

## L E T T E R VII.

DEAR SIR,

GIVE me leave now to make a few remarks on Mr. Fuller's SECOND PROPOSITION; which is this, "*Every man is bound cordially to receive, and heartily to approve whatever God reveals* \*." If Mr. F. means by receiving, no more than crediting, I agree with him. But if he means by receiving, a possessing, or receiving into the heart, I very much disagree with him. God reveals the glorious doctrine of adoption: I think every man ought to credit it; but I do not think every man is bound to receive the spirit of adoption. God reveals Christ as the only way of salvation: I think every man ought to credit it; but I cannot think every man is bound to have Christ in him, the hope of glory. Yet this is what Mr. F. advances when he says, "it is every one's duty to believe in him with a saving faith;" for as I told you in Letter 3d, true faith brings Christ into the soul, and transforms the soul into the image of Christ. Such a reception of Christ whom God reveals, I cannot for a moment imagine every man is bound to. Mr. F. asks, p. 50. "Is he at liberty to think unjustly concerning him, to prefer his idols before him; or set up another way of salvation than that which God hath appointed in opposition to him?"—He further adds, "to imagine that they ought not to think so much as a good thought of him, but are right in judging him to have no form nor comeliness, nor beauty that they should desire him, one

\* P. 49.

should

should think must shock every sentiment of love and loyalty in an upright heart." I am astonished at Mr. F.'s insinuation here, against those who differ from him. He knows it was never asserted, or even imagined by them, that men *ought* to think unjustly of Christ—prefer their idols before him—set up another way of salvation in opposition to God—and that they *ought not* to think so much as a *good thought* of him—but are *right* in judging him to have no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty.—He knows to the contrary, for he has read what Mr. Brine asserts in his *Motives to Love and Unity* among Calvinists, viz. that, "An opposition to " and rejection of God's appointed way of salvation by Jesus Christ as unfit, yea, as folly, is " in the heart of every unregenerate man, and for " this he stands righteously condemned by the " first covenant: for that covenant requires men " not only to believe those truths which God reveals; but also that they are worthy of himself, " or becoming his goodness, holiness, and wisdom \*." Now after Mr. F. has seen this declaration, which, I suppose, expresses the sentiments of those in general who oppose his ideas of faith; for him to throw out to the world such a false representation of their ideas, as in the words just cited, is *illiberal, and very unbecoming*. There are several intimations of this kind in a very few pages. Mr. F. endeavours to set those who differ from him in the most disagreeable light; as though their sentiments led them to imagine the sinner " does *right* in disapproving God's plan, and in not being willing that God should be glorified in the highest, their lusts crucified, and their pride abased," &c. But such intimations are not worthy an answer, and therefore I leave them.

\* *Motives to Love and Unity*, p. 32.

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

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

And here are two things offered in proof of this. The first is, The nature of the gospel: "it is an *embassy*, an embassy of peace, publishing a way wherein God can and will make peace with sinners on terms infinitely honourable to himself, " and advantageous to them †." I cannot help saying I think here is a capital mistake. For the gospel does not appear to me to be a publication of a way wherein God *can* and *will*, but a publication of a way wherein he *has* made peace; what else means the apostle, when he says, 2 Cor. 5. 18. "All things are of God, who *hath* reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" and again, ver. 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." The work is done. And this is the sum and glory

\* P. 57.

† P. 58.

of the gospel; and to preach the gospel, is to publish and proclaim peace and reconciliation made by the blood of the cross, as the fruit of everlasting love, and the ancient settlements in the council and covenant of peace, and not a proposing peace to men on certain conditions to be performed by them, or an "offering through Christ, a reconciliation to the world, and promising them who would believe in him an absolution from their past offences," as Dr. Whitby expresses it\*, and as Mr. F.'s words seem to intimate.—Much stress is laid on the last clause of v. 20. "Be ye reconciled to God;" and no less than five pages taken up in endeavouring to prove it an address to unregenerate sinners; and after all I think he is very far from establishing his point. It is acknowledged by Mr. F. that "this passage of scripture has been thought totally inapplicable to the subject, because it is supposed to be *an address to the church at Corinth*, who were considered by the apostle as believers; and therefore it is thought must mean a being reconciled to *providence*, or to the *discipline and ordinances* of Christ, or something of that nature, and so can have nothing to do with unregenerate sinners †." I own I am fully of that mind, and am not displeas'd to find Calvin ‡, Gill §, Perkins §, Hussey \*\*, and others of the same opinion.—That the apostle is addressing the church at Corinth I think is plain, and such who were reconciled, as ver. 18. God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. So again ver. 21. the apostle assigns as a reason why he would have them reconciled, *for* he hath made

\* Quota. from Whitby in Dr. Gill's Cause of God and Truth, 4to p. 90.  
 † P. 60. ‡ Instit. B. 3. ch. 4. sect. 27. § Exposit. on the Text.

¶ Vol. 3. p. 307. of his Works.

\*\* Opera. of Grace, but no Offers. p. 270 and 341.

him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.—Now the apostle must consider these persons as believers, or he could not say Christ was made sin for them. And when he considered them in this view as believers, as persons reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, as those for whom Christ had been made sin, and who had been made the righteousness of God in him, he could but consider it right to exhort, persuade and beseech them to be reconciled to all the dispensations of divine providence towards them, as they might rest satisfied all the Lord's dealings with them would issue well; and that if they were afflicted as he and the rest of the apostles were, yet (saith he) in chap. 4. 17. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And though while we are in this tabernacle we groan, being burdened, yet we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, chap. 5. 1."—These considerations reconcile us to all the dispensations of providence, however afflictive, and we as ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, from the consideration of what he has done for you in his grace, to be reconciled to all he does in his providence.—Or else, as Mr. Hussey intimates, it is to be considered as an exhortation to be reconciled to the orders of God's house: "These Corinthians were not come clean out from occasional conformity with the Pagan world; as is manifest in the next chapter, ver. 15—18. and as in a former epistle he had noticed some abuses and irregularities amongst them, at or before the Lord's supper, so he writes to them here that they might be ashamed and mind their conduct, as if he had said, now saints, you see your re-

“ lation, learn your duty. Be reconciled to the  
 “ king in the orders of his house\*.” And in  
 another place he observes, the “ text speaketh evi-  
 “ dently of the new creature’s act, in reference to  
 “ Christ as king in his own throne at Zion, and  
 “ to be the absolute master of church govern-  
 “ ment and gospel holiness, and good orders in  
 “ his house, which (its known) the Corinthians,  
 “ when Paul wrote to ’em, needed enough ;” and  
 he adds, “ Now faith and order must not be parted,  
 “ and if souls are under the blood of Christ, and  
 “ yet do not honour the sceptre, we must speak to  
 “ these as new born, after another manner than  
 “ we must speak to such sinners as are not begot-  
 “ ten by his blood, and with the apostle must say  
 “ to saints, Be you reconciled to Christ ; but how  
 “ to Christ ?—to Christ as Lord, as well as re-  
 “ conciled to Christ as priest †.”—Upon the whole  
 it does appear clear to me that, as Calvin expresses  
 it, “ The embassy which Paul so honourably ex-  
 “ tolleth, I beseech you in the name of God, be  
 “ ye reconciled to God, is not directed to *strangers*,  
 “ but to them that had been already regenerate  
 “ rate ||.”

I cannot help just noticing here what Mr. F.  
 observes, p. 64. that probably one thing which has  
 contributed to cause this passage to be misunder-  
 stood is the supplement *you*, which the translators  
 have put three times in the 20th verse ; which, he  
 says, “ might have been better without them ; or  
 “ if it must have been supplied, the word *men*  
 “ might have better conveyed the apostle’s idea.”  
 Mr. F. should have said, it would have better con-  
 veyed *his* idea : and if the supplement had but been  
*unregenerate men*, it would still have been stronger,  
 and so conveyed his idea still better ; but I sup-

\* Opera: of Grace; p. 343.  
 † Institut. B. 3. ch. 4. sect. 27.

‡ Ibid. p. 269.

pose Mr. F. thought a proposal of such a sup-  
 plement would have been too barefaced. I now  
 leave this part by observing the long, laboured  
 harangue of 5 pages, and the wish to alter the  
 supplement, shews to what shifts Mr. F. is put in  
 order to make this text suit his purpose.

I now proceed to the second proof of the Third  
 Proposition, which is, that faith is called *obedience*,  
 “ They are described as *obeying* the gospel, obey-  
 “ ing the truth and obeying Christ.” Now, says  
 Mr. F. “ It is generally supposed, that nothing  
 “ deserves the name of obedience, but what is a  
 “ conformity to some duty. If therefore faith were  
 “ not their duty previous to believing, that believ-  
 “ ing could not with propriety be termed obe-  
 “ dience.”\* To which I answer, the passages re-  
 ferred to by Mr. F. none of them prove faith to be  
 an act of obedience, they only shew that obedience  
 is the fruit of faith. The passage in Rom. 1. 5.  
 “ By whom we have received grace and apostleship  
 “ for obedience to the faith,” must, I think, to  
 every common understanding, clearly appear to  
 point out the grand design of the gospel ministry,  
 which is (through the blessing of the Holy Spirit)  
 to bring men to obedience to Christ, the object of  
 faith, and to the doctrine of faith. And when  
 faith is produced in the soul, evangelical obedience  
 follows ; faith must be prior to obedience, I mean  
 evangelical and acceptable obedience ; for with-  
 out faith it is impossible to please God. “ Those  
 “ acts of holy obedience (says an excellent writer)  
 “ which the subjects of supernatural faith yield  
 “ unto God, are fruits of that faith, and accom-  
 “ pany it: but they are not that faith itself ; or,  
 “ that faith does not consist in acts of obedience,  
 “ though acts of obedience flow from that excellent

“ grace †.”—But, says Mr. F. sinners are punished for disobedience; and produces two texts, 2 Theff. 1. 8, 9. “ Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.”—And 1 Pet. 4. 17. “ what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”—To which I reply, there is a reverential and obedient attention due to the gospel, as a revelation from God, stamped with divine authority, and every way worthy of himself; and where this is neglected, as it was by the unbelieving Jews, who despised and rejected it as folly, and not worthy of their attention, as well as by sinners in every age, it undoubtedly aggravates their sin, and will increase their punishment. But what has this to do with special faith, or with that evangelical and spiritual obedience of heart and life, which flows from the grace of faith in the soul?—However, as I have before given my thoughts on this subject, I take leave of the Third Proposition, and hope, Sir, you are satisfied with what has been said, and that you are convinced by this time, Mr. F. is entirely mistaken in his assertion, “ That the gospel, though it be no law, but a message of pure grace, yet virtually requires such an obedience to it, which includes saving faith.”

I remain

Yours.

† *Animadversions upon the Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, p. 34.