

## DEATH, GAIN.

“TO DIE IS GAIN.” Phil. i. 2.

THESE words of the apostle raise in the mind a question of no small importance. To whom is it gain to die? To this question I shall reply negatively and positively.

First, negatively. When the apostle says, “to die is gain,” does he speak with reference to all men, or has he respect to a part only of the human race? He well knew that it could not be gain to all. And, -admitting the Bible to be the word of God, we are bound to believe, that it never was, that it never will be, gain to the unbelieving, unconverted, and impenitent. Read the following positive and decisive language upon the awful subject: “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness.” “They shall be driven to darkness.” “Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and

he departeth ; and, as a storm hurleth him out of his place ; for God shall cast upon him and not spare : he would fain fly out of his hand." "The fear of the wicked shall come upon him." "Wickedness overthroweth the sinner." "The wicked shall fall by his own wickedness." "The Lord casteth away the wicked for their wickedness." "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins : he shall die without instruction." "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "He that believeth not shall be damned." "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Behold, one sinner, carnal and impenitent, under the powerful dominion of sin, and led captive by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. He draws iniquity with the cords of vanity, and sin compasses him about like a chain ; he wraps himself in it as in a garment, and it covers him like a robe ; he greedily drinks it in, as the thirsty ox drinks in water ; it enters into his bowels as a flood, and its inebriating fumes produce in him the most fatal intoxication. Mad with desire after the very worst of sensual delights, he rages, like the hungry lion after his prey, to satiate his unbounded appetite for

illicit pleasures ; and in opposition to the most affectionate entreaties, the kindest advice, and the most solemn warnings of his nearest relatives and his dearest friends, though often urged with many tears, and other affecting signs of real and deep concern for his everlasting welfare ; in most profane contempt of the sacred laws, the awful threats, and the tremendous judgments of the Almighty ; and in the most bold, obstinate, presumptuous defiance of his vengeful Omnipotence, and all the thunders of his throne, on he rushes with frantic precipitance in the way of his heart. In the height of his wild and guilty career, perhaps at the instant he is perpetrating or meditating some horrid act, death transfixes him ! he drops, and where is he ? How shall I write the dreadful truth ? in hell, raising his affrighted eyes amid the ever-burning flames of Jehovah's wrath.

See another ; laid by the Almighty hand, upon a dying bed, emaciated and helpless, fainting under the hand of deadly sickness, or languishing beneath the power of corroding consumption, or tossing to and fro, with rolling eyes, and limbs distorted, racked with strong pain, and tortured with keenest smart. His diseases are mortal ; they mock the skill of the ablest physician, and defy the power of every medicine, his case is hopeless, he must die. Conscience is at last roused from its torpor, and stung with remorse. The sins of his youth, and those of his growing years, numberless and dreadful to behold, are brought to his recollection, and,

with all their aggravating circumstances, are set in the light of his countenance, "and a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation," as the just reward of his ungodliness is presented to his view, as his appointed portion from the Lord. Astonished and alarmed, he searches with avidity, his whole life, for some good thing to dissipate his fears, and alleviate his bitter distress. But, alas! the retrospect is dreadful! it augments his fears and increases the anguish of his mind: not one good work, nor word, nor thought appears! all is guilt! He now feels that the Almighty knows how to take vengeance of his enemies; and that it is a fearful thing to fall guilty into his hands. Ignorant of Christ, the sinner's only refuge, he sees no way of escape. The black impending storm gathers thick around him, and is just ready to burst upon his guilty head, horrors, exceeding all imagination, seize his polluted heart, and keen despair sits prominent in his ghastly visage. Trembling and hopeless he waits the dreaded moment of dissolution, in full expectation of the vengeance of eternal fire. Death advances with hasty steps, he draws near, he appears at the bedside; tremble, my soul, at the awful scene! He takes the miserable wretch in his iron grasp, and plunges deep into his heart the fatal shaft! he feels the deadly stab, struggles, and heaves a deep and bitter groan; his eyes roll round in wild dismay, expressive of the agony of his departing soul, and are instantly fixed; he attempts to speak, but his tongue refuses to

articulate; his lips quiver; his pulse forgets to beat; his heart ceases to throb; his lungs heave no more; his eyelids drop, and down he sinks deep into the dismal gulph of eternal damnation !

View another equally remote from salvation with those just noticed, though the circumstances of his departure are very different from those of theirs. He is quite easy as to futurity, under incurable disease, and in the view of approaching dissolution, he sees no danger ! he feels no fear ! The god of this world has blinded his mind, his understanding is totally enveloped in the blackness of nature's darkness; his conscience is benumbed and insensible; and his heart is most awfully callous. The turpitude of his nature, his multifarious crimes and enormous guilt, the flaming purity, the vast extent, the inflexible rigour of the divine law, with its absolute authority to condemn to endless flames the man that offends but in one point, the infinite holiness, the vindictive justice, and the glorious majesty of the Supreme, together with his tremendous indignation flaming against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, are all concealed from his view. The arch deceiver, the father of deceit and lies, has filled him with a vain hope, founded upon the delusive, dangerous, destructive notions that nothing more of obliquity attaches to his character than a few trifling frailties and infirmities, to which human nature is always liable, and which are inseparable from the best of characters; that God is all mercy, benevolence, and love; that he

makes due allowance for human frailty, and does not expect to reap where he has not sown ; that he will not be so unkind, unjust, and cruel, as to punish for those diminutive mistakes which, in the present state of existence, are absolutely unavoidable ; and, that should there be, in some parts of his conduct, something more of demerit than he had supposed, it is sufficiently preponderated by the merit of his good works. Thus, ignorance and infernal deception have produced in his deluded soul, a false peace, and a presumptuous expectation of a blissful eternity : he has no bands in his death, he fears no evil ; but void of dread, he placidly bids adieu to all around him ; calmly closes his eyes upon every terrene object ; and, silent and resigned like a lamb, steps out of time into eternity. But Oh ! how surprised ! vengeance meets him ! damnation seizes him ! Cease, ye surviving relations, to enumerate his virtues, and to view them as his available passport from this world to the land of peace and rest ; forbear the delusive conclusion, that because his sun went down apparently serene and unclouded, he is gone to enjoy everlasting day ; say no more that your loss is his gain. Where, with all his confidence and peace, and his high expectations of immortal bliss, where, I ask, where his regeneration and his heavenly birth ? Where his knowledge of the depravity of his nature, and the amazing deceit, the inveterate enmity, the desperate wickedness of his apostate heart,—of the sinfulness of all his works, and words, and thoughts,—of the

insufficiency of his own supposed righteousness to justify him before God,—of the holy law, and the everlasting gospel, of Christ,—of the right way of salvation,—of the Holy Ghost and the operations of his gracious power on the soul gently drawing it into cheerful acquiescence in the divine designs, particularly that of saving sinners freely by his grace, through the obedience and sufferings of his beloved Son, and raising it from the dark and dismal deeps of apostacy, to the radiant and elevated state of communion with God? Did he ever profess to know any of these? Or was it ever known, that he, at any time, discovered real scriptural symptoms of such knowledge? Did he not always manifest a rooted antipathy to every idea of divine tuition and influence, and view them as the airy dreams of deluded fanatics, or the wild reveries of mad enthusiasts? Where was his faith in Christ as the only Saviour? Where his dependance on the Saviour's blood for pardon and purity, and on his righteousness for justification before God and acceptance with him, and where his good hope through grace, founded on the chief corner-stone, which God has laid, for the only foundation of a sinner's hopes of a blissful immortality? Were not all these excellences, each of which is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of heaven, and without the real possession of which, in the present life, no man can see the Lord? Were they not all totally absent from his heart? How then can he be blessed? Or how can death be, in any sense, his gain? This is the

man who kindled a fire, and compassed himself about with sparks : he walked in the light of his fire, and in the sparks that he kindled ; and, behold, he lies down in sorrow. He trusted in himself, believing that he was righteous, and has most assuredly received, as the due reward of his boasted goodness, the greater damnation : he has perished in his own deceivings. He now sees that he trusted in a lie, and departed with a lie in his right hand. Deception has for ever forsaken his mind, and a scene of eternal and awful realities is uncovered before him. That which he called innocence, he now sees to be real guilt ; those things which he deemed only human frailties and infirmities, appear, as they really are, enormous crimes ; and those actions which he called by the fine name of good works, he is fully convinced are nothing but splendid faults. His transgressions, exceeding in multitude all possible calculation, and in magnitude surpassing the utmost latitude of created conception, appear to his astonished and affrighted eyes, in all their horrid forms and dismal shades ; and he feels the full weight of his guilt. The law which he has broken in every point, appears in all its vast extent of purity and terror, its tremendous and tormenting curses, like incessant peals of the most awful thunder, sound in his ears ; divine justice shines in devouring flames before him, and pours forth upon him, in all its fury, and in all its force, the dreadful tempest of divine indignation ; his conscience, awakened to the keenest sensibility,



feels, in all its exquisite poignancy, the sting of death ; he sinks down under the pressure of the Almighty frown, and lies engulfed in the blackness of darkness for ever ! This is the portion, the inexpressibly dreadful portion, of all who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and the glory of his power. Reader, be not deceived, that which a man sows he must reap ; and whatever appearances of sanctity may attend the unbeliever's life, or whatever pleasing and hopeful circumstances may accompany his death, he must go to his own place, assigned him in the scriptures of eternal truth. Hell is moved to meet him at his coming, and opens her mouth to receive him as her appointed prey. He dies in his guilt, unpardoned, unpurged, unjustified, unblessed. He leaves the world, accursed and abhorred of the Lord ; a child of wrath ; a son of perdition ; reprobate silver, eternally rejected of God, and cast away in his anger ; all hopes, therefore, of happiness in a future state, for such a character, are unscriptural and vain, presumptuous and wicked ; militate with both law and gospel ; are repugnant to the holiness, justice, truth, and faithfulness of God ; and diametrically opposite to the revealed counsel and the declared will of the Most High. I shall now dismiss this part of the important subject, and proceed,

Secondly. To show positively to whom it is gain to die. Need I hesitate in saying that the true

believer is the man ? Surely not. " Say ye to the righteous," and such is the believer, " it shall be well with him ; whether he lives or dies it is well with him, because living and dying he is the Lord's : one of the seed that the Lord has blessed. Divine love, sovereign and free, fixed its eye upon him, in the beginning of Jehovah's ways, before his works of old, and said, " this man have I formed for myself, he shall shew forth my praise ; he is precious in my sight ; he is mine. I will surely raise him out of the dust and lift him up from the dung-hill, and set him among princes, and make him inherit the throne of glory. I will redeem him from death ; I will ransom him from the power of the grave. I give unto him, freely and immutably, eternal life, and he shall not perish ; neither shall any pluck him out of my hands." Consider, Oh ! believer, as an antidote against the fears of death, consider well, the exalted character, and the glorious privileges, which eternal love has conferred upon you in the person of Christ. Chosen of God to be one of his peculiar people, and adopted to be his child, in his ancient counsel, you are descended from the King of kings, by a spiritual birth, and may lawfully claim kindred with the Holy Trinity. God the Father is yours by an irreversible decree of his own will : your God, your Father ; and you are an heir of all that he possesses, fully and for ever entitled by celestial birthright to the real possession and enjoyment of all his fulness, according to the measure of your soul's utmost

capacity, now, and when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, Christ, the Son of the Father, and the brightness of his glory is yours, in everlasting federal bands. Chosen in him, you are united to him, and one with him, as the wife is one with the husband, as the branch is one with the vine, as the member is one with the head. Upon union with him stands your interest in him; the latter coeval with the former. Hence the dignity of your christian character, and the permanence of your christian immunities. All he has done and is doing in his mediatorial capacity, he has done and is doing for you; and all that he is, and all that he has, he is and has for you: all things are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's. In him you are a king and a priest unto God, endued with riches, and invested with dignity, equal to those sublime titles; and ordained to reign with him for ever on his throne, and to offer unto God by him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, through all the revolving ages of eternity. In consequence of your union with him, you are all that the love and mercy, the law and justice of God desire and require you to be. In his obedience you are obedient, and completely and eternally righteous before God, in his innocence you are innocent, in his purity you are pure, in his beauty and loveliness, you are beautiful and altogether lovely, in his wisdom you are wise, in his strength you are strong, in his riches you are rich, in his greatness you are great, in his honours you are

honourable, in his glory you are glorious, in his exaltation you are exalted, in his acceptance with God the Father you are fully accepted, in his blessedness you are for ever blessed, in his salvation you are eternally secured from the sting of death, from the curse of the law, and from all condemnation: finally, in his life you live, and must live, an object of his supreme love, a vessel of his distinguishing mercy, and a monument of his free and matchless grace, when all the proud blasphemous deniers, and obstinate and virulent opposers of eternal sovereign election to life everlasting, certain to all the elect; special redemption; effectual vocation; and final perseverance, in faith and love, ensured to all the saints by truth divine, are clothed with eternal infamy, and blasted with just indignation by the affronted Almighty Majesty. Jesus is your life, because he lives you shall live also; and when he who is your life shall appear then shall you appear with him in glory. These are not fictions, but facts, real and immutable facts respecting your dignified character, and your transcendently glorious and blessed state in Christ Jesus; in whom ye are raised on high, and made to sit in heavenly places: as he is, even so are you in him, even while you are in this world and in yourself a sinful creature. The holy and divine Comforter, the spirit of truth and grace, too, is yours. Because you are a son and an heir of God, he, as your Father and your portion, that you might know your sonship, and enjoy your inheritance,

has freely sent the spirit of his Son into your heart, crying, Abba, Father; and the holy Spirit has made you his temple and abode, his palace royal, in which he has condescendingly taken up his residence for ever, according to the counsel and will of the whole divine Trinity. The design of the Holy Ghost in making you his permanent home, is, to exalt and glorify himself, and the Father, and the Son in your hearts; to adorn and beautify you with his own glorious graces; and to endue your finite mind with capacity sufficient to receive and contain all that plentitude and eternal weight of glory, which, according to divine immutable appointment, is to be revealed in you, in the moment of your transmission into the beatific presence of uncreated Majesty. You are perfectly delivered from the curse of the holy law of God and all condemnation, being completely redeemed from all iniquity by the blood of the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world. You and the rest of the children of God, being partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus took part of the same; that he might bear your guilt and die for your transgressions; and, through death destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver those who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage: death to you must therefore be gain. With reference to believers in Jesus, it may be, and ought to be viewed, not as a foe, but a friend; not as a curse, but a blessing; not as king of terrors, but a peaceful messenger:

dying with such is but leaving one house and entering another: and death to them is only a short and safe transition from earth to heaven. Let them sing then, "O! death where is thy sting? O! grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Death sets believers perfectly and eternally free from sin, their worst enemy and chief tormentor in the present world. They have not yet attained sinless perfection in the flesh, nor can they arrive at it, until they quit this mortal stage. I freely confess myself to be one of those incredulous beings who cannot be prevailed upon to receive as truth the doctrine of fleshly perfection, or to believe that any man is made free from the existence of sin in his flesh in the present life. There are, indeed, some persons who speak as if their attainments far exceed those of all others, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, not excepted. These are proud boasters, vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds, who know neither what they say nor whereof they affirm. They say they are perfect, and the saying proves them perverse, as it gives the lie to the Holy Ghost, and denies the authority of the Bible, which declares quite the reverse. The perfection of which they so confidently boast, is most evidently the offspring of ignorance, pride, and unbelief: for, if they knew themselves, and were truly humbled; if they rightly understood the true

import of the scriptures, and if they really believed the divine testimony concerning the state of human nature, even in the regenerate themselves, we should hear from them language very different from that which they now speak ; each would cry in the bitterness of his soul, *unclean !*

That all the people of God are now perfect in Christ their covenant head, is a most glorious and everlasting truth, to which the apostle Paul gives the following unequivocal testimony : “ ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principalities and powers.” But the notion of Arminian perfection is, unless I am quite mistaken, without the shadow of evidence in the scripture page, and hostile to the experience of the Lord’s people, of every age and every clime. If there can be found, in any part of the book of God, a single passage to support the idea of fleshly perfection, let it be produced ; but if no such passage can be found, let the idea be eternally exploded, and let the messengers of grace and truth seriously and firmly withstand so pernicious an error, which, at once, highly dishonours God, and greatly distresses those of his people who are weak in faith, and have the deepest experience of the plague of their own hearts.

Having declared this notion to be unscriptural, and contrary to the experience of God’s people, I shall endeavour to substantiate the assertion. What says the wisest of men upon this important subject ? he speaks in our favour, and his language is positive and determinate. “ There is no man that

sinneth not." I Kings, viii. 46. "There is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not." Eccl. vii. 20. "The just man falleth seven times, and riseth again." Prov. xxiv. 16 Can evidence, in any case upon earth, be found more clear and full, more decisive and satisfactory, than this, which these inspired testimonies exhibit, against the utopian perfection, maintained with much unhallowed zeal by hundreds in the present day.

Add to these testimonies, the declared experience of the most eminent saints, under both the dispensations of the covenant of grace, and we shall find ourselves sufficiently armed against the boldest attacks of the most daring Arminian perfectionists.

It is said of Noah, that "he was perfect in his generation." But where was he perfect? In the righteousness of Christ, which he preached, and which was imputed unto him by that grace which he found in the eyes of the Lord; and not in his own flesh. No: the good man was truly sensible, when he awoke from his wine, that the depravity of his nature had occasioned his shameful fall, and knew that in his flesh there dwelt no good thing. Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, felt himself an imperfect man when he was afraid of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and Abimelech, king of Gerar. Sarah discovered considerable imperfection, when, in her heart, she gave God the lie, and laughed him to scorn. Lot, though his righteous soul was vexed from day to day, while



he dwelt among the filthy Sodomites, at hearing their impure conversation, and witnessing their ungodly deeds, could not say that he was free from sin when he dwelt with his daughters in the mountain. Isaac appeared to be far from perfection when he denied his wife. Rachel was quite remote from the "second blessing," when she was displeased at the divine dispensation, because she had no child. Jacob was rather imperfect when he cried, "all these things are against me"! Moses, though the meekest of men, was displeased with the Lord's commandment, to go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and appeared quite angry with his people at the rock, for which he must not pass over Jordan. Job is, indeed, said, by the Lord himself, to be "a perfect and upright man:" but this was spoken of him as he stood in his covenant head and representative; for in himself it is evident he was not near perfection: if he was, whence those bitter expressions, which appear in the third chapter of his book; and why that humble confession and that self-abhorrence, expressed in chapters xl. 4, and xlii. 6? David, the man after God's own heart, and the sweet singer of Israel, had in his nature the principles of adultery, dissimulation, and murder, which sprang up and produced a most baneful crop to the dishonour of God and his own bitter distress. He did not feel much like a perfect man, when he cried, "iniquities prevail against me;" nor when he said, "for thy name sake, O Lord! pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Nor did he believe that

any of the people of God were, or even would be, free from sin in this world; if he had, he would not have said, that "every one that is godly shall pray for pardon." Psalms, lxv. 3; xxv. 2; xxxii. 6. None, I think, will venture to say that Solomon was perfect: he was wise and eminent, but not perfect: imperfection stands prominent in his character. The prophet Isaiah was conscious of his want of perfection, when he saw the glory of Christ, and uttered that pathetic exclamation. "Wo is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." Jeremiah did not talk much like a perfect man, when he cursed the day on which he was born, and the man who brought tidings of his birth. Jer. xx. 14, 15. And Jonah seemed to be the very antipode of a perfectionist, when he obstinately refused to obey the divine mandate, passionately fled from the Lord; and impudently told his Maker, that he did well to be angry, even unto death, because mercy was extended to Nineveh.

Let us now descend to New Testament times, and see what evidence of the truth, for which we plead, may be found among the apostles of our Lord. Peter, though called by the ministry of Christ, endued with a knowledge for which he was not indebted to flesh and blood, and pronounced blessed by the unerring lips of infallible truth, had not arrived at perfection: when satan came to sift him as wheat, he found something in him besides pure grain, or else he would not so soon have denied his Lord with oaths and curses. Paul, a

man endued perhaps with a greater measure of gifts and grace than any other mere man ever was, acknowledged himself an impotent and imperfect man, and groaned most bitterly under the sense he had of his own depravity : attend to his humble confession, Rom. vii. 18-24. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good which I would I do not ; but the evil that I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then, a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man : but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O ! wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" In his first epistle to Timothy, i. 15, he declares himself the chief of sinners : he does not say, of whom I *was* chief ; but, "of whom I *am* chief." To say that the apostle, when he wrote the above, was not a converted man ; or, that he does not speak of himself, but of some other person, whom he personated, is to insult common sense, and commit a most daring outrage, upon the obvious meaning of language. Might it not as well be said, that he did not speak of himself, or that he was not converted, when he said, "by the grace of God I am what I am ?" At Galatia the spirit lusted against

the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, and these were contrary the one to the other; so that the Galatian believers could not do the things that they would. The apostle John most preremptorily declares, that "if we say *we have no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." I John i. 8. He does not say, if the unconverted say they have no sin they deceive themselves; but if we: I, the apostle John, and my brethren, the rest of the apostles, and others who are born of God, should say that, in ourselves we have no sin, we should be deceivers and liars. And James maintains the same truth. "In many things we offend all;" both I myself, and all who believe in Jesus Christ, as well as others. James iii. 2. Thus the holy scriptures testify, that saints of the highest growth, and the greatest eminence, were imperfect: how vain then it is to expect to find perfection among those of lesser growth and inferior rank!

Could we read all that the people of God in every age and every nation of the world, have written of themselves, we should find them complaining bitterly of the motions of sin innumerable in their flesh, and groaning deeply under the heavy pressure of unbelief, carnality, pride, enmity, rebellion, stubbornness, ingratitude, discontent, covetousness, worldly mindedness, lightness of mind, vain and foolish thoughts, envy, hatred, spite, malice, bitterness, passion, and many other things too numerous to be recited here. The sense which they, who are spiritual, have of these inbred, in-

dwelling corruptions makes them mourn, and causes them to pour forth long complaints, and many tears before the Lord in secret, and fills them with unutterable shame and grief: they loathe themselves, they abhor their lives, they would not live always, to be torn, and stabbed, and tortured by sin, and to dishonour God, by committing that, in thought, in word, and in deed, which is abhorrent to his infinitely holy eyes.

Could I have access to all the children of God on earth, I would say to them, come, my brethren, be of good cheer; time is on the wing, moments flee apace, the last will soon come, and with the last moment the last sin. Your breasts are now the seat of war; sin attends you in all the walks of life, mingles with all you think, and speak, and do; there is no evading its vigilance. If you retire to your closets it is with you there, to interrupt your devotions, and hinder your communion with God; it assaults you in every act of worship, both public and private; robs you often of your joys, and fills you with keen distress: but all this opposition will soon arrive at its final period, the dreadful conflict will quickly close; the last struggle is at hand. "God," says the excellent Romaine, "will send death to kill sin." As Jesus has, by his own death, put away completely all your sins, out of the sight of divine holiness and justice, and saved you from the damning power of your guilt; so, by means of your death, he will save you completely from the commission, the feeling, and the being of sin; and

from all the pain and grief, shame and confusion of face, which it now occasions, by its operations in your breasts.

Secondly. Death is the means of deliverance to the children of grace from all the temptations of Satan. The malicious foe, while they live, levels against them his malignant artillery, and hurls, with hellish rage, his flaming darts, to wound them, if possible, in their faith, understandings, wills, affections, and consciences. His temptations are, beyond all imagination, dreadful: the scriptures have compared them to burning darts, the roaring of a lion, the swellings of a mighty flood, and the impetuous rage of some tremendous storm. To violence and terror he unites the most subtle arts and cunning devices, in order to weaken their faith in the promise of God, and shake their confidence in his faithfulness and love; and to draw them aside from the paths of truth and peace, light and liberty, into those of error and distress, darkness and thralldom. Now, he draws a mist before their mental eyes, and conceals, as with a cloud, the truth and grace of the gospel from their view; sets before them, as in a magnifying and multiplying glass, their sins and unworthiness, and fills their ears with the thunders of the law; by which means he overwhelms them with doubts and fears, and sinks them in the deep waters of dejection and despondency. Anon, he employs all his infernal devices to swell them with self adulation, and raise them to the pinnacle of spiritual pride, with a design to cast

them thence wounded, and make them go halting and weeping to the grave; and in this he too often succeeds. It is no uncommon thing to see even God's own people, first, vainly puffed up with a fond conceit of the superiority of their gifts and graces, and filled with self-admiration and self-applause; and then, while they are eagerly employed in admiring themselves, and enumerating their superior excellencies, by a sudden gust of temptation to some atrocious crime, or some pernicious error, carried away, and plunged headlong into the mire of ungodliness, or dashed against the rock of presumption; where they remain miserably helpless, till the same free and almighty grace, which at first raised them out of the horrible pit and the miry clay of their natural state, raises them again, sets them on their feet, and establishes their goings in the right way.

Nor are the malice and rage of the old serpent, which are exercised against the followers of the Lamb, at all to be wondered at; for, as soon as ever they are called by the grace of God, and to possess that faith which gives glory to God, to taste the sweets of divine life and liberty, peace and love, they avow themselves the sworn enemies of hell and the world, and appear under the banner of the cross in arms against them. This enrages the powers of darkness, and hell burns with tenfold malice; the legions of Satan arise in all their strength, to intercept and stop them in their march through the wilderness of this world to Immanuel's.

land ; or in case they cannot put them to a stand, to cause them all the uneasiness and do them all the mischief they can ; the cursed infernal cabinet, and its allies, seem determined to rack their invention, and strain every nerve of their power, rather than they, who have deserted their cause, and espoused the interest of the cross, should enter the kingdom without much tribulation, and many scars and wounds, and groans and tears.

Fellow soldiers, and brethren beloved ; watch and pray : all hell is against you ! While you are in the field you must expect no quarter from the enemy ; he is merciless and cruel. You must not look for a moment's cessation of arms : the battle will continue coeval with life, and may, perhaps, grow hotter every day. But be not discouraged : you have an infinitely wise and mighty Captain, and the best of armour, both offensive and defensive. Christ is your captain, your helmet, your shield, your sword, your girdle, and your shoes of gospel peace. Thus armed you may face your foes without fear ; not in your own strength, but in the might of your invincible Captain ; who says, " fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness ; " and " no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Sometimes your hearts tremble and are afraid, your courage faints and dies, and you are ready to say, we shall one day fall by the hand of these strong ones. Nor is your fear alto-



gether groundless ; for, although you cannot fall finally, you may, perhaps, fall so far, as to dishonour the Lord, wound your own souls, and fill yourselves with distress and anguish for days, and months, and years. You may fall from the exercise of grace, from the enjoyment of communion with God, and into outward sin, so as to cause much reproach to the cause of God and his truth : but neither sins nor fiends shall so far cast you down, that you shall rise no more ; for the just falleth seven times, and riseth again ; and the steps of a good man are so ordered by the Lord, that, although he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. All whom the Father has given to the Son, shall, though the troops of hell sometimes overcome them, like Gad, overcome at last, and be more than conquerors, through him that has loved them. O ! the inestimable gain of death to the children of God ! In the moment of dissolution they tread down sin, and death, and hell, like straw upon the dunghill ; quit the field of battle, to enter it no more ; and receive their palms and crowns at the hands of their illustrious Captain. Their warfare is over, their victory is complete ; they enter into rest, ascribe the conquest to the Lamb, and lay down their honours at his exalted feet, with joyful hosannas, and loud bursts of unbounded praise.

Thirdly. Death delivers them from all bodily weakness, pain, and sickness : the happiness of the future state is perfect. The inhabitants of the

invisible world above shall not say, I am sick ; all diseases are confined to this world of sin. Here God has a poor and afflicted people ; various afflictions, in close succession, like Job's messengers, or foaming waves of the sea, distress and perplex the children of God in the present state ; and they come sometimes with such rapidity and violence as scarcely to afford them time to swallow their spittle or breathe. Strikingly true are the words of Bunyan :

“A christian man is never long at ease,  
When one fright's gone another doth him seize.”

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, both internal and external, but out of them all the Lord will deliver them by death, if not by any other means. There remaineth a rest for the people of God from all afflictions of body and mind ; and, blessed be the name of the Lord ! the happy hour appointed for them to enter it makes haste. A few more afflictive seasons, and death will faithfully transmit you, O ye afflicted ! tossed with tempests, and not comforted, to that state, in which the head will never ache, the heart will never grieve, the eye will never weep. Oh ! how great the gain of death !

Fourthly. Death places them far beyond the reach of the cruel arm of persecution, and the sound of the clamorous envenomed tongue of reproach and slander. Persecution, more or less,

secret or open, is the lot of the true christian in this world. "He that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," is the voice of divine inspiration. As it was of old so it is now: "they who are after the flesh will persecute them that are after the Spirit." In all ages and nations the world has hated the church, and the children of the wicked one have spit their infernal venom at the children of God. Nor is this matter of wonder, for they are not of the world, even as Christ was not of it, therefore it hates them. There is a rooted enmity, of long standing, between the seed of the woman and the old serpent; eternal war between them is proclaimed by the voice of heaven, and the latter will oppose the work of the former in the hearts of the redeemed to the utmost of his power. Through the medium of his own children, whose hearts he completely possesses, and whose minds are all obedience to his dictates, he rages most furiously against the saints of the Most High. Persecution, therefore, appears to be the malice of the devil in the hearts of the ungodly breaking forth in the flames of rage and fury against Christ, in the hearts of his members; and no sooner does God manifest his eternal purpose and grace, in the effectual calling of them to believe in Christ, and to walk in his ways, than they are marked by the world, and set up as butts to receive all the empoisoned arrows of ridicule and contempt, which their malignant hands and tongues can discharge at them. This makes their way bitter, and often

causes their heads to hang down ; but the Lord is their strength and their shield ; he upholds them in the day of adversity, carries them through all the scorns and jeers of the unbelieving crowd, to the day of death ; and then, by death, sets them for ever free from all that hate them, and fixes them where no malicious persecutor shall ever shew his accursed head, or shoot a fiery dart. For

Fifthly. Death raises them up to a most exalted and triumphant state in the world of glory. When they die they instantly enter into the joy of their Lord : absent from the body, present with the Lord : they go to be with Christ, which is far better than being here. When Lazarus died he was conveyed by angels into Abraham's bosom ; and when the thief, who was crucified with Jesus, departed, he was, on that very day, exalted to paradise. No sooner does the believer in Jesus take leave of his earthly tabernacle than he takes full possession of his house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He puts off his clothes of mortality and is instantly clothed with immortal garments, and feels in himself the full import of that ever memorable declaration : " Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, even so, saith the Spirit, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." They rest in the bosom of eternal love, and on the breast of him who died for them, and washed them from their sins in his blood : they see him whom their souls love ; not through a glass darkly, but

with open face in all the sublime beauties of his incomparable person, and in all the magnificence of his glorified state, and shine before him, to their unutterable and eternal surprise, in all the unfading brightness of celestial effulgence. "They are like him, for they see him as he is," they rejoice before him with joy unspeakable and full of glory; they "comprehend with all saints, what is the length, and the breadth, and the depth, and the height, and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and are filled with a!l the fulness of God." Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath the heart of man, in the present state of imperfection and darkness, fully conceived, the things which God has laid up in heaven, for them that love him. At his right hand there are rivers of pleasure, unbounded and undefiled, refined and exquisite, flowing without intermission, from himself, the uncreated fountain of supreme delight, at which all the glorified saints drink, even to satiety. There is eternal sunshine, without a cloud, in the presence of the Lamb, and fulness of joy for evermore, at his right hand. Each of the spirits of the just made perfect is eternally instated in the highest possible dignity, honour, and felicity, in communion with the uncreated and undivided Three.

But, after all that has been said, some of my godly readers are afraid of death. Look, my beloved, into the heavenly page; there the Holy

Spirit of truth assures you that death is deprived of its dreadful sting, that it is a part of your precious treasure, and that all who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him.

It appears, then, that death will finally deliver the saints from all the corruption of their nature, and every plague of the heart; from all the temptations of a malicious devil; from every bodily weakness, pain, and affliction; from the bitterness of persecution; and from all their griefs, lamentations, and woes; and will be the means of exalting them above the angels of light; consequently, it must be their gain.

## ENCOURAGEMENT TO A DISCONSOLATE MINISTER.

A LETTER TO THE REV. J. U—N.

DEAR BROTHER,

I have just been calling upon the Lord for you, and have now taken up my pen to write you a few thoughts, for your encouragement and comfort in your present distress. O may the Holy Spirit of truth and grace, whose sole prerogative it is to apply the truth to our hearts, make them the effectual means of present and lasting comfort to your troubled mind.

I often think of you and your people ; and my request to the God and Father of all our mercies, for you and for them is, that whatever there is among you opposite to his word, he will graciously pardon, and powerfully remove. Your heart bleeds over the wounds of Zion ; and the falls and contentions of your brethren make you groan in spirit,

while floods of tears gush from your eyes, to tell those whose conduct grieves you, the bitter anguish of soul you feel on their account, because they dishonour the Holy One of Israel, and expose to ridicule and contempt the best of causes—the cause of Christ: more dear to you than the treasures of the Indies,—than all the riches of the world.

But why, my dear brother, this profusion of grief? Has any thing strange or uncommon taken place? “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.” It is but the same cup of trembling which is put into your hands, that hundreds of your brethren are now drinking; but the same furnace you are passing, that thousands now with God, have passed before you. Come, dry up your tears, and consider,

First, that he, who walks serene “upon the wings of the wind,” can, with a word, or with a nod, or even with a look, still, in the twinkling of an eye, the rudest tempests; quell the most furious spirits and contentious tempers; and hush even wild uproar into endless sleep! When he says, “peace, be still,” it must be according to his word. Till then, my good brother, you must wait; till then, human efforts will be all in vain. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: the more patiently and submissively you wait, the more you will honour God and baffle the designs of the enemy, who has raised the storm in the house of God, and caused the iniquities of some, like the wind, to carry them.



away, to weaken your hands, and discourage your heart in your Master's work ; but fear not : for,

Secondly, the very hairs of your head are all numbered ; not one of them can fall but by an order from heaven : the very things which most distress you are, at this moment, under divine direction. Nothing, either painful or pleasant, is the effect of chance : prosperity and adversity are alike the subjects of decrees arising from boundless love, framed by infinite wisdom, and founded upon the absolute sovereignty of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will ; who says, " My counsel shall stand, and I will perform all my pleasure ; " whose hand none can stay, and to whom none, neither men nor angels, may say, " what doest thou ? " Our times are all in his hand, who created, who supports, and who sways universal nature. Who so fit to draw the lines of our lot, and measure out our portion of good and evil as he who called us into existence, and in whom infinite goodness and infinite understanding are united ? Oh that we were still ! that, by a cheerful submission to his will, we could acknowledge his right to reign, and to do all his holy pleasure, in every part of his vast domains ; influencing, restraining, and permitting the minds of men, according to his own supreme will, without giving unto us, or any of his creatures, any other reason of his conduct than this : " because it seems good in his sight. " His will, let us rejoice, or mourn, his will is surely the best. But is it his will that those

things by which his hallowed name is dishonoured, and his righteous cause is exposed to reproach and scorn, should occur? If not, where are his independence and supremacy? Whatever cause is supposed to produce an effect independent of his will, must, at the same time, be viewed as his superior; but he, before whom the nations are as the drop of a bucket and the small dust that cleaves to the balance, and in whose sight the whole creation is less than nothing and vanity, can have neither superior nor equal; therefore, nothing can take place in any part of his vast empire without his permission. Though such is the sublime holiness of his nature that he cannot possibly approve of the turpitude of any action, yet nothing is more certain than that he permits conduct the most nefarious to subserve his own sovereign designs, no less glorious and holy than profound and mysterious. That he suffered moral evil to enter our world, and envelope the whole human race; that he leaves his own elect, prior to their regeneration, to live in sin, and some of them to plunge as deeply into its impure abyss as any that are born of woman; that he does not eradicate it from their nature when he calls them by his grace, but lets it remain and operate in them during their existence in this world; and that he permits, in a multitude of instances, those who truly believe in Jesus, to fall, through the temptations of Satan and the power of indwelling sin, into crimes the most flagitious, are truths too evident to be denied. These

are parts of his wonderful ways, the reasons of which can never be accounted for on any other ground than that of his eternal immutable good pleasure, and his absolute and righteous sovereignty, which is the glory that he will never give to another, but maintain inviolate as the basis of his throne, and the brightest gem of his crown, amidst all the murmurings of men, and all the envy and rage of devils.

Thirdly, when, therefore, that line of conduct, by which reproach is brought upon religion, the mouths of the ungodly are opened, awfully to blaspheme the worthy name by which we are called; and the church is wounded and distressed, is pursued by any of those, who make a part of our connexions, it would be well, if, while we view their criminality with holy detestation, and censure them with a becoming faithfulness, we could fully acquiesce in that will which suffers it to take place. However much we abhor sin, and grieve for the dishonour which is done to the divine name, and the religion we profess, by the misconduct of those around us, we should be still and know that he is God who permits it: we should fall before him with trembling adoration and reverend awe, and say, with Paul, "how unsearchable are his judgments." So far as we disapprove of his will, even in the most awful dispensations of his holy providence among which his permission of sin in his church stands prominent, we charge him with folly, and assume an air of sovereignty, by which we disho-

nour and displease him in our turn, perhaps, as much as they do, whose conduct we justly censure, and whose crimes we mourn.

Fourthly, nothing is more certain than that the Almighty is glorified by all the acts of his will, as well as by those of his power, and that out of those heart-piercing things which cause you to sigh in secret, he will, some way or other, sooner or later, raise glory to his own great name, and good also, to the bleeding church, and her disconsolate pastor. It stands upon record, and is an indisputable fact, that "all things work together for good to them that love God: to them that are the called according to his purpose." He, therefore, that goeth forth weeping, and bearing precious seed, as you my brother do, shall, doubtless, rejoice in due time, and, from a sorrowful seed time, shall reap an abundant, a joyful harvest. "Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy shall surely come in the morning." The gloom of midnight must be succeeded by the splendour of day, and the dreariness of Winter by the charms of Spring. What, though some who once stood paramount in our esteem, with whom we have taken the sweetest counsel, and to whom our names were once as precious ointment, have turned aside to their crooked ways, and the Lord is leading them forth with the workers of iniquity to severe correction, or final destruction, yet peace shall be upon Israel. If backsliders abound on the right hand and on the left, and the iniquities of multitudes, like the wind, have carried them away ;

still, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." Though Zion is afflicted, tossed with tempests and not comforted, yet her stones shall be laid with fair colours, and her foundations with sapphires, her windows shall be made of agates, and her borders of pleasant stones, and all her children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of her children, and, although, in the midst of her confusion and anguish, she says, "the Lord has forsaken me, and my God has forgotten me;" she is still remembered of the Lord with peculiar regard; her name stands engraved upon the palms of his hands, and her walls, the means of her security, are continually before him; her children shall make haste, her converts shall increase, and her destroyers and they that made her waste shall go forth of her. It is indeed true, that the Almighty has his way in the whirlwind and the storm; that the operations of his providence are inscrutable, and the footsteps of his infinite sovereignty past finding out; that from the eyes of mortals he conceals a part of the profundity of his counsels, and gives to his creatures no account of some of his affairs; that he, occasionally, hides both himself and his goings, even in the sanctuary, behind a thick cloud of impenetrable mystery: yet, he is ever the God of Israel, the Saviour!

Fifthly, it is no uncommon thing for the Lord to carry on his wonderful designs and promote effectually the best interest of his people by means,

in their own nature, truly awful and afflictive ; and which, in human view, militate with the ends they are intended to effect. It was through the hatred and malice, treachery and cruelty of his brethren, the abject state of a slave, the temptation and false accusation of his mistress, and the gloomy horrors of a prison that Joseph passed to his elevated state in the court of Egypt ; by these events, apparently hostile to the import of his prophetic dreams, the prediction was fulfilled ; and the wise and gracious decree of heaven, relating to the preservation of him and his father's house and the land of Egypt, had its exact fulfilment.

When Joseph was supposed to be dead, and a famine prevailed in the land of Canaan, and Benjamin must go into Egypt, Jacob, in the bitterness of his heart exclaimed, "all these things are against me." But oh ! how opposite the exclamation to the fact ! The event proved, that the very things which most afflicted him, were most in his favour ; that in the moment when they wore the most gloomy and terrific aspect, and pierced his mind with the keenest anguish, they all conspired to promote his interest and secure his happiness. The Prince of Life permitted the powers of hell and death to lead him captive, to judgment and the cross ; that by means of his captivity and death, he might lead *them* captive, and raise upon the ruins of their sable empire, a glorious triumphal arch, which neither time nor eternity can efface ;

it was through death, he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Hell was suffered, for a season, to exult in the Saviour's death, while his disconsolate church wept over his breathless clay; but hell soon found, to her eternal cost, that the cause of her triumph was the means of her destruction; and that the means of the church's dejection was the cause of her exultation. A violent persecution must arise about Stephen, to disperse the disciples, that they might spread the gospel, not only in all parts of Judea, but also in the Gentile world, as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch. And Paul and Silas must be cruelly persecuted and unjustly imprisoned, to be the means of converting the gaoler and his house. Thus, the Most High, in his sovereign wisdom and love, carries on his glorious work, and promotes the interest of his kingdom by means which seem calculated only to impede the former and overthrow the latter; by this mysterious procedure he baffles the designs of hell, confounds the wisdom of the world, seals instruction upon the minds of his people, and raises glory to his own name.

I need not say to you, *pray*; I know you to be a man of prayer: you "call upon the Lord in the day of trouble, and he will deliver you; and you shall glorify him." He, my good brother, who has promised this is the faithful God, he cannot lie; you may safely, therefore, comfortably trust him. Sooner shall heaven and earth sink into eternal

chaos than one promise fail. What you have to do then, in your present situation, is expressed by the Holy Ghost; "wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Remember me in your petitionary addresses at the mercy-seat.

Yours, in the cause of truth.



AN AFFECTIONATE AND EARNEST  
ADDRESS TO THE MINISTERS AND  
CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

BELOVED IN THE LORD,

WHILE we view the rulers of the nations of this world furiously contending with each other for those things which must all perish in the using, and lavishly sacrificing treasure and blood for the possession of that airy, empty bubble, honour; should not we, the ministers and churches of Jesus; we, who have professed attachment to the pure gospel, and declared ourselves on the Lord's side; we, who through the constraining power of sovereign matchless grace, have joined the royal standard of the Prince of Life, have received the gracious bounty of the King of heaven, and put on the whole armour of God; should not we, with undaunted courage, avow our allegiance to our Sovereign, our love to our Prince, and our attachment to the truth by contending, with earnestness, for that faith, which was once

delivered unto the saints ? Would it not be criminal in us, either from motives of prudence, false delicacy, or fear, to fold our hands and sit at ease, when gospel truth, infinitely more precious than the most valuable terrestrial possessions, is attacked, most maliciously attacked, with satanic art and infernal rage ?

Ministers are stewards of the mysteries of God ; and churches are pillars and grounds of the truth ; ministers and churches should be, therefore, found faithful. Both the one, and the other, should hold fast, and hold forth the word, the pure, unmixed, unadulterated word of life ; and never give place to the greatest names that corrupt the truth, and, with cunning craftiness, lie in wait to deceive.

We live in a day, which loudly calls for more than common zeal, integrity, firmness, resolution, and exertion, in the defence of truth ; and although we are exhorted to avoid foolish questions, yet we are commanded to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

In this holy and honourable contention, the apostles of our Lord were engaged against both Jews and Gentiles. In this cause they freely devoted their reputation and their lives to the glory of God and the service of his church.

Had the chaste and holy breast of Paul been defiled by the false candour and the palliating spirit which disgrace the present day, he would not have used that sharpness which appears in his epistle to the Galatians ; but would, doubtless, have addressed

them and their false teachers, in language similar to the disgusting and pernicious cant of our times. "Brethren, although you and I do not see eye to eye, yet, as we differ in a few nonessentials only, it would be a great pity that we should enter into disputes on religious topics, or think the worse of each other on account of the difference of our theological sentiments. It would be glorious, brethren, to meet each other half way; sing the funeral song of bigotry, and agree never to offend each other's ears by mentioning the things in which we differ." Has not this accommodating, popular language, in the mouths of professors of religion, a tendency to render suspicious their belief of the reality of those things which they profess to believe, and to make it doubtful whether they really love divine truth? For, did they firmly believe the grand leading truths of the gospel to be more than fiction; did they regard them as eternal realities, essential to the honour of God, and the salvation of his people; and did they feel a cordial attachment to them, as the things which are most excellent; could they either relinquish them, or corrupt them, or conceal them? Would they not rather, regardless of the smiles or frowns of men, recommend and enforce them in the strongest terms, and contend for them, against every opposer, with all their ability, and with the utmost ardour.

Brethren, let us not be deemed void of charity, nor thought censorious, when we say, that multitudes, both in and out of the establishment,

are corrupted from the simplicity of Christ, and manifest an awful aversion to the real truth as it is in him. The fact is too notorious to be denied. Many, both episcopalians and dissenters, are departed from the pure gospel, and have introduced theological compositions of their own; compositions the genuine effects of their own proud rationality, and boasted natural and moral abilities, quite unknown to the plain honest fishermen of Galilee, the learned pupil of Gamaliel, and all the inspired writers. They have learned to trim, to temporize, to conceal, disguise, corrupt, and asperse the truth, in order to escape the censure, and secure the applause of the proud self-adulating professor, who loves to hear his own imaginary native excellences and free-will powers extolled, though it be done at the expence both of the truth and honour of God. Oh popularity! how many hopeful young men have been ensnared by thy delusive charms! What multitudes of the sacred order have paid their devotion to thee, and sacrificed at thy enchanting shrine, truth, fidelity, honour, conscience, and the precious bread of the household of God!

Numbers of dissenters, of all denominations, are united with clergymen, not a few, in depreciating the Saviour's glory: in defaming his character, and putting him to open shame, and in blasphemously denying, or impiously corrupting the sublime doctrines of sovereign grace. We hear from the pulpits and the press, of both the

former and the latter, that he is not the true and living God ; that he is only a mere man like ourselves, or, at most, but a subordinate deity, or a superangelic spirit united to human flesh ; that his death did not atone for sin ; that his blood was never intended to cleanse from the pollution of moral evil ; that sin is not an infinite evil, and, therefore does not deserve infinite punishment ; that the necessity of a satisfaction for guilt, in order that the guilty may escape eternal punishment is nothing more than a dream ; that men are not justified, in the sight of God, by the righteousness of Christ, but by their own personal obedience ; that Jesus saves in no other way than as our example. And they who are not advanced quite so far in the knowledge of this refined, rational scheme, as the above, very gravely and sedately tell us, that it is weak to suppose that sinners are saved entirely by the grace of God, independant of their own works ; that the covenant of grace, the promises of God, interest in Christ, justification, pardon of sin, and eternal salvation, are all conditional, and depend upon our faith, repentance and sincere obedience, and that unless we perform our part, we cannot reasonably expect that God will perform his. These, not satisfied with acting the Antinomian, and making void the law, by denying the necessity of Christ's atonement, make void the gospel also, by denying the reality of that atonement ; and exclude from salvation the whole human race, by their impossible

conditions. Thus, some have joined the standard of Arianism, some that of Socinianism, and others that of gross Arminianism, (all of which are real Antinomianism) while others, in vast crowds, rush, with eagerness, round the ensign of *refined* Arminianism, artfully covered with calvinistic varnish to deceive. Moderate Calvinism is their motto, and the badge of distinction by which they wish to be known. Of this they are proud, and of this they make their boast.

Let us, however, examine this mark of distinction, and see whether it does honour to the men by whom it is assumed. When they use the word *moderate* in reference to religion they must connect it either with the doctrines they hold, or with the disposition of their minds towards these doctrines, and the various branches of practical religion. However, connect it with which they will, it does them no credit, as will appear from the following observations.

Moderate is a word expressive of qualities in a middle state, and which places them in opposition to what is great, eminent, and excellent. If therefore, they use it in reference to their doctrine they tell us, that these doctrines are not the gospel; for that rises infinitely above mediocrity, and boasts, justly boasts, a superlative degree of excellence, in all its qualities and in all its parts.

Does God love his people with moderate love? Or is it moderate grace which the Almighty has bestowed upon sinners? Detested be the thought!

His love shines with transcendent lustre, and rises in greatness infinitely beyond the highest language of description, and the most exalted ideas of men and angels; and his grace is described as abundant, exceeding abundant; rich, exceeding rich; as justifying the most ungodly, pardoning the most guilty, and conquering the most rebellious and incorrigible; as saving the chief of sinners; as filling him, who filleth all in all; and as reigning over sin, and death, and hell through righteousness, unto life eternal, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Its greatness, glory, freeness, and excellence, are transcendent. What will you say to moderate election, adoption, pardon, and justification; to moderate regeneration and conversion; and to a moderate atonement, a moderate salvation, a moderate heaven, and a moderate crown of glory? Will these meet your approbation? Will these give you full satisfaction? Do not your minds recoil at the approach of such a system? Yet, if the term moderate retains its native meaning, when used in connexion with Calvinism, the above is a summary of the moderate calvinistic scheme. And is this the gospel? Do these moderate doctrines raise glory to God in the highest, and pour abundant consolation into the wounded heart? No: all must be moderate. As is the tree so is the fruit. Moderate glory to God, and moderate comfort to man, both now and hereafter, are the utmost that can be expected from moderate Calvinism.

If they use this modish term in reference to the

dispositions of their minds towards the doctrines they hold, and the different branches of practical religion, then they tell us, that they are not excessively attached to either ; that they view them as things indifferent, and, therefore, they do not wish to be very tenacious of either doctrine or practice.

Yet, these are the very men, who are, for ever exclaiming against the doctrines of the gospel ; and who are exceedingly immoderate in aspersing the ministers of those doctrines, as the enemies of holiness, as loose in their conduct, and as the real supporters of the empire of sin.

Sterling divinity is hated and despised by thousands who profess a love for the gospel. The grand truths and sublime doctrines of grace, when preached incorruptly, when handled without deceit, and when exhibited in their own simplicity and glory, are charged with relaxing the nerves of practical holiness, with strengthening the sinews of licentiousness and stimulating those who believe and receive them to a criminal indulgence in sin. The ministers too, who preach them, and the churches which embrace them, are invidiously stigmatized as Antinomians, despisers of the divine law, enemies of good works, and abettors of ungodliness.

Brethren, let none of these things move you. That the truths of the gospel have been, and are abused, by some of their pretended friends, is a lamentable truth ; but shall we discard them ; or blush to own and vindicate them, because men of



corrupt minds have prostituted them to the service of their lusts? God forbid. Whatever corrupt conduct may be found among ministers, or among churches, in the professing world at large, we are well assured that no blame attaches to the gospel; and are perfectly satisfied, that all its excellent doctrines are pure, are holy, are according to godliness, and never fail to produce holiness in heart and life, where they are experimentally known.

First, such is the nature, and such are the effects of the doctrine of love, the free, eternal unchangeable love of God to his people. When this doctrine is applied, by the Holy Spirit, to the most passionate lovers of sin, and is written in their inward parts, by the finger of the Almighty, they instantly enjoy the love of God; and in that very moment sin becomes the object of their hatred and they most ardently long for perfect holiness and exact conformity to the image of Christ; nor can they be satisfied until they see him as he is, are completely transformed into his likeness, and fully comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and are filled with all the fulness of God.

When the heart is directed into the love of God, it emerges, in triumph, from the love of sin, relinquishes its former pursuits, and says, "what have I to do any more with idols?" And when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost, it ascends the throne, asserts its imperial

prerogative, and proclaims its absolute dominion. The love and the power of sin, like Dagon before the ark of God, instantly fall down before it, and lie conquered at its feet, and all the powers of the soul, joyfully dropping the weapons of hostility, bow and welcome the conqueror for ever to the heart.

Secondly, the doctrine of absolute, eternal and personal election to everlasting life and glory, is no less according to godliness, than that of the love of God. The elect were as absolutely chosen to the sanctification of the Spirit, and to obedience, as they were to the enjoyment of heaven. One end of their election was, that they should be holy, and without blame before God in love. He who determined that they should be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and a peculiar people, determined also, that they should be a holy nation; nor can any power whatever nullify his determination, or frustrate his gracious design. It is then a fact which defies all the subtlety and power of its proudest opposers, that election has infallibly secured to all the elect, the perfection of holiness. This glorious and immutable decree is the source whence flows all true holiness to the sons of men, and the vital root from which it grows; but for this the whole world would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the human race would have been for ever as destitute of holiness as the fallen angels.

Thirdly, the doctrine of eternal indissoluble union with Jesus, is a pure and precious doctrine,

graciously designed and admirably calculated to promote the holiness and secure the happiness of all who believe. They who were joined unto the Lord Jesus, in election, before time, are made one spirit with him, in time ; and to all who are in him he is made sanctification. They receive the sanctifying unction from the Holy One, and are partakers of his nature. His holiness is imparted to them in consequence of their relation to him, as branches to a root ; “ for if the root be holy, the branches also are holy.” All the fruitfulness of the branches both internal and external, is the effect of their union with Jesus the living vine. Nor would there have been found among all the thousands that have sprung from the barren root of the first Adam, one holy, fruitful bough, had not that God who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, appointed another root, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven ; and in his ancient counsel and eternal decree, united his elect to him and immutably ordained, that, out of the immense fullness which dwelleth in him, they should receive grace for grace.

Fourthly, David, the man after God’s own heart, the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Israel, the sweet psalmist of Israel, who had the word of God in his tongue, and by whom the spirit of the Lord spoke, has testified, that the covenant of grace is ordered in all things and sure Ordered in all things ; it, therefore, includes in its order the sanctification of all the covenant

seed. And sure: therefore, absolutely ensures to them that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. In this holy covenant the Most High has pledged himself, not only to be the God of his people, to forgive their iniquities, and to acquit them from all condemnation, but likewise to put his holy Spirit within them; to circumcise their hearts to love him; to make them a holy people to himself; to make them mourn for their own evil ways and loathe themselves in their own sight for their abominations; to put his fear into their hearts, that they may never depart from him; and to guide them in the way of holiness, lead them in a way in which they shall not stumble, and cause them to walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments and do them. All which clearly shews the doctrine of the everlasting covenant to be a doctrine according to godliness, a powerful antidote against every vice, and an effectual incentive to every virtue.

Fifthly, Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, died, as our substitute and sacrifice, that he might, by his blood, atone for our guilt; expiate our crimes; remove our transgressions from the view of divine justice and holiness; deliver us completely from the law's tremendous curse; and save us eternally from the dreadful vengeance of heaven. And this, all this was done not to obtain for us a licentious liberty; not to dissolve our moral obligations; but, in order, to set us free from the dominion of sin. The language of inspiration upon this subject is remarkably

striking. "Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil world.. He suffered for us in the flesh, that we should not live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. He died for us, that we should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again.. Being then made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Sixthly, the redemption of the elect, by the blood of Jesus, from all condemnation, from death, from the grave, and from hell, is declared in the scriptures, in terms the most positive and decisive. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plague: O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes," is the language of the gracious Redeemer himself. "We have redemption through his blood," is the declaration of his faithful servant, Paul. "Thou wast slain, hast redeemed us unto God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," is the song of the whole church. The doctrine of redemption is a part of the holy gospel; a distinguishing part of that truth, by which, according to the Redeemer's prayer, the elect are sanctified, and must therefore be hostile to the dominion of sin and destructive to the throne of iniquity. The holy Redeemer came, not only to turn ungodliness from Jacob, but also to turn

Jacob from ungodliness. According to the apostle Paul, the redeemed are not their own, but are bought with a price ; for which reason they should glorify God in their bodies and their spirits which are his. And Peter assures us, that we are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, not from sin and hell only, but likewise from a vain conversation.

Seventhly, the doctrine of absolute adoption is a most holy and wholesome doctrine, as remote from licentiousness as the east is from the west. If an apostle may be credited, the eternal Father sends the Spirit of his beloved Son into the hearts of all whom he predestined to the adoption of sons before the foundation of the world ; that they are led by the Spirit ; and being led by him they live and walk in him, and therefore do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

Eighthly, the doctrine of the justification of ungodly men, by the free grace of God, through the imputation of the personal righteousness of Jesus to them, without their own works, is a pure and precious doctrine, not only replete with divine consolation, and designed to pour peace, solid lasting peace, into the conscience stung with remorse, and to diffuse celestial delights through the sorrowful soul, but also, wisely calculated and graciously appointed to produce the precious fruits of righteousness in the conversation and behaviour of all who believe. The propriety of this position is apparent in the following apostolic declaration : “ that being justified by his grace, we should be

made heirs according to the hope of eternal life ; this is a faithful saying ; and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.”

Ninthly, the doctrine of the total abolition of the covenant of works, and the perfect deliverance of all true believers from its power and authority, by the substitution, obedience, and atonement of Christ, breaks the arm of ungodliness, demolishes the whole empire of sin, and makes the church of the first-born fruitful to God: fruitful in heart, fruitful in life, fruitful in every good work. The proof which the scriptures afford of the truth of these assertions, mocks all contradiction, and bids defiance to all assault. “ Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law but under grace.” “ Wherefore, my brethren ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another ; even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God ; for 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 ; but now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

Tenthly, as the truths of the gospel are too numerous to be particularized and enlarged upon, within the compass of a short address, we shall

sum up all that we mean to add, on the present occasion, of the all important part of the gospel. All the ancient thoughts, counsels, and purposes of the holy Trinity; all the lines of grace and providence; all the truths and promises of the gospel; all the strokes in the book of life; and those in the volume of revelation, centre and unite in the doctrine of salvation by the sovereign grace of God, displayed in the mission, work, and suffering of the God-man. And what is affirmed of this doctrine, by the great Paul, affords meridian evidence that all the grand, sublime, distinguishing truths of the gospel are according to godliness; and demonstrates the charge of licentiousness exhibited against them, to be unjust and wicked. Titus ii. 11, 12. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Here we might conclude our address, which is, perhaps, already too long, but hope a few observations, upon this important subject, will not be deemed superfluous.

First, brethren, you will find a perpetual need of watchfulness and prayer; that ye enter not into temptation; that you may not fall from your steadfastness; that Satan may not beguile you as he beguiled Eve; that you may not be corrupted from the simplicity of Christ: in a word, that you may not be as children "driven to and fro; and tossed



about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Secondly, all the doctrines of the gospel are of infinite importance, and are designed by God to answer the highest ends ; to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote, constantly and effectually promote, the interests of holiness, amidst all the fiery rage of sin and hell.

Thirdly, our souls prosper, and are happy, in proportion as we spiritually understand, stedfastly believe, and live upon the pure, undefiled truths of the gospel as they are in Jesus.

Fourthly, it is the duty, the privilege, the honour of churches to stand fast in all the counsel of God ; to hold fast, and hold forth the word of life, pure and unmixed ; and to contend for sound doctrine, which few can endure, and from which many have most awfully departed : "Judah ruled with God, because he was faithful with his saints."

Fifthly, while we avow our attachment to that doctrine, upon which many fix the hateful sign of Antinomianism, we should be studiously ambitious to adorn it in conversation, in conduct, in all things : that they, who despise it, and reproach us, may be ashamed, while they behold our chaste conversation coupled with fear.

# ARMINIANISM RENOUNCED AND FREE GRACE EXALTED.

A LETTER TO A LADY.

DEAR MADAM,

Your unexpected, but not unwelcome letter, came safely to hand; not, however, till eight days after it was written. I read it with a mixture of pleasure and surprise; and after laying your case before your Lord and mine, and asking assistance of that all-wise and powerful Spirit, who condescends to teach the ignorant, and help the infirmities of the weak, I sit down to answer it.

I was once as you are now, a member of a society of Arminians, with whom I walked in love for some time. But as it pleased the Lord the Spirit of truth, whose office and whose pleasure it is to guide the bewildered mind into all truth, to open my mental eyes, and enlighten my understanding; to