be observed in many other such-like instances.

God's love to his Son, as a Mediator, is an everlasting love; Thou lovedst me, says Christ ([Joh 17:24](#)), before the foundation of the world. This love was a love of complacency and delight; for Christ as Mediator, was from everlasting, then by him, that is, the Father ([Pr 8:30](#)), as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. Now God loves his elect with the same love he loves his Son as Mediator. Hence Christ prays for the open and manifest union between him and his people; That says he ([Joh 17:23](#)), the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved

them, as thou hast loved me. If God therefore has loved his Son, as Mediator, from everlasting, with a love of complacency and delight, and he has loved his elect from everlasting with the same love he has loved him, then he must have loved his elect from everlasting with a love of complacency and delight: and, indeed how can it otherwise be, since the elect were always in Christ their Head, in whom they were chosen before the foundation of the world? And they could not be considered in him but as righteous persons, through his righteousness, with which God is always well pleased, because by it the law is magnified, and made honorable; and so Christ is often said to be God's beloved Son, in whom not with whom, he is well pleased ([Mt 3:17](#); [2Pe 1:17](#)); which designs not his person only singly, but all the elect, as considered in him, who together with Christ, are the objects of God's eternal delight and pleasure.

It is certain that Jesus Christ has, from everlasting, loved the elect with a love of complacency and delight; for from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, when there were no depths nor fountains, before the mountains and hills were brought into being, while as yet God had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, Christ's delights were with the sons of men" ([Pr 8:31](#)). The word in the Hebrew rendered delights, is expressive of the most intimate, sweet, ravishing delight and pleasure; and it being not only in the plural number, but also having its radical letters, especially its two first radical letters, doubled, which, in the Hebrew language, increases the signification of the word; it sets forth, that exceeding great delight and pleasure which Christ had in his people from everlasting; nay, he not only took delight in the persons of the elect, as they were presented to him in the glass of his Father's purposes and decrees, but took pleasure also in the fore-views of the very spots of ground where he knew his people would dwell: and hence he says, that he was rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth ([Pr 8:31](#)). Now why God the Father should not, from everlasting, love the elect with the same love his son did, I know not.

Nothing is more evident than that God's choosing his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, is an act of love; and I will venture to say, it is an act of love, founded upon, and springing from his delight in them; even as God's loving and choosing of Israel (which was an emblem and representation of his special love to, and choice of the true and spiritual Israel of God) is owing to that delight he had in them; for it is said, The Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them; and he chose their seed after them, even you above all the people, as at this day ([De 10:15](#)). And, indeed, all the favors and blessings which God bestows on his people in time, arise from his delight in them. His bringing them out of darkness into light, out of a state of nature into a state of grace, out of distresses and difficulties of every kind, springs from his delight in them He brought me forth also into a large place, says David ([Ps 18:19](#)); he delivered me, because he delighted in me. In a word, the whole salvation of the elect is owing to God's love of delight, with which he loves them. The Lord taketh pleasure in his people; and, as a fruit and effect of that he will beautify the meek with salvation: He has promised to rejoice over them, to do them good; and it is said, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; and he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing ([Ps 149:4](#)).

Some, perhaps, will say, that the elect, while in a state of nature, are destitute of faith, which is very true; and since without faith it is impossible to please God ([Heb 11:6](#)), he can take no delight in them, while in that state. The Remonstrants have urged this text in favor of election, ex fide prævisa; and their argument upon it is this: "That if it is impossible to please God without faith, it is impossible that any should be "chosen by God unto salvation, without faith: seeing to be chosen unto salvation, is the highest instance of God's love and good-will to man that he can shew him:" But "they have been told, by the Anti-Remonstrants, that though election is an act of God's great love and good pleasure, yet it may be without faith, since there is a sense in which persons may be said to please God before faith; for God is said even to manifest his love to his enemies,

(Ro 5:8,10). If then he loved them when enemies, they must needs please him before they believed;" and that "although whatsoever is done without faith may be displeasing to God, yet God may be said to love some persons, whose actions displease him; so he loved the person of Paul before he was converted to the faith of Christ; yea, that there is a certain complacency in the person, if it be proper so to say, before his works and faith please God." And it is easy to observe, that the apostle is speaking, not of the complacency which God has in the persons of his people, but of that which he has in their works and actions. Now no works without faith can please God, such as praying, reading, hearing, and the like because whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. It is in this sense, that they that are in the flesh, that is, who are unregenerate, are in a state of nature, cannot please God (Ro 8:8); for it may be as well expected to gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles, as that good works well-pleasing to God should be done by an evil man: but though man can do nothing without faith, that can please God, yet this does not hinder, but that the persons of God's elect, as considered in Christ, may be well pleasing to God before faith, and without it.

It may be further objected, that God's elect, while in a state of nature, are children of wrath, even as others, and therefore cannot be the objects of God's love and delight; for how can they be children of wrath, and yet objects of love at one and the same time? To which I reply, that "a person may be the object of love and delight, and of displeasure and wrath, at one and the same time, in a different respect." It is said of the Jews (Ro 11:28), as concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. But this will be better exemplified in the instance of Jesus Christ, "who standing in two different relations, and sustaining two "different capacities, was at one and the same time the object of his Father's love and wrath; as he was the Son of God, he was always the object of his love and delight; but as he was the sinner's surety, and while bearing the sins of his people in his own body on the tree, he was the object of his displeasure and wrath, which he sensibly felt, and therefore it is said

([Ps 89:38](#)), Thou hast cast off and abhorred; thou hast been wrath with thine anointed. And yet even then, when he poured out his wrath to the uttermost on him, on the account of his people's sins, when he ordered justice to draw its sword, and sheath it in him, his love towards him, as his Son, was not in the last abated." Thus the elect of God, being considered in different views, may be truly said to be children of wrath, and objects of love at one and the same time; consider them in Adam, and under the covenant of works, they are children of wrath, they are deserving of the wrath of God, and are exposed to the curse of the law; but then as considered in Christ, and under the covenant of grace, they always were, and ever will be, the objects of God's love and delight.

This doctrine, I apprehend, is no ways contrary to the purity and holiness of God's nature; it does not follow, that because God loves and delights in his elect, while in a state of nature, that he loves and delights in their sins: God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon sin, with any approbation or delight ([Hab 2:13](#); [Ps 5](#)). He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. We are obliged to distinguish between the persons and sins of God's people after conversion; it is allowed that God loves and delights in their persons, though he hates their sins. Now why the same distinction may not be allowed before conversion, as after, I see not; since it is not any thing that is done by them, nor any thing that is wrought in them, that is the ground and foundation of God's love to and delight in them; but his love to and delight in them is the ground and foundation of all that he does for them, or works in them. No doubt, what he works in them is well-pleasing in his sight, but their acceptance with God, and their persons being well-pleasing to him, does not lie in this, but in the beloved. When, Sir, these things are considered by you, I hope you will no longer esteem it a fancy, that God should love and delight in his people while in a state of nature. But I go on, III. To consider another evangelic truth, which, indeed, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and with the proof of which the scripture abounds, though you are pleased to condemn it is a fancy, and that is, that

"God sees no sin in his people." I know this doctrine has been most odiously traduced, and most widely misrepresented; but, I hope, when some few things are observed, it will plainly appear not to be a fancy, or a freak of some distempered minds, but a most glorious and comfortable doctrine of the gospel, and without which the gospel must cease to be good news and glad tidings to the sons of men. 1st, When it is asserted that God sees no sin in his people, the meaning is not, that there is no sin in believers, nor any committed by them, or that their sins are no sins, or that their sanctification is perfect in this life. 1. Sin is in the best of saints; to say otherwise is contrary to scripture, and to all the experience of God's people; If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ([1Jo 1:8](#)). The ingenuous confession of the saints, their groans and complaints, and that continual war between flesh and spirit they feel in themselves, are so many proofs of sin's being in them; nay, it is not only in them, but it lives in them. It is true, indeed, they do not live in sin, for then there would be no difference between them and unregenerate persons; to live in sin, is not only unbecoming, but contrary to the grace of God: but still sin lives in believers; though there is an inward principle of grace, and a mortification of the outward actions of sin, and a putting off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; yet this old man is not changed, nor removed, much less destroyed. Moreover, sin is not merely in believers now and then, by fits and starts, as we say, but it dwells in them. Hence the apostle calls it, Sin that dwelleth in me ([Ro 7:17,20](#)); where it is not idle, but active and busy; it hinders all the good, and does all the mischief it can; it makes war against the soul, and sometimes brings it into captivity. 2. Sin is not only in the best of saints, but is also committed by them: There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not ([Ec 7:20](#)); nor is there any sin, but what has been, or may be committed by believers, excepting the sin against the Holy Ghost: their daily slips and falls, their frequent prayers for the discoveries of pardoning grace, and the application of Christ's blood, which cleanseth from all sin, confirm

the truth of this. It is true, the apostle John says, that whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1Jo 3:9); that is, as born of God, he neither does, nor can commit sin. What is that which is born of God? The new creature; the other I, distinguished from sin that dwelleth in him this never did, nor can commit sin; there are an old man and a new man in regenerate persons; the new man never sins, the old man does nothing else but sin; there are flesh and spirit in the saints; all sinful works are the works of the flesh, as all good works are the fruits of the Spirit.

The work of grace, though imperfect, is not impure; nothing impure springs from it, nor is any thing impure to be attributed to it. 3. The sins of believers are sins, as well as the sins of others; they are of the same kind, and are equally transgressions of the law, as others are murder and adultery, committed by David, were sins in him, as well as they are as committed by others; yea, oftentimes the sins of believers are attended with more aggravating circumstances than the sins of other men, being acted against light and knowledge, love, grace and mercy. Though believers are justified from all sin by Christ's righteousness, and have all their sins pardoned through Christ's blood, yet their sins do not hereby cease to be sins.

Justification from sin by Christ's righteousness, and pardon of sin through Christ's blood, free them from obligation to punishment due to sin, but do not destroy the nature of sin. 4. The work of sanctification is imperfect in this life it is a good work begun, but not finished; there is something lacking in the faith of the greatest believer; love is not come to its full growth and as for knowledge, it is but in part. There is a twofold sanctification; the one in Christ, this is complete and perfect; the other is derived from Christ, and wrought in the soul by the Spirit of Christ; this at present is imperfect. There is indeed a perfection of parts, but not of degrees; that is to say, the new creature has all its parts, but these are not grown up to the perfection they will arrive unto. The best of saints need fresh supplies of grace, which they would not, were they perfect: they disclaim perfection in themselves, though they wish for

it both in themselves and others; when therefore it is said that "God sees no sin in his people," neither of these things are designed by it. 2ndly, God's seeing no sin in his people, does not impeach his omniscience: nor is it to be considered as referring to the article of providence, but to the article of justification as I shall shew presently. God is omniscient, he knows and sees all persons and things; nothing is or can be hid from his all-seeing eye: His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings; there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves ([Job 34:21-22](#)). All the actions of men, whether good or bad, are known to him, with their secret springs and principles from whence they flow; he sees the sins of his own people, as well as the sins of others, both in their first motions, and in their open productions; The Lord's throne is in heaven, his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men! the Lord trieth the righteous ([Ps 11:4-5](#)). About this there is no debate; they must be stupid indeed, if there be any; for my part, I never heard of any who deny that the omniscience of God extends to the sins of his people; it never was thought of, or designed, by this assertion, to limit or deny the omniscience of God; nor is it limited or denied by it. Though the phrases of seeing and knowing, are used as synonymous in the article of providence, yet never in the article of justification; there they are always distinguished: knowledge and sight are two things the one belongs to the attribute of God's omniscience, the other to the attribute of his justice: when therefore it is said, that God sees no sin in his people, the meaning is not, that he does not with his omniscient eye, see and know sin to be in them; but he does not see any iniquity in them with his eye of justice, or so as to punish them for their sins, or require satisfaction at their hands for them. 3rdly, Nor is the meaning of this proposition, that "God sees no sin in his people," that he takes no notice of them, nor resents them, nor chastises them, in a fatherly way, on the account of them. God does not, indeed, punish his people for their sins in a way of vindictive wrath and justice; for this is contrary to his justice, and must overthrow the satisfaction of Christ; for either Christ has perfectly

satisfied for the sins of his people, or he has not; if he has not, they must satisfy for them themselves; if he has, it is contrary to the justice of God to punish for sin twice, or to require satisfaction, both of the surety and the sinner: but though God does not punish his people for their sins, yet he chastises them in a fatherly way; he takes notice of their sins, lays his hand upon them, in order to bring them to a sense and acknowledgement of them; If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail ([Ps 89:30-33](#)).

4thly, Though God sees sin in his people, as being but in part sanctified, yet he sees no sin in them, as they are perfectly justified; though he sees sin in them, with his eye of omniscience, yet not with his eye of revenging justice; though he sees them, in respect of his providence, which reaches all things, yet not in respect of justification; though he takes notice of his people's sins so as to chastise them in a fatherly way, for their good; yet he does not see them, take notice of them, and observe them in a judicial way, so as to impute them to them, or require satisfaction for them: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ([2Co 5:9](#)): No, he has imputed them to Christ, he has beheld them in him, he has charged them to him, and Christ has made full satisfaction for them; and therefore who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died ([Ro 8:33-34](#)). God will not require satisfaction at the hands of his people for their sins; he will not punish them on the account of them; they shall never enter into condemnation; for there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit ([Ro 8:1](#)). Was God to see sin in his people in this sense, and proceed against them in a forensic way, he must act contrary to his justice and set aside the satisfaction of his Son. A few things will make it

plainly appear that God sees no sin in his justified ones, as such: First, This will be evident, if we consider what Christ has done with respect to the sins of his people. These have been removed from them to him; they have been placed to his account, imputed to him, and laid upon him. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all ([Isa 53:6](#)); which he has bore in his own body, on the tree; yea, he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; he has removed the iniquity of his people in one day: As he was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their sins, so he has washed them from their sins in that blood of his which cleanseth from all sin; by his righteousness he justifies them from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses; and by the sacrifice of himself, he has put away sin for ever; yea, he has finished transgression, made an end of sin, has made reconciliation for iniquity, and has brought in everlasting righteousness. This is the language both of the Old and New Testament, and if this be the case, as it certainly is, God does not, and cannot see iniquity in his people, since all their iniquity has been transferred on Christ, and it is all done away by him.

Secondly, This will be yet more evident, if we consider what God the Father has done on the account of the blood, righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction of his Son. He has freely forgiven all the sins of his people for Christ's sake; he has covered them with a covering of mercy, so as they are not visible; he has blotted them out of his sight, so as they are not legible to the eye of justice; yea, he has cast them all behind his back, and into the depths of the sea; insomuch that the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: such strong expressions as these from the mouth of the Lord of hosts, will sufficiently bear us out in asserting, that "God sees no sin in his people." Thirdly, Add to this, the view in which the people of God are to be considered, and are considered by Father, Son, and Spirit, being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and washed in his blood; they are complete in Christ; they are without fault before the

throne, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: Christ says to them, Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no spot in thee ([Song 4:7](#)). The church is a perfection of beauty in his esteem; all the saints are perfectly comely through the comeliness he has put on them; yea, they are, in the sight of God, in the eye of justice, unblameable and unreprovable; and if so, then surely God sees no iniquity in them. One must transcribe a considerable part of the Old and New Testament to give the full proof of this doctrine.

If this is a fancy, it is the glory of the Bible, and the marrow of the Gospel; what most displays the riches of God's grace, the efficacy of Christ's blood, the completeness of his righteousness, and the fulness of his satisfaction it is the foundation of all solid hopes of future happiness, what supports the life of faith, and is the ground of a believer's triumph. One would have thought, Sir, you might have forbore so severe a reflection on this truth, of God's seeing no sin in his people, since it is the to rhton, the express words of the sacred oracles: He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel ([Nu 23:21](#)). I proceed, IV. To another truth decried by you as a fancy; the assertors or which are ridiculed, as amusers of themselves with a fancy, which is, that "good works are not necessary to salvation." I am sensible, in some measure, what controversies have been in the world about this subject, and what extremes have been run into on both sides the question. There was a sharp contention among the Lutherans on this head. George Major asserted, that "good works are necessary to salvation;" on the other hand, Nicholas Amsdorsius said, that they were "noxious and pernicious to salvation;" neither of these positions are defensible, as they thus stand: Not the former; for though good works are necessary, upon many accounts, to answer several valuable ends and purposes, yet not necessary to salvation; though they ought to be performed by all God's justified and saved ones, yet not in order to their justification and salvation; though the people of God ought to maintain good works for necessary uses, yet these necessary uses do not design salvation, but other things, as I shall shew presently. Nor is the latter of these positions to be defended; for though good works

are not necessary to salvation, yet not noxious and pernicious to it, unless when they are placed in the business of salvation, to the displacing of Christ and his righteousness; and then they are so far from helping forward, that they hinder the salvation of souls, being an ignis fatuus, which leads out of the way of salvation. The Papists and Protestants have warmly contested this point: the former say that good works are necessary to salvation, *per viam efficientiæ*, "by way of efficiency or causality," to merit or procure salvation; which is the only sense in which the proposition can well be understood for if good works are necessary to salvation, it must be to procure it; for in what sense else can they be necessary to it? This is denied by the latter, and by them fully confuted; though some have made use of some distinctions, in order to qualify and soften this proposition, that good works are necessary to salvation, by which they have betrayed the truth into the hands of the enemy, I shall attempt to shew, First, That good works are in no sense necessary to salvation.

Secondly, What they are necessary to, or what are the necessary uses of them First, I affirm that good works are not necessary to salvation in any sense. 1st, They are not necessary to salvation by way of causality, as having any causal influence on our salvation, or any part of it. Christ is the sole author of salvation; he came into this world to effect it; he has done it, it is finished, it is complete and perfect in itself; it needs nothing to be added to it to make it so: Christ is a rock, and his work is perfect; he is a Saviour in whole, and not in part; he will admit of no copartner or assistant in this matter. Good works have no concern, as causes, in our salvation; God, in saving persons, does not act according to them, nor by them, nor in consideration of them; for he hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ([2Ti 1:9](#)). And says the same inspired writer elsewhere ([Tit 3:5](#)); not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but, according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. God saves his elect by Christ a way of pure grace and mercy, to the exclusion of good works having any

hand therein; For by grace ye are saved, says the apostle ([Eph 2:8-9](#)), through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. Good works are not to be placed in any rank of causes of our salvation whatever. 1. They are not the impulsive or moving causes of salvation. Nothing out of God can move him to do any thing; good works did not move him to take any one step relating to the salvation of his people; they did not move him to choose them unto salvation by Jesus Christ; he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, before they had done either good or evil; and so not because they were, but that they might be holy. This act of his sprung from his good will and pleasure, and is an instance of pure grace. Hence it is called the election of grace ([Ro 11:5-6](#)); and, adds the apostle, if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. Good works are the fruits, not the causes of electing grace; nor did these move God to make a covenant of grace with his elect in Christ, in which the scheme of salvation was fixed, the whole of it secured, and all blessings and promises put into the hands of the Mediator; nor was it good works that moved God to send his Son to obtain salvation, but his own free love and grace; nor what moved Christ to give himself for his people, since at that time they were without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies to him; in a word, it is not good works, but grace, which moves God to justify, pardon, adopt, regenerate, sanctify and glorify any of the sons of men. 2. Good works are not the efficient, procuring, or meritorious causes of salvation; for they are imperfect in the best of men; and were they perfect, yet the requisites of merit are wanting in them; for, (1.) That by which we would merit, must not be due to him, of whom we would merit. Now all our works are previously due to God; he has a right to all our obedience, prior to the performance of it; and therefore when we have done all those things which are commanded us, we have done but that which was our duty to do. (2.) That by which we would merit, must be some way or other be profitable to him, of whom we would merit: but can a man be profitable to God,

as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it any gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man ([Job 22:2-3; 35:7-8](#)). (3.) That by which we would merit, must be done in our own strength, and not in the strength of him, of whom we would merit: we must not be obliged to him for any thing in the performance of it; whereas all our sufficiency to think a good thought, or do a good action, is of God without him we can do nothing; it is by the grace of God we are what we are; and it is by the grace of God we do what we do; and therefore to him all the glory belongs. (4.) There must be some proportion between that by which we would merit, and that which we would merit. Now there is a just proportion between sin and the wages of it, but none between good works and eternal salvation; The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord ([Ro 6:23](#)).

In fine, if good works were the efficient procuring causes of salvation, then Christ died in vain; his obedience and sufferings must be useless, and of no effect; besides, boasting would not be excluded, which is God's design in fixing the method of salvation in the manner he has; for if men were saved by works, they would have whereof to boast. 3. Good works are not coefficient causes or con-causes of salvation, with Christ; they are not adjuvant or helping causes of it; they do not assist in, or help forward the business of salvation; it is done without them; Christ will not admit of any rivalry in this matter: his own arm has brought salvation to him; he has alone effected it, and is the sole author of it; and therefore good works are needless in this respect. It is a rule in philosophy, Quod potest fieri per pauca, non debet fieri per plura; "What can be done by few, ought not to be done by more." There is a fulness, a sufficiency in Christ to salvation, therefore good works are not necessary to salvation. 4. Good works are not causa sine qua non, of salvation they are not conditions of salvation, or that without which

persons cannot be saved; as is evident from the instances of the thief upon the cross, of elect infants dying in infancy, and of multitudes of others, as it is hoped, whom God calls in the last hour, upon their death—beds, who live not to perform good works. Now if good works are necessary to salvation, and persons cannot be saved without them, there none of those persons mentioned can be saved. 2dly, There are some worthy divines who utterly deny the efficiency or causality of good works in salvation, who yet think that this proposition, that " good works are necessary to salvation," may stand safely, and in a good sense, admitting some distinctions, which I shall briefly take notice of, and are as follow;

Some say, that good works are not necessary to salvation as causes, yet they are necessary, as means. This cannot be true, because every mean is the cause of that unto which it is a mean: and then good works must be the causes of salvation, which has been disproved already. If good works are the means of salvation, they must be either the means of procuring it, or of applying it, or of introducing God's people into the full possession of it; they are not the means of procuring salvation, for that is procured by Christ. alone without them; nor are they the means of applying it in regeneration or effectual vocation, because, properly speaking, before regeneration, or effectual vocation, there are n good works done by the sons of men they must be first regenerated, and called by grace; there must be an application of salvation; the gospel must become the power of God unto salvation, before they are capable of performing good works: We are his workmanship, says the apostle ([Eph 2:10](#)), created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Nor are they the means of introducing God's people into the full possession of salvation; for they that die in the Lord, rest from their labours, and their works follow them. They do not go beforehand to prepare the way for them, or to introduce them into the heavenly glory. Good works are not necessary, as means, either for the application or possession of salvation, neither for the incohesion or consummation of it.

Others make use of a distinction, which is Bernard's: which is, that though good works are not causa regnandi, "the cause of reigning," yet they are via ad regnum, "the way to the kingdom." But it ought to be observed, that Bernard does not say that they are via ad regnum, but via regni, "the way of the kingdom;" between which there is a great difference; for good works may be the way or course of such, who are of the kingdom of grace and belong to the kingdom of glory, when they are not the way to either. Christ is the way, the truth and the life; the only true, way to eternal life. Good works are to be performed by all that are in the way, Christ: they are the business of all such that walk in this way but they themselves not the way, unless it can be thought that good works are Christ.

Others say, that good works are necessary to justification and salvation; not quoad efficientiam, "as to the efficiency of them," but quoad præsentiam, "as to the presence of them;" and though they have no causal influence on salvation, yet the presence of them is necessary to salvation. That the presence of good works is necessary to all those who are justified and saved, that are capable of performing them, and have time and opportunity to perform them, I allow but that it is necessary to their justification and salvation, I deny; for if it is necessary, it must be necessary either as a cause, or a condition, or a mean of justification and salvation; either of which has been disproved already.

Others say, that they are necessary antecedent to salvation, and that they are necessary to it, as the antecedent to the consequent: but, from the instances before mentioned, of the thief on the cross, of elect infants dying in infancy, with those whom God calls by his grace on their death-beds, it appears that salvation is where good works do not go before. It is true, indeed, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord ([Heb 12:14](#)), that is, without internal holiness, without a principle of holiness in the heart. This must be supposed to be in the persons instanced in; but then there may be this, where there is no external holiness, or any performance of good works before men; and that either through incapacity, or through want of time and opportunity. And now lest it should be thought that

I imagine that the performance of good works are unnecessary, I shall proceed, Secondly, To shew in what sense they are necessary, and what are the necessary uses of them; for to say, that because they are not necessary to salvation, that therefore they are unnecessary to any thing else, is very illogical; though the scriptures no where say that they are necessary to salvation, yet they direct us to learn to maintain good works for necessary uses ([Tit 3:14](#)); which are these following: 1. They are necessary on the account of God, who has commanded them; We are under his law as creatures, and ought to do his will and pleasure; and as new creatures are under greater obligation still; we ought to perform good works in respect to the commands of God, to testify our obedience and subjection to him, and to shew the grateful sense we have of his mercies, both spiritual and temporal, as well as to answer some ends of his glory: Herein, says Christ ([Joh 15:8](#)), is my Father glorified, that ye bear ,much fruit. Nay, we not only glorify God ourselves by our good works, but are the means of others glorifying him likewise: Hence, says our Lord ([Mt 5:16](#)), let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. 2. Good works are necessary on the account of ourselves. They are useful to evidence the truth of our faith to the world, and discover to them the certainty of our election and vocation, who have no other way of judging of either, but by our outward conversation; hereby we adorn the profession we make of Christ and his gospel; so that his name, his ways, truths, and ordinances, are not blasphemed, or spoke evil of through us: yea, hereby we exercise a conscience void of offence, both towards God and man. 3. Good works are necessary on the account of our neighbors, who as they are often injured by evil works, are helped and profited by good works. One part of the moral law is, to love our neighbor as ourselves: now as a turning from this holy commandment tends to our neighbor's injury, so a conformity to it issues in his good. 4. Good works are necessary on the account of the enemies of religion. A good conversation recommends the Gospel, and the truths of it, and may be a means of winning persons over to it; and if not, yet it

silences the ignorance of foolish men, and shames such, and stops the mouth of those who reproach the Gospel of Christ, as a licentious doctrine, and falsely accuse the good conversation of the saints. From the whole, I hope, it appears on the one hand, that good works are necessary, and not trifling and indifferent things, that may, or may not, be done; or that they are useless, unnecessary, and insignificant; and on the other hand, that it is no fancy, but matter of faith, and what ought to be abode by, that good works are not necessary to salvation.

V. I observe that you describe such as assert that God loves and delights in his elect, while in a state of nature; that he sees no sin in his people, and that good works are not necessary to salvation, as persons "forward to condemn pressing men to duty, as legal preaching; and to speak of exhorting to repentance, mortification and self-denial, as low and mean stuff." The same complaint you make in another place. 1st, I cannot but wonder that you should esteem such culpable or blame-worthy, who condemn pressing men to duty, as legal preaching; for pressing men to duty, can be no other than legal preaching, or preaching of the law since duty can be referred to nothing else but the law, which obliges to it.

Should they condemn pressing men to duty, as criminal, or deny that there ought to be any preaching, or that there is any use of the law, you might justly have blamed them. The duties which the law requires, ought to be in their place insisted on in the ministry of the word; they should be opened and explained; men should be taught their duty to God and one another; they should be pressed: that is, if I understand it, be exhorted unto it, with gospel-motives and arguments, such as the apostles frequently make use of in their epistles. They should, at the same time, be told where grace and strength lie, and are to be had to assist them in it. The preaching of the law is of use both to saints and sinners; it is made useful by the Spirit of God to convince of sin; By the law is the knowledge of sin ([Ro 3:20](#)); though by it is no knowledge of a Saviour from sin; it shews the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the deformity of nature, the imperfection of man's obedience, and what is requisite to his

justification before God; though it leaves him ignorant of that righteousness which can only answer its demands, and render him acceptable in the sight of God. The law is a rule of walk and conversation to believers, as it is in the hands of Christ, and given out by him, as King of his church it contains the perfect and acceptable will of God; it points out what is, or what is not to be done; it is in its own nature spiritual, just and good, and very agreeable to the regenerate man, who delights in the law of God, after the inward man. But then pressing men to duty, is preaching the law, and that must needs be legal preaching, though it ought not to be branded within any odious or invidious character; for all duty belongs to a law; grace and promises of grace, belong to the gospel, but precepts and duty to the law. We have had a controversy among us lately about preaching Christ, in the latitude and restrictive way; and, no doubt, the people have been much edified and instructed by it; but men may controvert to the end of the world, it can never be proved, that preaching good works is preaching Christ, or that pressing men to duty, is preaching the gospel; unless it can be thought that good works are Christ and that the law is gospel. I am entirely for calling things by their right names; preaching duty, is preaching the law; preaching the free grace of God, and salvation by Christ, is preaching the gospel; to say otherwise, is to turn the gospel into a law and to blend and confound both together. Some very worthy divines, whose names I forbear to mention, did formerly talk of gospel-commands, gospel-threatenings, and gospel-duties, which, to me, are contradictions in terms; and I fear that this loose and unguarded way of talking, tended to pave the way for Neonomianism among us, which some few years ago, gave the churches so much disturbance, and the bad effects of which we still feel. 2dly, "Exhorting to repentance, you say, is spoken of by these persons as, "low and mean stuff;" but you do not tell us what kind of repentance is meant, or with what views, or upon what considerations an exhortation to it is given.

There is an evangelical and a legal repentance: Evangelical repentance has God for its object, and is called repentance toward

God ([Ac 20:21](#)). It is the gift of Christ, who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins ([Ac 5:31](#)); and is one of the graces of the Spirit of God, which he implants in the hearts of his people. It is that sorrow and concern for sin, which springs from and is heightened and increased by the discoveries of God's love; it is accompanied with views, or, at least, hopes of pardoning grace and mercy; it is a godly sorrow ([2Co 7:10](#)), ἡ κατὰ γενόν λύπη, "a sorrow according to God," agreeable to the mind and will of God; a divine sorrow, which springs from divine principles, and proceeds on divine views: or it is a sorrow for sin, as it is committed against a God of holiness, purity, grace and mercy; which godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of; and therefore by no means to be spoken slightly of. Nor can exhortations to such kind of repentance, be treated as low and mean stuff, without casting contempt on. John the Baptist ([Mt 3:2](#); [4:17](#)), Christ, and his apostles: who made use of them, either to shew the necessity of repentance, or to encourage the exercise of this grace in the saints, or to stir them up to an open profession of it, and to bring forth fruits in their conversation meet for the same. Legal repentance is a work of the law, and consists in outward confession of sin, and external humiliation for it, and an inward horror, wrath and terror, upon the account of it. It is a sorrow and concern for sin, not as it is in its own nature exceeding sinful, or as it is an offense to God, and a breach in of his law, but as it entails upon the sinner ruin and destruction; This is the sorrow of the world, which worketh death; and may be where true evangelical repentance never was, nor never will be, and therefore is not to be valued and regarded. Now to exhort to this kind of repentance, or even to evangelical repentance, as within the compass of the power of man's will, and as a condition of the covenant of grace, and a term of acceptance with God, and in order to make peace with God, and gain the divine favor, which you know is the rant of some men's ministry; I say, to exhort to repentance within such views, and on such considerations as these, is low and mean stuff, too mean for, below, and unworthy of, a minister of the gospel.

3dly, You mention exhorting to mortification and self-denial, as treated by some, in the same slight and contemptuous manner. You know very well that much of what has been said and written concerning mortification, is low, mean, and trifling, and it would be mortification enough to be obliged to hear and read it. I confess, I have often been at a loss what divines mean by mortification of sin; if they mean a destroying the being of sin, a killing, a taking away the life of it in believers, which seems to be their meaning; this is contrary both to Scripture and all the experience of God's people. The word of God assures us, that sin is in believers, and they find it to be in them; yea, to be alive in them, though they do not live in sin. The old man is, indeed, put off, concerning the former conversation, but not put to death; he remains and is alive, and is sometimes very active, though he lies in chains, and is under the power and dominion of mighty and efficacious grace. There is a mortification of sin by the death of Christ; The old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed ([Ro 6:6](#)). Christ has abolished, destroyed, made an end of sin; through Christ's bearing the sins of his people in his own body on the tree, and through his death they are dead to sin, and live unto righteousness. But sin is not dead in them; there is no such thing as a mortification, a killing or destroying the inward principles of sin in believers, nor is it to be expected in this life. If, indeed, by mortification of sin, is meant a weakening the power of sin, so as that it shall not have the dominion over the saints; this is readily granted to be found in them: but then it will be difficult to prove that ever this is called mortification in Scripture. The mortification the Scripture speaks of, and exhorts to, does not design the mortification of the inward principles of sin, but the outward actings of it; it is a mortification of an external course of living in sin, and not a taking away the life of sin in the soul, as is evident from those places where any mention is made of it; mortify therefore, says the apostle ([Col 3:5,7](#)), your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry; in which ye also walked some time when ye lived in them; which last words

shew, that the apostle has respect to a walk, a conversation, a course of living in these sins; so when he says ([Ga 5:24](#)), they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts, he means the works of the flesh, and the actings of unruly passions and deceitful lusts, as appears from the context; and when exhortations to mortification of sin, in this sense, are given, a special regard should be had to the gracious influences of the blessed Spirit; for, as the apostle says ([Ro 8:13](#)), If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

As for self-denial, perhaps no persons are found more in the practice of it, than those you have described, however averse they may be to exhortations to it, made without taking any notice of the grace and assistance of the Spirit of God, as necessary to the exercise of it. They choose to suffer reproach, the loss of good name and reputation, to forego popularity, wealth, and friends, to be traduced as Antinomians, and reckoned any thing, rather than to drop, conceal, or balk any one branch of truth, respecting Christ and free grace.

None are more ready to deny self-righteousness than they are, and to submit to the righteousness of Christ, on which they alone depend for justification before God, and acceptance with him; nor are any persons more powerfully and effectually taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. And, you, Sir, are so kind as to say, that such who have amused themselves with what you call fancies, "by their life and conversation have shewed that they were far from being enemies to holiness." And you further add, "Far be it from us to charge some, who have gone into this way of thinking and talking, with turning the grace of God into wantonness."

I conclude, Sir, with assuring you, that I write not this with an angry and contentious spirit; I am willing to submit these things to the Scriptures of truth, which are the only rule of faith and practice; and would gladly enter into a sober controversy, and try whether they be mere fancies, or parts of that faith which was once delivered to the saints. If, Sir, you should think fit to give me an answer to this letter,

I desire you would not so much attend to my inaccuracies in writing, which I know you are able to correct, as to the truths themselves herein asserted and defended. I wish you success in your learned studies.

I am, SIR, With all due respect, Yours, &c.