

A Display of GOD's special GRACE.

IN

A familiar Dialogue

BETWEEN

A Minister & a Gentleman of his Congregation.

About

The WORK of GOD, in the *Conviction and Conversion* of Sinners, so remarkably of late begun and going on in these *American Parts*.

WHEREIN

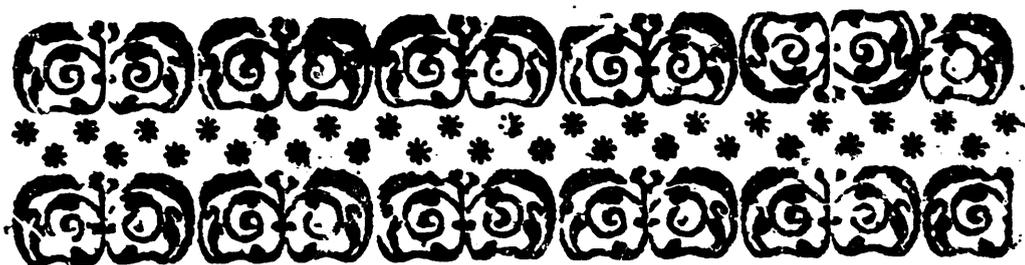
The OBJECTIONS against some *uncommon Appearances* amongst us are distinctly consider'd, MISTAKES rectify'd, and the WORK itself particularly prov'd to be from the HOLY SPIRIT.

With

An ADDITION, in a second Conference relating to sundry *Antinomian Principles*, beginning to obtain in some Places.

To which is prefixed an ATTESTATION, by several Ministers of Boston.

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The ATTESTATION.

HE must be a Stranger in Israel, who has not heard of the uncommon religious Appearances in the several Parts of this Land, among Persons of all Ages and Characters.

This is an Affair which has in some Degree drawn every One's Attention, and been the Subject of much Debate both in Conversation and Writing. And the grand Question is, ---- Whether it be a Work of GOD, and how far it is so ?

The most serious and judicious, both Ministers and Christians, have look'd upon it to be, in the main, a genuine Work of GOD, and the Effect of that Effusion of the SPIRIT of Grace, which the faithful have been praying, hoping, longing and waiting for ;
while

while at the same Time they have look'd upon some Circumstances attending it, to be from natural Temper, human Weakness, or the Subtilty and Malice of Satan permitted to counter-act this Divine Operation.

But here rightly to distinguish is a Matter of no small Difficulty ; and requires both a scriptural Knowledge of, and an experimental Acquaintance with the Things of the Spirit of God.

Mr. Edwards's Discourse concerning the distinguishing Marks of a Work of the SPIRIT OF GOD, has met with deserv'd Acceptance, and been of great Use.--- The following Performance, by another dear and reverend Brother in a different Part of the Country, is also, in our Opinion, exceeding well adapted to serve the same Design, viz. to help People to judge of the present Work, whether, and how far it is of GOD ; and to remove those Prejudices, which may keep them from owning it to the Honour of GOD, and from coming under the Power of it to their own Salvation.

Here

Here the Reader will see the ordinary Work of the Spirit of Grace, in applying the Redemption purchased by Christ to particular Souls, judiciously described, in those distinct Parts of it, Conviction, Conversion, and Consolation : The Necessity of Regeneration and Faith in Order to final Salvation, and the Necessity of Conviction and Humiliation in Order to these, clearly evinced, from the Reason and Nature of the Thing, as well as the Method GOD has established in his Word : Mistakes, which might prove fatal and undoing, carefully guarded against : And very safe and judicious Directions given to one who is awakened to that Enquiry, What must I do to be saved ?----

Whoever takes up this Book and reads, has as it were in his Hands a Glass, in which he may behold what Manner of Person he is ; whether a natural or renewed Man, a Hypocrite or a sound Believer.

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The Form in which it appears, is Dialogistical ; in the Manner of a Conversation carried on by Persons under borrowed Names ; which makes it not the less pleasant, entertaining, and instructive. It is a Method the best suited of any to answer the Design : For this Way of Instruction is the most easy and familiar ; engages the Attention more closely, strikes the Mind more directly, and gets the nearest Access to Conscience, which the Reader will easily discern to be the special Aim of the Author ; whose Name would have been a sufficient Recommendation of the Work, had he thought it proper to have prefix'd it to a Performance of this Kind.

But in the Want of that, as many of us as have had the Pleasure to read it in Manuscript, do with Freedom and Satisfaction recommend it to those into whose Hands it may come, and them to the blessed Influences of the DIVINE SPIRIT in the reading of it. And if particular Persons, while they
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are reading it, would as it were place themselves in the Room of the Inquirer in the Conversation thus represented, with an open Mind and a serious Disposition, the important Things which are the Subject of it, might, by the Blessing of CHRIST, be brought so close and home to them, as to put them into something of a like Frame with that which the two Disciples were in, while they convers'd with the risen SAVIOUR in their Way to Emmaus, who said afterwards one to another, Did not our Hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the Way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures ?

And in recommending this Book to the World, we would be understood as owning, and bearing a publick Testimony to, what is call'd the present Work of GOD in this Land, as it is here stated and distinguish'd & separate from those Disorders, Errors, and Delusions, which are only the unhappy Accidents sometimes accompanying of it) to be such a glorious Display of the divine
Power

Power and Grace, as may well raise our Wonder, excite our Praises, and engage our Prayers for the Preservation and Progress of it.---

May the Children of GOD then unite in this Request, Let thy Work appear more and more unto thy Servants, and thy Glory unto their Children ; And the Beauty of the LORD our GOD be upon us !

*Boston, Aug.
10. 1742.*

Benjamin Colman

Joseph Sewall

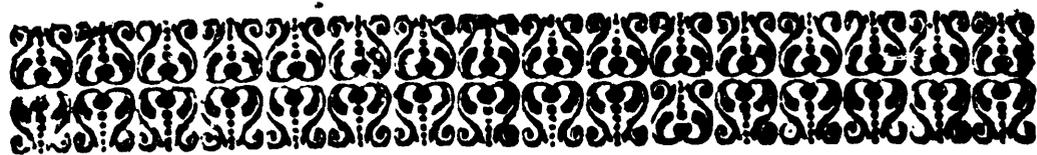
Thomas Prince

John Webb

William Cooper

Thomas Foxcroft

Joshua Gee.



A

Display of God's special GRACE

IN

A Plain and Familiar

DIALOGUE,

Between a MINISTER and a Gentleman of his Congregation, *about the Work of GOD, in the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, so remarkably of late begun and carry'd on in these American Parts.*



Minister being visited by a Gentleman of his Congregation, their Conversation turn'd upon the religious Appearances, which are at present such Matter of Speculation and Discourse. --- This Conference having prov'd so very serviceable to that Gentleman, it is hop'd that if communicated to the World, it mayn't fail of some Usefulness to others also, in these Times of general Debates, and searchings of Heart, about the Way of Salvation. I shall therefore endeavour as faithfully

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as I can, to set the Substance of that Conversation in View, with its happy Effects; representing the Persons concerned under the borrowed Names of *Theophilus* and *Epinetus*.

The DIALOGUE proceeded in the following Manner.

THEOPHILUS. You have doubtless heard the joyful Tidings from several Parts of the Country, of the great *Revival of Religion*, of the numerous Convictions and (as we hope) saving Conversions to God, among Persons of all Ages and Characters, as well as most different moral Qualifications. You can't but have heard of the serious and awful Concern among Multitudes of every Sort, about the Salvation of their Souls; how Ministers have been quicken'd and revived; secure and sensual Persons awaken'd; Formalists and Self-Deceivers detected and undeceived; Sincere Christians comforted and strengthened; and how even *out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings Christ has perfected Praise*.--- I hope you will join with me in adoring and magnifying the Name of God, for this wonderful Display of his Power and Grace.

EPINETUS. " I am afraid either to speak
" or think any Thing that may be derogatory
" to the free Grace of God; or that may re-
" flect

" flect any Dishonour to his blessed Spirit :
" And yet I can't but acknowledge, that
" many of the late Appearances are Matter of
" Stumbling to me; and very dissonant to
" the Apprehensions I have hitherto enter-
" tain'd of Religion. --- I am therefore glad
" you have introduced this Discourse, that I
" may have Opportunity to propose my Diffi-
" culties; and that you may obviate them;
" and give me Satisfaction, if you can.

THEOPH. I shall cheerfully endeavour according to my Capacity, to consider and answer your Objections, if you'll be pleas'd to propose them separately; and to lay aside all Prejudices against the Truth and the Evidences of it, that may be laid before you. --- This last Condition I have the greater Reason to insist upon, because your eternal Interest does immediately depend upon it; and a Love to your own Soul should divert you of all Prepossessions, in an Affair of such infinite Importance.

EPINET. " I acknowledge, Sir, that your
" Conditions are just and reasonable. And
" I hope my Conduct will convince you, that
" I am not willing to lose my Soul, by a te-
" nacious Adherence to my own Sentiments,
" a fond Opinion of my present Safety; or a
" wrangling Humour and Disposition. ---- I

“ shall therefore endeavour modestly to propose my Objections ; and impartially to attend to your Answers.”

THEOPH. Be pleased then to propose your first Objection, that it may be distinctly consider'd.

EPINET. “ I first object against those FRIGHTS and TERRORS, that so commonly abound, not only among ourselves, but in several Parts of the Country. -- Can it be suppos'd, that a merciful God should take Pleasure in the melancholly Dejections, Soul-Distresses, and desponding Fears of his Creatures ? --- I must confess, I have a very different Idea of the divine Nature.”

THEOPH. No, Sir, it can't be supposed, that God takes Pleasure in the Misery of any of his Creatures, *as such*. But it must be suppos'd agreeable to the divine Goodness, to deliver his reasonable Creatures from their Misery, in a Method agreeable to their rational Nature. And that this is applicable to the Case before us, may perhaps appear evident to you, if you'll be pleased to answer me to a few Questions. --- And I first enquire, Whether we are not all of us, whilst unconverted,

sinful

sinful and *guilty* Creatures in the Sight of God ?

EPINET. “ Most certainly ! Both Jew and Gentile are all under Sin ; and the whole World are become *guilty* before God.”

THEOPH. I enquire again, Whether all that remain in this State of Sin and Guilt, are not under a Sentence of *Condemnation* by the Law of God ?

EPINET. “ This must also be granted : He that believeth not, is condemned already ; and the Wrath of God abideth on him.”

THEOPH. Is not every Unbeliever liable every Moment, to have this Sentence of *Condemnation* executed upon his Soul ?

EPINET. “ That cannot be deny'd. For we know not at what Hour the Son of Man will come, whether at Evening, at Midnight, at Cock-crowing, or in the Morning.”

THEOPH. Is it possible for any Man to be easy and secure under a sensible Impression, that he is an Enemy to God, an Heir of Hell and Damnation ; and that he may be, for ought he knows, before to morrow Morning

among

among Devils and damned Spirits, in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone ?

EPINET. " But has not every one a Refuge to fly to ? Is not Jesus Christ freely offer'd in the Gospel ? "

THEOPH. 'Tis certainly impossible to have too high Apprehensions of the Riches of Gospel-Grace, of the Wonders of redeeming Love, or of the Readiness of the Lord Jesus Christ to save the worst of Sinners, upon Gospel-Terms. --- But I must yet enquire of you, what those Terms and Conditions are, upon which the Lord Jesus Christ and his saving Benefits are so freely offered in the Gospel ?

EPINET. " The blessed Saviour freely offers himself and his glorious Salvation to all, who will believe in him and live to him. "

THEOPH. But do all Men believe in Christ ; and live to him ?

EPINET. " No ! *All Men have not Faith.* "

THEOPH. Has any Man a natural Power to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ ; and thereby

thereby to obtain an Interest in him and his offer'd Salvation ?

EPINET. " No ! our Lord himself assures us, that *no Man can come unto him, except the Father draw him.* "

THEOPH. Does God the Father actually draw every Man to Christ, give them a lively Faith in him ; and a Title to his Salvation ; or has he any where promised that he will do so ?

EPINET. " No ! he has *bidden these Things from the Wise and Prudent ; and revealed them unto Babes.* --- *To some it is given to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God : but to others it is not given.* "

THEOPH. This then is the Case of a convinced Sinner. He has a sensible View, that he is by *Nature a Child of Wrath*, that he is guilty of numberless Sins both of Omission and Commission, that he is by the Law of God sentenced to eternal Condemnation ; and liable every Moment to have the dreadful Sentence executed upon him, to his everlasting Ruin. --- He has hitherto withstood the Offers of Salvation in the Gospel, which dreadfully aggravates his Guilt and Misery. --- He finds himself incapable to comply with the graci-

ous Proposals of Salvation by Jesus Christ ; and has therefore no Claim to the Comforts of them. Though God can, if he pleases, give him this Power, he has no Security that God ever will. --- He knows that if he dies in his present State, he has nothing before him but a fearful Expectation of fiery Indignation, which shall consume him. And whether he shall ever obtain a saving Change, is to him dreadfully uncertain. He may die suddenly in his Guilt and Pollution. He may return (as many others have done) like a Dog to his Vomit, to find Security and Impenitence ; or he may deceive himself with a false Hope ; and be found too late with a Lie in his right Hand. --- In a Word, He has utmost Certainty of a most dreadful Damnation, if he dies in his present Condition ; and at the best but an Uncertainty, whether he shall escape the eternal Wrath of an angry God. And now judge you, whether a reasonable Being can possibly avoid a distressing Concern, upon a realizing Apprehension of such an amazing State of Guilt and Danger.

EPINET. “ I confess my self something surprized with this Representation of the Case :--- You have set it in such a Light as I never before saw it. --- It will be dreadful indeed, if it should prove my own Case. --- But yet I can't apprehend how Convictions and Terrors are any Way conducive to a Recovery.

“ Recovery from this State and Condition, be it ever so difficult and dangerous. --- Faith in Christ is the only Remedy ; and what more opposite to Faith than these desponding Fears ?”

THEOPH. The Lord grant that you and I may take Heed to ourselves, that our Hearts be not deceiv'd ; and not cry Peace to our Souls, when God says there is no Peace for us ! It certainly concerns us solemnly to consider an Affair of such vast Importance. --- I would therefore desire you to tell me, what you understand by that Faith in Jesus Christ, which you mention as the only Remedy for a guilty condemned Sinner.

EPINET. “ I understand Faith in Jesus Christ to be a receiving him, and resting upon him alone for Salvation, as he is offered to us in the Gospel.

THEOPH. We , Can any Man receive the Lord Jesus Christ upon Gospel-Terms, while he prefers the World, his Lufts, and sensual Gratifications before him ?

EPINET. “ No ! If any Man come to Christ ; and hate not his Father and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren and Sisters ;

“ *Sisters ; yea, and his own Life also, he cannot
“ be his Disciple.* ”

THEOPH. Do you think that the gospelized World in general have such a Value for Jesus Christ, as to prefer an Interest in him to their most darling Lusts, their dearest Relations ; and even to their own Lives ?

EPINET. “ No ! The contrary to this is
“ most visible, in the Multitudes that go on in
“ their sensual Pursuits ; and *will not come
“ unto Christ, that they might have Life.* ”

THEOPH. What do you think is the Reason, that no Means will prevail upon these sensual Worldlings, to consider the Interests of their immortal Souls ; or to set any suitable Value by a precious Saviour ?

EPINET. “ I know of no Reason, but
“ their blockish Stupidity.”

THEOPH. That is, they have no feeling Sense of their Sin and Danger ; and therefore no active Desire of a Deliverance from it. They have no lively Apprehension of their Necessity of an Interest in Christ ; and therefore no proper Sollicitude to obtain it. --- They are in Love with their Lusts and Idols ; which must be more embitter'd to 'em, before they can be
willing

willing to part with them. ---- Their carnal Mind is Enmity to God and Godliness ; and they cannot submit to the Yoke of Christ, until the Yoke of Sin and Satan more sensibly galls their Necks ; and appears an intolerable Burden to 'em. --- Their sensual Pleasures and Gratifications appear more desirable and delightful to 'em, than an Interest in Christ and a Life of Holiness and Piety. They cannot therefore help but choose them, as preferable to the Salvation proposed in the Gospel, until an awaken'd Conscience discovers to them their Misery and Folly, makes them feel themselves perishing with Hunger ; and thereby puts 'em upon a proper Concern about returning to their Father's House.

EPINET. “ Don't every Body know the
“ Danger of a sinful Life ; and the Misery of
“ a Christless State, without these Convic-
“ tions and Awakenings, Frights and Sur-
“ prizes.”

THEOPH. They who are brought up under Gospel-Light, have a doctrinal Knowledge of these Things : but no feeling sensible Impression of them. We see in Fact, how many Persons of Knowledge and Capacity there be, who have all their Lives had the great Things of their eternal Peace inculcated upon them in the Ministry of the Gospel, who yet live and
die

die as if they had no Souls to be saved or damned, no future Distribution or eternal World before them. We see in Fact, that among those who have a sufficient speculative Knowledge of the Doctrines of the Gospel, the Drunkard follows his Cups, and the Adulterer his wanton and unclean Lusts ; though they can't but acknowledge, that these are the Paths of Destruction and Death. But then on the contrary, how many Instances (through the great Goodness of God) have we lately seen, of a thorough Reformation of these sinful Courses, of an earnest Enquiry after an Interest in Christ, of an hearty Acceptance of an offer'd Saviour ; and of a holy and religious Life, among those, who by strong Convictions have been brought to a sensible Impression of the great Concerns of an eternal World ! ---In short, it is impossible to be otherwise, but that the secure Sinner must indulge his Lusts while they remain so pleasant to him, and he feels no Danger in their Gratification ; and that he must reject a tender Saviour, whilst he does not realize his own perishing Circumstances and want of Salvation. ---- And on the other Hand, It is impossible to be otherwise, but that a convinced Sinner must be in earnest enquiring after the Way of Salvation, while he feels his Danger, Misery, and Necessity of an Interest in Christ.

EPINET

EPINET. " Do you then suppose that
 " none are brought to believe in Christ, with-
 " out such previous Convictions and awaking
 " Concern as you speak of ?

THEOPH. Awaken'd Sinners pass through very different *Degrees* of Conviction, preparatory to their Faith in Christ.--- But I cannot see how any Person that is arrived to an Age of rational Consideration and Choice, can receive the Lord Jesus Christ upon Gospel-Terms, till he is at least brought to some sensible Apprehension of the Misery of his present State, and of his absolute Necessity of a Saviour.---Be you (Sir) yourself Judge in this Case.---Can any Man be in earnest enquiring after a Saviour from a State of Sin, Guilt and Misery, which he is insensible of ?

EPINET. " That's a plain Contradiction."

THEOPH. Can any Man in earnest flee from Dangers, which he neither sees nor fears ?

EPINET. " No ! that's manifestly inconsistent."

THEOPH. Can any Man be willing to accept of Christ upon his own Terms ; and to forsake all for him, while he sees no Necessity of
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an Interest in him ; but prefers his Lusts and Idols before him ?

EPINET. “ This likewise is a manifest Contradiction.”

THEOPH. Can any Man receive Christ for his *Lord*, while he is cheerfully and delightfully living in the Service of Sin, Satan, and the World ?

EPINET. “ No certainly ! *No Servant can serve two Masters*, who have direct contrary Commands.

THEOPH. Well then by your own Concession, it is necessary from the Nature of Things, that preparatory to an actual Reception of Christ, a Sinner must have some impressed Sense, that he is in a State of Sin, Guilt and Misery ; and that he is in Danger of the Wrath to come. He must have such a Discovery of the Evil and deadly Nature of his Sins, as will cause him to prefer an Interest in Christ and the great Salvation, to his most darling Lusts and Idols ; and chuse the Service of Christ, before the Service of Sin, Satan and the World. And what Inducement can such a Person possibly have, to give this Preference to the Service of Christ, but either Love to him or Fear of Danger ? Love to Christ he cannot

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not have. For that is the Consequence of Faith ; and can never go before it. This must therefore be the Product of Fear, of such Fear as is effective of this wonderful Change in the Frame and Disposition of the Soul.--- And now having thus allow'd the Premises, can you deny the Conclusion, that such Degrees of Conviction as will excite a proper Sollicitude about Deliverance from deserved Wrath, are a necessary Preparation to a Reception of Christ by Faith ?

EPINET. “ I don't see what Answer can be given to the Evidence you have offered upon this Head.”

THEOPH. If we consider this Case in another View, you will find the same Conclusion follow.--- A saving Faith, according to your own Description, does as well imply a *depending upon Christ for Salvation*, as receiving him upon Gospel-Terms ; and can any Man be brought to this without previous Convictions of his lost and undone State ? I would here also take Liberty to ask you a few Questions, to which I only desire a considerate and candid Answer.--- And I would first enquire, whether the most careless and secure of our Gospel-Sinners could be so easy and quiet as they appear to be, if they expected to live and die in their present State of Sin and Guilt ?

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EPINET.

EPINET. "No! They can't but know
 " that they are at present in the Paths of
 " Death and Hell. And *Sinners in Zion would*
 " *be afraid, Fearfulness would surprize the Hy-*
 " *pocrite, if they really expected to dwell with*
 " *devouring Fire; and to inhabit everlasting*
 " *Burnings."*

THEOPH. By what do you suppose they ordinarily quiet their Consciences, in such a State as this?

EPINET. "By Purposes of future Repentance and Reformation."

THEOPH. And is it not a Contradiction, to depend principally, if not wholly, upon Purposes of future Repentance and Reformation; and yet to *rest upon Christ alone for Salvation.*

EPINET. "It seems so."

THEOPH. Could these Persons possibly quiet their Consciences with these good Purposes, if they did not suppose themselves capable to fulfill them; or at least, if they did not expect by their Duties to obtain that Capacity?

EPINET. "No! I think not."

THEOPH.

THEOPH. It is therefore evident, that a secure World cannot possibly rest upon Christ alone for Salvation, while their Security itself supposes that they are depending upon their own Capacity to exercise, or at least to obtain the Grace they hope for; & consequently that they must be brought out of that Security, before they can savingly believe in Jesus Christ: Or in other Words, that Convictions must precede their Conversion to God. --- But I go on to enquire, By what Means Sinners usually quiet their Consciences, when they upbraid them for particular Sins, either of Omission or Commission; or set the Guilt and Danger of their State before their Eyes? --- You are sensible that there is nothing more common, than for Persons to wear off such *Lanes* of Conscience; and return again to former Calmness and Serenity of Mind. And how do you suppose this is done?

EPINET. "You expect, I see, that I
 " should now relate my own Experiences in
 " this Case. For I can't but be a Stranger to
 " the Operations of other Men's Minds. I
 " will therefore inform you something of the
 " Exercise of my own Soul, in the Case which
 " you propose. --- Though (I thank God) I
 " have been kept from gross Enormities; and
 " have had a good Reputation for Religion among Men; yet I frequently feel the Accusations
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“ cufations of Conscience, both for the Neg-
 “ lect, or careless Performance of Duty ; and
 “ for the many sinful Imperfections of my
 “ Life. These awaken me to Resolutions
 “ through God’s Grace, that I will be more
 “ diligent and conscientious in the Performance
 “ of Duty, that I will maintain a more watch-
 “ ful and careful Regard to my Heart and
 “ Life, that they may be regulated according
 “ to the Gospel of Christ : and I can’t but
 “ hope that God will for Christ’s sake, ac-
 “ cept my Duty and Repentance ; and not
 “ impute my Sin to me”

THEOPH. What you represent as your own
 Case, is common to Multitudes besides your
 self. And indeed Sir, I should be guilty of
 greatest Unfaithfulness, if I did not tell you, that
 all this is far short of any good Evidence of a State
 of Safety.--In your Purposes and Endeavours to
 reform and regulate your Duties and Conver-
 sation, you do well : but while you raise your
 Hope of Acceptance with God upon this Foun-
 dation, you are building upon a Quick-Sand.
 You expect your Duties and Repentance will
 be accepted for Christ’s sake before you clear it up
 to your self, that you are interested in Christ,
 and have a Claim to his Intercession. Has
 Christ purchased for you the Power to atone
 for your Sins by your Duties, your good Re-
 solutions and Reformatations ; or is this agree-
 able

able to your Description of Faith ? Are En-
 deavours to pacify an offended God by your
 Performances, consistent with your resting upon
 Christ alone for Salvation ?--- It is plain from
 this Account of your Case, that instead of de-
 pending upon what Christ has done and suffer-
 ed for you, your Dependance is upon what
 you do, or intend to do for him. --- You are
 by Nature *dead in Trespasses and Sins* ; and
 how can your Duties and good Purposes revive
 you ?--- You owe ten Thousand Talents to
 divine Justice ; and will your Resolutions of
 future Obedience pay the Debt ?--- You have
 (if Christless) no Title to Salvation ; and will
 you purchase the eternal Inheritance with your
 own Performances ?--- Allow me to proceed as
 before ; and ask you a few Questions upon this
 Case of yours, as you have represented it. ---
 Have you ever sensibly felt the Sinfulness of
 your Nature, the Hardness of your Heart ;
 and your natural Enmity to God and God-
 liness ?

EPINET. “ Truly Sir, though I ben’t
 “ ignorant of this, I dare not say that I
 “ have had a sensible and feeling Impressi-
 “ on of it.”

THEOPH. How then can you depend upon
 Christ for Salvation, when you have no feeling
 Sense of your want of a Saviour ; nor what
 that

that Salvation is you are to depend upon him for. --- Permit me yet to enquire, Have you had a sensible Apprehension of your just Desert of God's Wrath ; and of your utter Unworthiness that he should ever bestow Mercy upon you ? Or to use St. *Paul's* Expression, has the Law come with such Power, that *Sin has revived and you died ?*

EPINET. " I have always known this to be Truth, that I am by Nature in a State of Guilt ; and altogether unworthy of God's Mercy."

THEOPH. So do the very worst of Men ; and even the Devils themselves. --- But if you have no more than a doctrinal Knowledge of this, How can you depend upon Christ alone for Salvation, when you han't so much as felt that you are not already safe ? How can you depend upon Christ to save you from the Wrath to come, when you have no realizing Apprehension of your being expos'd to that tremendous Wrath ? What Sort of Salvation can such a Person depend upon Christ for ? --- I must yet take Leave further to enquire of you, whether you have ever been feelingly sensible, that your highest Attainments in Religion are not only *Loss*, as being imperfect and unequal to the Demands of Justice ; but *Dung* (a polluted Thing) through the Sinfulness that at-

tends

tends them ; and the Guilt thereby contracted ? --- You are sensible from whose Experience I take this Enquiry. And have you ever been able to say as St. *Paul* did in this Case ?

EPINET. " I cannot say that I have."

THEOPH. How then have you *won Christ*, been found in him, and depended only upon the *Righteousness which is of God by Faith*, while you yet have on your own *Righteousness which is of the Law* ; and have never yet realized to your self the infinite Defects of all you are and can do ? O Sir, if you had a just View of the best Duties, and the best Frames and Purposes that you could ever boast of, you would be deeply sensible, that the Defect and Sinfulness that accompany them, might justly condemn both you and them. --- Bear with me once more ; if I proceed to enquire, Have you given up all Hopes and Expectations of obtaining a Victory over your Corruptions, of obtaining a more spiritual Habit and Disposition of Soul ; and a more acceptable Performance of religious Duty ; or even any good Qualification whatsoever, by your most earnest and active Endeavours, until you are united to Christ ; and derive all gracious Supplies from him ? --- Has this View of your Impotence brought you in a Way of most diligent Duty, to lie at God's Foot as a guilty helpless Sinner,

ner,

ner, that have no Claim to Mercy, resolving never to rest until you are interested in him, and are thereby renewed in the Spirit of your Mind?---Let your Conscience impartially answer to these Enquiries. For you may assure yourself, that it is impossible, from the Nature of Things, to depend upon Christ for Salvation; and at the same Time to maintain a reserv'd Expectation of obtaining gracious Qualifications by your own Endeavours. This, in other Words, is to depend *only* upon Christ; while you depend *partly* upon yourself for Sanctification. And yet it is equally impossible to depend upon Christ at all, in any other Way than a Course of diligent Duty. For by neglecting this, you practically reject him and his offered Salvation.

EPINET. " You seem, Sir, to have forgot
" the Subject we were upon.---How does all
" this prove the Necessity of those Soul-Di-
" stresses, of which we were discoursing ?

THEOPH. No, Sir, I have not forgot the Subject of our Discourse. I will now leave it to you to judge, whether it is possible for any Man to be feelingly sensible of the Sinfulness of his Nature, and the Enmity of his Heart to God, of his utter Unworthiness of God's Favour, or the infinite Defects and even of the Guilt and Pollution of his highest Attainments

in Religion, whilst Christless; and of his own Impotence and utter Inability to help himself, or ever make his Case better by any Power of his own; and yet under a Sense of all this Misery, to remain secure and easy.---- Judge you, whether it be not absolutely necessary, that this View must put any reasonable Being under Distress, proportionable to the Impression of these Things upon his Mind; or whether it does not appear from what has been said, to be an Inconsistency, for any Man to believe in Christ, before he has had some sensible Impression of these Things.

EPINET. " What Necessity is there of such
" a Sensibility of these Things, as you speak
" of? Is it not sufficient, that we know 'em
" and act accordingly ?

THEOPH. Have we not to do with an omniscient God, a God that *searcheth the Hearts and the Reins*, a God that demandeth our *Hearts*; and requireth *Truth in our inward Parts*? And can our Hearts be in those Things, which we have no Impression of? Be not deceived, God won't be mockt with lifeless Pretences. He will bring us indeed (and not in Speculation only) to lie at his Foot and bow to his Sovereignty, before he will *reveal his Son in us*. He will bring us sensibly and not doctrinally only, to see our own lost and undone State,

State, to renounce our own Confidences ; and to fly to Christ for Refuge. --- If we have but a notional and not real Humiliation and Faith, we must likewise obtain but a notional and not real Salvation.

[It was observ'd, that upon this Discourse the Gentleman chang'd Countenance, fetch'd a deep Sigh, and sat some considerable Time silent in a musing Posture. ---- After which he proceeded as followeth.]

EPINET. " You have (I confess) given
 " me rational Evidence of a Sort of natural
 " Necessity of Convictions and spiritual Distresses,
 " preparatory to our receiving of Christ by Faith. --- But how does it appear, these
 " Convictions are the *Operations of the Spirit of God* ; or that they are any more than
 " the mere Exercise of our natural Passions ?

THEOPH. I do not suppose, that the Spirit God does in this Case put any new Appetites

rites or Passions into our Souls ; but that he quickens and actuates our natural Passions, to a rational and proper Exercise. --- And that this, is his Work, that these Convictions are produced by his Almighty Energy, is manifest from many Considerations ; and especially from this that our Lord Jesus Christ has promised to send the *Comforter* for that very End, *that he may reprove or convince the World, of Righteousness ; and of Judgment.* John xvi. 8.

EPINET. " Don't you think, that any Man
 " may by close Meditation upon the amazing
 " Terrors of God's Law, and Application of
 " them to himself, raise these distressing Apprehensions in his own Mind ?

THEOPH. It is an evident Observation, that the secure World in general will not closely meditate upon their Danger. They will not be persuaded by any Attempt of their Ministers or godly Friends, to realize their Misery and Danger ; and to renounce their Lusts. They will not be awaken'd by the most powerful Preaching ; nor by the most terrible Dispensations of Providence, till God takes the Work into his own Hands ; and then the slightest Means are made effectual, the Alarm is at once raised and continued in the Soul of the most secure and abandon'd Sinner. --- It is further observable, that if such Sinners do force
 D
 them-

themselves upon some Consideration ; and do thereby prick their Consciences ; and awaken some Resolutions of Reformation ; their good Purposes are (like the Principle from whence they flow) but unsteady, transient and short-liv'd. They fall again before the next Temptation ; and then perhaps will have a new Concern revived. Thus they repent and sin ; and sin and repent.--- Thus Multitudes go on, and will go on, against the Dictates of their Reason and Conscience, until they have a new and more powerful Impression, than they can raise merely by their own Consideration. And does not this make it evident, that this Work is from the Spirit of God, when it procures such an effectual and lasting Change, as no Purpose, Promise, Resolution, or Endeavour flowing from the mere Power of Nature, could ever procure ?

EPINET. “ How shall we distinguish between meer rational Convictions ; and those which (as you suppose) proceed from the Spirit of God ?

THEOPH. Temporary Convictions may proceed from the Spirit of God. Sinners may quench the Spirit, and so provoke him to withdraw his Influences. But we may be certain that those Convictions are from him, that are powerful and lasting, that embitter the Sinner's
Lusts

Lusts to him, that put him upon a most earnest and active Care about his eternal Interests, that empty him of his self-Sufficiency ; and cause him with Diligence to fly for Refuge to the Hope set before him.--From whence should these proceed, but from the blessed Spirit of God ? They are not the Productions of Nature ; for that is Enmity against God. And there never was one Instance yet seen, of any Man's producing these Effects by the Power of his own good Purposes or Resolutions, as I have observ'd before.--- They do not proceed from the Devil ; for he is not such an Enemy to his own Interest, as thus to drive Men from his Service into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. ---- The Change often appears powerful and wonderful ; and therefore must proceed from a powerful and wonderful Agent.

EPINET. “ We often see Men wearing
“ off the greatest Impressions ; and returning
“ again to Sensuality : which is a Prejudice against
“ this Doctrine.

THEOPH. It is no just Cause of Prejudice. For though Men may quench the Spirit, and provoke him to withdraw, as I observed before : Yet how many are there in whom we see a wonderful, sanctifying, and lasting Change, who are and continue to be *New Creatures*, in all spiritual Respects ? And does not the

Greatness and Duration of this Change, fully declare the glorious Author?

EPINET. “ How comes it to pass, that we
“ hear so much of these Things of late, which
“ former Times and Ages knew so little
“ about ?

THEOPH. This Question makes Way for two further Evidences, that the Spirit of God is the glorious Author of this Work. *First*, I must inform you, that the Fact is quite contrary to your Supposal.---Read all the most famous Authors upon practical Godliness, from the Beginning of the Reformation ; and you'll find that they teach the same Doctrines which I have now insisted on.---Read the Narratives of particular Conversions, not only in the Scriptures ; but in all the preceeding Ages of the Church, and in all the most distant Countreys and Nations ; and you'll find that the Work has always been carried on in Men's Hearts, in a Method substantially the same with what I have described, by the same Progress of Convictions and Humiliations. --- And how could this possibly be, unless it proceeded from the same blessed Author ? For there could be no Conspiracy, Collusion, or Endeavours of Imitation, in Persons so far removed from, and so unacquainted with one another. -- And *Secondly* ; whence is it that we hear of so much of these Things

Things now, but from the more plentiful Effusion of the blessed Spirit ?---Whence is it that this blessed Work has spread so extensively, far and near, among young and old ; and there are so many crying out under the Burden of their Sins ; and so earnestly enquiring after the Way of Salvation ?---Is not human Nature the same now that it used to be ?---Whence is it that the Ordinances, that were before but as a dead Letter, do now make such a lively Impression ? Certainly *this is the Lord's Doing ; and it is marvellous in our Eyes.*

EPINET. “ How do we know that these
“ Convictions are any Thing more, than the
“ natural Effects of those pungent and terri-
“ fying *Addresses*, from some warm and zeal-
“ ous Ministers, which we lately hear of ?

THEOPH. I readily allow, that a short temporary Surprise may be this Way excited ; but then this Effect could last no longer than the Cause operates. This only could never produce a real effectual lasting Change. --- I also allow, that God deals with Mankind as with reasonable Creatures : and when he designs this Change in the Hearts of any, he will provide and bless some suitable Means to effect it. If he ~~favours~~ *favours*, it will be in the Way of his own appointing.---But can you yourself imagine, that ~~the~~ most pungent Address of any Teacher under

under Heaven, can in a natural Way produce those Effects that are frequently seen among us? --- Consider I beseech you, the natural State of carnal Men. *They are dead in Trespasses and Sins.* And can a plain Discourse of the most zealous Preacher, how pungent soever, awaken these dead Men to such a lively lasting Concern about their Souls, that they can rest no more until they find Rest in Christ? --- They are blind and ignorant, they have no just Apprehensions of their own deplorable Condition; of the Way of Salvation provided for 'em; or of the glorious Excellency of an offer'd Saviour. And will this enlighten their Minds, to a lively View of, and Acquaintance with the Things of their everlasting Peace? --- They are proud and self-righteous. And will this lay 'em in the Dust, and bring them to renounce all their own Attainments, Duties, false Hopes, and Refuges? --- They have a natural Enmity and Opposition to this Change. And will this so suddenly conquer their Aversion to a Life of Godliness, their Love to their Lusts, Ease and Security, their natural rooted Inclinations to sensual Pursuits; and their habitual Custom in Sin? --- Will this cause 'em to lay aside all their Prejudices, beloved Lusts, fleshly Interests and Endearments? --- They have strong and mighty Opposition to conquer. And will this overcome all the Craft and Power of Satan? Will it constrain them to forsake all

their

their Pleasures, worldly Pursuits, merry Company, and alluring Expectations; for their present melancholy, fearful, pensive Life? Will it fortify them against all the Persuasions of their carnal Acquaintance, against the Banter and Reproach of their old Companions; and against the Doubts and Misgivings of their own unbelieving Hearts? Could any of the Orators of Greece or Rome produce such Effects as these upon their Hearers? --- If this be a natural Effect, what's the Reason that it was produced no sooner, upon those who have heard so many Scores of Sermons, as pungent and awakening as that which at last prov'd successful? And what is the Reason that it has not a like Effect upon others, naturally as capable of Impression; and as well prepared to receive it, as those who are thus suddenly, throughly, and powerfully awaken'd? In a Word, The *Apostle* himself assures us, that *the Excellency of the Power is of God and not of Man; and that neither is he that planteth any Thing; nor he that watereth: but God that giveth the Increase.* Let who will oppose the Work, or deny to God the Honour of it, I shall be awfully careful not to ascribe that to poor Worms, which is manifestly (as the *Apostle* speaks) *the Working of God's mighty Power.*

EPINET. " Though I can't reply to the
" Evidence you have given, that this Work
" is

“ is indeed from the Agency of the Spirit of
 “ God : Yet it still remains a great Diffi-
 “ culty in the Way or this, that we hear No-
 “ thing of the extraordinary Progress of Con-
 “ victions, and of what you call Conversions
 “ to God, but only under the Ministry of
 “ those *warm Preachers*, who directly calcu-
 “ late their Addresses to awaken the Passions
 “ of their Hearers ; and to put them into
 “ Frights and Surprizes.

THEOPH. Your Intelligence has been very defective ; or else your Prejudice against these Things has call'd off your Attention, from some of the most surprizing Instances of God's Power and Grace, that have been heard of since Apostolick Times.---If you reflect upon the *first Fruits* of this extraordinary and mighty Work of God's special Grace, in the Conversions in *Hampshire County (Massachusetts-Bay)* whereof there is so judicious a *Narrative* publish'd to the World, it will be a sufficient Answer to this Objection. Don't you know and don't we all know, that the Ministers there, under whose Instrumentality that Work was carried on, are calm, sedate, and judicious Men, unto whom the greatest Adversaries of this wonderful Work of God could never pretend to impute the least Tincture of *Enthusiasm* or irregular Heat ? And if we overlook all the other astonishing Instances of this Na-
 ture ;

ture ; and attend to the last refreshing Ac- counts we have of the like general Progress of converting Grace, at *York, Portsmouth*, and other Places to the Eastward of *Boston*, † does it not appear, that no natural Cause has had the least Hand in making a Difference between these Places and others ? --- The *Ministers* there are some of our grave solid rational Men, and yet the powerful Energy of the Spirit of God, has been as remarkably manifested there as any where else.---Every Objection is therefore now fully silenced ; and give me Leave to say, you must be obstinately blind, or acknowledge that *this is the Finger of God*.---O take Heed, when God is in this extraordinary Manner manifesting himself to us, when the Lord Jesus Christ is in these wonderful Works reveal'd from Heaven amongst us, that you ben't found *fighting against God*.---Beware lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the *Prophets*, *Behold, ye Despisers ! and wonder and perish*. My Friend, Beware lest you reject the Counsel of God against your self !

EPINET. “ Methinks if these Convictions
 “ were so necessary as you suppose, we should
 “ have more *Examples* of 'em ; and more *Di-*
 “ *rections* about 'em in *Scripture*, than I can at
 “ present remember.

† This was wrote before the Work remarkably spread in many other Towns, which now might be added.
 THEOPH.

THEOPH. Don't you remember, how there were three Thousand at once pricked in their Heart from St. Peter's Preaching ; and driven by their Distress to that Enquiry, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do ?* Don't you remember the Conversion of Saul and of the Jailor ; and their Trembling and Astonishment under a Sense of their Sin and Guilt ? --- Don't you remember that it is promis'd, that when God pours out his Spirit upon us, we shall remember our own evil Ways, and our Doings that were not good ; and shall loath ourselves in our own Sight, for our Iniquities and Abominations ? (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) --- Don't you remember, that our Lord pronounces those blessed, that are poor in Spirit, that mourn, that hunger and thirst after Righteousness ; and that weep ? (Matth. v. 3. Luke vi. 21.) --- Don't you remember, that an awakening Sense of our Guilt and Unworthiness is recommended to us, in the Story of the Publican ? (Luke xviii. 13.) --- Don't you remember the Parable of the Prodigal Son, who was brought to see himself perishing with Hunger, before he tho't of returning to his Father's House ; and brought to approach his Father's Presence with a most humbling Apprehension, that he had sinned against Heaven and in his Sight ; and was no more worthy to be called his Son ? (Luke xv.) --- Don't you remember, that Sinners are exhorted to break up their fallow Ground, Jer. iv. 3.

to rent their Hearts and not their Garments, and turn unto the Lord their God, (Joel ii. 13.) to awake out of their Sleep and arise from the dead, that Christ may give them Light ? (Eph. v. 14.) Don't you remember what Carefulness was wrought in the Corinthians, what cleaning of themselves, what Indignation, what Fear, what vehement Desire, what Zeal, what Revenge ? (2 Cor. vii. 11.) --- You certainly can't forget what I but just now shewed you, that our blessed Saviour promis'd to send the Comforter to this very End, that he should convince the World of Sin ; nor can you forget that our Lord came, not to call the Righteous ; but Sinners to Repentance. (Matth. ix. 13.) --- But the Time would fail me, should I enter upon a particular Detail of the many Passages of Scripture, to the same Purpose. --- What has been said is sufficient to convince you, that the Scriptures are not so silent in this Case, as you seem to insinuate. And it concerns you and I to take Care, that our Hurt is not healed slightly ; and that we don't say Peace Peace, when there is no Peace, according to that Jer. viii. 11.

EPINET. " Well, Sir, I must confess that
 " I have had no Experience of these Things ;
 " and am therefore afraid I have hitherto
 " built my Hopes upon the Sand !

THEOPH. The Lord make these your Fears introductory to a more sure Foundation of solid Hope and lasting Comfort.

[Upon this the Gentleman made a considerable Pause ; and appeared very thoughtful. But after a While seem'd something to recover himself, and proceeded.]

EPINET. “ If Convictions, according to your Representation of them, are allow'd to be a necessary Preparation to Conversion, I am yet uncapable to account for some wonderful Things that I have lately heard of.

THEOPH. What Things do you refer to ?

EPINET. “ One Thing is the CRYING OUT of considerable Numbers at a Time, under a real or pretended *Fright*, whereby the Congregation is put into Confusion, the Minister's Voice drown'd ; and every one's Mind call'd off from their Devotions, to attend to these Exclamations. --- These Things
“ I

“ I have several Times seen my self ; and I confess, they are and cannot but be Matter of stumbling to me.”

THEOPH. Don't you think Persons may have such *sudden* and *powerful Impressions* of their Guilt and Danger made upon their Minds, that they cannot refrain from these outward and audible Expressions of their inward Agony and Distress ?

EPINET. “ This may possibly be the Case with some ; but I can't think you'll pretend, that all these OUT-CRIES are of divine Original. --- I have known some of those that have been noted and famous for repeated Exclamations in Publick, whose future Conversations have not given the best Evidence in their Favour.”

THEOPH. And have you known *none* of those that have thus openly express'd their distressing Concern, who by their future Conduct have manifested a *lasting Change*, both in their Hearts and Lives ?

EPINET. “ I must acknowledge, that there are a considerable Number, of whom I am obliged to make that charitable Conclusion : A Number that I am personally acquainted with, who were before careless, secure and
E even

“ even profligate Persons, but from the Time
 “ of these publick *Exclamations*, have reformed
 “ their former sensual Lives ; and appear
 “ to be serious, devout, and truly religious.”

THEOPH. This then must make it evident, that their *Convictions* are from the SPIRIT of Grace, for the Reasons I have before assign'd ; if their *inordinate Passions* be allow'd to flow from their own Infirmity.

EPINET. “ But what shall we say of those
 “ others, of whom I spake before ?”

THEOPH. According to what Light I at present have in this Affair, from what Observations I have my self had Opportunity to make when I was lately abroad, and from what Informations I have had about these Things, I have been ready to come into the following Conclusions.---- I first take it for granted, that the *Power and Grace of God* have remarkably appeared, upon some of these Occasions. The sanctifying and abiding Effects of some of these *Convictions* do loudly and manifestly declare, that they proceed from God himself. --- Yet I can't help but conclude, that there has been a great deal of *human Infirmity* sometimes discover'd in this Case. Perhaps *some* of those who have thus openly proclaim'd their Distress, might have put a greater *Restraint* upon their Passions,

Passions, if they had with the utmost Care and Pains endeavour'd it. --- Nay, I have been inform'd, that some have suppos'd it their *Duty* thus openly to give *Vent* to the Agonies of their Mind, lest they should *quench the Spirit of God*. --- And if some of our *Ministers* have given too much Encouragement to these *Exclamations*, this Circumstance of the Work (on that Supposition) won't appear so wonderful. --- And it may besides, probably have happen'd, that *some* who have (through the Influence of the *Spirit*) been so deeply affected with a Sense of their Sin and Misery, that they really could not refrain these publick *Exclamations*, have thereby so alarm'd the softer Passions of many others, as to excite them (from a natural *Empathy*) to break forth in like *Cries and Groans*, though they have had no other special *Impressions* upon their Minds. I think, I have seen something of this Kind my self. And it can't be wonderful, if such as *these* should discover themselves to be but *stony Ground-Planters*. --- And if any should be so prodigiouly wicked, as to *counterfeit* these Degrees of *Conviction* from meer *Ostentation*, and a Desire to be esteem'd religious, as they find others have been for the same Reason, this also wou'd add to this Kind of Appearances. But *Charity hopeth all Things*.

EPINET.

EPINET. " This Representation of the
" Case doth (I confels) appear to be just and
" satisfactory."

THEOPH. You must then allow, that none
of these unusual Appearances are any just Pre-
judice against the Necessity of Convictions,
preparatory to our saving Conversion.

EPINET. " That's true ; but there are
" other Appearances, that have been no less
" surprizing ; and are more of a stum-
" bling-Block to me, than those already men-
" tion'd."

THEOPH. What do you mean ?

EPINET. " When I was at---while Mr.
" --- was preaching, I saw some of the Hear-
" ers first TREMBLE, like paralitick Persons,
" or rather like Persons shaken with a violent
" Ague ; and then some of 'em fell upon the
" Ground in a SWOON, and lay for some
" Time under considerable convulsive Motions.
" ---These Things raise strange Idea's in my
" Mind."

THEOPH. I have not seen any of these
Things my self : and am not therefore so ca-
pable to form a Judgment about them. It
may be safest for you and I to suspend our Judg-
ment

ment of 'em, till we see what Fruits and Con-
sequences appear.---On the one Hand, God
can (if he pleaseth) make as powerful Impres-
sions upon Men's Minds by his *Spirit*, as he did
upon *Paul's* by a *Light from Heaven*, that shall
suddenly and forceably *cast 'em to the Ground*.
---But on the other Hand, as this has not been
his *usual* Dispensation, I don't know that we
have any Warrant to *expect* such Things ; nor
to conclude from these *Agitations*, separately
consider'd, that they necessarily are, or are not,
the Consequences of the Operations of God's
Holy Spirit.---Sudden and great *Surprizes* may
produce strange Effects upon the *animal* Œco-
nomy ; whether with, or without any due Im-
pressions of *Sin*. But (as I have shewn you be-
fore) a *bare* Surprize will never raise Sinners
from their State of spiritual Death ; and pro-
cure a *sanctifying* Change in their Hearts and
Lives. If *this* therefore be the Consequence of
these unusual Appearances, give GOD the
Glory ; for the Work is certainly from *Him*.
If the *Excess* of Terror and Passion be allowed
to flow from *human* *Infirmity* ; yet the *Change*
it self in its whole Progress, whether consider'd
as preparatory or saving, can proceed from
Nothing else (as I have before prov'd to you)
but from *that Working of almighty Power*,
whereby God is able even to *subdue all Things to*
himself.--- But then, on the contrary, we may
safely suspect this to be no more than a natural
Surprize,

Surprize, or at most but a temporary Conviction when there is no *lasting* good Effect thereby produced.

EPINET. "I don't know what to say to these Things. For my Part I don't understand 'em."

THEOPH. But can't you leave these Things to God and Time to discover; and in the mean while make it your earnest and solemn Business to obtain those *gracious Qualifications*, that you are certain you must obtain, or perish forever?

EPINET. "The Lord give me a Heart to comply with your Advice. I'm sure, it is high Time to look about me; and well may Destruction from God be a Terror to me, if I han't yet taken the first Step towards Salvation, as I am awfully afraid that I have not."

THEOPH. It is indeed of infinite Importance for every one to see to it, that their Hope for Eternity is well-founded; and to be now in Earnest *striving to enter in at the strait Gate*, while the *Day of Visitation* lasts. And in Order to this, it is of great Concern, that the Mind be wholly freed from all *Prejudices* against the Methods of converting Grace.

EPINET.

EPINET. "That the present Conference may have that happy Effect upon my Mind, as to remove all the Prejudices that I have heretofore entertain'd, and give me a just View and Apprehension of Things, I shall take the Freedom to propose some further Difficulties, from these late Appearances, which I don't know how to solve; hoping for the Continuance of your friendly Assistance."

THEOPH. I shall rejoice in being any Way serviceable to your best Interests. Be pleased therefore to propose your Difficulties.

EPINET. "I can't understand those *excessive Joys*, which many of our late Converts manifest in a very extraordinary Way and Manner.---Some seem to be acted with the most *rapturous* Exults; while others under the same comfortable and delightful Apprehensions, fall into a *Syncope*, and faint away, remaining for some Time under a Prostration of bodily Strength."

THEOPH. Can a *weary and heavy-laden* Sinner possibly do otherwise than *rejoice*, upon his obtaining good EVIDENCES of an *Interest in Christ* and the *Favour of God*; and thereby his Freedom from the dreadful Burthen of Guilt, and the amazing Apprehensions of the Wrath

Wrath of God, with which his Soul was so greatly oppressed? Don't the Apostle accordingly tell us, that *being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, --- and rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God?*

EPINET. "But the Text you mention, speaks nothing of those *extatick Joys*, which have lately been so much talked of."

THEOPH. If that Text does not speak of such extraordinary Joy, there be many other Texts of Scripture that do particularly speak of this also. Such as that, (1 Pet. i. 8.) *In whom believing, ye rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory.* And that, (Eph. i. 13, 14.) *After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of Promise, which is the Earnest of your Inheritance.* --- You certainly can't have seen or heard of any Thing of this Kind, superior to JOY UNSPEAKABLE and full of GLORY. And it is equally certain from the Nature of Things, that Nothing can exceed the EARNEST, first Fruits, or Foretastes of the future INHERITANCE. --- You must therefore acknowledge, that the Scriptures do speak of Joys as eminent both for Kind and Degree, as any of those Instances can be, which you refer to.

EPINET,

EPINET. "How then does it come to pass, that we have heard nothing of this Kind heretofore? Were there no Christians in the World till now?"

THEOPH. This Question is founded upon a false and mistaken Supposition. --- These Joys have been experienced by very many of the Children of God, in all Ages and Dispensations of the Church. And I have met with former Instances of this Kind more eminent and remarkable, than any of a late Date, that I have heard of. --- It must indeed be supposed, that in this happy Time of a more general Effusion of the blessed Spirit, Instances of this Kind will be more numerous; and these Experiences more freely spoken of.

EPINET. "Then you suppose these Joys to proceed from the immediate Influences of the Spirit of God."

THEOPH. Be pleased to read Rom. viii. 15, 16. and try whether you yourself can dare to think otherwise, than that it is the Spirit of Adoption, whereby Believers can so joyfully cry *Abba Father*; and that this proceeds from the Witness of the Spirit himself with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God.

EPINET,

EPINET. " It seems to me an invincible
 " *Objection* against this, that *some* have expe-
 " rienced these self-same rapturous Joys, whose
 " future *Conversations* have not exhibited the
 " *Fruits of the Spirit* ; and have been very
 " far from Evidences of their good State.----
 " Can it be supposed, that the Spirit of God
 " will witness to the Adoption of proud, disho-
 " nest, and worldly Persons ? "

THEOPH. How do you know that these
 have experienced the *same* Kind of Comfort, the
self-same Joys that others speak of ?--- These
Joys of the Holy Ghost are certainly incommu-
 nicable to any who han't themselves had the
 Experience of them ; or as the Apostle expres-
 seth it, they are *unspeakable*. They are a *new*
Name written, which none can know, but they
that have it.---Some Persons, alas, may (from
 animal Impressions, or from diabolical Delusi-
 ons) *imagine* that they have these *Sealings of the*
Spirit ; and be lull'd asleep in their Carnality
 and Security, by this vain Dream.---- In this
 Way the Devil plays a sure Game ; and, no
 Doubt, often *transforms himself into an Angel*
of Light, to this End, that he may keep People
 secure, by an *imaginary* Experience of a State
 of Safety. He never acts more like a *Devil* ;
 nor is he in any Shape more to be feared, than
 in this plausible Disguise.

EPINET.

EPINET. " How then shall we *distinguish*
 " the Sealings of the blessed Spirit, from
 " animal Impressions, or diabolical Delu-
 " sions ? "

THEOPH. Though I have told you before,
 that these divine Experiences are *incommunicable*,
 inexpressible to those who are Strangers to them,
 yet there may be a certain and safe *Distinction*
 made between the one and the other, by these
 following Rules.

First, False and delusive Joys never do, but
 the unspeakable Joy and Comfort of Believers
 always does, flow from *good Evidences of a jus-*
tified State.--- The Spirit of God never does set
 his Seal to a Blank ; nor cause Persons to re-
 joice, they don't know why, or for what.---
 They therefore, who depend upon their *Joys*,
 as the *only* Evidence of a justified State, are al-
 ways deceived : But they whose Rejoicing
 flows from *good Evidences of a justified State*,
 are never deceived.--- In those who are Christi-
 ans indeed, this is the Order. They are first
justified by Faith, and have Peace with God ;
 and thence *rejoice in Hope of his Glory.*--- Should
 I congratulate you upon your Accession to the
 Government of this Province, it might fill you
 with sudden *Joy*, from your imaginary Pro-
 motion : But as this Rojoicing had no Foun-
 dation, it must quickly end in Disappointment
 and

and Vexation. But should I bring you the King's Letters Patent, vesting you with that Dignity, your Joy would be rational and grounded. The Application of this to the present Case is easy and familiar. And then Again----

EPINET. " Pardon me, Sir, if I take Liberty to interrupt you, that I may (before you proceed further) enquire whether this Distinction of yours (which I acknowledge to be most just and scriptural) don't necessarily conclude against most of those sudden transporting Joys, of which we are treating. For how can these flow from good Evidences of a justified State, which are such quick Transitions from greatest Darkness and Distress ?

THEOPH. Don't you think, that the Spirit of God can make a quick Discovery of Jesus Christ, to the most dark and distressed Soul ; and enable him to give a speedy, hearty, and sensible Consent to the Gospel-Offer. ?---Suppose the Case to be (as it frequently is) that a Person is at least under a most uncomfortable Suspence with Respect to his State. He sees many dark Symptoms upon his Soul ; and is filled with awful Jealousy of the Event ; if not under greatest Agony from a dreadful Expectation of eternal Misery. In the Time of this

thick Darkness, the Spirit of God shines with a surprizing Light into the Soul, discovers the Fulness and Sufficiency of Christ, and his Readiness and Willingness to save all that come to him, enables the poor trembling Soul heartily and willingly to accept this precious Saviour upon his own Terms ; and to feel that he does so. By this Means he finds Joy and Peace in Believing.---Now, in this Case, his Rejoicing is founded upon the most sensible Evidence of a true Faith in Christ ; though perhaps there may be but little or no discernable Distance of Time, between his acting Faith in Christ, and this ravishing Fruit of it. The Continuance or Renewal of this Joy in Believers is in like Manner accompany'd with such Outgoings of the Soul to Christ, and such a shedding abroad of the Love of God in their Hearts, as carries its own Evidence with it. --- They have Reason to rejoice, or else it would be a fallacious and absurd Joy.

EPINET. " This Explanation of the Case, removes the Difficulty beyond my Expectations.---- You'll now be pleased to proceed, to give the other Distinctions, you were about to propose, between the Soul-deluding Joy of the Hypocrite, and these Sealings of God's holy Spirit.

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THEOPH,

THEOPH. I would (*Secondly*) observe, that the *Joy* of the *Hypocrite* tends to exalt his Spirit, and lift him up with a high Opinion of himself; it causes him like the *Pharisees* of old, to think himself righteous and to despise others: But the *Joy* of the true Believer does always exceedingly humble his Soul, and lay him low, under a deep Sense of his Vileness and Unworthiness. It fills him with admiring, & adoring Thoughts of the wonderful distinguishing Grace of God, to such a guilty and polluted Creature as he is. And

Thirdly, The *Joy* of the *Hypocrite* tends to Security; and to more Negligence, Slothfulness, and Formality in Duty: But the *Joy* of the true Believer has an animating and quickning Influence upon him, in all the Duties of a religious Life. It causes him to heartily love, and diligently attend all the Ordinances of God; and to mount up with Wings as the Eagle, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.

Fourthly, The *Joy* of the *Hypocrite* leaves him under the Dominion of his Lusts, more careless of his Heart and Life, more bold and confident in the Commission of Sin, from an Apprehension of the Safety of his State: But on the contrary, the *Joy* of the true Believer causeth him to loath himself for all his Iniquities and Abominations; and from a Principle

ciple of Love to God, to be more careful to approve himself to him; and more fearful of offending him.---In a Word, These ravishing and transporting Influences of the blessed Spirit, are always a happy Source of habitual *Spiritual-Mindedness*, of *Holiness* towards God, and *Righteousness* towards Men. For the Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth.

EPINET. "Are we not in great Danger of Mistake, in the Application of these Rules?"

THEOPH. I see no great Danger of Mistake by those, who will seriously and impartially attend to 'em.---For, on the one Hand, Can the Devil himself delude any Soul by good Evidences of a justified State, and by the Exercise of a lively Faith? Or will he endeavour by these transporting Comforts, to make any Man walk humbly with his God, to quicken him in his spiritual Walk, to embitter his Sins to him; and make him more watchful over his Heart and Life; and more spiritual and heavenly in his whole Conversation? This cannot be. Such Joys therefore must always be acknowledged to be the Fruits of God's blessed Spirit; and the Manifestation of his Love to the Soul.---And, on the other Hand, It is impossible that the Spirit of God should

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delude.

delude Men with false, groundless, or unreasonable Comfort and Joy ; or lead them by his divine Influences to Pride, Self-Opinion, and Vanity of Mind ; and to Hypocrisy and Formality, Boldness and Security in Sin. *This Joy* therefore, however rapturous and extatic, can be no other than a dangerous and fatal Delusion.

EPINET. “ I can’t but acknowledge, that
 “ you have given a just and reasonable Solution
 “ of my Difficulties in this Case ; and
 “ yet these Things are what I have no *sensible*
 “ *Apprehension* of. But alas ! that is
 “ what you can’t help me to. You have
 “ convinced me, that Nothing but the powerful
 “ Influences of the blessed Spirit of God
 “ can beget a saving Change in me, or give
 “ me the Comforts of it, if I had it. And
 “ how should I expect to know any Thing
 “ about this Joy and Comfort, when I am afraid
 “ I know nothing else as I ought to know ;
 “ and have yet laid no *Foundation* for Rejoicing !---
 “ However, since we have begun upon these
 “ Subjects, I will take Liberty to be further
 “ troublesome to you, in proposing one or two
 “ more of the Difficulties, I have had on my
 “ Mind from the late Appearances, if your
 “ Patience will hold out.”

THEOPH.

THEOPH. Indeed, Sir, there is no resting with Safety in such a State, as you apprehend your own to be.--- Certain it is, that you are either a Child of God, or his Enemy ; either an Heir of Heaven, or of Hell ; either in a converted State, or upon the Borders of eternal Destruction. You can’t be insensible, that this is not a trifling Affair : but that it infinitely concerns you to see to it, that you be not too late *ashamed of your Hope.* --- I tho’t it my Duty to use this Freedom with you : and I hope you will accept it (as I am sure it’s design’d) for an Act of Kindness and Friendship. --- As for the other Difficulties you speak of, I hope your proposing them won’t be unserviceable to either of us ; and I shall therefore be heartily willing to contribute what I can towards their removal.

EPINET. “ I confess there is something
 “ else of greater Importance for me, than to be
 “ finding Fault with other Men’s Conduct.
 “ But I have Grounds to hope from what I’ve
 “ already experienced, that this Conference
 “ may serve to make my own Path more
 “ plain before me : and therefore I shall proceed
 “ to inform you, that I can’t understand
 “ the new Method, of discoursing about religious
 “ EXPERIENCES, in all Company, and

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“ upon

“ upon all Occasions, so very freely and commonly.”

THEOPH. I hope you are not against Men's improving their Opportunities together, in conversing upon religious Subjects, and in Endeavours to assist and quicken one another in the Way to the Kingdom of God. --- *They that fear the Lord, speak often one to another, and God keeps a Book of Remembrance; and they shall be his, in the Day when he binds up his Jewels.*

EPINET. “ There may sometimes be Occasion for such Discourse, when Christians meet together. --- But do you suppose, that Religion should *always* be the turning Point of Conversation ?”

THEOPH. I acknowledge we may be call'd by Business, or out of Civility to others, and sometimes meerly for the Diversion of our own Minds, to discourse upon other Subjects. --- But as *Religion is* infinitely the most important Concern, so it should certainly be most upon our Hearts; and then it would also be most upon our Lips. For, *out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh.* And it is indeed the Scandal of Professors, that they spend away their social Opportunities in worldly, vain, trifling Discourse, as if they came into the World for no other End, but meerly to amuse

amuse themselves and one another. --- But would they duly consider, that *for every idle Word they speak, they must give an Account in the Day of Judgement,* they would be more careful to follow that Advice (Eph iv. 29.) to *have their Communication such as is good for the Use of Edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.* And that Advice (Col. iv. 6.) *Let your Speech be alway with Grace, season'd with Salt.* --- It is most evident from the Importance of religious Concerns, from the infinite Value of our own Souls and the Souls of our Neighbours, as well as from the plain Directions of the Word of God, that we should improve our Occasions of conversing together ordinarily and chiefly in religious Discourse.

EPINET. “ What if we fall into the Company of such, to whom this Discourse would be most *burthensome* and disagreeable ?”

THEOPH. The Apostle's Exhortation (*Heb. iii. 13.*) is a sufficient Answer to that Question: *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.* --- The more irreligious any Person is, the more should his perishing Soul be pitied; and the more Need has he to be awaken'd, and excited to flee from the Wrath to come. --- There may indeed be some open, aban-

abandon'd, and profane Scoffers at Religion; to whom our Lord's Direction is applicable, in Matth. vii. 6. *Give not that which is holy unto Dogs; neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine.* But then, they should be notoriously such, before we give over our charitable Attempts for their Recovery.

EPINET. "The Lord forgive me the horrible Mispende of all my past Opportunities in Society! Perhaps you have purposely gone aside from the Case I propos'd, that you might reprove me for sinning away so much Time, in idle impertinent Conversation: And I must own, there was good Reason for it.--- But what I desired your Observations upon, was the Practice of many of our new Converts, who are for *discoursing* of their own *Experiences* and Attainments in Religion, and *examining* others, upon almost every Occasion of Conversation."

THEOPH. You'll acknowledge that there may be Occasions to communicate our religious Experiences one to another; and that it is at least sometimes a Duty to do so.--- The Scriptures seem to require this of us. We should comfort them which are in any Trouble, with the Comfort, wherewith we our selves are comforted of God. 2. Cor. i. 4.--- We should comfort our selves together, and edify one another. 1 Thess.

1 Thess. v. 11.--- On some we should have Compassion, making a Difference; and others we should save with Fear. Jude 22, 23.

EPINET. "I doubt not, but that there are proper Occasions for these Things. But don't it too much favour of Ostentation, to be so commonly speaking of our own religious Attainments, as tho' we were recommending ourselves for Examples and Patterns to others?"

THEOPH. There is (I confess) great Danger, not only of apparent, but of real Ostentation, and spiritual Pride, by making our Christian Experience the ordinary Topic of Conversation.--- Christians themselves have unhappy Remains of *Vanity* and *Pride* in their Hearts, which are too apt to be elated, and blown up by every Representation of their own Excellencies. For which Reason they should be very cautious of pouring Oil upon that Fire, which is so apt of it self to blaze.--- They are also under the strict and curious Inspection of the carnal *World*, who are always ready to take Occasion of *Prejudice*, from every imaginary Appearance of *Pride*, or *Self-Exaltation*. This should therefore excite their Caution, lest they bring Reproach upon the Operations of God's Holy Spirit; and cause the good Ways of the Lord to be evil spoken of. --- And what

is as much to be fear'd as either of the Things now mention'd, is the Danger of tempting and prompting some *Pretenders* in Religion, to exceed the Truth, in the Narrative of their Attainments, and to recommend themselves to their Company, by speaking of Experiences which they have never had, when these are made the *common* Subject of Discourse.

EPINET. "What then are the *proper Occasions* for communicating our spiritual Experiences to one another?"

THEOPH. When Persons are in *Darkness* and Distress about their *State*, it is needful that they should *make their Case known*, to their Minister, or some faithful experienced Christian, that they may obtain that Assistance, Comfort, or Counsel, which their Condition requires. For how can we *comfort those in Trouble* (as directed, in forecited 2 Cor. i. 4.) if they don't make their Trouble known? --- When a convinced Offender is so distressed with the Burden of some *particular Sin*, or with some particular *Darkness* and Difficulty relating to his *Conduct*, that he can find no Means to ease his Mind, or quiet his Conscience, he should in this Case also make his Difficulty known; and *seek Direction* from his Minister, or some faithful Friend, that his wounded

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Conscience may be safely healed. Here that Rule takes Place, Jam. v. 16. *Confess your Faults one to another; and pray one for another.* --- Moreover, when the imparting our Experiences, whether we be apply'd to, or not, may be *likely* to alleviate the Agonies of any wounded and distressed Souls, it is then proper to let *such* know, how we our selves have conflicted with the *like* Darkness, Trials, or Temptations; and to endeavour to *comfort our selves together*, and help them (if possible) to the *same Comforts wherewith we have been comforted of God*, according to the forecited 1 Thess. v. 11. and 2 Cor. i. 4. --- Furthermore, when by conversing with any, we find them building their *Hope* upon a *false* Foundation, it may be seasonable to let 'em know how we our selves have formerly been under the same dangerous *Deceit*; and how by the Power of divine Grace, our Feet have been pluck'd out of the fatal Snare. This is a *likely Means to save them by Fear, pulling them out of the Fire*, according to that in Jude 23. This is the Course the Apostle took, to detect the Self-Deceivers, Phil. 3. 4, &c. --- I may also add, that intimate Christian Friends may profitably improve Occasions to assist, comfort, and quicken one another, by mutual Communications of religious Experiences. For *as Iron sharpeneth Iron, so may a Man this Way sharpen the Countenance of his Friend.* Prov.

xxxvii.

xxxvii. 17.--- Upon the whole, I think that an ordinary and common Discourfing of our fpiritual Experiences, except upon fuch Occafion as I have mention'd, is not fo likely to promote the Interests of Religion; at leaft without the utmoft Guard againft thofe Indifcretions, which the too frequent and familiar Practice of it may tend to betray us into.

EPINET. " I can't but highly approve what you have faid upon this Subject :
 " but there is one Thing you have not yet
 " fpoken to; and that is a *Claim* to EXA-
 " MINE and ADMONISH all they meet with,
 " that fome Men feem to pretend to. I would
 " be glad to hear what *Rules* and *Directions*
 " you think proper in that Cafe alfo."

THEOPH. You have now impos'd upon me a very difficult Task: It is here fcarcely poffible to fuit Directions to every particular Cafe.

EPINET. " Are we then, in this Cafe,
 " under no Rule for our Guidance?"

THEOPH. We are under the general Rule of *Charity* to our Neighbour; and as to the particular Application of that Rule, *Wisdom* is profitable to direct. And thefe following Methods may be obferv'd. -- We fhould always

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enter upon Discourfes of this Nature, in the moft tender, kind and obliging Manner poffible, that we may infinuate ourfelves into the Affections, and not ruffle the Paflions of thofe with whom we converse. Thus did our LORD himfelf by the feven Churches of *Asia*, as you may fee in his Epiftles to them.--- We fhould endeavour to describe the Danger, and to detect the Sins and Delufions of fome Men, in a more general and diftant Manner, without fpecial Application to them; when we have Reason to conclude, that they would not bear personal Examination and Admonition. Thus we may without Offence, in the moft ftrong and pointed Manner, address the Confcienfes of fuch Men as would be prejudiced and affronted by a personal Address. This Method (you know) the Apostle *Paul* took with *Felice*; and left his own Confcience to make the Application. *Acts* xxiv. 25. We fhould likewife take Care, not too bluntly and abruptly, without a proper Introduction; nor unfeafonably, in the Midft of Conversation or Bufinefs; much lefs imperioufly, in a Way of Challenge or Demand, to examine any Man as to his religious Experiences, left we bring Contempt upon our felves and our Profeflion.--- But yet it is doubtlefs our Duty upon proper Occafions, in a kind affectionate Manner, to difcourfe our Neighbour upon his religious State and Attainments, fo that the Rule be therein attend-

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ed, Rom. xv. 2. *Let every one of us please his Neighbour, for his Good, to Edification.*

EPINET. "If I don't too much intrude upon your Time and Patience, I would still propose one of my principal Objections against the Conduct of many of our late Converts, which has prov'd a special Matter of Prejudice and Stumbling to me."

THEOPH. Be pleas'd, Sir, to speak freely, without Compliment or Restraint. I am yet ready to contribute what I can to your Satisfaction.

EPINET. "What I refer to, is that JUDGING and CENSURING Spirit, which so much obtains among us. I can't see how these can be (as they pretend) converted Persons, and Christians indeed; who so openly and avowedly *judge their Brethren; and set at Nought their Brethren.*"

THEOPH. Hold, Sir; *Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self; for thou that judgest, dost the same Thing.* --- You are complaining of others for Censoriousness; and in the same Breath, you censure and judge them as unconverted Persons, or in other Words, for *meer Hypocrites.* Don't you know who has directed *to first cast the Beam out of thine own Eye, that thou*

thou mayst see clearly to cast the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye?

EPINET. "Sir, I accept your Reproof; and heartily thank you for it. I see that the Fault is on both Sides, by which these Distances and Alienations of Mind are kept up among Professors of Religion.---But though I have carried my Censure too far, even till I have fallen into the same Fault myself; yet you must nevertheless own, that this judging and censuring Spirit is what the *Scriptures* every where condemn."

THEOPH. There is nothing more certain, than that the *Scriptures* do repeatedly and in the strongest Terms condemn our judging and censuring one another.---It may therefore be proper to consider *what that Sin is*, which the *Scriptures* so often testify against. In Order to which I would enquire of you, whether you think it an unlawful Judging & Censoriousness, to determine of a *visibly loose, scandalous and profligate* Person, that he is in an *unconverted* State; and as such, an Heir of Destruction and Death?

EPINET. "No! That's a clear Case: *The Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God; and the Tree is known by its Fruits.*"

THEOPH. Is it sinful Censoriousness, to conclude, that such who are open *Despisers of vital Piety*; and Neglecters of God's *Worship*, who don't pray in their Families, or attend publick Ordinances; who visibly abhor all *religious Conversation*, and oppose all that promote it, are yet in a carnal State?

EPINET. "Some Parts of this Question do (I confess) most sensibly affect me: You have brought the Matter home to my own Case. But though I thereby condemn myself, I think this also must be answer'd in the Negative. For *God is a Rewarder of none but those, who diligently seek him: and they who forsake him (much more they who despise him) will be cast off for ever.*

THEOPH. May we not lawfully judge such Men to be insincere and in an unconverted State, who rest in an *outward Profession*, in their *moral Honesty*, or *religious Duties*, without any Experience of a *regenerating Change*, or of a *lively Faith* in Christ?

EPINET. "It is doubtless true, that there be such who have a *Name to live*, when they are *dead*; and have a *Form of Godliness*, without the *Power*. And it can be no Censoriousness to determine of such as these, in general, that they are Hypocrites and in a carnal

"carnal State.--- But what Business have we to make the Application to particular Persons? Can we judge Men's Hearts; or know what are, or are not, the secret Transactions between God and their Souls?"

THEOPH. Suppose I were discoursing with any Man about his religious Experiences and Attainments; and found good Reason to conclude, that he rested in a meer *Form of Godliness*, and was thereby in Danger of eternal Perdition; Don't Charity and Compassion to his precious Soul oblige me to tell him my *Fears*, with the Reasons of them, that I may (if possible) prevent his *perishing, with a Lie in his right Hand*?--- To give you a more sensible Apprehension of what I mean: Suppose from the Account you have given of your self in the present Conversation, I have Reason to conclude, that you are yet a Stranger to the *Power of Godliness*, am I not obliged in Duty to God and Faithfulness to you, to set your Danger before you?

EPINET. "I believe both these Questions should be answer'd in the Affirmative."

THEOPH. Well then, there may be Occasion to represent to particular Persons our *Fears* of their resting in a meer *Form of Godliness*.

liness.---And pardon me, Sir, if out of a tender Regard to your eternal Interest, I am obliged, to tell you that I can't but think the Occasion is now before me. I am awfully afraid, from your utter Unacquaintedness with the Methods of divine Grace in a Sinner's Conversion, that you have never yet experienced that *Change*, which you certainly must experience, or never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.--This, Sir, is the greatest Kindness to you that I am at present capable of; and I hope, you will accept it accordingly.

EPINET. " Sir, you surprize me. Tho'
 " my Conscience was before laying the same
 " Charge against me, your faithful Dealing
 " (for which I heartily thank you) has re-
 " vived and quickned its Accusations; and
 " my Mind is grown very uneasy, that I
 " am not so fit for further Discourse.---But it
 " mayn't be unserviceable to me, to hear your
 " particular Sentiments upon the present Sub-
 " ject. It may perhaps further remove those
 " sinful Prejudices, that I am sensible I have
 " entertain'd. --- As you have already shewn
 " who are *not* guilty of sinfully judging one
 " another: Be pleas'd also to shew *what this*
 " *Sin is*, which the Scriptures so much con-
 " demn, and who may be said to be guilty
 " of it.

THEOPH.

THEOPH. The Lord grant, that your present Concern may end in well-grounded Comfort and Peace! --- As for my Sentiments upon the Subject under Consideration, I shall offer them in the following Particulars.

1. There is no Doubt to be made but that there has be'n *utterly a Fault among us*, in the *Censoriousness* and reproachful Aspersions, that have be'n so commonly observ'd and complain'd of, in so many Parts of the Country: Nor can it be doubted by any that have read the New Testament, that this is a very great Sin, destructive of christian Charity, injurious to our Neighbour's Reputation, productive of Divisions and Animosities; and of Prejudices in Men's Minds against the Professors, and even the Profession of vital Piety: And therefore very provoking unto God.--- But then it concerns us, that we our selves may avoid this Sin, which we so justly condemn in others, charitably to conclude, that some of these act with *good Views*, though upon mistaken Principles; and that they have a *Zeal for God* therein, tho' it be *not according to Knowledge*.

2. They who adventure to censure the State of such, who are of a *regular and blameless Conversation*, Friends to a religious Life, and careful Observers of the Ordinances of God, without any special Acquaintance with their
 religious

religious *Experiences*, are guilty of this Sin. *Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth.* Rom. xiv. 4. *Judge Nothing before the Time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkness; and will make manifest the Counsels of the Heart.* 1 Cor. iv. v.

3. They who *publish* and proclaim abroad their *Fears* and Apprehensions, of regular and blameless Professors, that they are but *Formalists* and Hypocrites, though they may suppose they have good *Grounds* for their Fears, are notwithstanding guilty of that *judging*, which the Scripture condemns. For they hereby *set at Nought their Brother*, contrary to Rom. xiv. 10. And *Speak evil of their Brother; and judge their Brother, and thereby speak Evil of the Law, and judge the Law; they are therefore not Doers of the Law, but Judges.* Jam. iv. 11. --- These Apprehensions, if such we have, should either be *concealed* in our own Breasts; or else (if we have Opportunity for it) privately, charitably, and affectionately communicated only to the *Person concern'd*, for his best Good and Advantage.

4. They who with Rigour, Roughness and Asperity, in dealing with any Persons of a regular Conversation, do admonish them of their
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Formality; and they who in a *positive, haughty* Manner determine their present *State* and future Danger; these are likewise guilty of this Sin. For herein also they are *not Doers of the Law, but Judges*; and hereby they *put a Stumbling Block and Occasion to fall, in their Brother's Way*, contrary to Rom. xiv. 13. They hereby irritate Men's Passions, prejudice them against the Persons and Profession of their Admonishers: and inflame the Enmity of their carnal Mind to the Power of Godliness?

5. When Men run into these Methods of judging those *Ministers* of the Gospel, who are visibly *well-qualified* for the Ministry, and have visibly *conducted* themselves well in the Discharge of their sacred Trust, they are more *aggravatedly* guilty of this Sin; by prejudicing People against their Ministers; and thereby making them slight the Ordinances of the Gospel, to the great Danger of their precious Souls. This is to do direct Violence to that Admonition, 1 Tim. v. 19. *Against an Elder receive not an Accusation, but before two or three Witnesses*; and to that Exhortation, Phil. ii. 29. *Hold such in Reputation.* --- Upon the whole, they who have been guilty in any of these Instances, have great Reason for a particular and deep *Repentance*; and for a solemn Care to *reform* their future Conduct. For, whatever Thoughts they may now entertain, they must
quickly

quickly stand before that Judge, who will let the World see the Honour he puts upon his *Word*; and the Regard he expects from all who profess his Name, to the *Rules* which he has given them.--- Thus, Sir, I have endeavoured according to my Capacity, to answer your Demands in this Instance also. --- Are there any other Difficulties before you, which you desire should be consider'd?

EPINET. " I should be something gratified
 " by hearing your Opinion of the Practice
 " which has very much obtain'd of late, of
 " positively *determining* the *Conversion* of par-
 " ticular Persons; and even of declaring to
 " their Faces, that they are in a converted and
 " safe Estate; though perhaps in some of
 " those Instances, there has been but a very
 " short Time to observe this great Change.--
 " These Things have stumbled me. But I'm
 " afraid, whether I han't been acted more by
 " Prejudice, than by a proper Concern for the
 " Interests of Religion, in my Opposition to
 " 'em."

THEOPH. You must own, that these Operations of the blessed Spirit, whereof we have been discoursing, are in their own Nature *sensible Impressions*; which may be discerned by those who are the happy Subjects of 'em. They therefore, who have had a convincing and hum-
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bling Sense of their Sin, Guilt and Impotency; who have been thereby driven to Despair of Help from any Refuges of their own; who in this their Extremity, have had a Discovery of the Sufficiency and Willingness of the Lord Jesus Christ to save them; and have betaken themselves for Refuge to this Hope set before them; such may be capable to exhibit in some Measure these their Experiences, with the Comforts which flow from them, to others; and thereby give good *Reason* to hope, that the Power of God's *special Grace* has indeed passed upon their Souls.--- And if in any late Instances, this Change has appeared very *sudden* and surprizing, there is the clearer Evidence of the *almighty* Efficiency, by which it is wrought; and the greater Resemblance of the first Conversions in the Christian Church.

EPINET. " Do you then suppose it pro-
 " per in this Case, to inform such Persons, in
 " *strong* and *positive* Terms, that they are now
 " converted to God, and become Heirs of eter-
 " nal Glory; and to *publish* and proclaim the
 " same Thing abroad to the World?"

THEOPH. *Man can look no further than to the outward Appearance; the Lord only looketh on the Heart.* We are not therefore to assume the divine Prerogative, by pretending to any *Certainty*, even in the most comfortable and
 promising

promising Appearances of this Mind.--- They who have made the *highest* Pretences this Way, have met with Instances enough to *confute* and *shame their Confidence* ; and to humble them for their own Claim to any Thing of an exact Spirit of Discerning. --- It is enough for us to go as far in this Case, as the *Apostles* themselves did ordinarily pretend to ; and to say as in 1 Pet. v. 12. *By Sylvanus, a faithful Brother, as I suppose.* --- Besides, this confident determining his State may prove very mischievous to the supposed Convert. Our mistaking his Case, and yet positively decreeing in his Favour, may lull him asleep in a dangerous Security : And he will find but little Cause to thank us for our Confidence, when all his Expectations are *eternally* cut off.

[On this Occasion, the Gentleman seem'd to be in very great Perturbation of Mind. He wept, ----- and sat a good while silent : but at last in a sort of Agony, he vented these abrupt Expressions.]

EPINET.

EPINET. “ O Sir, you don't know with what Force your last Words struck my Mind. ETERNAL Disappointment! O ETERNITY ! *Who can dwell with everlasting Burnings !*--- Dear Sir, Can you advise a poor self-deceiving Hypocrite how I shall escape the dreadful, the eternal Consequence of my Self-Deceit ! O what a Dream, what a Delirium have I been in, to expect Salvation by Christ without an Interest in him !”

THEOPH. You know, Sir, what Advice the *Apostle* gave to one, who was in the like Case as you seem to be now in : *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ ; and thou shalt be saved.*

EPINET. “ But you have already convinced me, that this is not in my Power ; this depends upon the sovereign Agency of the Spirit of God, of that blessed Spirit, whose Operations I have opposed and slighted ; and he may justly now reject me ; and leave me forever, under the Guilt of my innumerable Sins ; as I have so long withstood, and upon every Occasion spoke against his divine Influences.---It's certain, I can't help myself ; and I'm afraid he'll now leave me in my Distress, *so call upon him and receive no*

H

“ Answer

“ Answer, to seek him early and never find
“ him.”

THEOPH. I rejoice to see you *despairing* of all Help in your *self*: but take Heed, that you don't despair of the infinite Mercy of GOD; and of the infinite Merit and Compassion of the glorious REDEEMER. --- Go to God in Prayer: labour sensibly to acknowledge the Sin of your Nature; and the Sins of your Practice, with their special Aggravations. Lament before him this particular Sin, that seems to fasten upon your Conscience at this Time. --- Acknowledge your Guilt and Desert of his Wrath; acknowledge your Impotence and utter Inability to help your self; and that you lie at his Mercy. Cast yourself at his Foot; and beseech him, with importunate Ardour of Soul, that he will *draw you to Christ*. --- And endeavour to *look to Jesus Christ*, as a Saviour sufficient for you, how numerous, how great, and aggravated soever your Sins are; and how dark and difficult soever your Case is, or can be. And hold on in this Way, whatever your Success appear to be.

EPINET. “ I'm an old Man, an old Sinner, and Despiser of Mercy. I'm afraid it
“ is too late.”

THEOPH.

THEOPH. It is indeed too late to rest any longer in your *Security*, or to *put off* the Concerns of your Soul, and reject the Offers of Mercy any more. But blessed be God! *Behold, now is the accepted Time! behold, now is the Day of Salvation!* --- God has waited long upon you; and has not taken the Forfeiture at your Hands; but is by your present Concern giving you a happy Evidence, that your Day of Grace is not yet past. --- O therefore now *fly for Refuge to take hold of the Hope that is set before you.* *There is yet Hope in Israel as concerning this Thing.*

EPINET. “ If I am saved, it will be one
“ of the greatest Displays of Divine Grace,
“ that ever was known. --- Well! I will lie
“ at the Footstool of God's infinite Mercy:
“ if I must perish, I will perish there!”

THEOPH. A good Conclusion! If the Lord assist you to keep this Resolution, your Case will be very hopeful.

EPINET. “ Sir, I heartily thank you for
“ all your Kindness and Faithfulness to me:
“ And intreat your Prayers for a poor guilty
“ worthless Wretch. --- It is now grown late;
“ and I must (tho' with Reluctance) bid you
“ Farewel.”

H 2

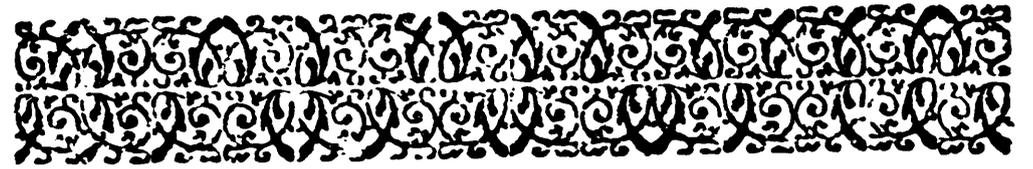
THEOPH.

THEOPH. Sir, a good Night to you !---It is my Duty to pray for you, that God would carry on his Work in your Heart, enable you to bring your weary and heavy-laden Soul to Christ ; and not leave you to wear off these Impressions, until you find Rest in him. May the God of all Grace shew you his Mercy, and visit you with his Salvation !

EPINET. “ Amen ! Amen !



THE



THE

Second Conference.

THE next Day after the Conversation before recited, the Minister having Occasion of a long Journey, was about a Month absent from Home. And the first Day after his Return, he was again visited by the same Gentleman, who with a cheerful Countenance addressed him in the following Manner.

EPINET. “ Sir, you are welcome Home, “ I am heartily glad to see you.---I had always a great Value for you ; but much “ greater now than ever before. I can now “ more feelingly say, *How beautiful are the “ Feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace ; “ and bring glad Tidings of good Things !*”

THEOPH. Sir, I rejoice to see you. As you have been very, much upon my Mind since your last Visit, I have earnestly long'd to know the Effect of that *Concern*, which you then express'd, about your eternal Interests.

EPINET. " If I ben't again deceiving my self, God has been wonderfully gracious to one of the greatest of Sinners. And notwithstanding my long Abuse of Mercy, and Opposition to the Operations of his blessed Spirit,---

[Upon the uttering these last Expressions, the Gentleman was stopt by his Tears ; and for some Time incapacitated to finish what he began to speak : but at Length suppressing his Passions, he proceeded.]

" Notwithstanding (I say) my enormous Guilt, a merciful God has, I hope, even in my old Age, made some Manifestations of his Love in Jesus Christ to my Soul."

THEOPH.

THEOPH. If you have indeed experienced a *saving Change*, you are laid under the highest Obligations of Gratitude to the special, distinguishing, and sovereign Mercy of God ; and have Reason eternally to magnify and praise the Riches of that Grace, by which you are *accepted in the Beloved*.---Will you be pleased to favour me with a general Narrative of the Methods, by which you were brought to this comfortable Conclusion?

EPINET. " I left you last with a Sort of a *Resolution*, that I would lie at the Footstool of God's Mercy ; and determin'd, if I must perish, to perish there. And accordingly I retired to my *Closet* as soon as I came home ; and attempted to pour out my distressed Soul to God. But alas ! my Mind was Nothing but *Horror* and *Distress*. The Sins of my past Life, even from my earliest Youth, were set in Order before my Eyes. I could not look to God, but as to a provoked Judge. The Idea's of eternal Destruction seem'd to interrupt every Confession of Sin, and every Petition for Mercy ; and in short, the whole Performance was a meer Medley of *Distraction* and *Confusion* : Infomuch that the small Gleam of Comfort, which flow'd from the fore-mention'd Resolution, was now quite lost. For what Hope could I entertain from such

“ such *Lip-Service* to an Omniscient God!---
 “ I retired to my *Bed* ; and there lay tossing
 “ to and fro, until the Dawning of the Day.
 “ ---I spent the following Day in *Fasting* and
 “ *Prayer*, with but little better Success.--- I
 “ examin’d my Conduct towards *Men*, in all
 “ the Dealings of my Life, as particularly as I
 “ could ; and resolv’d upon *Restitution* to all
 “ whom I had wrong’d, in every Instance
 “ that I could remember. But this Bed also
 “ was too short for me to stretch myself upon.
 “ ---I saw that these Things, though necessa-
 “ ry Duties, would never appease the Divine
 “ Justice, and atone for my Sins ; nor pur-
 “ chase the Favour of God. --- I sometimes
 “ endeavour’d to comfort myself with *Resolu-*
 “ *tions* of a more strict and watchful Life :
 “ and sometimes endeavour’d to look to the
 “ Lord *Jesus Christ* for Salvation ; but was
 “ sensible, that I could not act *Faith* in him.
 “ ---I spent a great Part of my Time for the
 “ first *Fortnight*, in Acts of *Devotion* ; and
 “ yet found my Heart as hard as a Stone. I
 “ could excite no Affection or Passion, but
 “ *Fear*, in any of my Approaches unto God.
 “ ---I was now ready to conclude my Case
 “ *hopeless* : that I was left of God ; and that
 “ my Day of Grace was past.---In this *Ex-*
 “ *tremity* I retired to my *Closet* ; and was en-
 “ abled, with a more feeling Sense, to con-
 “ fess my utter *Unworthiness* of Mercy ; and
 was

“ was filled with Admiration at the *Pati-*
 “ *ence* of God towards me, that I was yet out
 “ of Hell. I saw that I could not help myself ;
 “ and did not deserve, that God should help
 “ me. I concluded the Duty with a Sort of
 “ *Resignation* of myself into his Hands. I ac-
 “ knowledged, that I lay at his *Mercy* ; if he
 “ would grant me an Interest in Christ and
 “ his Salvation, it would be to the eternal
 “ Glory of his great Name : But he would
 “ be most *just*, if he should cast me off forever.
 “ I resolved to leave the Case with him, how-
 “ ever he would be pleased to deal with me.
 “ And this something eased my Mind ; and
 “ put me into a more calm and quiet Frame.

THEOPH. You speak of a *Calm* in your
 Mind, that follow’d this Submission. Did you
 now conclude your self in a safe State ?

EPINET. “ No, Sir, but my *Hopes* were
 “ something revived ; and my *Desires* after
 “ CHRIST were more than proportional to
 “ my Hopes.--- O (thought I) that I could
 “ but obtain an Interest in CHRIST ! How
 “ much is an Interest in him to be prefer’d
 “ to all the World ! I could not then envy
 “ the Magnificence or Grandeur of the great
 “ Men of the World.--- I saw this World to
 “ be what it is, a Bubble, a Nothing, when
 “ compar’d to an Interest in Christ.”

THEOPH.

THEOPH. And how did you at last obtain Satisfaction in that important Point ?

EPINET. " After some Days spent in such ardent Desires after an Interest in Christ, accompany'd with such Endeavours as I was capable of, I happen'd to read Luk. vii. 41, 42. *There was a certain Creditor, which had two Debtors : the one owed Five hundred Pence, the other fifty ; when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most.*" --- This gave me a surprizing View of the Freeness of redeeming Love ; and the Readiness of our blessed Saviour to pardon and save all such Sinners that come to him, without Distinction or Difference, the greatest as well as the smallest. --- With what a full and convincing Light, and with what inexpressible Satisfaction, could I now behold, that there was Safety for my poor guilty trembling Soul in Christ ! --- I tho't if I had a thousand Souls, I could venture them all with him. Tho' my Sins were ever so many and great, he would frankly forgive them all. The Efficacy of his Blood was sufficient for any Sinner under Heaven ; and therefore sufficient for me. -- I found my self joyfully willing to accept this Saviour upon any Terms ; to do, be, or bear whatever he call'd and enabled me to.

" --- These

" --- These delightful Operations of my Mind stopt the Progress of my reading for some considerable Time. At length I undertook to read the remaining Part of the Chapter, and when I came to the 48th Verse, *And he said unto her, Thy Sins are forgiven,* a powerful Impression accompany'd the reading those Words, as if they had been spoken to me in Person. --- How did this fill me with Wonder and Joy ! How did my Soul cry out, Lord, what am I ! Whence this astonishing Mercy to so vile a Wretch ! O how in me has the Lord Jesus Christ shew'd forth all Long-suffering, for a Pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him ! --- But I can't describe to you the ravishing Satisfaction of the Remainder of that Day, and the whole succeeding Night. --- Since that Time, my joyful Views of the Love of God are sensibly remitted : but my Comfort remains ; and I still find such Delight and Enlargement in all the Duties of Religion, as I never experienced before. --- This is a brief and imperfect Representation of my Case ; and I desire you would deal freely and impartially with me, in giving me your Opinion of it.

THEOPH. My Opinion will stand you in but little Stead. --- If you had a Certificate from all the Ministers in the World, it would not be accepted

accepted at the Bar of your final Judge. Or if they all decree you a Hypocrite ; and the Lord Jesus Christ accepts and approves you in the great Day, you will be safe enough. ---I can't however but hope, that I have Cause to join with you in praising God for this Work of Grace, which he has wrought in your Soul. May the succeeding Fruits of the blessed Spirit convince us both, that our Hopes are well grounded. If it be indeed a saving Change, (as I hope it is) it will have a happy and abiding Effect upon your Heart and Life ; by which your Hope and Comfort may be further confirmed.---I am glad to find you so cheerfully and delightfully trusting your Soul in your Redeemer's Hands. But remember, that you are not always to expect Sun-shine and fair Weather. You must prepare for a Storm ; and resolve through Grace, that whatever Temptations or Corruptions you may encounter, you will yet keep your Heart fixed, trusting in the Lord.---Have you met with no Rub in your Way, since your first Comfort ?

EPINET. “ Yes, Sir, I fell into Company
 “ the last Night, with a Gentleman who ve-
 “ hemently exclaims against our Ministers,
 “ and the Doctrines they teach ; which put
 “ me into some little Confusion. But I chose
 “ to avoid any Disputation with him ; and
 urged

“ urged him to meet me here to Day, which
 “ he promised to do ; and I expect him every
 “ Minute.”

[Just as these Words were spoken, the Person mention'd knockt at the Door, who being introduced with usual Salutations, the following short Dialogue ensued ; in which this Gentleman will be represented under the borrowed Name of LIBERTINUS.]

THEOPH. I suppose this may be the Gentleman you referred to, in your Discourse just now.

EPINET. “ Yes, Sir. He is come to let
 “ you know the Objections he has against
 “ your Ministry, and the Doctrines you teach.”

LIBERTINUS. “ Upon this Gentleman's
 “ Request, I promis'd the last Night, that I
 “ would make the same Objections to your
 “ Face, that I then made to him against you
 I “ (and

“ (and other carnal Ministers, who are leading
 “ poor Souls blindfold in the Way of Darknes
 “ and Misery) upon Condition that you will
 “ patiently hear what I have to say.”

THEOPH. Sir, If I am as you represent me,
 a carnal Minister, who am leading Sinners in
 the Way of *Destruction*, it is high Time I
 should hear, and good Reason I should pati-
 ently hear my Danger ; and chearfully submit
 to be led out of it. I shall therefore attend
 in the Character of a *Learner*, to what In-
 structions you are pleased to give me.

LIBERTIN. “ You shew your *legal Spi-*
 “ rit, by teaching Sinners the Necessity of
 “ *Preparations* for their coming to Christ ;
 “ and not directing them to come immediat-
 “ ly, without Delay.

THEOPH. Be pleased to give me some par-
 ticular Directions, that I may know how to
 conduct my self for the future.---And I first
 desire you would tell me what you mean by
coming to Christ ?

LIBERTIN. “ I mean, receiving him by
 “ *Faith*.”

THEOPH. Should we direct Sinners to come
 to Christ, and receive him by Faith, before
 they

they *understand* the Way and Terms of Salva-
 tion, propos'd in the Gospel ?

LIBERTIN. “ No ! you should instruct
 “ them in these Things ; and then exhort them
 “ to come to Christ. For *how can they be-*
 “ *lieve in him, of whom they have not heard*.”

THEOPH. What should we exhort them to
 come to Christ *for* ?

LIBERTIN. “ To save them from their
 “ Sin and Misery.”

THEOPH. Should we exhort them to come
 to Christ to save them from their Sin and
 Misery, without any *Sense* that they are sinful
 and miserable ?

LIBERTIN. “ That's impossible ; and a
 “ Contradiction.”

THEOPH. Should we direct them to come
 to Christ, and receive him, with an Apprehen-
 sion and Expectation that *they can save them-*
selves ; and have no *Need* of a special Interest
 in the *Redeemer* ?

LIBERTIN. “ No ! you should teach them
 “ their Necessity of an Interest in Christ ;
 “ and exhort them to come immediately.”

THEOPH. Should we teach them to come immediately to Christ, and to receive him by Faith without any *Desires* of an Interest in him?

LIBERTIN. "We should come to him for
" *Desires* to receive and trust him.

THEOPH. We should then teach Men, to come to Christ *against* their *Wills*: and to believe in Christ, that he may make them *willing* to believe in him!---Should we teach Men to bring *their own Righteousness* with them, when they come to Christ? and to expect Salvation from him for their own sake, for their Duties, their good Purposes, or Performances?

LIBERTIN. "You had'nt Need (I dare
" say) to teach 'em any more *legal* Doctrines
" than you do. This Legality of yours, is
" what I am now finding Fault with."

THEOPH. Should we teach Men to come to Christ, and to receive him, *before* they see any *Safety* in so doing, and while they dare not venture their Souls in his Hands?

LIBERTIN. "Why do you ask such Que-
" stions! You know, that receiving Christ by
" Faith implies trusting in him, and depending
" upon him."

THEOPH.

THEOPH. Here then are six different *Preparatives*, which you acknowledge necessary to our receiving Christ by Faith. By your own Concessions, a Sinner must first understand the Way and Terms of Salvation.---He must be sensible of his sinful and miserable State. ---He must see his Impotency and Necessity of an Interest in Christ.---He must have such *Desires* of an Interest in Christ, as will make him willing to accept him upon his own Terms.--He must renounce all other Hopes and Confidences. ---And he must see such Safety in believing in Christ, as will enable him readily to venture his eternal Interests in his Hands.-- Now then, what Doctrines do we teach, but what you yourself are forc'd to allow necessary to be taught? We are as earnest with Sinners to believe *immediately* in Christ, as you can be: and therefore admonish them to cry earnestly to God that he would remove all Hindrances out of the Way; and enlighten, persuade and enable them to believe, that they may be saved.We exhort them to look to Christ *immediately*; but not with their Eyes *shut*.We call upon 'em to give Christ *immediate* Entertainment in their Souls: but we advise them, in Order to it, to get the Doors of their Hearts *open'd*, which are barr'd against him; that so he may come in and sup with them, and they with him. We call upon them to use all appointed Means, to *awake out of their Sleep, and*

arise from the Dead, that Christ may give them Light.

LIBERTIN. "Poor deluded Soul! I see
" you han't been *taught of God.*"

THEOPH. Though you find me unteachable
in this Point, be pleas'd to proceed in your In-
structions; and see if you can't find better
Success hereafter.

LIBERTIN. "You teach, that Men may
" be true *Believers*, and yet not *know* that they
" have saving Faith: And on the contrary,
" that they may have a joyful *Persuasion*
" they are interested in Christ; and yet be *Un-*
" *believers*. Thus you give Men *Hopes* of Sal-
" vation, who want the very *Essence* of saving
" Faith; and would throw uncomfortable
" *Scruples* into the Minds of those, unto whom
" *God speaks Peace.*

THEOPH. Then you suppose, *Manifestation*
or a *Persuasion* of our *justified* State, belongs
to the *Essence* of a saving Faith.

LIBERTIN. "Most certainly! Can Men
" believe, and not know it? Is not Faith an
" Exercise of the Mind? And can any Man
" be ignorant of the Operation of his own
" Mind?--- Can any Man believe in and de-
" pend

" pend upon the Lord Jesus Christ as his
" Saviour, and not be persuaded of the Truth
" and Certainty of it? Or will the Spirit of
" God ever give Men this joyful Persuasion,
" when there is Nothing in it?

THEOPH. Does not *Faith* in Jesus Christ
consist in our *receiving* him upon Gospel-Terms?

LIBERTIN. "Receiving Christ is certainly
" (as I told you before) the Scripture-Defini-
" tion of saving Faith. *To as many as received*
" *him, to them gave he Power to become the*
" *Children of God, even to them that believe on*
" *his Name.* John i. 12.

THEOPH. Which is *first* in Order? Our
Act, in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ; or the
Evidence, that we have received him?

LIBERTIN. "It's certain, that there can
" be no Evidence of an airy Nothing. The
" Act must needs precede the Evidence of that
" Act. That can't be evidently true, which
" is not really true at all.--- But what do you
" mean by this Question?

THEOPH. Doth it not then follow, that
we must *have* Faith *before* we *know*, or have
Evidence, that we believe in Christ; since we
cannot know we have that, which in Fact we
have

have not? and consequently, that *Manifestation* is not of the *Essence* of Faith?

LIBERTIN. "There is but a very short
" *Distance* of Time between our receiving
" Christ, and the Evidence that we have re-
" ceived him."

THEOPH. Suppose that there were but a
Minute's Distance.--- If true *Faith* can exist
one single Moment, without *Manifestation*, it
may for the same Reason exist a thousand.---
If *Persuasion* of our good Estate be *necessary*
and *essential* to true Faith, then it cannot exist
one Minute without it. If this be not essen-
tially necessary to true Faith, it *may* (tho' I
don't think it ordinarily does) exist always
without it.--- I don't see how this comes short
of *Demonstration*: You must certainly fall
under the Power of Conviction.

LIBERTIN. "Demonstration! It is nothing
" but a Quibble. I see no Force in it to con-
" vince----

THEOPH. Let me then enquire further into
this Matter..... Do you suppose, that *all* true
Believers *always* have the *Manifestations* of
God's Love, and clear *Evidences* of an Interest
in Christ?

LIB.

LIBERTIN. "No! They may be under
" Desertions. God may *hide his Face*, and
" *they may be troubled*. There may be
" such, *who fear the Lord and obey the Voice*
" *of his Servant, who yet walk in Darkness and*
" *see no Light*. But they have then no Faith
" in *Exercise*.

THEOPH. Are there not such as have had
those *Evidences* and *Manifestations*, which we
are speaking of, who are afterwards, the greatest
Part of their Lives, in *Darkness* and Doubt
about their State?

LIBERTIN. "This is notoriously true:
" but how comes it to be so, but from such
" *Teachers* as you are; and from such *Doc-*
" *trines* as you teach?

THEOPH. However it comes to pass, you
allow it to be Fact. And what *Class* must we
rank these in, while in these dark and doubting
Frames? Are they Believers, or Unbelievers?

LIBERTIN. "I have told you before, they
" are Believers, under Desertion. They have
" the Habit of Faith; but are under a *Suf-*
" *pension* of the Exercise of it."

THEOPH. Suppose they should *die* in this
dark and doubting Frame, what would their
eternal State be? LIB.

LIBERTIN. "That's clear: *Whom he justifies, them he also glorifies.*"

THEOPH. The Sum of your present Instruction then is this. That there may be true *Believers*, who (while such) may want the very *Essence* of a saving Faith---They may, the greatest Part of their Lives, have the *Habit* of Faith without the *Exercise* of it; and be all this while wholly destitute of what is absolutely necessary to the very Being of true Faith.--They may *die* in this State, true *Believers*, without the *Essence* of Faith; and be eternally *glorified*.--Don't you think it high Time, that a carnal Ministry and an ignorant World should be enlightned by such Instructions as these!

Well now, if you please, consider the *other* Part of your Charge against the carnal Ministry you complain of; and see whether we are so guilty as you suppose, by preaching that Men may have a joyful *Persuasion* that they are *interested in CHRIST*; and yet be *Unbelievers*.---I would then enquire, Whether we must conclude such a *Persuasion* to be a saving *Faith*, if it should puff a Man up with *Pride* and *Vanity* of Mind; and cause him, like the *Pharisees*, to think himself *righteous*, and to despise *others*; or like those in the *Prophet*, to say, *Stand by thy self; come not nigh me; for I am holier than thou?*

LIBERTIN.

LIBERTIN. "That *can't* be. But if it were supposed, all that can be inferred from it, is, that they have *Imperfection* accompanying their *Faith*."

THEOPH. That this *can* be, is too evident from unquestionable Fact, open to every Body's Observation.---And you are to remember, that I am not enquiring, whether these Persons *have* true Faith: but whether this *Persuasion* of an Interest in Christ be *essential* to a true Faith. If so, this *Pride* and *Vanity* does not only accompany their Faith, but is the *Effect* and *Fruit* of it. It directly flows from what you call saving Faith, as the immediate Cause of its Production.---Suppose this *Persuasion* be but a *Part* of the Description of saving Faith; yet, according to you, it necessarily belongs to the Description; and is of the *Essence* of Faith: and thence it follows, that it is Faith *it self* (what belongs to its Nature and *Essence*) that is the immediate Cause of *Haughtiness* and *Pride*.---But I forget that I am the Learner. What if some Persons, who have this *Persuasion*, should live *sinful* sensual and scandalous Lives; are they notwithstanding true *Believers*?

LIBERTIN. "They won't live such Lives; they *will* love Holiness. But if they *did* live as you suppose, they being interested in the Redemption of Christ, can't fail of Salvation."

THEOPH.

THEOPH. The World has had too many Evidences, that Men may entertain this comforting and delightful *Persuasion* of an Interest in Christ; and yet live most profligate and abandon'd Lives. --- Was not this the Case of the *Ranters*, *Muggletonians*, *Seekers*, *Familists*, &c? There are many now living amongst us, who han't forgot the mad Freaks of the infamous *CASE* and *BANKS*, with their Followers. And who could have a stronger *Persuasion* of an Interest in Christ, than they had? How did they frequently go about the Streets in a Sort of *Rapture*, crying JOY, JOY! --- Was this their joyful *Satisfaction*, and *Persuasion* of their Interest in Christ, a true *Faith*, or not?

LIBERTIN. " Poor Man! You have had
 " no *Experience* what this satisfactory and joy-
 " ful *Persuasion* of an Interest in Christ means:
 " Or else you would not have imagin'd this
 " People to be capable of it.

THEOPH. Be pleas'd then to give me some further Information about it. --- Is our *receiving* Christ, and our personal *Persuasion* of an Interest in him, the *same* Thing? Or are they not?

LIBERTIN. " I can't say, they are altoge-
 " ther the same Thing. For, the *receiving*
 " a Gift, and *knowing* that I do receive it, are
 two

" two different Things; tho' they accompany
 " one another, and can't be separated.

THEOPH. Is it not possible for a Man to *deceive* himself, by a strong *Persuasion* of his having received the Lord Jesus Christ by Faith, when in Reality he has not? May he not *think himself Something, when he is Nothing*? --- Did not *Judas*, did not the five *foolish Virgins*, and the Church of *Laodicea*, deceive themselves? --- And won't all that live and die in such *Self-Deceit*, necessarily *perish*?

LIBERTIN. " This can't be deny'd."

THEOPH. The Sum then of the present Instruction you give me, is this: That the *Persuasion*, which you say is essential to a true saving *Faith*, may be productive of *Pride* and *Vanity of Mind*; & may consist with a *scandalous* and profligate *Life*: --- That it is *not* the *same* Thing with receiving Christ, or with saving Faith; but may, and sometimes does *deceive* Men to their eternal *Destruction*: And yet that all who have this *Persuasion*, are actually *interested* in the Redemption of Christ; and can't fail of eternal *Salvation*. --- This, it seems, is the *Doctrine* you would direct us to teach to our People.

K.

LIBERTIN.

EPINET. " I think, Sir, you have sufficiently expos'd this Gentleman's Opinion. You would now oblige me, if you would give us *your own* Thoughts upon the Subject under Consideration."

THEOPH. I acknowledge the Truth of what he says, that *Faith* is the Exercise of the Mind; and that every Man may *know* the Operations of his own Mind: But it does not follow from thence, that every Man must know whether he *be*, or be not a *true* Believer.--- Tho' we cannot but be conscious to the Actings of our Minds, and feel them operate: yet we may not *certainly* know what is the exact *Quality* of those Operations; and whether our *Faith* be *saving* and true, or not.--- The Believer may sensibly feel such Exercises of Mind, as look very much *like* true *Faith*: And yet through the Darkness of his Understanding, the Prevalence of Temptation, or Fear of Presumption, he may be awfully jealous, that this is but a *counterfeit* Grace, which may leave him expos'd to Disappointment and Confusion. Alas, it's to be fear'd, that Thousands deceive themselves in this *most* concerning Case, by taking the Resemblance for the Reality: and hence we may well dread being cheated by meer Appearances.

It must also be acknowledged, that clear distinct and satisfying *Evidence* of the Exercise of Faith is not only *attainable*: but is what has
been

been actually attain'd by many of the Children of God, to their unspeakable *Consolation*; and is what should and will be earnestly *pressed after* by every true Believer. He that can content himself without Assurance, does thereby evidence that he has hitherto rested short of true Faith. A true Believer can't willingly be at a dreadful Uncertainty, what his eternal State is like to be: but will give *Diligence* to make his *Calling and Election jure*.--- *Manifestation* is absolutely necessary to the *Comfort*, though it be not necessary to the *Safety* of a Child of God. It's necessary to the *Joy* of Faith, though not to the *Being* of Faith. But this notwithstanding, it must be remembered, that it is our *Acceptance* of Christ (and not our *Persuasion* that we have received him) which gives us the *Power, the Privilege, to become the Children of God*. Joh. i. 12.--- It is Christ's *Righteousness*, and not our *Evidence* of an Interest in it, that is the Matter of our Justification before God. *We are justified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ*. Rom. iii. 23. --- Accordingly, our Safety is founded upon our trusting in Christ, and committing our Souls to him; and not upon the Satisfaction we have in our Minds about it. Eph. i. 12. *That we should be to the Praise of his Glory, who first trusted in Christ*. 2 Tim. i. 12. *He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that Day*. Whence it follows, that the Joy

and Peace, which is commonly found, first or last, in a greater or lesser Degree, in all true Believers, is not *Faith* in Jesus Christ: But a *Fruit* or Consequence of Faith and the Discovery of it to their own Consciences. AFTER *that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise.* Eph. i. 13.

What a dreadful Train of *Consequences* will follow from the Supposition, that *Faith* consists in a satisfactory *Persuasion* of our good Estate! If so, Then our Justification must depend upon our Frames; and be as mutable as our Comfort. For how often soever we want this *Persuasion*, we are Unbelievers; and while such, in a State of Condemnation. *Job. iii. 18.*--- If so, then tempted, deserted, or melancholly Believers can have no possible Means of Comfort or Relief. *Those who walk in Darkness and see no Light, can no Ways be encouraged to trust in the Lord, and to stay themselves upon their God; as directed in Isa. l. 10.* ---- If so, the most secure and presumptuous Self-Flatterers are in the safest State: And how then can that be true, that *he who thinketh himself something, when he is nothing, deceiveth himself!* Gal. vi. 3.--- If so, the Church of *Ladicea* was in the Exercise of a true Faith, when she said, *I am rich and increased with Goods; and have Need of Nothing.* Rev. iii. 17.--- If so, there can be no Occasion for the Apostle's Exhortation, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves whether*

whether ye be in the Faith. For we can be always certain, whether we have a *satisfying Persuasion* of our own good Estate, or not. Nor is there any Occasion to *give Diligence to make our Calling and Election sure*; as we are exhorted 2 Pet. i. 10. For what Diligence can be wanting, to know what is the settled and satisfying *Persuasion* of our own Minds?--- In fine, If so, there is no Means left to detect confident Self-Deceivers, or to recover bold presumptuous Sinners out of their dangerous Soul-destroying Mistakes. Infomuch that I don't know what Doctrine can have a directer Tendency to the Destruction of Multitudes of poor Sinners, than this has.

LIBERTIN. "These *Consequences* shew the
" *Darkness* of your own Mind."

THEOPH. Well! What further Instructions have you to give, that may *enlighten* my dark Mind?

LIBERTIN. "You are so rooted in your
" *Prejudices* and erroneous Principles, that it
" will be to no Purpose to talk to you any
" longer."

EPINET. "Be pleas'd then for my Sake to
" proceed, according to the Promise you made
" me the last Night."

LIBERTIN. "One of those *legal Doctrines*,
 " which I then did, and still do object against,
 " is, That Men are put upon *evidencing* their
 " Justification by their *Sanctification*. This is
 " like lighting up a Candle to see the Sun. By
 " this they are looking to their own Attainments,
 " and not to Christ's Righteousness, for Hopes
 " of Salvation."

THEOPH. Don't you acknowledge, that a
 Life of Holiness is absolutely necessary to Salva-
 tion; and that *without Holiness no Man can see*
the Lord?

LIBERTIN. "I told you before, that Belie-
 " vers *will be holy.*"

THEOPH. Don't it therefore follow from
 thence, that those who will *not* be holy, are
 not *true* Believers?---Do you yourself suppose,
 that any Man may justly esteem himself a Child
 of God, while he lives in the Service of Sin and
 Satan?

LIBERTIN. "God won't impute Sin to his
 " Children. *He has laid upon CHRIST the Ini-*
 " *quities of us all*; and he won't lay 'em upon
 " *them too.*"

THEOPH. I thought that the Lord Jesus
 Christ had not come to save Men in their Sins;
 but

but to *redeem them from all Iniquity, and to pu-*
rify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good
Works: And consequently, that none have their
 Iniquities laid upon Christ, but those whom he
 saves from the *Power* and *Dominion*, as well
 as the *Guilt* and *Punishment* of Sin. --- Pray,
 Sir, answer me directly.---Can any Man *have*
this Hope in Christ, that doth not purify himself,
even as he is pure? And on the contrary,
 Shall not *the pure in Heart* certainly *see God*;
 and *he that orders his Conversation aright, partake*
of his Salvation?

LIBERTIN. "I acknowledge, that those
 " are the very Words of the Scripture: but
 " you don't understand them; *You wrest the*
 " *Scriptures.*"

THEOPH. Is it not certainly true, that *he*
who doth Righteousness, is Righteous, even as he
is Righteous? And on the contrary, is it not
 also true, that *he who sinneth, hath not seen him,*
neither known him? And that *he who committeth*
Sin, is of the Devil?

LIBERTIN. "I acknowledge, that this
 " also is Scripture-Language.

THEOPH. Don't the Scriptures make the
 committing, or the not committing Sin, the distin-
 guishing

guishing Mark, by which *the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil?*

LIBERTIN. "It does, I confess.

THEOPH. Well, Is there any other Evidence, that would give us a comfortable Claim to the Character of God's Children, if this were wanting?

LIBERTIN. Yes; if this should be wanting, *the Witness of God's Spirit with our Spirits, that we are his Children, is a better Evidence in our Favour than this.*

THEOPH. Which Way shall we know, that we have the *Witness of God's Spirit*; and are not deceived, as many Pretenders to it have certainly been?

LIBERTIN. "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the *Witness in himself.* He feels it, he knows it.

THEOPH. So said the *Ranters, Mugletonians, and Familists* before mention'd. But both they and you must excuse me from believing, that the *Spirit of God* witnesseth with your Spirits, *contrary to his Witness in his Word.* --- Where he is a witnessing Spirit, he is also a sanctifying

sanctifying Spirit. --- *They who live in the Spirit, do also walk in the Spirit.* Gal. v. 25.

LIBERTIN. "Thus blind Men may undertake to judge of Colours, as you adventure to speak Evil of Things you understand not."

THEOPH. Shall we then sum up your Instructions upon this Subject? --- You can't deny but that the Scriptures make *Holiness* absolutely necessary to Salvation; that no one can have this Hope, who don't purify himself, as *Christ is pure*; that every one hath this Hope, that doth thus purify himself; that he who doth *Righteousness is righteous*; and that they who live in Sin, have not seen him, neither known him; and that this is the Light, by which the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil. --- You can't but acknowledge that all this is the very Word of God. --- And yet you will hold, that we must not evidence our Justification, by that which God himself has told us is a sure Mark and Evidence of it; and without which he has assured us, that we are not in a justified State. We must not make it manifest to our selves whose Children we are, by that which God himself has told us, is the proper Manifestation of it. --- And what is the Reason why we must not try ourselves by this Rule? Because this were

were “ to light up a Candle to see the
 “ Sun. We may have a better and clearer
 “ Evidence.” What, without this ! An Evi-
 dence, that may consist with a Course of Sin-
 ning ! And may with the greatest Assurance
 be pretended to, by Men of most profligate
 and abandon’d Lives ! Let these but impute
 their presumptuous Confidence to the Spirit of
 God, and call it his *witnessing with their Spi-
 rits* ; and their State is safe !--- You tell us
 indeed, that they who have this Witness, *will*
 not sin : But what if they should ?---I con-
 clude, you will answer with a famous *Rabbi*
 of the present Day, “ That we must not
 “ mind Sin any more than a Fly.”---What
 Sort of Doctrines are these ! I hope our
 People are better instructed by their carnal
 Ministers (as you are pleased to stigmatize us)
 than to receive such carnal, such dangerous
 and mischievous Principles as these are.

LIBERTIN. “ Poor Soul ! I pity you
 “ and your deluded Followers : But I see
 “ it is to no Purpose to talk any more with
 “ you ; and therefore must bid you Fare-
 “ wel.”

THEOPH. I hope, Sir, you won’t go away
 disgusted. I have design’d no personal Incivi-
 lity or Disrespect, in any Thing I have said.---
 But

But if you are resolute to go, I heartily wish
 you well.

EPINET. “ I see, he is ruffled : He’s
 “ gone away in a Pet. But though he’s
 “ gone, I hope you will for my Sake more
 “ particularly clear up the Subject before us ;
 “ and shew how far we may depend upon
 “ *internal Manifestation* of the Love of God,
 “ as an Evidence of our Safety ; and how far
 “ we ought to look to our *Sanctification* for
 “ the Comfort of a justified State.”

THEOPH. You may remember, I said some-
 thing to this in our former Conference. To
 which I will now add ;---It is doubtless true,
 that the Believer may in such a feeling and
 sensible Manner exercise Faith in Christ, he
 may have such a clear Discovery of his Suffici-
 ency, so heartily comply with the Gospel-
 Call, so firmly depend upon the Promise ; and
 have all this so clearly manifested to himself
 by the *Spirit* of God, that he can at that
 Time no more doubt of it, than of any other
 Operations of his own Mind.---But then it
 must be remembred, that these sensible Im-
 pressions are but *transient* Things. He may
lose them : and if the Spirit of God withdraw
 his comforting Influences, he certainly *will*
 lose them ; and not so much as retain a lively
Idea of the transporting Comforts, which he
 then

then had. And what shall he do now? Whither shall he betake himself for Support? --- He remembers indeed, that he has had Comfort and Joy: But this Prop is now knockt from under him. *He goes forward, but it is not there: And backward, but he cannot perceive it.* --- Besides, Many have pretended to the *same* Experience, and to the *same* Assurance that he has formerly had, who are evidently *Self-Deceivers*. And how shall he know that *he* is not himself likewise in a most dangerous Mistake, but by the *Fruit of the Spirit*, in his Heart and Life? --- These therefore must be consider'd, as the *ordinary and standing* Evidences in his Favour.

If he maintains an habitual Course of vital and true *Holiness*, he thereby clears up his Interest in CHRIST. For from him only, the Head of Influences, this sanctifying Change in the Man must proceed. If he has not a Principle of Holiness in his Heart, and is not careful to be practically holy in his Life and Conversation, he can't *belong to Christ*, or be *his Disciple*; He can have no Interest in Christ. For *Christ came to save his People from their Sins.* --- And if we yet further consider this Case; how many true *Believers* are there, who may never have experienced such clear, ravishing, and unquestionable *Manifestations* of the Love of God to their Souls? And which

which Way possibly can such evidence their Justification, but by their *Sanctification*? They sometimes doubt whether their *Faith* (taken under an abstract Examination) be sincere, and genuine: But they may perhaps find beyond Doubt their Sorrow for and Hatred of all Sin, their Love to Holiness, and their unfeigned Endeavours of Conformity to God in all Things. They find the purifying Effects of Faith. By this therefore, they may safely conclude their State good. They may safely conclude themselves to be *in Christ Jesus, because old Things are passed away; and all Things are become new in them.* --- In fine, Sanctification is in it self a good Evidence for us: But where that is wanting, we can have none at all.

EPINET. " I must acknowledge, Sir, you
 " have set this Matter in a clear and convinc-
 " ing Light. --- Oh! What wild Schemes this
 " Gentleman entertains! --- We had several
 " other such Doctrines taught us, in Conversa-
 " tion with him the last Night. Particularly,
 " that we are justified from *Eternity*; that
 " the Law is not a *Rule of Life* for Belie-
 " vers; that God *sees no Sin* in his
 " Children, how imperfect soever; and the
 " like."

THEOPH. The Lord graciously prevent the spreading of such dangerous Contagion. ---- What! *Justified* before we had a Being! Pardon'd, before we had sinned! Acquitted from Guilt, before we were guilty! Why not sanctified and glorified too from Eternity? Is it not true of all who *believe not, that they are condemned already*? Are they justified from Eternity; and yet condemned for their Unbelief?---What, the *Law* not a Rule of Life to Believers! Have they then no Rule to walk by! Are they under no Obligations to Obedience? Nay, are they not even under greater Obligations, from the special Love of God manifested to them? *Do we then make void the Law by Faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law.*---What, does God see no Sin in his Children! Are we not expressly told, that *the Thing which David did, displeased the Lord?* 2 Sam. xi. 27. Don't Believers sin against greater Obligations? And are not therefore *their* Sins especially displeasing to God? Alas, What dreadful Work would those *strange Doctrines* make in the World, if Men should be generally acted and influenced by them? The Lord deliver us from such loose and dangerous Principles!

EPINET. "A good Petition!--And now,
"Sir, I heartily thank you for your renew'd
"Pains with me, and Kindness to me.--I hope

"I shall have Occasion to praise God to all
"Eternity, for my Acquaintance and Con-
"versation with you.---The Lord requite to
"you this Work and Labour of Love!

THEOPH. May God be with you, my Friend! And grant you continued Experience of the sanctifying, quickning, and comforting Influences of his blessed Spirit; that you may go on your *Way rejoicing*, may glorify God on Earth, and at last enter into the Joy of your LORD, in the heavenly World.

EPINET. "I thank you, dear Sir, for
"these your friendly Wishes: And beg the
"Favour of a daily Remembrance in your
"Intercessions at the Throne of Grace. ----
"Sir, I wish you a good Night.

THEOPH. *God forbid, that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you!---I also desire your Prayers for me.---My Love to all at Home.*



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ERRATA.

- P. Age 35. line 6. read, *clearing*, P. 94. l. 16
read, *We'll* now.