

ARDENT DESIRES FOR HOLINESS
PRODUCED BY A SENSE OF
DIVINE LOVE.

A LETTER TO MR. B—.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I should have written to you before : excuse the delay. I have confidence in your love and feel assured that you will not impute this epistolary vacuum to ingratitude, when I assure you that my engagements are such, as leave me but very little time to employ in writing to my friends. Pray how do you do, and how is Mrs. B. ? Are your bodies in health and do your souls prosper ? I inquire alike after body and soul, because they are alike the purchase of Messiah's blood, and equally precious in his esteem. He bought the whole man : our bodies and our spirits are his ; his entirely, his for ever ; his royal treasure and his precious jewels. For as he has bought them both with one and the same

price, so he has loved them with one and the same love. He loved and redeemed ; redeemed because he loved, and loved because he would love. As the Father hath loved him, so hath he loved us, our bodies and souls, with love unchangeable and infinite, running through all the vicissitudes of time and all the revolving ages of eternity, without variation or the shadow of a change. O, what a humbling consideration is this, and what a powerful incentive to love and obedience ! When I consider that Jesus is the everlasting God, the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy ; who dwelleth in the high and holy place, exalted in his own eternal excellence, infinitely above all the blessing and praise that seraphic powers can raise to his name ; who humbleth himself to behold the purest and the brightest things that are in heaven, and before whom the whole creation is nothing, less than nothing and vanity ; and, when I believe that this high and mighty Lord, infinite in majesty and grandeur, loves me, a worm, an atom, and compared with him, nothing, less than nothing ; and not only less than nothing, but worse than nothing, a sinner, a rebel, a traitor, a wretch laden with guilt, in my flesh replete with evil ; utterly unworthy of the smallest mercy from his hand, and deserving the utmost possible destruction, I wonder with amazement ; I blush and am ashamed ; I fall down into the dust before the feet of my infinitely glorious and condescending lover, covered with shame, and filled with self-abasement

and self-abhorrence. I grieve and mourn, that sin, which he cannot love, should dwell in me, whom he does love, I am ashamed that I love him so little, who loves me so much; and that I can do scarcely any thing to honour him, who has done, yea, and suffered too, every thing requisite for my complete salvation from eternal disgrace and misery, and is doing every thing needful to raise me to everlasting honour and felicity. I long to be entirely free, not only from the commission of sin, but also from the being of that hateful and accursed thing; to love my gracious redeeming Lord, without intermission, without weakness, without the least imperfection; and to be devoted to his honour and praise, in body, soul, and spirit, every day, every hour, every moment of my future life.

While I was under the law, and its devouring flame scorched and tormented my guilty conscience, and filled me with horrors, which no language can possibly express; when my views of God, of judgment, and eternity, were such as deprived me of rest and filled me with nightly agony; when my apprehensions of certain future misery, without intermission and without end, not only sunk my spirits, but caused me to tremble upon my bed, till I have been bathed in my own sweat; nay, when I have expected that the vengeance of insulted majesty would instantly seize me and send me quickly down into the deep and dismal gulph of eternal despair, the love and the power of sin both reigned in my desperately wicked heart; and,

although, I sometimes, in the act of gratifying my unlawful desires, have expected the lighting down of Jehovah's arm, with all the furious indignation of his wrath, upon my guilty head ; I have, in the hardness and stubbornness of my impenitent heart, and with a kind of desperate madness, persisted in the fulfilment of my horrid purpose. The love and power of sin were still predominant!!

But, when in the midst of all this terror and dread, hardness and obstinacy, desperate rebellion, and nefarious conduct, the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man, were manifested to my understanding, in the light of the glorious gospel, and shed abroad in my heart, by the Holy Ghost, a most amazing change instantly ensued. The horrors of my affrighted mind and the anguish of my tormented conscience ceased ; the peace of God flowed freely into my soul, and my heart rejoiced in God my Saviour ; the love of sin was dethroned, and its dominion taken away ; the haunts of dissipation were forsaken, not only as ruinous, but disgusting ; former associates were shunned, as both dangerous and unsuitable ; sin, both internal and external, was abhorred ; the time past sufficed for me to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have walked according to the course of this world ; former beloved pursuits were all cheerfully relinquished ; and the language of my heart was, " what have I to do any more with idols ? " My longing soul panted, and blessed be my God, it still pants, after the most complete con-

formity to the beauteous image of my immaculate Redeemer, and the utmost enjoyment of his love, that a creature can possibly possess. I feel that I was not formed for earth nor sin, nor can I live on things so vile. My soul often cries, "woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar;" so far from him whom my soul loveth. My God has made the beauties of his Son my soul's eternal food: nor do I think it possible for me to be satisfied, until I wake with his likeness, and behold him as he is, in all his loveliness and glory, in the world invisible and eternal, and feast upon his infinite fulness.

And now, my friends, I shall conclude my epistle by observing that, by means of this experience, I have learned, First, that amazing long suffering of God, exercised continually towards the most vile and obstinate sinners upon earth. Secondly, that no sinner out of hell, however guilty and abandoned, is too bad for the God of all grace to cause, by his power, to believe in Jesus, and to receive the full remission of sin and an everlasting inheritance with the saints in light. Thirdly, that all the legal fears and terrors, which it is possible for a soul on earth, or in hell, to feel, cannot, in the smallest measure, subdue the power and love of sin; consequently, that all ministerial efforts to prevail with sinners to hate and relinquish it, by reasons and arguments taken from the threats and terrors of the law, must for ever prove abortive; and, therefore, for ministers to adopt that measure, with a design to

promote the interest of holiness, is for them to take the high way to certain and perpetual disappointment. The doctrine of the law was never designed of God to produce any such effects in fallen man. This is a fact fully evinced by the following scriptures; “the strength of sin is the law;” “for when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were *by the law*, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death;” “but sin, taking occasion *by the commandment*, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence: for without the law, sin was dead.” Fourthly, that the love and grace of God, which bring free and complete salvation from all condemnation and every penal evil, bring also, at the same time, salvation from the dominion of the love and power of sin; and at once acquit the culprit and liberate the captive; breaking in pieces, at one powerful stroke, the chains of slavish fear, and the bond of prevailing corruption. Nor can I form any other conception of the salvation proclaimed in the gospel, than that of a present, complete, and free deliverance in the grand imperial court of heaven, and at the bar of infinite justice from the awful charge of guilt and every obligation to endure the punishment due to our crimes, through the obedience and sufferings of our great substitute, and in consequence of this, a deliverance from the dominion and love of sin in the heart; and, finally, from the existence of it in our nature; which deliverance is effected by the royal prerogative and omnipotence of Jesus,

asserted in the gospel ; and exercised in the glorious work of regeneration ; and at the hour of death, when the final stroke is put to the good work of grace in each believer and sin is totally destroyed, root and branch. Thus I am taught, and thus I teach ; nor can I teach otherwise, while I have the concurring testimonies of the holy scriptures and my own experience, that what I teach is the truth.

DOMINION OVER SIN THE PRIVILEGE OF BELIEVERS

ALTHOUGH sin, like a raging tyrant, reigns over vast multitudes, and, in every nation, slays its thousands, and tens of thousands, yet, blessed be God, all true believers have dominion over it, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

They have dominion over the guilt of sin. By the guilt of sin, I mean, the fault which is in it, as a transgression of Jehovah's righteous law, or a violation of his just command: from this fault, every real believer is made free in the account of that God, whose judgment is according to truth. To this truth a faithful apostle has cheerfully set his seal; Rom. vi. 18; "being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." From the indwelling of sin, its corrupt motions, its opposition to the law of their minds, and the commission of it, they are not free in this life; but from the guilt of it, eternal truth declares them free in the sight of God. "And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by

wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblamable, and unreprouable in his sight." Col. i. 21, 22. "The Son having made them free, they are free indeed;" John viii. 36. It is in this sense, that Christ has finished transgression, and made an end of sin by his death. Dan. ix. 24. As all the iniquities, all the transgressions, and all the sins of the children of Israel were, on the great day of atonement, laid upon the head of the scape-goat, and by him borne away, so all the iniquities, and all the transgressions, and all the sins of God's elect, were laid upon Jesus: were laid upon him in all their aggravated guilt, and in all their horrid contamination, that he, the holy, harmless Lamb of God, might bear them away. Jehovah the Father, in his absolute mercy, and unbounded grace, transferred them all from the persons of his people to the person of his beloved Son, and judicially charged them upon him. This truth is not to be called in question, for the Holy Ghost has put it beyond the reach of doubt. His language is plain and positive: "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." "He shall bear their iniquities." "He bore the sins of many." "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." And by the sacrifice of himself, infinitely precious in the Father's esteem, he completely removed them from the view of divine holiness and justice. If this be not

admitted as divine truth, how are we to understand the following inspired language ? “ But now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” “ And we know that he was manifested, to take away our sins : and in him is no sin.” “ As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” “ Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.” “ We are sanctified, by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” “ For, by one offering he hath perfected, for ever, all them that are sanctified.” “ Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” These scriptures clearly evince, that those persons, for whom Christ died, are not chargeable with guilt in the high court of divine justice ; for if their criminality was charged upon their surety, it cannot, in equity, be imputed unto them. They ought, therefore, to be viewed as no more liable to be indicted for sin by the law of God, than they would be if they had never transgressed. If this be denied, either the perfection of Christ’s atonement is called in question, or infinite justice is impeached ; for if Jesus has made full satisfaction to eternal justice for all their sins, it can have no power to accuse them : nor can the most subtle Arminian on earth reconcile a power in the justice of God to accuse and condemn those for whom Christ suffered, with a full atonement made by his blood for all their sins.

It appears, I think, sufficiently evident, that

although believers, are in themselves guilty, they are not so, in Christ, their head and representative. In him, they are perfectly innocent, and entirely without blame. Adam, before his apostacy, was faultless in the eye of his Maker, and the elect angels stand unimpeached before the celestial throne; but the vessels of mercy are more dignified in innocence, through their union with Jesus and in consequence of his death, than the former was, in his primeval state, or than the latter are, in their present blissful station: for they shine in all the superlative perfection of that man, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In the covenant transactions of the Holy Trinity, it was resolved by the divine mind, that all the guilt of the chosen should become their surety's, and that all his innocence should become theirs. This is what Paul intends, II Cor. v. 19—21. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Do any call this in question? Let them consider the subsequent attestations of the inspired writers. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." "Ye are complete in him;" the consequence of which is,

They have dominion over the damning power of sin. That sin is of a damning nature is a solemn truth, of which millions have awful experience. It kindled the fire of hell, and keeps it incessantly burning. It gave being to the never-dying worm ; it cast myriads of angels out of heaven, plunged them into the eternal deep, and laid them under chains of darkness, reserved unto the judgment of the great day ; it imprisoned the inhabitants of the old world in the gulph of perdition ; it brought upon the filthy Sodomites the vengeance of eternal fire ; and it sent perfidious Judas to his own place. And it will be known to all eternity, that the second death is the wages of sin, that the wickedness of the wicked is the cause of their destruction, and that if a man die in his guilt, he cannot escape the damnation of hell.

But from all the tremendous and destructive power of sin, the children of God have nothing to fear. If by the pestilential breath of this hellish monster, a thousand fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, it shall not come nigh them ; they shall only behold with their eyes and see the destruction of the wicked. They are safe. Beneath Immanuel's impenetrable shade they dwell in peace, and rest in permanent security. They have redemption in his blood, the free forgiveness of all their sins ; and are, therefore, in no more danger of destruction, than they would be if they had never committed a single sin ; for, as one has observed, " if sin be pardoned we are secure,

death hath no sting beside." Their sins exhausted all their destructive power upon the Lord of life and glory, when he was tortured on the fatal tree. When he suffered, the just for the unjust, he drew the sting of death, and utterly destroyed the damning power of sin for all his beloved and elect. For them he most freely gave his precious life, resigned his body and soul, immaculate and glorious, to the keenest smart, and cheerfully poured out his invaluable blood; and all this he did and suffered, with a gracious design, to secure them, eternally, from the ravages of sin, and raise them infinitely beyond the reach of its devouring hand. We may consider Jesus as having sin entirely beneath his exalted feet; and as saying to it, "touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm:" the consequence of which is, although it frequently hurts their feelings, distresses their minds, wounds their consciences, and fills them with shame and grief in this life, yet it cannot injure them with regard to their eternal state. Prophets and apostles, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have, with united voice, announced their everlasting security in Jesus. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." "He that believeth shall be saved." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth on

him is not condemned." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life."

Before sin can destroy any one of God's elect, it must change the word of truth into a lie, strip Jesus Christ of all his merit, render his blood inefficacious, pollute his righteousness, contaminate his nature, conquer his omnipotence, cast him from his throne, and sink him in the abyss of perdition; it must turn the love of God into hatred, nullify the counsel of the Most High, destroy the everlasting covenant, and make void the oath of Jehovah: nay, it must raise discord among the divine attributes, make Father, Son, and Spirit unfaithful to each other, and set them at variance, change the divine nature, wrest the sceptre from the hand of the Almighty, dethrone him, and put a period to his existence. Till it has done all this, we may boldly say unto the redeemed, "fear not, for ye shall not be ashamed; neither be dismayed, for ye shall not be confounded."

Now, since it has pleased the all-wise Sovereign, not to conceal this glorious and precious truth, but to proclaim it in the holy volume of revelation, why should any of those who wish to rank with ministers of the gospel of salvation shun to declare it in all its fulness, glory, and freeness? Is it not a part, a very important part of the counsel of God? Is it enough for us not to oppose it? Is it not our indispensable

duty to insist upon it, as the very essence of the gospel? Can we omit this doctrine, or speak of it but sparingly, in our ministrations, and yet preach the pure gospel? Are there any glad tidings without it? Should not the feeble minded be comforted, by hearing their present and everlasting safety attested, in the strongest terms? Can any man acquit himself of the weighty charges of corrupting the word of God, and handling it deceitfully, of loving the praise of men more than the praise of God, and of being an unfaithful steward of the mysteries of God, who keeps back this doctrine? How can they, who withhold this part of the precious bread of God from the hungry soul, justify themselves to him whom they call master? Why should any who pretend friendship to Jesus, and love to the souls of men, either through fear or shame, conceal a truth, so essential to the Redeemer's glory, and to the present and future happiness of the redeemed? Why should they covet Arminian smiles, and with a dastardly meanness, shun the frowns of the enemies of truth, and endeavour to escape the Antinomian brand; or, from prudential motives, and a false unscriptural fear of licentious consequences, hide the absolute safety of believers from their view, and bind them to their duty with legal cords. This is to turn things upside down, which the Lord says, is like potter's clay; to make the fearful heart more fearful, the weak hands more weak, and the feeble knees more feeble; and to turn the lame out of the way,

rob the poor and needy of that which is their due, and make the heart of those sad, whom the Lord hath declared should be comforted. It would be better, ten thousand times twice told, to preach that grace which brings a full salvation, and gives a present dominion, to all who believe, over all the damning power of sin ; and teaches them, influentially and effectually teaches them, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, godly, and soberly in this present evil world : because through this grace

They have dominion over the love of sin. In the hearts of unbelievers the love of iniquity reigns ; nor can any power short of that which is divine and infinite, cast it from its throne. It mocks the utmost efforts of all the boasted ability of man, both natural and moral, and laughs to scorn the haughty reason of the most rational and refined. The clearest apprehensions of the holiness and justice of the Almighty, that it is possible for fallen man to possess, cannot, in the least degree, refine the depraved heart from the love of sin. Were all the thunders of the fiery law incessantly sounded in the ears of sinners ; were all the horrors of eternal damnation presented to their view ; were their consciences arrested by the keenest sensations of the divine displeasure against sin ; and were their minds impressed with the firmest persuasion of the eternal duration of their anguish, that infernal principle, the love of sin, would still keep its possession of the heart. The highest possible legal terror, and the

deepest experience of the wrath of God, are entirely void of sanctifying virtue. The love of sin exists, operates, and reigns in all the sons of perdition, and in every apostate angel, amidst the fiercest flames of hell, and under all the insupportable weights of damnation; nor will an eternity of misery, the most exquisite that omnipotent justice can inflict, as the due reward of iniquity, either extinguish or diminish it in the unhappy sufferers. To maintain that sanctification, from the love of sin, is effected, either wholly or in part, by legal fears and terrors, is, to lay the foundation of another purgatory, and erect a pillar of popery.

But, although the love of sin reigns in every unbelieving heart, and the above means are all insufficient to subdue it, every true believer is really and for ever, delivered from its fatal dominion: delivered by means which the mind of man, with all its boasted powers, could never have devised; means, which angels view with amaze, and contemplate with ever-growing delight; means, which display, in the clearest light, the infinite greatness, grandeur, glory, and sovereignty of the Holy Trinity; and which will redound to the honour of each person, and every perfection of the Deity through all eternity. Is it asked what means these are? Nothing less than eternal electing love, divine redeeming blood, and invincible sanctifying grace. Electing love shed abroad in the heart, redeeming blood sprinkled upon the conscience, and sanctifying grace diffused through all the facul-

ties of the soul, dethrone the love of sin, and effectually, demolish its dominion and power in all the redeemed. All who taste the sweets of divine love, feel the power of the Saviour's blood, and experience the operations of almighty grace, hate sin; not because of its dreadful effects only, but, likewise, on account of its intrinsic evil. They view it as diametrically opposite to the nature of Jehovah, as hostile to his honour, and as aiming at the demolition of his throne, and the annihilation of his being. In the glass of the holy law, they see its hellish malignity, but much more so in the mirror of the Mediator's death. They consider it as the cause, the meritorious cause, of the pains of his body, and the sorrows of his soul; of his agonies in the garden, and his tortures on the cross. Is it, then, possible for them, while they feel their souls cleaving to him, in faith and love, to delight in the accursed thing which filled him with unutterable anguish and brought him to the dust of death? No: their souls rise, in holy indignation against it, and they mourn, and are in bitterness, while they look upon him whom their crimes have pierced. While they feel it dwelling in them, and see it contaminating all their thoughts, words, and actions, they most bitterly exclaim, we are vile! we are vile! We loathe ourselves in dust and ashes. And, seeing how much they dishonour Christ through its influence, how much it impedes their progression in the divine life, and how often it interrupts their communion with God, they abhor it,

and long, ardently long, for their promised rest, in which they will no more feel its tormenting influence.

Reader, are you a lover of sin ? If so, you are not a true believer, though you may pass for such in your own estimation and that of your fellow worms, who can only judge according to outward appearance ; but remember, that God, whose judgment is always according to truth, has distinguished the ungodly by a mark of infamy, conspicuous in the following emphatical declaration. “ They abhor not evil.” It is to be feared that, in many, the love of sin reigns under a cloak of religious profession, and that not a few who make a fair shew in the visible church are its real and constant slaves. But while numbers of splendid professors are living in the habitual practice of sin, the true christian has dominion over its reigning power. Christ as a priest, has taken away its guilt by his blood ; and as a king, he takes away its dominion by his power, from all his people. Though sin lives in them, they do not live in sin ; they cannot do it, because they are born of God, and his pure seed remaineth in them. The old man strives for the mastery, but the new man bears rule ; the former is put off with his deeds ; the latter, with his deeds, is put on. The flesh, powerfully lusteth against the spirit ; but the spirit, more powerfully, lusteth against the flesh. Sin struggles for empire ; but grace keeps possession of the heart, and reigns, through righteousness, to eternal life, in every child of God :

therefore, although they, like Gad, may be sometimes overcome, they shall overcome at last. They may lose a battle, and be much discouraged and often cast down, but, still, the dominion is theirs. "Sin," says the apostle Paul, "shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." *Not under the law*: which is the strength of sin, and by which it takes occasion to work in them who do not believe all manner of concupiscence; *but under grace*; which weakens its power, stifles its motions, binds its operations, and will not suffer it to reign. Being dead to the law by the body of Christ, we bring forth fruit unto God: the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to whom we are wedded and with whom we are one: whereas, when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death. And it will ever be found, that while men are in a state of unbelief, and under the law, sin has dominion over them, and they are its vassals and slaves; and that when they believe, and are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein they were held, they are made free from its dominion, become servants to God, and have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFLICT AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

A LETTER FROM A SOLDIER STATIONED ON THE
WALLS OF ZION, TO HIS FELLOW SOLDIERS
IN THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

DEARLY beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, our common Saviour, who has loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet savour unto God; his Father, and our Father, his God, and our God; in an everlasting covenant which cannot be forgotten.

As God who comforteth those who are in any trouble, comforteth me in all my distresses; I, like the apostle of the gentiles, would be instrumental in comforting you with the comfort wherewith I myself am comforted of God. You, beloved, like me, know that in you, that is, in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing. You feel a nature totally depraved and deplorably disordered; minds most carnal and earthly; wills stubborn and perverse; affections vicious and vile; understandings dark; and swarms of evil thoughts

arising out of hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. You find an evil law in your members warring against the law of your minds, and although to will is present with you, how to perform that which is good, you find not. You experience a perpetual warfare. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are as contrary the one to the other, as light and darkness, life and death, God and the devil, heaven and hell. Between these two contending parties you must never expect peace, no, not one single moment while you breathe. The old man will never give up the contest, till death stops his breath: nor will the new man ever yield, while God is on his side, and that will be always. He never leaves his own. Though the old man is obstinate, and is aided by the gates of hell, and the battle is ever so hot, the new man shall be victorious in the end. While the breast is the seat of war, the mind is often bewildered and uncomfortable; the spirits flag, the heart trembles, doubts and fears arise, the soul is faint and weary, and sometimes ready to give up all. Under these circumstances comfort is greatly wanted, and much desired; and the God of all comfort has richly provided it in his counsel, and freely published it in his holy word.

My desire being to comfort the disconsolate, I shall lay before you a few scripture truths, which the God of love has intended for the consolation of his dear children in the field of battle.

First. He who made you has fixed his love upon you freely in his Son. He loves you unchangeably, in all states and conditions, from eternity to eternity. Whatever changes, internal or external, you may pass through, the love of your God is the same. You may suffer the loss of wealth, health, ease, reputation, friends, and, like Job, be stripped of all your earthly comfort; but you cannot be deprived of your heavenly Father's affection. "He rests in his love, and joys over you with singing." Love runs through all his purposes concerning you, and all his dispensations toward you.

Secondly. He has chosen you in Christ Jesus to be his people for ever, and adopted you to be his children and heirs. He has given himself to you, to be your God and Father, your portion and inheritance for ever.

Thirdly. He has united you to his Son Jesus Christ, and fixed you in him, never to be separated from him. Jesus and you are one. One body, one building, one vine. Your union with Christ commenced with your election in him. Free sovereign grace was the cause of both. God's eternal and immutable love is the bond of your union with Jesus: therefore it can never be dissolved. That God who choose you in him, keeps you in him. Being in Christ, all that he is, and all that he has is yours. His abundant grace; his perfect righteousness; his complete atonement; his consummate holiness; his eternal redemption; his perfect and all glorious salvation; his unsearchable riches of

glory and blessedness, are all your own: on this very ground that you are Christ's. Christ and you being one, you stand in him complete before the throne of God. You are washed from all your sins in his blood; you are justified from all things by his righteousness: yea, you are law-fulfillers, and the righteousness of God in him. The Father views you with infinite delight. He sees no spot in you. There is no curse, no condemnation for you. You are saved with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.

Fourthly. God has made with you an everlasting covenant; not a covenant of works, but of grace; not a conditional, but an absolute one; not one all confusion and disorder, but one ordered in all things by his all comprehending wisdom. Not one which may vary, be disannulled and made void, but one which, like its divine author, is immutable, permanent, and everlasting. It is founded upon Jehovah's unchangeable will, and confirmed by his inviolable oath. It is sealed by the blood of his incarnate Son; and for its fulfilment the eternal Three, have, by their joint oath, pledged themselves.

Fifthly. God has given you exceeding great and precious promises, suited to all your cases. The fulfilment of these promises is certain, because the promiser is faithful and Almighty. These promises are breasts of consolation to the distressed, milk for babes, and meat for strong men; you may safely trust them, and in trusting them, you will sweetly enjoy them.

What I have written is but a small part of what the book of God affords for the comfort and consolation of the followers of the Lamb. But these few hints, if applied by the Holy Ghost, will serve to encourage and cheer your hearts in this evil world, and stimulate you to obedience. Therefore take courage, your cause is good. You have nothing to fear. Your armour is all proof; your Captain is infinitely wise and almighty, he leads you on to certain victory, and will make you more than conquerors, because he loves you. "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." All those who contend with you shall fall for your sakes; they shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

Hear your leader speak to you. His language breathes love, and is pregnant with encouragement. "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Yet a little while, and you shall lay down your arms and take your crowns; shall quit the field of war, and enter into the joy of your Lord. Your toils, your fears, your cares, your struggles, your sighs, groans, and tears will all be over, and all will be peace, rest, joy, and infinite delight through endless days. Therefore gird up the loins of your minds, be sober and hope to the end; for the grace which shall be brought to you at the appearing of Jesus Christ. That you may be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, prays your fellow soldier.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SHIELD.

A shield is a defensive piece of armour, which was much used in ancient times. It was made use of both in single combats and in battles fought by armies. Some shields were made of gold, some of brass, and others of inferior materials; but sufficiently strong to preserve the warriors from the charges of their antagonists whenever they met the force of their weapons. This weapon being large, and fixed to the arm, or held fast in the hand, and held up against the enemy, guards the body from the arrow, the dart, or the sword. With this the skilful warrior meets the javelin, catches the shaft, and parries the thrust of his enraged and inveterate foe.

On account of the singular usefulness of this instrument in battle, we have frequent allusions to it in the Holy Scriptures, and our Lord has thought proper to adopt it as a fit emblem of himself, as a defence of his people in all their wars with sin and hell. He has, condescendingly, called himself

their shield. To the father of the faithful he said, "fear not Abraham; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Gen. xv. 1. And in this endearing character he was known by his people in ancient times. Moses, the man of God, to excite the children of Israel to confidence in him, said unto them: "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the *shield* of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency." Deut. xxxiii. 29. Here their Saviour is called their shield: and as Jesus is the only Saviour, he must be the shield intended. David, the man after God's own heart, sang of Jesus, and taught the church of the first born to sing of him as their shield. "The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory." "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of my head." "The Lord is my strength and my shield." "Thou art my hiding-place and my shield." "Blessed be the Lord my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. My goodness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield, and he in whom I trust, who subdueth mine enemies under me." In all the above places, Christ is, unquestionably, the shield. Now, what he was to Abraham, to David, and to the church of the Old Testament, he is to his people now, and will be to the end of the world.

As their strong impenetrable shield, and their invincible defence, he stands between his people

and their enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil; shelters the former from the most furious and well directed charges of the latter; saves those while he rebukes these: breaks their armour, routs and discomfits them; and graciously verifies his precious promises to his church: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." "The Lord is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way for your escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "The gates of hell shall not prevail." We are, therefore, "more than conquerors through him that hath loved us." We "overcome through the blood of the Lamb."

Now why should it be thought incredible, that Christ should be the shield intended by the apostle, when he says, "above all, taking the shield of faith." There is not one passage that I can find, in all the Old Testament, from which we learn that faith is our shield; but there are many, which plainly declare that our shield is Christ. No man, who is truly skilful in the word of righteousness, and sound in the faith, will venture to affirm, that when the same apostle makes mention of the *righteousness* of faith, he means that *faith* is our righteousness. Why then should it be thought, that when he speaks of the *shield* of faith, he designs to teach us, that faith is our shield.

Why faith should be considered as our shield, is not easy to conceive; since the whole current of scripture language on the subject, is quite opposite

to the thought. But it is no uncommon thing to set the servant in the master's place, and to attribute that to faith, which can be predicated of none but Christ.

Faith is quite insufficient to be our shield, nor was it ever designed of God to answer that end. Indeed it wants a shield for itself. It is at best but a puny arm; "makes feeble fight;" and would soon fall a prey to its enemies, were it not guarded and defended by him who prayed for Peter, that his faith might not fail, and is called "the author and finisher of faith." But is it not said: "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith?" How does it overcome, if it is not our shield? By putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, who has overcome the world, and conquered principalities and powers for his people, and by opposing every enemy in his all-prevailing name, and his never-failing power. It never yet obtained a victory over the least of its adversaries by its own prowess. It can do nothing but as it stands connected with Christ, who is, really, its almighty shield. If ever it conquers, it is when it lays hold of the strength of Jehovah, puts on Christ as its all-sufficient shield, and is "strong in the grace which is in him;" "strong in him and the power of his might."

Nor is my opinion upon this subject novel and singular. The learned and truly evangelical Dr. Gill, upon Gen. xv. 1. thus writes: "Christ is the shield of his people against all their spiritual enemies, sin,

satan, and the world, which being held up in the hand of faith, called therefore the shield of faith, is a security against them." We might, with strict propriety, ask those who maintain that faith is our shield, what is the hand by which we take hold of that shield? Here, it is supposed, they must pause; because nothing but faith can, without impropriety, be called the hand, with which the soul takes hold of any of the blessings which are freely given us of God. By faith we receive the holy promise, take hold of the truths of the gospel, and hold fast the form of sound words, which was delivered to us by the inspired writers. By faith we receive the atonement, put on our beautiful garments of righteousness and salvation, and handle and feel the word of life. By faith we gird up the loins of our minds with the girdle of eternal truth; buckle on our breast-plate of righteousness; put on the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace; take Jesus as our shield and oppose him to the enemy; take the helmet of his finished salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God; and pray, always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance.

Indeed, Christ may be said, in truth, to be the whole of our armour, appointed and given of God for our use, defence, and safety; and we may with equal truth, be said to put him on as such, by faith, He is the truth, the essential truth, the Lord our righteousness, the preparation, the sum and substance of the gospel of peace, our shield and

buckler, our complete, everlasting salvation, and that essential word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing, even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. See Deut. xxxiii. 29, where our Saviour is called our sword. By faith we take this whole armour of God, as his free gift, and face our enemies. It is by faith in Christ, as our shield and our complete armour, which entirely covers us in the day of battle, we resist the devil and quench his fiery darts; wrestle with flesh and blood; contend with principalities and powers; and triumph over spiritual wickedness in high places.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HELMET.

HELMETS were much in use among the ancients, both Jews and heathens. Uzzia, the king of Judah, prepared helmets for his vast army; II Chron. xxvi. 14. The Philistine champion, when he defied the armies of Israel, had on his head a helmet of brass; I Sam. xvii. 5. Persia, Ethiopia, Lybia, and others mentioned by Ezekiel, had all of them helmets : Ezek. xxxviii. 5.

The helmet was formed for a covering for the soldier's head, and being made of metal, hard and strong, adorned with fine plumage, or the fur of some beautiful animal, or both, it served at once for defence and ornament.

In allusion to this military head-piece, the holy prophet, when exhibiting the Saviour in a warlike form, advancing in majesty against his own and his people's enemies, particularly the antichristian powers, to tread them in his wrath, and trample them in his fury, as grapes are trodden in the wine-press, describes him with a "helmet of salvation" on his head. See Isa. lix. 17 ; lxiii. 1-6. with which

compare Rev. xix. from the 11th verse to the end. And the apostle has the same thing in view when he exhorts the soldiers of the cross to take "the helmet of salvation : " Eph. vi. 17, and when he represents them as having "for a helmet the hope of salvation." I Thess. v. 8.

Now, I cannot help thinking, that the helmet of salvation worn by our illustrious captain is that salvation which he wrought for himself and us. For himself as our surety from sin imputed to him, and from the united powers of earth and hell combined in arms against him. For us, from all our sins, original and actual, interior and exterior, past, present, and future ; all which he bore in his own body on the tree ; for all which he suffered and atoned ; and all which he at once and for ever put away, by his own one offering, both for himself and us, from all condemnation and every penal evil to which we were exposed by sin, and from the hateful dominion of sin, hell, and the world, to all which we were captives and slaves.

This complete immutable salvation, all in Christ, is worn as a helmet by every soldier in the grand army of saints. The most exact and beautiful uniformity in this as well as any other part of the christian armour and ornaments prevails throughout the mighty host. The royal commander, and all his beauteous train, appear in the same glorious array ; the same robe and armour of righteousness and the same garments and helmet of salvation shine upon him who leads, and them who follow ;

for there being between him and them a real and indissoluble union, whatever he possesses is truly and for ever theirs; and what spiritual good soever they possess, is in all its perfection and glory in him; and is, at once, his and theirs, because he and they are one.

And what is truly and beyond measure amazing, and will be the wonder of men and angels, through all the revolving ages of eternity, is, that the excellencies which he is, in scripture, said to possess in himself, those very excellencies he is absolutely declared to be unto us. Does he possess eternal godhead? he is our God; though not so as to deify us, yet so as to impart unto us every communicable good from his own fulness, called by the apostle Paul, "the fulness of God." Eph. iii. 19. Does he possess love, wisdom, and strength? he is our love, wisdom, and strength, I John, iv. 8: I Cor. i. 30: Psal. xviii. 1, 2. God is love, and Christ is God, therefore love; and he is our God, therefore our love. He is wisdom also; and he is made of God the Father, wisdom unto us. He is likewise the strength of Israel: therefore our strength, who are a part of Israel. In him we have perfect love, perfect wisdom, and perfect strength; and from him we have received, as his free gift, the living principles of love, wisdom, and strength. Does he possess light, life, holiness, righteousness, redemption, peace, glory, and salvation? all these he is unto us. See Psal. xxvii. 1; Col. iii. 4; Cor. i. 30; Mic. v. 5; Eph. ii. 14; Isa. lx. 19, and xii. 2.

Now, upon the very same principle, on which Christ is declared to be all the above excellencies unto us, I conclude that he is our helmet. For the very same salvation is called his helmet, and our helmet, and he was evidently his own salvation, from sin imputed, etc., therefore his own helmet, or defence ; and he is as evidently our salvation, and, therefore, our helmet or defence.

Nor, is there any inconsistency, that I can perceive, in this conclusion, any more than there is in saying, that Christ is his own righteousness, therefore his own breastplate ; and our righteousness, therefore our breastplate : all which is undeniably evident. See Isa. lviii. 17 ; Jer. xxiii. 6 ; Eph. vi. 14. Or than there is in viewing him, in the act of atoning for sin, as his own altar, his own sacrifice, and his own priest ; and, by divine appointment, all these unto us : our altar ; unto which we, by faith, bring ourselves, and all our offerings : our sacrifice ; by which our persons and offerings are purified from all the defilements of sins : and our priest ; by whom they are presented, perfumed by the holy incense of his own intercession, pure and acceptable to God the Father. Or than there is in the scriptures themselves, which expressly affirm, that his banner over his people, is love, and yet, that he is himself their banner. Cant. ii. 4 ; Exod. xvii. 15.

But, Enquirer has his eye upon I Thes. v. 8. where the *hope* of salvation, and not salvation itself, is called our helmet. It will be, therefore, proper to observe, in addition to what has been said, that

Christ is our hope of salvation, as well as our salvation itself. I Tim. i. 1. The term salvation, sometimes means, the perfect consummation of our bliss, at the second appearing of the great God our Saviour; when the bodies of all the saints departed will be raised incorruptible; they who will then be found alive upon the earth, will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the whole innumerable multitude of God's elect, will be fashioned like the pure, glorious, and immortal body of Jesus Christ; death and sin will be swallowed up in everlasting victory; and the whole mystic body of Christ, will know, what is the length, and the breadth, and the depth, and the height of electing, redeeming love, and be filled with all the fulness of God. Rom. xiii. 11; Heb. ix. 28; I Peter, i. 5, 9; I Cor. xv. 51, 52, 53, 54; Phil. iii. 21; Eph. iii. 19. Of this salvation, infinitely great and glorious, looked and longed for by all the believing world, Christ is the hope, "Christ in you the hope of glory:" Christ crucified and raised from the dead, is the ground of our hope; Christ glorified is the object of our hope; and Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is the principle and life of our hope. Col. i. 5; Heb. vi. 18, 19; Col. i. 27. Christ is then both our salvation and our hope, therefore, the helmet, which by faith we put on and wear, as the best defence, and the brightest ornament for our heads. First. As *the best defence*; for it is by him, known by the revelation of his word and spirit, and believed on

with the heart, our understandings are both defended and preserved from the keen edge of the poisoned sword of error, brandished around us, with wonderful dexterity, by the legions of darkness, zealous and indefatigable in the black infernal cause. Clothed with Christ in his person, offices, and work, as our salvation and hope, our understandings are filled with his light and truth, and guarded against the poignant force, and preserved from the fatal effects of Atheistical, Deistical, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Antinomian, Popish, and all anti-christian heresies and delusions, and are kept in the truth, as it is in Jesus ; while they who have no other guard for their understandings, than the poor flimsy cobweb of their own reason, however, much improved by the hand of literature, fall before the power of error, and die in the arms of delusion. Secondly. As *the brightest ornament* ; for, our minds being clothed with him, who is the brightness of glory, are adorned and ornamented with beauties, infinitely richer and brighter than the most costly and splendid, which adorn the most accomplished philosophic minds, where the true spiritual knowledge of him is absent ; for human science is, at best, but the wisdom of this world ; but the true knowledge of the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, is the wisdom which cometh from above ; and, if we are allowed to estimate the excellence and beauty of knowledge, in proportion to the excellence and beauty of its object, we shall soon perceive that the latter

is as much superior to the former, as Christ the object of this, is superior to the creation, the object of that, and the very babe in christian understanding, will be found in the possession of mental ornaments, rich and brilliant, such as none of the sages of Greece and Rome could ever boast, such as no mere literary character ever possessed, or ever will possess. This very consideration, if I am not mistaken, induced one, eminent for parts and learning, to say: "yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

THE SAFETY OF BELIEVERS AND THE GROUNDS OF THEIR CONFIDENCE.

A LETTER TO MR. W—. OF ST. C—B.

DEAR SIR,

I hope you, Mrs. W. and family are well. I bless God I never enjoyed a better state of health than I do at this present. Oh ! how kind is the Lord to a poor unworthy worm, who is less than the least of all his mercies and truth. Help me, dear sir, to praise and exalt him, who has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ; who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquity ; by whose stripes we are healed. He has brought us everlasting health and cure. Our wound was grievous and our disease incurable by all the art and power of nature. We had no healing medicine of our own. All that we did to remove our complaint only increased it. All the angelic host could afford us no relief. There was no eye to pity us,

no hand to help us, but those of the compassionate Redeemer, the great physician of souls. Oh ! the love of his royal heart. Oh ! the riches of his free grace. He remembered us in our low estate, when lying upon the dunghill of our natural condition, full of sores, and covered with our blood. He came ! He flew to our relief ! How great the wonders which he has performed ! He has perfectly obeyed the righteous law of God for us ; and is the end of it for righteousness unto us. We may, therefore, boldly say, in Jehovah Jesus we have righteousness complete, immutable, eternal. This is the grand endearing name by which he is called, and by which he is known, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Clothed with this celestial sun of righteousness, we outshine the highest seraph in glory, and stand complete in the Father's sight. Our heavenly parent beholds us, in our representative, with smiles of the highest approbation and delight. He has made us accepted in the beloved, and rejoices over us with joy and singing. In this high, honourable, and happy state we should always consider ourselves ; for being once in it, we are for ever so. There are no vicissitudes here. Ten thousand changes in our frames can make none in our state. Whatever changes we may experience in ourselves, Jesus is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever ; and our union to him, and our interest in him, are without variation. We were fixed in him, before time began, by an irreversible decree ; there-

fore, nothing in time can affect our interest in him and his salvation. We have nothing to fear, with regard to our eternal state, from all the policy and powers of hell ; from the malice, rage, and fury of the world ; nor from all our innate corruptions: they cannot, by their united force separate us from our beloved, unjustify us, nor bring us into condemnation : “ there is, therefore, now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Dear sir, we may rejoice, and be exceeding glad ; we may laugh all our enemies to scorn ; and sing “we have a strong city, salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks.” “Behold ! God is our salvation, we will trust and not be afraid.” Oh ! how often are we in fear where no fear is. Our unbelieving fears are all unreasonable, groundless, dishonouring to God, and exceeding sinful : we should by no means indulge them, but always resist them with abhorrence.

We have not to do with an unfaithful God, but with one who will not suffer his faithfulness to fail. His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. He has promised ; his promise is true. He cannot lie, nor prove to his people as waters that fail. No one that believed him was ever yet ashamed. Not one of all the thousands that have trusted him has been confounded. Impious is the thought, that the Holy One of Israel is fickle and uncertain. Mutability belongs to created existences, not to the uncreated, self-existent I am. As the perfections of

his nature, so the thoughts and decrees of his heart are without the shadow of a change. As from everlasting to everlasting he is God, so from eternity to eternity he is the same God.

Upon his immutability stands our salvation complete. It is because he is God who changes not that the sons of Jacob are not consumed. Being of one mind, he never erases those names from the book of life which, by a sovereign act of his righteous will, he has written there ; never revokes any one of his decrees ; never reverses a single act of his grace ; nor recalls a promise that he has made to his people : hence the promise is sure to all the seed, and the heirs of promise have strong consolation.

The fulfilment of the promise does not depend upon our belief of it. The divine promise does not ask us whether he shall fulfil his promise or not ; that would be unworthy of his own greatness. Neither our faith can facilitate, nor our unbelief retard the accomplishment of a single promise.

It is not evangelical to say, that the promise and the blessing promised, become ours through believing. That they are ours in possession and enjoyment through believing, is readily granted ; but that our faith gives a title to them, must be denied : for our title to them was freely granted, and eternally established in the covenant of grace before time begun. Then God, that cannot lie, promised eternal life and all things connected with it, to all the elect, and blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus ; and it is in consequence of

this that they are brought to believe and embrace the promise.

One principal blessing promised in the covenant of grace is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now this promise must be fulfilled and this blessing must be conveyed to the heart before there can be the least degree of true faith ; for such faith is produced by the operation of that divine agent. The faith of God's elect, in its commencement and duration, in principle and exercise, is the pure fruit of the grace of God, communicated to the soul from the fulness of Jesus, according to his eternal purpose and absolute promise. Omnipotence, influenced by the discriminating love, and guided by the uncontrolled sovereignty of him who has said, " my counsel shall stand, and I will perform all my pleasure," carries the promise to the heart: and then, but not till then, the heart believes the promise, and " sets to its seal that God is true."

I would always consider salvation as springing from eternal love divine, as planned by infinite wisdom so as to infallibly secure the glory of Deity, and as performed with the most beautiful exactness by the three in Jehovah ; and keep in sight that fine concatenation of causes and effects which runs through the whole glorious design, from the first motion toward it in the mind of God, to the consummation of it in the glorification of all the vessels of mercy.

It is owing to our want of a clear understanding of this, that we so frequently confound causes and

effects, or put the one for the other, and rob the Almighty of the glory of his grace. And I think I may say that it is owing to the same cause that many of the Lord's people, after they have trusted in Christ, are in great fear that they shall come short of the promised rest, and go mourning all their days.

Is this the case of my friend? Is he willing to be saved? Let him consider his willingness as the effect of the operation of divine power; and that operation as the effect of his interest in Christ. This the word of God authorises him to do. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Is he trusting in the incarnate God for eternal life, and still doubtful whether he shall enjoy it? The scriptures warrant him to reason thus: my reliance upon Christ is the effect of my coming to him; my coming to him is the effect of the Father's drawing; his drawing is the effect of his everlasting love to me: for "thus saith the Lord, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Does he fear that after all he has experienced, he shall be a castaway? Let him remember, that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," and that "he never forsakes the work of his own hands." Our health may decay, our outward estate may all change, all the streams of earthly comfort may fail, and, in addition to this, God may hide his face, and leave us to walk in darkness, the exercise of our faith may fail, the aid and the influences of the Holy Spirit may, for a time, be suspended, communion with God may be denied, divine comfort may

entirely depart, the corruptions of our apostate nature may beset us like an invincible legion, or rage like the tempestuous ocean, ten thousand fears may assault us, the most dreadful temptations may arrest us, and we may be brought into a state of the deepest despondency and despair that it is possible for men, out of hell, to be in; but can it be said that his mercy is clean gone; that his promise has failed; or that he has shut up his bowels? No, no, let not Zion say, the "Lord has forsaken me, and my God has forgotten me." He cannot forsake the children of his love; he cannot forget the objects of his infinite delight. He is indeed, a God that sometimes hideth himself; but still he is the God of Israel, and the Saviour. He that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant and walketh in darkness and hath no light, is authorised and encouraged to trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. His God still! and as much so as when he shone into the soul with the greatest lustre, or as he will be when the glorified Spirit is held in the divine embrace in the heaven of heavens. Nothing in heaven, nothing in earth, nothing in hell, nothing in our unhappy selves can dissolve the covenant relation between us and our God. May we always believe this consolatory truth, and may the belief of it powerfully and perpetually stimulate us to love and obedience, that we may glorify our Father who is in heaven, while we fill up the remainder of our days upon earth. You will excuse the length of my epistle, and believe me, etc.

THE STATE OF MIND PROPER TO
BELIEVERS UNDER BODILY
AFFLICTION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

BE it remembered, that neither the pains of the flesh, nor the troubles of the mind, are the offspring of chance ; but come directly or indirectly from the divine hand. They were all determined, both as to quality and quantity, by a sovereign act of our heavenly Father's most gracious and righteous will in his eternal council, and are all under the direction and management of his infinite wisdom and almighty power. Neither less, nor more, nor other in kind, than he has appointed, can any of his people feel. Humble and cheerful submission to his good pleasure, even in circumstances the most afflictive, highly becomes us, who have derived our existence from his power, and are continually dependent upon his will for our breath : especially as his very rod is love ; and the keenest pains we endure work together for our good. Shall we who are but dust and ashes, nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, *sinner*s, deserving nothing but

his eternal frown, say unto him what doest thou? Shall we who are, notwithstanding our insignificance and guilt, temples of the Holy Ghost; regenerated and born of God; raised from death to life; translated out of our own native darkness into God's marvellous light; delivered from the galling and insupportable yoke of the covenant of works, the power of sin and the dominion of satan; and brought into the glorious liberty with which Christ has made us free: we, who through grace, sovereign and efficacious, believe in Jesus; have received him as the gift of God, and in him all the divine promises, and every spiritual blessing; have put him on in all his gracious offices; and are looking to him and confiding in him alone for a full salvation: we who are the objects of Jehovah's delight; the people of his choice; the children of his love; and heirs of himself: we who are one with Christ, members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bone; purchased with his death; washed in his blood, clothed with his righteousness; interested in his great salvation, and entitled to all the immense riches of his fulness: shall we who are thus blessed and honoured, murmur, fret, repine? Alas! we do. Frequently we charge infinite wisdom with folly; and say in our hearts that infinite goodness is unkind. Often we proudly arraign our Maker, and impiously call him to an account. Like Israel in the desert, we tempt him and vex his Holy Spirit. Then he wisely and lovingly rebukes and corrects us. He hides his face, and we are troubled. We

walk in darkness, and are afraid. The sensible influences of the Holy Spirit are suspended, and his consolations are withheld. Guilt seizes our consciences; shame covers our faces; anguish fills our breasts; and we mourn like an infant deprived of the breast, or like a child that has lost its parent, or its way. We are denied, for a season, that free access to our divine, dishonoured parent, in which we have felt, in times that are past, unspeakable delight.

Desire of divine enjoyments, kindled and increased by his grace, grows restless; and, impatient of denial, makes effort after effort to enter within the vail, to enjoy a smile, or obtain a taste of the delicious sweets of communion with God, or some indications of pardon and acceptance. But every new attempt is attended with new disappointment, and additional distress: he still hides his face with a cloud. Here we should patiently wait, with humility and quietness, in the use of his appointed means, for our admission into free familiar intercourse with him, and the enjoyment of his love. But jealousy, cruel as the grave, and furious as hell, burns within; and we fret, grow peevish and sullen, and, Jonah like, think we do well to be angry.

Now, as if we could be revenged of the Lord, we indulge rebellion, and cherish a disposition to restrain prayer before him, and neglect those very ordinances, which he has appointed in rich mercy, for the refreshment of the weary pilgrim; and in the use of which, he has graciously promised to meet his people, and to bless them. Thus when

his eternal frown, say unto him what doest thou? Shall we who are, notwithstanding our insignificance and guilt, temples of the Holy Ghost; regenerated and born of God; raised from death to life; translated out of our own native darkness into God's marvellous light; delivered from the galling and insupportable yoke of the covenant of works, the power of sin and the dominion of satan; and brought into the glorious liberty with which Christ has made us free: we, who through grace, sovereign and efficacious, believe in Jesus; have received him as the gift of God, and in him all the divine promises, and every spiritual blessing; have put him on in all his gracious offices; and are looking to him and confiding in him alone for a full salvation: we who are the objects of Jehovah's delight; the people of his choice; the children of his love; and heirs of himself: we who are one with Christ, members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bone; purchased with his death; washed in his blood, clothed with his righteousness; interested in his great salvation, and entitled to all the immense riches of his fulness: shall we who are thus blessed and honoured, murmur, fret, repine? Alas! we do. Frequently we charge infinite wisdom with folly; and say in our hearts that infinite goodness is unkind. Often we proudly arraign our Maker, and impiously call him to an account. Like Israel in the desert, we tempt him and vex his Holy Spirit. Then he wisely and lovingly rebukes and corrects us. He hides his face, and we are troubled. We

walk in darkness, and are afraid. The sensible influences of the Holy Spirit are suspended, and his consolations are withheld. Guilt seizes our consciences; shame covers our faces; anguish fills our breasts; and we mourn like an infant deprived of the breast, or like a child that has lost its parent, or its way. We are denied, for a season, that free access to our divine, dishonoured parent, in which we have felt, in times that are past, unspeakable delight.

Desire of divine enjoyments, kindled and increased by his grace, grows restless; and, impatient of denial, makes effort after effort to enter within the vail, to enjoy a smile, or obtain a taste of the delicious sweets of communion with God, or some indications of pardon and acceptance. But every new attempt is attended with new disappointment, and additional distress: he still hides his face with a cloud. Here we should patiently wait, with humility and quietness, in the use of his appointed means, for our admission into free familiar intercourse with him, and the enjoyment of his love. But jealousy, cruel as the grave, and furious as hell, burns within; and we fret, grow peevish and sullen, and, Jonah like, think we do well to be angry.

Now, as if we could be revenged of the Lord, we indulge rebellion, and cherish a disposition to restrain prayer before him, and neglect those very ordinances, which he has appointed in rich mercy, for the refreshment of the weary pilgrim; and in the use of which, he has graciously promised to meet his people, and to bless them. Thus when

the Lord rebukes us for iniquity, and tries and proves us, to shew us what is in us, and to do us good in the latter end, we, like Ephraim, go on frowardly in the way of our hearts till we are brought almost to our wits end. But he, from whose spirit we can never fly, and whose watchful eye we can never escape ; whose friendship is constant, and whose love defies the shadow of a change, sees all our ways, and, O amazing mercy ! promises, after all, to heal us, and restore comfort unto us.

He sends bodily afflictions, to try our patience. He hides his face, to try our faith and love. He leaves us to ourselves, to convince us of our own weakness, and cure us of self-confidence. He suffers us to fret and rebel, to show us what is in us, and to deliver us from the dominion of self-love. And, he lets us struggle, in vain, with darkness, doubts, fears, enmity, corruption, and temptation, as long as he pleases, to teach us his own sovereignty, and our absolute dependance upon his will ; and to let us know that he will perform all his pleasure. Thus he empties us from vessel to vessel, to humble us and make us meet for his own use ; and when these exercises and trials of mind have produced their due effects, and answered the ends for which his infinite wisdom and goodness designed them, he removes them and administers consolation. He shines upon the soul, and darkness departs from the mind, just as the cloud vanishes before the rising sun. He sheds abroad his perfect love in the heart, and it casts out unbelieving fear. He sprinkles the conscience with atoning blood, and guilt

recedes and peace ensues. He pours forth his holy unction, which softens the stony heart, heals the wounds of the mind, and cures the anguish of the breast. He applies his holy promises, replete with consolation, and they make us glad. And he renews our access to himself, and our communion with his dear Son, and we rejoice and sing: "O Lord we will praise thee: though thou wast angry with us, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest us." Thus he turns our mourning into joy, and our lamentations into the voice of melody. The love of our God rules in the heart; his peace reigns in the conscience; the joy of his salvation is restored; and we view him as resting in his love, and joying over us with singing.

Now we arise and shine; for our light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon us. The dark and gloomy night is fled; "the winter is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come; and the voice of the turtle is again heard in our land." The Holy Spirit utters his peaceful voice, and speaks us blest: pronounces us forgiven, justified, and saved, and bears witness to our spirits that we are the children of God. All our graces are revived and appear in bloom. *Faith* rises in strength, views the King in his beauty, feasts upon the Saviour's inexhaustible fulness, and triumphs in his eternal victories; *love* joyfully embraces him, cleaves to him with ardour, and feels him precious; *hope* anticipates his coming in the clouds, and rejoices in the glory which will

be revealed when he appears; filial *fear*, filled with holy reverence of his glorious Majesty, trembles at the thought of dishonouring his blessed name; humility veils her face and bows down at his feet; *repentance*, covered with sackcloth, mourns for sin, both internal and external, and weeps for the dishonour done by it to infinite Majesty; *self-abasement*, *self-abhorrence*, and *self-denial*, all unite in denying the proud claims of our apostate nature, founded upon its pretended merit, in stripping it of all its fine plumage, in refusing to gratify its taste with any unlawful indulgences, and in laying it in the dust and covering it with ashes; holy *zeal* puts her shoulder to the work of God, warmly opposes erroneous doctrine, condemns unscriptural practice, as dishonouring to God and pernicious to the souls of men, and ardently contends for those doctrines, and that practice, by which the King of Zion is honoured and glorified, and by which the spiritual health and prosperity of his people are promoted; and true *devotion* presents both body and soul, with all their powers and faculties, a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, upon his own altar Jesus Christ, accompanied with fervent prayers and songs of praise; and worships the divine Jehovah in spirit and in truth. How astonishing the change! The soul which resembled the dreary wilderness is now like a garden of rich perfume. The Saviour is come down to the beds of spices, and is pleased with the fragrance of the Spirit's fruit, now ripening in our hearts.

He conducts us to his banqueting house and waves over us the banner of his love. Here he regales us with “a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.” We feast upon his pleasant fruits and they are sweet to our taste. We eat his flesh and drink his blood. The King sitteth at the table to welcome the guests, and gladden every heart with tokens and expressions of his love. We see the sweet smile of approbation and delight sit upon his radiant countenance, while words, more delicious than honey, and more precious than rubies, drop from his heavenly tongue: “eat, O friends; drink abundantly, O beloved.” O how sweet is his voice! His lips drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under his tongue. His charming accents drop into our ears, and sink down into our hearts; and our souls are like the chariots of Amminadib. We now almost forget the wormwood and the gall, which, not long since, embittered our moments, and caused us to exclaim, “thou makest us possess days of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed us.” The voice of murmuring and discontent, which, like a serpent, hissed at the rod of correction, is now completely silenced by the love of Jesus: and we are taught to be still, and to behave ourselves as a child that is weaned, and to wait upon the Lord, should he in future hide his face from us, and look for him, till he is pleased to renew the visits of his grace, and make us glad with his countenance.