

Volume 5

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Epistles of Faith

PREFACE

Courteous Reader,

I HERE present thee with a few letters; the first consists of controversy, the others upon heart-felt union and living faith, &c. But my reader may desire to know the reason of the controversy in the first letter. The reason is as follows: I once got a man, of whose praise I had heard several people very lavish, to go and preach for me at Sunbury, in Middlesex; at which place he was well received by a few who had not long heard the gospel; but certain persons at times informed me that he was an Arminian in principle. However, as the man had long been a preacher, and formerly the leader of a society at a very large chapel in London, I could not believe it, but reprov'd them for their report. Some time after, I got the above person to go and preach for me at another place, and they said the same, that he savoured of Arminianism. Hearing

of this, I wrote a letter to Sunbury, to inform the people of it. They sent my letter to the preacher; and he sent a letter to the little flock at Sunbury, which was read to the congregation, and by some much approved of. The next week the same person was appointed to preach in London: I took with me a few pious men, whom I supposed able of judging between truth and error, and went and heard him for my own satisfaction; and as far as God hath given me to am into his word, he appeared to be an Arminian, as was reported. I therefore sent to Sunbury for his letter, and took a copy of it: I answered his letter, and made some remarks on his sermon; as my letter was not allowed to be read at Sunbury, there I had formerly carried the gospel. The reason was asked, why his letter was read, and not my answer to it? And the reason assigned for it was, because some good men and some gospel ministers had condemned my answer. Therefore, not being fond of things done in a corner, I have in this little pamphlet published his letter first, verbatim as it was taken from his own copy; and the next is my answer to it, with my descant on his sermon; and I chuse to submit to the judgment of the sound and experienced Christian, whether I have dealt scripturally and faithfully with him or not. I must beg my reader to put one consideration in God's balance, which is, I have been cast down into arminianism, and have suffered much in it. But perhaps God has kept my reader from these errors: if so, he cannot be so sensibly enraged against the fire as the burnt child is Thine to serve

W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith – Part I

Letter I

William Huntington (1745-1813)

MR. J. RHINE TO THE CHURCH OF GOD AT SUNBURY

"IF any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified;" and as I am called upon to give an answer of the reason of the hope that is in me, I therefore tell you, that it was not from either Luther or Calvin, for I cannot find either of their names in the bible, and I am so taught to look no where else; as the lively oracles of God are sufficient, when I am enabled by the Holy Ghost to believe them, that there is sure standing when upheld by God the Father in his love, the Son in his work, and the Spirit in his grace, as three faithful in covenant, unchangeable in nature, unalterable in purpose, uncontrollable in his providences; and all these attributes to be engaged in the behalf of his chosen people, of which number not one can be lost, or by any means perish at last. I am convinced that many of them have been brought low by, and for their sins; but not to satisfy justice, or make an atonement, but to bring them to their right mind and in their right place, to make a proper use of the advocacy of Christ, who by his life and merits, by his sufferings and death, hath for ever perfected his elect, who was his gift from the Father. I also am taught by the scriptures, that it is in time they are separated by his grace to be a people to himself, and not to be numbered with the nations among whom they sojourn; and when called, a new language is given, that the world cannot understand; that they are strangers, and pilgrims, and this is not their rest, and therefore journeying to a country of promise, which is even now realized by faith, and of the fruits

which grow on that tree the root, and they as branches in him, grafted in, and deriving sap from that blessed root Christ Jesus; the fruit holiness, and the end everlasting life. Not as their works to justify, but the work of the Holy Ghost that worketh in, by, and upon them to glorify their father which is in heaven, and is their unspeakable mercy as well as their indispensable duty to shew forth the praises of him that hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light, and not to render evil for evil to any man, but contrariwise, blessing for cursing for although the wrath of man shall praise him, yet no thanks to man for his wrath, for the remainder thereof will God restrain therefore they who falsely accuse me with rejoicing at my brother Butler's fall, do me wrong, as I am bold to say, that I love them in the Lord Jesus, and did also give them the right hand of fellowship, only whilst they were under that delusion, and unconvinced; and as to speaking of any man's pride behind his back, it is, and hath been the way with me, to speak face to face; for which cause, I have lost the professed friendship of many; but I respect no man's person, nor seek reward at any man's hand, for the Lord is my reward, and rewarder. But to this charge I do plead guilty, if it be criminal, my unprofitableness, which is my plea before God for my removal from Sunbury, that I may not hinder others, by whom the work of God may be carried on: I am only sorry I staid so long to so little purpose.

I therefore gladly give place to whom God may please to send, wishing all peace and prosperity in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to you all. And as I am thought to act the Jonah which hath caused this storm, I fear not to be cast into the sea, that the raging thereof may cease from you; that the church may have rest, walking in the fear of the Lord, and be multiplied and edified; and as pastors after his own heart, is the promise of God, that God may help you to plead for such, is the wish and prayer of your unprofitable servant in the Lord,

JAMES
No. 22,
Portman-Square, May 21st, 1784

RHINE.
Henrietta-street.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter II

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MR. JAMES RHINE.

Winchester Row, 4th June, 1884.

Dear Sir,

BY my desire your letter is brought to me, and indeed it should have been sent to me at first, as I was the person who wrote the letter concerning you. But perhaps you had your private reasons for this step.

You begin your letter thus: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, that God in all things may be glorified."

I will in this letter prove to you, that you do not speak as the oracles of God; consequently he is not glorified. You say, you are called upon to give an answer of the reason of the hope that is in you. If any man gives a reason of the hope that is in him, he should tell us how this hope held him up, as an

anchor through all the storms of life, and give an account of the quickening power of the Spirit, who formed Christ in his heart, as a lively hope of glory. The joy likewise that attends this hope; "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God," with Paul. To give a reason of a man's hope, is to tell how he came by it, and what the experience was, that wrought this hope in him; for it is experience that worketh hope; also who the object is that he hopes in, and what the truths are that he grounds his hope upon. Christ formed in the heart is a hope of glory within, and through the mediator they hope in the Father. They shall set their hope in God, says David, for he is the object of hope. "Remember thy word unto thy servant," says David, "upon which thou hast caused me to hope:" there is the foundation of his hope. And now Sir, give me leave to refer you to the 26th chapter of the Acts, where Paul gives a reason of the hope that was in him. You will not be displeased at this, because your letter expresses, that a man ought to speak as the oracles of God, that God may be glorified. In Acts the 26th, Paul says, "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our Fathers; for which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews." Here Paul is accused for his hope; and he stands to be judged for his hope; and now his business is, to give a reason of the hope that is in him; and let us see how he does it. First, Paul tells them what a sinner he was by nature, and how he persecuted the preachers of the gospel, and did things contrary to the name of Jesus. Secondly, He tells them how he was enlightened by Christ the true light, and thus delivered from darkness. Thirdly, How the word of Christ came with power to his heart. Fourthly, How Jesus appeared to him, to make him a minister, and a witness of all that he had seen, mark that; he was to be a minister of the things which he had seen. Fifthly, He obtains a promise that Christ would appear to him again, and that Paul should be a witness, and a minister of the things which Christ would reveal, when he appeared again. Sixthly, He receives a promise of Christ's

protecting and delivering grace. Seventhly He is to preach that glorious change, which was wrought in his own heart, and no other. I send thee to open blind eyes, says Christ, as I have caused the scales to drop from your's; to turn people from darkness to, light, as I have turned you; and from the power of Satan unto God, as Christ had turned him: that they might receive an inheritance among them that are pardoned, and sanctified, by faith that is in Christ. Thus Paul gives a reason of the hope that was in him; mark that, that was in him. And then he goes on to the warranted foundation of this hope within him; which is, the hope or testimony experienced, and left upon record by Moses and the Prophets. "Having therefore," said he, "obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead; and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles," Acts xxvi. 9-13.

But perhaps you may object, and say, all are not taught as Paul was. To which I answer, they must all be enlightened as well as Paul: "Whoso believeth on me," says the Saviour, "shall not abide in darkness, but shall have the light of life." All must hear Christ's voice as well as Paul; "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice, and they follow me." They must all be taught of Jesus as well as Paul. It is written, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be their peace." All must see Jesus as well as Paul; "And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him; we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Thus, Sir, I have spewed you what it is to give a reason of the hope that is in a man, and of God's word, as a warrant for faith, and a foundation for hope, upon which we build our expectations of heaven and glory. And now I am willing to appeal to any righteous man, or even to your own

conscience, in God's sight, whether or not I have spoken in this letter agreeably to the oracles of God.

Now, sir, you call yourself a child of God, as well as Paul. You appear in the character of a gospel minister, as well as he: you say in your letter, God is your reward and rewarder; and that you are called upon to give a reason of the hope that is in you, as well as Paul. If you read the 29th chapter of Isaiah, and 16th verse, you will find, turning things upside down is esteemed of God as potter's clay; and afterwards the prophet goes on to shew what experience the righteous have, which begetteth hope within them. The deaf shall hear, the blind shall see, the meek shall increase their joy, and rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, ver. 18, 19. Now, I think you, in your letter, have begun where the apostle Paul left off; and thus your house stands on the chimney: this is turning things upside down indeed! and I think, sir, if you will compare your letter to God's word, you will be humble enough to own, that you have not given a reason of a good hope within you, nor even how you came by, it; nor have you proved that you have any hope at all. Your hope seems to be without, even in the bible only, but not in the heart, as an anchor of the soul. Surely you cannot call this, speaking as the oracles of God or giving a reason of your hope, as God's witnesses have done, and as all his witnesses ought to do. Give me leave to recite the reason which you have given of your hope within; and I think you begin thus; "I am called upon to give an answer of the reason of the hope that is in me." Now, let us see how you answer your call. Then you go on; "I therefore tell you, that it was not from either Luther or Calvin" That is, you did not receive your hope from either of these men, if I understand you right. Pray where did you get it then? But you go on, and say, You cannot find the name of Luther or Calvin in the Bible. Nor can I find the name of Mr. Rhine there; yet he says his hope is there. But, sir, a good hope must be within you. But you proceed: "I am so taught to look no where else." No

where else but where! You don't tell us where. You again proceed; "As the lively oracles are sufficient, when I am enabled by the Holy Ghost to believe them." But let me tell you, sir, that Christ is the object of faith; he says, the scriptures testify of him; and again, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." We must believe in the object the scriptures testify of; but your faith stands in the letter only. The word left upon record is to lead faith to the Son of God; the word is the record given of the Son.

You now proceed, "That there is sure standing, when upheld by God the Father in his love, the Son in his work, and the Spirit in his grace." Pray, is this speaking as the oracles of God? No; the oracles of God tell us, our standing sure is thus: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God," and the arm, or power of the Lord shall uphold me; and again, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;" and again, "Be strengthened by the Spirit's might in the inner man." So we are to lean on the Father's arm, be strong in the Saviour's grace, and to be strengthened by the Spirit's might in the new man, which you have left quite out of your confession. You have attributed the grace of God all to the Spirit, contrary to the blessings of all the Apostles. Grace is God's favour freely given us in Christ, and treasured up for us in him. "It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell;" and out of his fullness we must receive grace for grace, for he is full of grace and truth. The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of his grace, or of his love; because he reveals this grace to us, and sheds abroad God's love in us.

You say, that you are upheld by the Son in his work: is this speaking as the oracles of God! I answer, No. The work is finished, which his Father gave him to do. Be strong in faith, as Abraham was, and believe as Christ tells you; believe me, saith he, for the work's sake. Your hope within you, as you call it, is only a creed or a confession of your faith, and a very

corrupt one at best. I hope you will for the future do as you leave commanded others to do; that is, speak as the oracles of God; and do not say, I am upheld by the Father in his love, the Son in his work, and the Spirit in his grace: but say, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with me, and uphold me; and then, but not till then, will you speak as the oracles of God. You next go on, saying; that is, speaking of your confused ideas of the most Holy Trinity, that your standing, as before cited, is in these three faithful in covenant, unchangeable in nature, unalterable in purpose, uncontrollable in his providences; and all these attributes to be engaged in the behalf of his chosen people; of which number, not one can be lost, or by any means perish at last. Sir, the unchangeableness of God in his nature, causes him to be unchangeable in his purpose, and unchangeable in his providence; for a being that is unalterable in himself, is the same in his purpose, and cannot be changed by his creatures: this is no more than one attribute; namely, the immutability of God. Thus, sir, you have jumbled the doctrine of the Trinity into what you call the engaged attributes of God; and it amounts to no more than the immutability of him. This is all that you can bring out of the ever-adorable Trinity: this therefore is not speaking as the oracles of God; consequently he is not glorified. But you proceed; "I am convinced, that many of them [that is, of God's people, if I understand you right] have been brought low by and for their sins; but not to satisfy justice, or make an atonement, but to bring them to their right mind and to their right place." If a person is by sin brought low, he feels the fear of death, and hell, and is in bondage to them; but he is not brought to his right mind, nor to his right place, till the Holy Ghost delivers him. "Ye," says Paul, "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;" but we have received the spirit of love, and of a sound mind: In this you have not spoken as the oracles of God; consequently he is not glorified. You proceed further, and I

follow you: That they are brought to their right mind and place to make a proper use of the advocacy of Christ. Pray, what is advocacy? I never read of the word advocacy in the bible, nor in any dictionary; therefore this is not speaking as the oracles of God; this is a very rotten part of your creed; for if a sinner is brought low for sin, it is that he may fly to the atonement for pardon and peace; but the advocateship of Jesus is to be applied to, when the law or Satan accuse, either before or after justification has taken place. You likewise say, that "I also am taught by the scriptures, [not by the Holy Ghost who is to guide us into all truth,] that it is in time they are separated by his grace; to be a people to himself, and not to be numbered among the nations among whom they sojourn." I read, that from all eternity their number and names were written in the Lamb's book of life; and that the others have their names written in the dust; and thus speak the oracles of God. You go on, that when these are called, but you don't tell us how; that they receive a new language, but you don't tell us what; which the world cannot understand, but you don't tell us why; and that such are pilgrims, but you don't tell us how; and strangers, but you never tell us in what sense. But you say, the country to which they go is now realized by faith; which you go on to explain thus, if it has any meaning at all: "And of the fruits, which grow on that tree, the root, and they as branches in him, grafted in, and drawing sap from the blessed root Christ Jesus, the fruit holiness, and the end everlasting life." Now, sir, in this you have not spoken as the oracles of God; if you had, you would have described the Holy Ghost's operations, and have owned that the Spirit is an earnest of our future inheritance, which you call a land realized by faith, and that we derive life from Christ the root of David, by faith; and so pass from death to life by believing, and not call the fruit holiness, for God is holiness: but you would have spoken as Paul did, namely, that believers have their fruit unto holiness; mark that, unto holiness. The fruits of the Spirit are one thing; fruit unto

holiness is fruit produced by the Spirit unto God, who is holiness itself. Here you have not spoken as the oracles of God; therefore God is not glorified.

You say, it is necessary for such, that is, the saints as I suppose, or the world I don't know which, that they should chew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into marvellous light. But who are they? I read that a preacher is to be eyes to the blind; and Christ says, if the eye, or the preacher, be singly directed, all the whole mystical body, which he is the leader of, and the eye too, shall be full of light: for he is to be God's candle, to give light to all that are in the house. Now many at Sunbury declare this your letter to be written in a Christian spirit, and to be sound doctrine; and I will prove that there is not one line of sound divinity in it; and this either personally or by letter, which you please; and I will submit to the judgment of any you shall choose. But as your judgment is rotten, and your eye evil, it proves, that the greater part of the body you minister to at Sunbury, agreeably to scripture, is full of darkness; and if the whole body be darkness in a gospel profession, then, says Christ, how great is that darkness which keeps its veil in an enlightened age, and under one called a gospel minister! You inform us, that you are not for rendering railing for railing, but blessing for cursing. I suppose the railer is myself; and you the blessing. But let me tell you, it is better to rail against a fellow creature for his faults, than to corrupt the word of God, or deal deceitfully in the covenant: for the oracles of God say, that if a man sins against another, the judges shall plead for him: but if a man sins against God, as Eli's sons did, who were false priests, who shall plead for him? Railing may wound a man in his reputation, but dealing hypocritically in the word of God, damns the soul. "My people perish for lack of knowledge," and a blind guide leads many to the ditch; therefore, God says, "cursed is he that causeth the blind to wander out of his way." You own yourself to be the Jonah that has occasioned this

storm, and I believe you are; because you have in your ministry fled from the presence of God, and have not preached that doctrine which the Oracles of God bid you; and as you confess yourself willing to be thrown overboard, that there may be a calm, my soul's desire is, that you may occupy a little business in deep waters, and not come up again, till you can say of your errors as Jonah did of his, namely, "they that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies." When this is the case, you will own, as he did; that salvation is all of the Lord. But I suppose you are desirous of going overboard, because the mariners have cast the lot on you. One word in your letter I like much; that is, you call yourself an unprofitable servant; God grant the Judge may not bind you both hand and foot, and cast you, as such, into utter darkness.

I must, by your leave, go on to inform you of my writing about your doctrine. When I was at Barnet, they told me, that they would be glad of a change of preachers, if I could get any. I mentioned you, as Mr. Ruff had given me such a wonderful account of you, and told them I had no doubt but you would please them, if I could prevail on you to come and preach to them. I therefore prevailed, and got you to go. The last time I was there, they told me, that when they heard you, they concluded among themselves that you were not the man I recommended, but some person you had got in your room; till by inquiring they found your name to be Rhine, agreeably to the name I promised to send. Then they asked if you were a Lutheran, and told me that you were not a Calvinist, or in other words a sound scripturalist. You owned you were a Lutheran, though at the same time you said, Calvin was of the best spirit. I asked the man all the particulars about it, who I believe to be as sound a man, as experimental, as zealous, and as circumspect, as any I ever met with; and he told me that you was within one step of rank Arminianism. One of them came to me before, and desired me to let you come there no more, and asked me if I had ever heard you; I

said, No, I had not; but some friends had spoken very highly of you. And indeed I have been sorely displeased with some who have spoken lightly of your doctrine to me; and as Mr. Ruff, the last time he went with me to Woking, wished me to hear you; saying you trod in the same steps with me, and that you spake the same things, I was determined last Lord's day to hear you myself; and as I had heard various reports, you must needs think I came with all the ears of a critic: at the same time I prayed God to be with you, and convince me from your own mouth what you really was; that I might either justify or censure you, as every faithful minister ought to do. I therefore did as you do, when you come to hear me, that is, I stood incog. that I might not intimidate you, nor draw any thing out of your mouth contrary to the usual stream. And now give me leave to correct some of your unwarrantable assertions. I shall be glad to inform your judgment, and I will be open to conviction, if you can object, agreeably to scripture. Your text was, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Your work was, to contradict yourself; You took a text, and then exclaimed against taking texts. You said, the prophets never used any such methods, nor the apostles; they made the whole scriptures their text. I believe I can prove several sermons left on record in the bible, that were preached from a single text, that is, The promise made to Abraham. And the first sermon that Christ ever preached in the flesh, was from a text in Isaiah, and he stuck to his text, and told them it was fulfilled in their ears; then closed the book, and said no more. The last chapter of Habakkuk is a sermon from one text out of Deuteronomy. And when Christ sent out his twelve apostles, he sent them with one text, which is this, "The kingdom of heaven is come nigh unto you." But you affirm, that taking texts was by many wire-drawing the scriptures; that is not speaking as the oracles of God. I do not read that divinity is compared to bell-wire, to be played with. You said many brought more out of their text than there was in it: but I believe

no man can drive to the bottom of any one text in the bible. Paul only knew in part, and prophesied in part; therefore left a part unprophesied or unpreached. However, you did not run to the extreme of bringing more out than there was in; for you never explained a word of your text, nor did you bring out one word of real experience, nor apply a word to conscience. You drew the bow at a venture indeed, for you aimed at nothing. David's saying, "By thee I have been holden up from the womb;" you said he meant the womb of spiritual conversion: but read the whole verse, and there he tells you, God took him out of his mother's bowels, Psalm lxxi. 6. The womb of God's secret decree, and my mother's bowels, are different things: my mother's womb is an unclean thing; but that which is born of God, sinneth not. You said, "David could not mean a natural birth, for the elect were children of wrath, even as others." But David tells you, in God's book were all his members written, when as yet there were none of them; and God's eye did see his substance: and Jude saith, We are preserved in Christ Jesus and called, that is, called after we were preserved, and preserved in our calling, and after being called; and though many are called and few chosen, yet only the chosen are said to be preserved in Christ Jesus.

You say, the saints did not trust in persons or things, but in the word. I wish all the saints to trust in the persons of the ever-blessed Trinity; and this is brought to pass by the things which belong to a sound experience. Your main drift is to lead people to trust in the written word, and those whose trust stands in the letter, will be sadly foiled when the bibles are burnt up: the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. The word must come to the heart with power, and in the Holy Ghost; when the law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide.

As you were speaking of a guilty sinner, you said he feared, till he was brought to see the surety had doubly paid Justice

his debt; and brought a passage out of Isaiah to prove it. This is representing God in an awful light; for if he exacted of the surety double the sum that was due, the Judge of all the earth did wrong; and Christ must offer up two bodies, two souls, and two masses of blood. But read the law, sir, and I will shew you a mystery. Most of the legal threatenings are in the singular number: "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" "Cursed is he that continueth not," &c. "Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree." This was to skew one sacrifice, one surety would do. Pray read the text you perverted, Isaiah, xl. 2. "She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Who? I answer, Jerusalem. It is not said, God received of the surety's hands double for all her debts; but it is said, Jerusalem hath received of the Lord's hands double for all her sins. The meaning is this; where sin hath abounded, grace from God, through Christ, hath much more abounded, to remove the guilt of it, and subdue its reigning power. This woman's sins are many, and much grace she required to cast out seven devils, and to set her down a true penitent; and as she received much forgiving grace, she loved much. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, that God may be glorified. As you was speaking of the fall of saints, you referred them to a passage in Micah, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy," &c., Micah, vii. 8. You said that that enemy was the plague of the heart; if it was the plague of the heart, it should be called, it, in the neuter gender: and if it was the old man of sin, it should have been called him, in the masculine; but if you read the passage, you will find the enemy to be called, her: literally it was his persecuting wife; keep thy lips, saith he, from her that lieth in thy bosom. And Christ applied it to the foes of our own household; household is a family, not the sawn of sin in the heart; but figuratively it means a false church, or an oppressing nation. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.

The words which you commented on, "Deliver me in thy righteousness," did not mean the imputed righteousness of Christ; for David was delivered from' the law and wrath by the faith of that before; but he meant, Remember how many promises of protection I had from thee, and how thou chose and anointed me; be just to thy word, and deliver me in righteousness, justice, or faithfulness, according to thy promise.

The part of your discourse about Cornelius was a stolen morsel, believe from Luther, about his having the faith of the fathers before Peter came to him. Doubtless, he had legal convictions, and groans after ease; and gave alms and wrought for life; but he was to hear words from Peter, by which he and his house were to be saved. You never made any difference between Christ's active and passive obedience, which the scripture doth abundantly. Excuse my freedom, Sir, though you are an older preacher than myself; I write not in anger, but to be of use to you.

Farewell; thine to serve,
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter III

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, May 4, 1784.

Dear Madam,

THE life of faith, joy and peace, and an heartfelt union with the dear Redeemer, as the blessed effect of eternal love; and the doctrine of eternal election in Christ, the Rock of Ages; from whence these soul satisfying streams perpetually flow, are my favourite themes: and as you are not insensible of the value of these unmerited mercies of God, nor of the assurance and security which they afford to an enlightened mind, I do not know that I can entertain you with a more interesting subject.

This life of faith is a familiarity and a divine correspondence, carried on between the Most High God and a redeemed soul, by which the mind is ennobled, the understanding enriched with the knowledge of heavenly treasures, and the affections enflamed with a fervent love to the Father of all Mercies. Faith is a fruit of God's Spirit, begotten on the mind by the Holy Ghost; "For what soever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is called the faith of God's elect, because it is peculiar to them; "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." It is called the faith of the operation of the Holy Ghost, because it is brought forth under his prolific operations. It is a divine and unshaken persuasion of the reality of a divine report, deeply impressed on the mind of man; and is the result of an eternal union which subsisted between Christ and the elect from everlasting; the bond of 11e0 which union is God's everlasting love to Christ and to his elect in him. Thus faith firmly credits a divine testimony, and makes the happy possessor most assuredly know that he is an heir of all the blessings testified of. Faith is an eye, and sees the wonderful works of God both in grace and in providence; yea, she pries into his eternal council, and- at times sees Him who is invisible. All the ancient saints saw the promised seed at a

distance, and spake of him as present; and the blessed effects of every vision justified the prediction. This proves their life to be a life of dependence on God; they conversed with Him in his promises; their expectations were employed in looking out for the fulfilment of them, and patience waited for the issue; and after they had endured awhile, they inherited the promises. Faith is an undoubted persuasion that fetches in the blessings couched in the promises, and applies them to the renewed and heavenly mind. Faith doth the same kind offices to the soul that the hand doth to the body; for it lays hold on eternal life, and realizes the promises with such a firm assurance of their full and final accomplishment, so as to quicken and enliven every power of the elect soul, and make it joyful, in hope of the glory of God.

Faith eyes the obedience of the Saviour, and applies it to the disquieted conscience; and is attended with the internal witness of the Holy Ghost, assuring the conscience of the sinner that Jesus is his eternal righteousness before the throne of God; while peace, from the atonement made by the great Mediator, sweetly flows in, as a proof that the Most High God is appeased, and the sword of justice sheathed in the Son of God. O mysterious scabbard! Thus, Madam, this long and dreadful war between God and sensible sinners is ended, and eternal peace proclaimed to all believers.

Faith eyes the atoning blood of the surety, and a multiplication of pardons are produced therefrom, which faith applies; and thus she purifies the heart from all the filth or guilt daily contracted through our manifold infirmities. And to maintain life in her beloved habitation, she leads her possessor to a throne of grace, and there begs the bread of heaven, and does her office in attending every good petition: she claims her privileges in her own country, and her freedom in her own city; she will take no denial at a throne of grace, nor will her father deny her suit. Faith in us is of high extraction; God

ordained her; Christ possesses her; and the Holy Ghost produces her. God has greatly honoured faith, and it is certain she will never dishonour him. By her allowed fortitude and importunity she glorifies her Father, and her Father will ever honour her. She keeps house at the expense of the Saviour, and fetches all her food from afar.

She being of a divine origin, will exist for ever. In the church militant faith is both the eye and the hand of the soul; but in the church triumphant she will be only an eye: divine light can never be extinguished.

Faith despises all human inventions and human assistances and ceases to act when carnal wisdom is invited to take the reins of government; but always accomplishes the decreed and the desired end, after fleshly sufficiency has left us exposed to ridicule.

Faith, if she is let alone, will make her despicable habitation stand firm against all assaults; for she establishes her house on a rock. She will lead her armies on through the most formidable hosts of opposers; for none overcome the world but believers. In short, that man is eternally rich who has her, for God is his portion; and this she freely declares before every adversary, as it is written, "Rich in faith." He stands firm indeed whom she establishes; and he is sure to hold on his way, if she leads him in the path. Every fallen countenance that appears in a persecutor, is an indication of a conquest made on that adversary, either to reduce him to the sceptre of Christ, or leave him to the judgment of God. Faith can blunt the edge of a sword, disarm a flame of its force, stop the mouth of a voracious lion, and make a devil fly to his cave. God himself is her shield, and she is the honourable and victorious hand that wields it. Our wealth, honour, success, victory, safety, and eternal security, lay in the possession of her. The Lord increase thy faith, while I remain,

Dear Madam,

Thy willing servant in the Lord,

W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter IV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Dear Sister in Christ,

I RECEIVED yours, dated May 5, 1783, and I thank you for it. You seem to express much grief, because you had heard your friend Lazarus had been sick. But, blessed be God, his sickness was not unto death; nor will poor Lazarus ever die. However, his sickness has been for the glory of God; that the Son of God, after humbling his pride, might get the more glory by his instrumentality.

You may depend upon it that your friend Lazarus will only sleep; and you know if he sleep, he shall do well. Your letter seems almost silent about the state of your soul, which I should be glad to know; but as you have filled yours with nothing but inquiries after my health, I shall fill this with nothing but informations concerning it.

I have been sick indeed; and I found fresh life in my sickness. Faith got fresh life, and made me pray weeping, with my face to the wall. Filial fear got fresh vigour, and made me set about the important work of self-examination; and as I had not balanced my books for some few days with exactness, I went about that work with as much reluctance as a bullock that is unaccustomed to the yoke, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks. Hope also got a revival, and I saw the necessity of my casting anchor within the veil. Expectation set me to looking out of the window three times a-day towards the holy Jerusalem; while zeal for truth took me to task for my indolence. Conscience reproved me for neglecting my day-book; and patience came into the assembly of carnal reasonings, a f22 nd whipt every murmurer out of the court; and sternly asked if I had not procured these things to myself? I replied yes; and said no more, but sat down pensive, while patience had her perfect work. Thus, my sister, I find that by these things I live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.

The rod and reproof give wisdom; and my cumbrous train of crimes teaches me many a wholesome lesson. I often backslide in my heart from my dear Lord and master; but he makes my own backslidings reprove me, and drive me back to my resting place. If pride possesses my heart, even that, under the management of infinite wisdom, brings me to the Saviour's feet in humility; "A man's [own] pride shall bring him low."

If sin be indulged, it teaches me that prayers are in vain; for "If I regard iniquity, the Lord will not hear me." My reins instruct me in the mystery of my base original, and cry down free agency all the day long.

The various changes that go over my soul, teach me how to speak to the children of God; for "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips."

The plague of my own heart prohibits my placing any confidence in the flesh. The hatred of the world stands as a sentinel, to keep me within bounds, and strictly forbids my holding communion with the wicked.

The temptations of the devil make me cry and pray for help, while my manifold imperfections teach me to preach down all perfection in the flesh.

Every murmuring thought against the cross, teaches me that I am a debtor to immutable grace; and my daily infirmities teach me that I am an unprofitable servant. Thus, my friend, every where, and in all things, I am instructed.

I find by happy experience, that all things do work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose. God's rod brings me into humility, and fills my soul with heart-felt contrition; and thus God prepares his own residence. I will dwell with him also that is of an humble and a contrite heart, and will revive the spirit of the contrite, Isaiah, lvii. 15.

We must be subject to the Father of spirits, that we may live. His rods and reproofs give wisdom; but a child left to himself will fall. God often afflicts his dear children with a bad state of health, that they may seek him who is the health of their countenance and their God.

If we are disappointed in our earthly expectations, it is that we should make Christ our earnest expectation and our hope; and then our expectations will not be cut off.

If my soul can find no rest in temporal enjoyments, it teaches me that this is not my rest, because it is polluted; but in Jesus the weary shall for ever be at rest Look forward, O my soul! for there remains a rest for the people of God, Heb. iv. 9.

If God keep his children poor, it is to keep them from trusting in uncertain riches; and to lead them to live by the faith of his providence; and to lay up treasure in heaven, that their hearts may be where their treasure is.

Manifold infirmities make us look and long for heavenly perfection; and when we are truly sick of this world, we shall not be loath to leave it.

A continual war with sin makes us long for a cessation of arms; but this being denied, we must be satisfied with now and then a parley. We must expect no discharge from this war; nor can we be crowned with victory, till we are conquered by death.

Death is the sentence of God, the issue of sin, and the torment of devils. But every believer may view death as a mysterious hand of Christ, by which he goes down into his garden and gathers lilies. Song vi. 2. Dear sister, adieu.

Thine to serve,
W. H. S. S.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter V

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, June 6, 1784.

Dear Madam,

YOURS I received; and return you my best wishes, with the ancient blessings in their gospel significations, namely, that of grace, mercy, and peace, be with thee, from him who ever lives, and ever loves. I have also returned your tribute of thankfulness to your greatest creditor, knowing that you are a debtor to grace.

I find a degree of gratitude to God, for his condescending to own any feeble attempt of mine, to the refreshing the bowels of his saints. I am willing, Madam, to entertain you with a second epistle on the pleasing subject of the gospel of faith, if I can get my cruse to spring again. But you know I live upon divine alms myself; and I doubt you will be more earnest in petitioning at second hand, than I am at the first. I find by daily experience that it is an easy matter for a thirsty inquisitive soul to drain a preacher dry; but truth hath said, "He that watereth, shall be watered also himself." Faith is not only an eye, by which our forefathers saw the promised seed at a distance, but the encircling arm, by which they embraced the promise; and that soul-emptying, God-honouring, and victorious grace, by which they went from one nation to another, without suffering harm.

Faith led their hearts and affections from the vanities of time and sense, so that they had no desire to return to that country from whence they came, though they had an opportunity.

Faith led them to trust in God, and to walk before him as in his immediate presence; and to place their confidence in him as their shield, and their exceeding great reward. Faith thus purifying their hearts, and overcoming the world in them, led them to seek a better country, that is, an heavenly; and often reminding them, that this was not their rest; sweetly led them

to look for a continuing city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God.

Thus faith led them to credit omnipotence for protection, strength, and safety; and to look out for a glorious accomplishment of the promises; persuading them that he was faithful who had promised.

Under faith's influence, they confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth; strangers, because none knew their birth or nativity; pilgrims, because they viewed not themselves at home on this side the grave; foreigners, because their birth was from heaven, and heaven was their journey's end.

God's irrevocable decree brought them forth into this world as into a refining pot; and when they were tried, purified, and polished, they went back again. After faith had done its last office for them, which was to make their dying bed easy, and their views of heaven clear, these all died in faith; and now they burn in love, shine in glory, and bathe in pleasure; in love that knows no bounds; in glory that knows no period; and in pleasure that never can be fathomed. Oh, happy souls! happy state! and happy place!

Faith is a viewing of Christ, Heb. xi. 27; a longing for Christ, Psalm, lxxiii. 1; a coming to Christ, Heb. xi. 6; a laying hold of Christ, 1 Tim. vi. 12; a closing in with Christ, Ps. xxvii. 13; a dwelling in Christ, Psalm, xc. 1; a receiving of Christ, John, i. 12: and is attended with a cordial love to Christ, Gal. v. 6. Faith puts on Christ, Rom. xiii. 14; stands fast in Christ, 1 Thess. iii. 8; and is a walking in Christ, Col. ii. 6; and the end of faith is the salvation of the soul, 1 Peter, i. 9. The Lord attend my friend with this soul-establishing grace, which leads us to see the glorious end of all real religion. Faith feeds upon Christ in the promises; mixes her influence with the promises; and kills the soul to all but Christ Jesus the Lord revealed in the promises.

Beware of that faith that boasts in temporal prosperity, but is dashed out of countenance in adversity; "*He that believeth shall not be confounded.*" Fiery trials discover gospel faith from daring presumption; hence the trial of faith is more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire.

I never could trust an untried faith; when faith hath been once tried, her language is, God hath delivered, and we trust that he will yet deliver us.

Real faith will find her way to God in a storm, and bring help from him too. "*This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*"

That is a precious faith, that will never give up prayer till it gets relief; then faith appears in character, as it is written, "*Oh, woman, great in thy faith!*" Her faith had stood three discouraging rebuffs, and yet it overcame by importunity.

That is a precious faith that persuades the mind it shall surely obtain its request, even when there is no visible signs of it. It was this faith that set Habakkuk the prophet upon his watch-tower, and kept him waiting till the vision revealed the way of life; "*The just shall live by faith*" Thus faith appears the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

Faith, as an eye, keeps looking to Jesus; and as a hand, she will keep her hold. "I held him and would not let him go." Who can lose their way with such an eye? And who can drop into hell with such a hand? " He that believeth is passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation"

Faith is like a salamander, she can exist in the flames; by faith they quenched the violence of fire, Heb. xi. 34. Or, she is like

the ark, she can swim in the floods. "By faith Noah being warned of God, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Faith is like an eel, she can dive in the mud; she dived with Jonah into the whale's belly, and made him look towards the holy temple, and directed a petition to enter the ears of the Almighty, even from the depth of the sea: and in answer to faith's petitions, the living house of prayer vomited up the prophet. *"My prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited up Jonah upon dry land."*

The grace of faith is better felt and enjoyed than described; lint it may be discerned by the fruit of the lips; by her fruits in our life, and by her spiritual effects on our souls. When we hear nothing come out of a man's mouth but pure, unmixed truth, directed to the honour of God, without being tintured by human worth, or savouring of fleshly confidence, we are informed that that springs from a good treasure in the heart. When we hear a man's delivering, in an experimental manner; the mysteries of God: and can find that God gives his approbation of it, by the preacher's lively frame, by his cheerful countenance, and by the irresistible spirit of truth, so that scoffers are astonished, the mouths of fools stopped, the judgments of saints informed, and their bowels refreshed, we may conclude that that man holds the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, 1 Tim. iii. 9.

And when we see a person wholly unsupported by friends, and furiously opposed by enemies, who use both fraud and force against him; and yet this man perseveres in the path of holiness, we may say he walks by faith, and not by sight: for here is nothing before his eyes but discouragements.

And when we see such a person sorely thrust at; that he may fall; and others setting traps in his way; others watching for his

halting; others laying things to his charge that he knows not of; and others crediting false reports, begin to triumph, and say, ah, ah, so would we have it! and yet that man stands firm in the testimony both of God and saints; we may conclude, that he is strong in the Lord; for by faith he stands, 2 Cor. i. 24.

Justifying faith is known by the internal blessings that attend it; faith works by love, and is a companion of peace; "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

A divine faith is known by her leading the soul to live on divine food; "*I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" A living faith is known by the living object she applies; "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*" The faith of God's elect is known, because it submits to, and rejoices in the doctrine of God's election. "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?*"

The doctrine of eternal election is known by faith; "*As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*" An active faith is known by her choice foundation and her spiritual industry. "*Building up yourselves on your most holy fait, praying in the Holy Ghost.*"

False faith is known both by her confessions and fruits: by her confessions, as they are never consistent with the Spirit's work, if they are with the outlines of scripture. "*And none of the wicked shall understand,*" Dan. xii. 10. Secondly, by her fruit. False faith pleases the world, unites with the world, and is of the world. But true faith displeases the world, comes out from the world, fights against the world, and overcomes the world.

My cruse, Madam, is almost out again; and my pen always drags heavily, when reflection and recollection are obliged to travel so far to fetch matter in. Writing is a pleasure to me,

when matter flows easily, without labour, because it refreshes my 159 soul as it runs. You may expect a line drawn between true faith and false, when the great master of lively figures shall draw the outlines of my mind. In the mean while, dear madam, believe me to be

Devotedly thine in all godliness,
W. H. S. S.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter VI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, Nov. 10, 1784.

Dear Mother in Israel,

LOVINGKINDNESS and tender mercy be with thee. Yours I received, and can truly sympathize with thee. But there is nothing fallen to thy lot by chance; "All these things," says Job, "are appointed for me, and many such things are with him." Every trial is put into God's balance before we leave it, and a proportionable degree of faith to counterpoise it; God corrects us in measure, and will not leave us wholly unpunished. Is thy way hedged in? God says he will make a way for thy escape, that ye May be able to bear it. Call not thyself poor, while the Ancient of Days is thy eternal portion.

"God hath chosen the poor in this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he had promised to them that love him." Every believer is an heir of promise. The Bible is the Lord's last will and testament; and all that faith lays hold on, is sure to all the seed. I know it is hard for flesh and blood to be left a widow, and the mother of a distressed and fatherless family. The mournful thought rebounds with the cutting edge of a double affection; but God is a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow. These endearing characters he sustains, and sweetly answers them in his holy habitation, which is the household of faith. Call not thyself poor, while faith can hold one single promise; nor a widow, while one tender thought of God is left. Credit his truth, and cast all thy care upon him, for he careth for thee.

Thou 106c art not the first widow that has been left with a family in debt. One of this number came to the prophet Elisha, and God sent a spring into her pot of oil, and set her tip an oil merchant. And I will be bold to say, that she sold the best commodity of that sort in the universe. The water that the dear Redeemer turned into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, was praised by all the guests.

What Faith brings in, in answer to prayer, has a particular flavour, which is peculiar to itself.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and all that dwell therein;" all hearts are in his hands, therefore trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. There is nothing too hard for the Lord; he has made a fish produce money to pay tribute to Caesar; turned a jawbone into a springing well to supply Samson; sent a divine increase into the widow's barrel of meal, to keep her alive in famine; yea, he turned ravens into butchers to feed a prophet; and angels into cooks, while Elijah slept under the juniper tree also, at the sea of Tiberias the Saviour himself

broiled fish and baked bread for his disciples after he had said, Children, have ye meat? and they had answered him, No.

Let me know how you go on, and I will endeavour to send thee a little savoury meat, such as thy soul loveth: and if God should use me to convey a little comfort to thy heart, I shall be better to thee than ten sons. Thou knowest God hath often made me a fellow helper of thy joy, a nourisher of thy hope, a strengthener of thy faith, a confirmer of thy feeble knees, and a nurse in thy old age. I have no doubt but thy hoary head will go down- to the grave in peace, and appear nay joy, and tile crown of my rejoicing in the great day of the Lord Jesus. Arise, shake thyself from the dust, and be of good cheer, for Jesus calleth for thee.

The ever-blessed Redeemer has shewn a very tender regard for distressed widows. When he saw the tears of the widow of Nain, he was so moved with compassion, that he raised her son from the dead, and restored him to his mother again. While you sit sobbing in sackcloth, you forget the dignity that the Lord has conferred on your believing sex, honourable women not a few; and you are fully persuaded that you belong to this number; "Blessed is she that believes, for there shall be performance of what is told her from the Lord." Jesus has got an inexhausted fullness to supply thy wants, a powerful arm for thy aid, a propitious ear for thy prayers, and a bottle for thy tears; and what would thou have more but the kingdom? Why, the kingdom and all, say you! Well, only believe, and thou shalt have the kingdom, and the king too. The Lord is the portion of his people, and the kingdom is given to the saints of the Most High. Oh, my mother, put thy present troubles into God's balance, and put an eternal weight of glory against them, and you will call them light afflictions, as. Paul did. A daily cross proves that we are the followers of the Lamb; and without this we should soon lose our way. Deliverance is most

surely at hand, when our expectations are ready to give up all for lost. I have often observed that the blackest clouds have discharged the most fruitful showers.

Of this be assured, that the longer the day of adversity lasts, the longer will the day of prosperity be. The darkest nights are succeeded by the brightest mornings. The deeper you go into the pit, the higher will you ascend on the mount. Those that have been the most shook with God's terrors, have had the sweetest tastes of God's love; and the keenest convictions have been succeeded with the brightest evidences. I write this from my own experience; and it is consistent with the word of God. That soul that is a stranger to the horrible pit, and the glorious mount, knows nothing savingly, either of the justice or of the mercy of God. Farewell, the best of blessings attend thee while I remain,

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Thy dutiful son, and willing servant in
the gospel of Christ,

W. H. S. S.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter VII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, August 9, 1784.

My Daughter in the Faith,

I RECEIVED yours, and read it with indignation; and shall take the liberty to answer it in three particulars. First, I will shew you the word of the Lord. Secondly, detect the hypocrisy of thy heart; and, Thirdly, I will shew you what will befall you in the latter days.

The Most High has not tied up his children from marrying but says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." The blessed Saviour himself honoured a wedding with his presence in Cana of Galilee, wrought his first miracle at it, and manifested forth his glory, insomuch that his disciples believed on him.

Even our happy enjoyment of Christ is set forth by the term espousing; and our glorious entrance into blessedness, by the consummation of a marriage in the wedding chamber.

But God says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." If a woman have a mind to marry, she is at liberty to marry whom she will, only in the Lord, 1 Cor. vii. 39. Mark that; her liberty is limited, to marry only in the Lord.

There are but two families in this world; the children of God, and the children of the devil, 1 John, iii. 10. If a daughter of God marries a son of Belial, she makes herself a daughter-in-law to the devil: and by this infamous step labours to bring about an affinity between the Most High God and Satan.

When God brought in his bill to the antediluvian world, unlawful marriages stood first in the account. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of such as they choose;" and by this they brought on the dreadful deluge: and you are going to justify them in your proceedings; and, by falling a sacrifice to their infatuations, you are endeavouring to bring on the final conflagration.

What! is there not a son of Israel that will satisfy thy desire, but thou must go and take a husband of the uncircumcised?

All the plagues, persecutions, woes, and captivities that fell to Israel's share in the land of Canaan, began with these mixed marriages. God has set forth the miserable match of Samson as a caution to every believer. But if thy affections are saddled upon an ass, thou wilt go on, however perverse thy proceedings may be, unless the drawn sword of God should appear in thy way. I have shewed you the word of the Lord, which is the sword of the Spirit; and if you rush upon the point of that sword, expect to pierce yourself through with many sorrows.

Let me dissect the hypocrisy of thy heart. You say, he is a person of great property. This springs from the cursed root of covetousness; "They that will be rich, fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." As for his beauty, that is but skin deep, and lays at the mercy of a cold or a fever. Jacob paid dear for this fading article; fourteen year's hard labour, many cutting disappointments, and her beauty was long

balanced with a reproachful barrenness. And as her beauty was a kind of rival to, God, he permitted Jacob himself to denounce her death in the face of her own father: "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live." Rachael has hid them; and God took Jacob at his word, and sent the first arrow of death to the beautiful object. God likewise entangled her in her own words. When she said to Jacob, "Give me children or I die," God gave her a child; a Benoni; a son of her sorrow, and she died in bringing him forth.

You verily believe that he will be converted to God. Yes: a likely matter, that God should convert a man to satisfy your carnal desires, and nurse your rebellion against his word. I know you will make a convert of him, rather than be disappointed of your lust.

Where will not a giddy woman run, when her wantonness is kindled, and she is left to kick against Christ! God compares such as you, who have waxed wanton, to a wild ass braying after her male. "A wild ass, used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away; all they that seek her will not weary themselves; but in her [wanton] month he will find her." He goes with you to hear the gospel, and approves of it. No doubt of that: and he will appear to get a deal of comfort. from it too, while your carcass is perched at his right hand. But, depend upon it lasciviousness conceived in his heart is the main spring of all his religion; and this will come to its final end in the bridal bed. I have seen enough of this to make a wise man mad.

I will now slew you what will befall you in the latter days. First, you will not find Christ at the wedding, yet you will not be comfortless; for your comforts will spring from another quarter; and while these last you will hold up your head. But when the honey month is over, you will think about turning to your first

husband again, saying, it was better with me then than it is now, Hosea ii. 7. But the Bible will appear a sealed book; the intercourse between God and your soul will be barred up; many cutting reproofs God will send you from the pulpit, which conscience will apply to your case. These things will be the beginning of sorrows with you. Finding your soul bereft of the presence of God, and sinking in distress under it, Satan will begin to tempt you, conscience will accuse you, and God will frown upon you. When this is the case, you will naturally wither to all the charms of your husband, and be brought to hate him as the cause of your soul's distress.

When your husband sees this, it will provoke him to jealousy; your coldness to his embraces will quicken his malice; and the devil telling him that your religion is the cause, he will then appear in his proper colours; curse your profession, and take up the cudgels against you; and then you may expect to go all the rest of the way with a corpse strapped to your back.

I know this letter will not please you; it is a purge for your conscience, not a cordial for your wantonness. However, you will seek counsel from some other professor, who will approve of your measures, and then my letter will have no weight till after the wedding be over.

I do not expect an answer to this, as it is so wide to your purpose. But if ever you should write to me again, I crave one favour of you, which is, that you will never more call me your father, or even own that you were called under my ministry; for your presumption in wedlock will be a scandal even to a coalheaver. Remember you are a daughter of Sarah, as long as you do well; and I will own you as long as you obey the word of God, and no longer.

Yours, &c.
W. H. S. S.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter VIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, July 6, 1784.

Dear Brother,

GRACE, mercy, and peace be with you through Jesus Christ our Lord. I received your melancholy epistle, which I believe to be expressive of the gloomy state of your soul. Your appearing in your own eyes one of the greatest of sinners, is intended to erase the sandy foundation of human excellency, and to level the towering pinnacle of vain boasting; but is no argument against salvation by grace. This I tell you by the word of the Lord, that there is not a single text in God's book against a poor sensible heavy laden sinner, that is willing to renounce all confidence in the flesh, and to submit to be saved by free grace through faith in Christ Jesus.

I do not wonder at the threatenings in God's word levelling their contents at you; they will do this, till your eye is singly fixed on Jesus Christ. When this is the case, the promises, as so many breasts of consolation, will meet you with cordials; and the threatenings will level all their arrows at your back, to keep you from looking again towards Sodom. After the

Saviour had given his followers many admonitions, he bid them remember Lot's wife.

You would not have continued so long in your present situation, if all your working abilities were exhausted; for God has promised to appear when his people's strength is all gone, and there is none left; for by strength shall no man prevail. A legal hope dies hard; and it must be a killing sight and sense of sin that buries it. At the funeral of this wretched hope, deliverance will rise to you another way. "Let the weak say I am strong." Moses must bring in many bills before our supposed wealth be expended. Insolvency is a cutting consideration to a man of consequence and reputation; nor can self-sufficient nature submit to the kind offers of a surety. But the family of God are all brought into this strait; "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both" This step brings them in debtors to grace; and leaves them no stock in hand to boast of. "Which thinkest thou will love him most? Simon answered, He to whom he forgave most. And the Lord said, Thou hast rightly judged."

If I had not been well acquainted with your occupation, I should have taken you to have been an advocate at a bar of judicature; for you labour as hard against a good cause as a counsellor doth when his arguments are drove home by a thousand pound bribe.

If you was to use as many arguments in your plea for the atonement of Christ, as you do against your soul's salvation, you would cut as good a figure at a throne of grace as any sinner that ever carried a plea into court.

Moses is said to accuse us for breaking his law; and Satan will accuse us, conscience will accuse us, and the world will accuse us. But we have no reason to puzzle our judgments, and strain our nerves to assist either of them. Plead your own wretchedness, and a Saviour's fullness; and that will silence

every accuser. Your despairing of the mercy of God under a sense of want, and nursing unbelief, are the greatest sins you ever committed, and are daring reflections cast on him who saves to the uttermost.

I believe you will be eternally saved; and if your faith has given up the ghost, you ought not to labour so hard to knock down mine also. We are commanded to bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Beware that there be not in thy heart a secret thought of meriting something by thy long suffering. There is also a kind of mock modesty, that often possesses us under our first legal convictions. This appears, when we endeavour to put away from us what we hope to enjoy. Job said, "I shall come forth as gold;" and yet he refused to be comforted.

I believe if death was to stare you in the face, I should find it hard work to dispute you out of your right and title to those gospel blessings, which you now labour so hard to put far from you. Farewell; "Be of good comfort; arise, he calleth thee." As soon as unbelief has influenced thee to patch up another epistle, you will be so kind as to let me have it, for I am still in hope that my patience will weary out your unbelief.

Thine to command in all godliness
W. H. S.S.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, July 19th, 1784.

Dear Madam,

YOURS came to hand, but wish you to drop your encomiums; as some unguarded Christians have brought many bitter reflections on me, which have sprung from the evil surmisings of some Hebrews. There are some who don't like to see a young prodigal with a kid in his hand, much less kissing, ornamenting, music and dancing. I have no desire for a spangled coat: a coat of many colours once provoked eleven brethren to sell a Joseph. Be content to reap the benefit of my labour, and make your boast of God; then you will not give offence to my superiors, or bring the scourge of tongues on my reputation.

I thought I had pretty well satisfied you with an account of faith; however, I am willing to comply with your request as far as I am able.

But to give you a description of false faith is more than I can pretend to, unless you will allow me to describe true faith and oppose it to false, and so lead your mind in the line between the two.

As for the faith of arminianism, I believe it to be worse than the faith of devils; for I have heard arminians mention the awful decrees of God, and wantonly laugh at them; but devils

believe and tremble. True faith holds every revealed truth of the Bible, but opposes none. If you live by faith, Christ, the bread of heaven, will be the food of thy faith. If you walk by faith, Christ, the living way, will be the path of faith, If you stand fast by faith, Christ will be faith's foundation; faith will stand no where, but on Christ; and Christ will always bear every weight that faith lays on him. Christ will never suffer faith to fail, nor will faith ever suffer Christ to have a co-partner; Christ will never suffer faith to be confounded; nor will faith ever suffer Christ to be dishonoured.

False faith makes her boast of what she never had; but true faith does what she never can relate.

False faith furnishes the head with notions; but true faith fixes the heart in love. False faith has always much to say, but little to do; her business is to boast, not to work; but true faith does her business in silence first, and talks afterwards: "I believed, therefore have I spoken;" "We believe, and therefore speak."

False faith often relates what she has done for God; but true faith delights to tell what Christ has done for her: Christ loved me, and gave himself for me; and again, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

False faith is full of good words; but true faith of good fruits.

False faith unites with an erroneous and loose community; but true faith delights in the excellent of the earth and in such as excel in virtue. False faith flies from a heart-searching,

experimental ministry; but true faith roots the deeper under it: "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in faith."

False faith triumphs in the testimony of men; but true faith stands in the testimony of God: "He that believes, hath the witness in himself."

False faith credits every word: but true faith looks well to her way.

False faith makes a prating fool; but true faith makes a humble soul.

False faith exalts the creature; but true faith exalts the Saviour.

False faith makes lies her refuge; but true faith makes God's word her shield and buckler.

False faith leads the sinner to be proud of himself; but true faith leads the soul to make her boast of God.

False faith is pleased with words on the tongue; but true faith applies the promises to the heart.

False faith floats in the imagination; but true faith is a root in the heart.

False faith says, Roll yourself on the written word; but true faith says, "Let the word of God dwell richly in your hearts."

False faith is attended with no change of soul; but true faith is attended with regeneration.

False faith rejects the greatest part of the Bible;
but true faith credits the whole word.

False faith denies sound experience; but true
faith owns herself a fruit of the Spirit.

False faith defends herself by cunning, and a
noise of words; but true faith will have no
defence but the Saviour: But above all, taking
the shield of faith.

False faith triumphs in temporal prosperity, and
gives up the ghost in adversity; but true faith is
lowly in prosperity, and in adversity considers.

In short, false faith can talk, but not work; boast, but not fight;
brag, but bring nothing from God; but true faith will work, but
not trust in it; fight, but not beat the air; and beg, but not in
vain. The Lord bless you with a stronger faith than I can
describe: I desire no dominion over your faith, but am glad to
be a fellow-helper of your joy.

Adieu, Madam,
Thine to command in the gospel of Christ

W. H. S. S.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter X

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, Sept. 30, 1784

Dear Madam,

You have asked me a pleasing question, and set me a delightful task; but I must own that communion with the Father and the Son, is better felt and enjoyed, than described: before we can have communion with Christ, we must be brought nigh to him. When God created Eve, he brought her to her husband, to shew that a wife was the gift of God: in like manner, no sinner can come to Christ, except the Father draw him. Redeemed sinners are the Lord's espoused; chosen by the Father and given to the Son; "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me." Thus God draws the second Eve to the second Adam; the Saviour receives her, and the twain become one flesh; "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and his Church;" for as much as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, himself also took part of the same; and what is still more, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit with him." Before we can have sweet communion with the Almighty Saviour, we must be brought to submit to his sovereignty; no man can hold communion with the Lord, who resisteth his sovereign will: this is striving against him, not holding communion with him: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" A person who rejects any essential truth that the Lord hath revealed, walks contrary to God, and God has promised to walk contrary to him. A man is to cleanse his way, by taking heed thereto according to God's word; but if he rejects any bdf part of that word, which is to be a light to his feet, and a lamp to his path, he perverteth his way and shall be known as such. Such behave themselves froward; and with a froward man God will shew himself froward. Before we can hold close communion with Christ, we must be enlightened to behold his super-excellent worth, "and

the all-sufficiency of his deity and grace, to make us completely and eternally happy. "What fellowship hath light with darkness?" Yea, we must be brought to hate evil, and every thing else that stands in competition with Christ; and to love Christ above every object beside. "Verily I say unto you, that whosoever loveth father, and mother, wife, children, or his own life better than me, is not worthy of me." Christ must be loved above all, and every earthly enjoyment despised in comparison with him: "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" If we hold communion with Christ, we must be humbled the proud cannot agree with the meek and lowly Jesus; "Learn of me, I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." A man of a proud, impenitent, self-righteous, and unhumbled spirit, can have no fellowship with a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; such fellowship would be as bad a discord as singing songs to a heavy heart.

If we hold communion with Jesus, 'we must view him as our best and most indulgent friend in heaven or earth; this must be apprehended, and soundly credited, before we can love him with all our hearts: if we view him as an angry judge, our thoughts of him will be hard our conceptions of him terrible, our fear slavish; our service will be eye-service, and our best fear will be tintured with that of a criminal; fear hath torment; but if the Saviour's love casts this slavish fear out, we shall view him as our chief good, and then all the world cannot hinder our love to him; for "Love is strong as death;" it is better and dearer to us than our own life, which we would sooner part with than Christ. If we have fellowship with the Father, he will lead us into the mystery of his eternal council: "The secret of the Lord is with the righteous, and he will shew them his covenant," and they will approve of it; and when he asks them, they will subscribe with their hands, and call themselves by the name of Jacob, and set to their seat that God is true. If we have fellowship with the Son, he will shew us the plan of the covenant, and give us a sympathetic feeling of his

sufferings in the execution of that mysterious plan; and then a purged conscience, and a pure Saviour, will sweetly close in together; "That I may know him," says Paul, "and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable until his death." Fare thee well; grace, mercy, and peace be with thee, while I remain, thy most obedient in the kingdom and patience of Christ.

W. H. S. S.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, July 19, 1784.

Dear Sir,

I RECEIVED yours, dated June the 25th, and would have answered it before, if either a will or an opportunity had offered. As for the wonderful prophet, which you have heard so much of, and now inquire after, he lives in Shoreditch work-house. You mistake the place, Sir. The report which you have heard is true; he is attended both by high and low, saint and sinner, ministers not excepted. This is a wonder, but not from the Lord of Hosts.

The man was formerly an arminian, and you know that many lying wonders have chewed forth themselves in them. I believe the man went on for some years as a child of that popish family, working in his own strength, and boasting of his own power, merit, and perfection, till being exalted above measure, he fell into the condemnation of the devil.

By what I could learn, he had formerly been very strong in human confidence, and sinless perfection; and that being the only anchorage of his legal hope, I believe a strong temptation came upon him, while he rode at that anchor, and driving him from his moorings, he fell, and made a shipwreck of his arminian faith in the gulf of despair. The devil having lifted him up in the pride of himself, a just God left him in Satan's hands, and Satan having gained an ascendancy over him, bereft him of his rationality, which came upon him, as I am credibly informed, in the following manner. He lived with an Upholsterer, in the capacity of a foreman, and was greatly esteemed by his master, consequently trusted with every thing. But the master having, at certain seasons, missed goods from his shop, and not knowing which way they went, one night concealed himself in his shop, and saw the foreman come in, and take what he thought proper, and withdrew. The master pursued him, and caught him by the shoulder, and calling him by his name, it so struck him, that he fell into fits. His prophesying originated here. This I believe to be the real case, as far as I am able to judge.

About two or three years ago, a gentleman desired me to go with him and see him, as there had been so much talk about him.

I refused to comply with his request, as I am slow of heart to believe; but he much pressed me, and at last I went with him, though with much reluctance; yea, and got many a secret lash from conscience in the way.

Before we got to the place, a small quantity of pound-cake was bought, to take as a present, because he takes no money, the devil knows that that would be a hindrance to his market, therefore pound-cake is the only reward of divination. When we were let into the house, we were conducted to the prophet's room, which is a large one; and there we found this surprising being. He is a little thin man, with his own black hair, mingled a little with white. He was sitting in a low chair by the fire side, and had got an hank of crewel, or worsted of various colours, about his neck, and his needle in his hand: whether he has been a brother stitch by trade or not, I know not. On his left hand there lay a little lump of straw, with which he makes straw rings, with knobs, and then quilts and ornaments the knobs of the rings with this crewel of divers colours.

His fingers were ornamented with the rings of his own manufactory, and by his side stood a basket, with many of those straw trinkets in it; he gave his rings various names, some he called the Star of Bethlehem, &c., and some of those rings he gave to us.

I cannot say but I looked at the creature with astonishment; as I had been informed by several people who profess the gospel, that he was filled with the Spirit of God, and lived all the year round quite out of the body, as Paul did when he was caught up into the third heaven.

A likely matter that these childish baubles should be the production of inspiration. When Paul became a man, he put away childish things. He generally calls his visitors by some nick name; one in the company be called by the name of Germain; but this I observed, that he never called any one of us by a name that was famous either for grace or valour. I am told that a gospel minister, who once went to him, received the name of God's fiery dragon: it is true, we read of dragons

and serpents, but these names are always applied to devils and tyrants; but by no means applicable to an ambassador of peace.

However, the magician's head being stuffed with such names as these, chews us plain enough that his mind is not in heaven, because there are no such names there; the dragon hath been cast out from thence long ago; his mind therefore is employed in another region.

But the magician begins to divine: You must say something to him, and then he tells you to look at such a chapter, and at such a verse, and that will do for you. Some in company wanted me to speak to him, but I would not, for I thought that if he was filled with God's Spirit, he would know something of me. But so far from my thinking him inspired, I thought, and thought right, that he was possessed with the devil, as sure as ever Simon Magus, or the witch of Endor was.

After we had been some time in the room, the gentleman that took me there, wanted him to go up and shew us his chamber of imagery, which he refused to do; but a maid servant was called, who it seemed could do any thing with him; when she came, and had spoken a little childish gibberish to him, and taking him by the arm, he leaped up like a March hare, and scampered all the way across the room; he then galloped up stairs with her like a young kitten, and went into the curious chamber, which is a large unfurnished room, kept on purpose for this man's exhibition of straw work. There we saw the Saviour's sepulchre, made of straw; the twelve apostles also, if I remember right; and the ever-blessed Trinity, represented by three little figures of straw.

He pointed with his finger to one of the little images, and told us that he had set Christ upon the throne.

Is it not strange, Sir, that gospel professors should think that a man, whose whole employ is a violation of the second commandment, should be under the influence of God's Spirit? What is this but fathering idolatry upon divine inspiration?

The Bible informs us, that the Spirit of God is to repair and renew the disordered faculties of our souls, and set us down at Jesus's feet in our right mind, but not to drive us out of our mind, much less into hellish frenzies!

The Spirit of God brought the prodigal son to himself, but never drove any man beside himself. To suppose a madman possessed with the Spirit of God, is to justify the Pharisees of old, who declared the Saviour's divine, miracles done by the Spirit to be done by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, for the which they were charged with the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. A likely matter, that a man who has been for years in the damnable delusion of arminianism, until the Almighty, in justice, gave him up to the prevalency of the devil, should be a prophet of God! I am informed he left his wife and children to shift for themselves, and got into the workhouse. Since he has been there, it seems, he will not so much as allow them to come and see him. What! does the Spirit of God teach us without any just cause to bate and forsake our family? Does inspiration submit to be supported as a parish charge? To suppose a madman influenced by the Holy Ghost, is to cast a most cruel reflection on the Spirit of God, and to level his influence with those of devils. Of this be assured, that whenever the Spirit of God comes to inspire a man, he comes with a threefold energy; to deliver the conscience, the affections, and the mind, from the power of the devil; not to lead us to hate our wives and children, but to love them; and to deliver us from all madness, which is of the devil: therefore the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7.

After we had seen the straw exhibition, we went down stairs again, into the shop of labour, where the rings are made, and there we sat down. My friends in company pulled out their Bibles, and said a word to him, and he then referred them to some passage in scripture, which he said would suit them, and then they doubled them down. But I observed that he never referred them to any passage where the doctrine of God's election is mentioned. This gave me clearly to see, that whether an arminian be in his senses, or mad; whether he be in the land of hope, or is bell, he will still hold his principles. This appears plain by the Saviour's parable of the rich man, who desired Abraham to amid Lazarus to his father's house, to warn his brethren; but when Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them;" he answered, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham stuck to his text saying, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

These arminian gentlemen, who have got such a stock of human talents to trade with, vainly imagine that the fears of death, hell, and damnation, are sufficient to alarm them to perform all the task that God requires of them; this their way is their folly.

The gentleman that was with me, desired me to give the prophet a word, that he might begin to prophesy concerning me, but I would not. The gentleman told him, that I was a preacher of his brother, as he was pleased to term Christ: the madman said, Yes, but he has not been diligent; they told him they thought I had: he answered, that I had not been faithful; they told him, Yes, they thought I bad: he said, that his Father, as he was pleased to term God, would scourge me, &c. At this I laughed heartily, which provoked the prophet exceedingly, and caused him, with a pale face, and much bitterness, to tell me that if I laughed at him, I laughed at God. My friends again

desired me to speak a word to him, and after much importunity I mentioned a word which I thought he would not like, in the state he appeared to me to be in; for I look upon it, that a person who is sunk into despair and madness, is wholly destitute of hope, either in God, or in himself, therefore I mentioned the word, hope, to him. "Hope!" said he, "away with hope." This fully convinced me that he was without God, and having no hope in the world; for Paul says, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

The man that casts away hope, casts away the anchor of his soul; the word of his God, and the salvation of the Saviour; but we have not so learned Christ.

The gentleman that was with me, desired him to prophesy something concerning me; he at last was prevailed on to look at the wrinkles in the palm of my hand, and to give me likewise a pat on the hand. What he could find out by the wrinkles of my hand, I know not; but I know it is the way that vagrant fortune-tellers use.

I have read in Cave's Lives of the Fathers, that Julian, the great apostate, divined by the liver of a woman, whom his priest had killed for that purpose, just before the judgment of God overtook him; and I read that the King of Babylon divined by the same article; but whether it was a human liver, or the liver of a brute, I know not; but it was one of them; "For the King of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver."

Others, in old time, have divined by the flight of birds, the smoke of chimneys, the motions of insects, the croaking of reptiles. But all our modern conjurors divine by the spots of cards, the wrinkles of the hand, the sticking of pins, or the grounds of a tea-cup.

Old Doll Bridget, the famous Norwood gipsy, used to peep at the wrinkles of the hand, the same as this arminian conjuror did. But surely the Spirit of God never sends a believer to seek instruction at the hand of any such; but tells us to have nothing to do with wizards that peep and mutter, but to seek unto our God to the living from the dead? Isaiah, viii. 19.

Before we departed from him, he spoke some words which made me shudder: he said, "I have set my brother upon the throne now, if my Father don't save me through my brother, I will tell him that he is a liar." By brother, he meant Christ: and by father he meant God. This shewed me the rebellion of his heart. I believe some of the hypocritical tribe have got a little comfort from him, which has lasted for awhile; for I am told, that some who are very strongly suspected to be of that number, have gone to him, to whom he has said, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord," and applied a passage out of the prophet Isaiah to them, "Oh, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours," &c.

The friends that went with me, asked me, after we had left him, what I thought of him: I said, that I thought the devil was in him, and I am still of the same mind. The Lord keep us from all such delusions; we have no occasion to go to mad persons to cast the nativity of our spiritual birth; the testimony of the Spirit within, and the written testimony, are quite sufficient for that purpose. I did not think to have sent you so long an epistle about a madman; but as you seem so very inquisitive, I have related all that I know about him.

I am credibly informed that some poor weak minds have gone to him, to know whether they belong to God or not; and if he has spoken comfortably to them, and called them the blessed of the Lord, or the children of God, a deal of dependence has been put upon this delirious oracle; and after a time they have

visited him again, and taken their neighbours with them. I think the Saviour's predictions are daily fulfilled; "If it were possible, they should deceive the very elect"

That which deceives so many of these simple ones, for I can in conscience call them no better, is his having so much scripture in his head, and his seeming to have such a love to Christ, and talking so comfortably about him. This is the devil transformed into an angel of light. I once knew a man who was a violent persecutor of the gospel, and even of his wife, whom God called under my ministry, who had long laboured against the profession of his wife; but when he found he could not drive the grace of God out of her heart, he attempted to hang himself, but was prevented. He was a very strict Pharisee, therefore further from the kingdom of God than publicans and harlots. However, at last he was prevailed on to come and hear me; and I believe his carnal conscience did her office sufficient to chew him that he was wrong, and his wife was right. Directly after this, God struck him with a stroke of the palsy, which turned him into an idiot; and after that, he attended me for some time; he soon after began to talk much about Jesus Christ, but in a childish way, as the Moravians do. However, at last he was seized with a frenzy in his head, and lost all his rationality. During his affliction I visited him several times, and he kept continually talking about Christ, and of his love to Christ. However, I thought the devil had got the possession of his heart, and influenced him to speak in that manner, to prevent truth from dethroning of him; and so it seemed to fall out; for soon after this he became quite violent, and so desperately mischievous, that he aimed at the life of his wife and children, and would not hear the Lord's name mentioned, or even a prayer put up for him; and thus he died. I knew a man at Cranbrook, in the wild of Kent, named Thomas Fielder, who fell in love with a woman, but not obtaining her, he lost his senses; and from that time he would talk about scripture from morning till night; but before his

madness came on him, he never used to speak a word about it that ever I heard of. The devil knows how to mimic religion, or else where do all our tribes of hypocrites come from? and who influences them, that they deceive so many good men? Why, the same that influenced Ananias and Sapphira. Peter tells you that Satan filled their hearts. As for the madman's quoting the scriptures, it is no wonder at all; the devil can fill his head with scripture on purpose to deceive poor simple people. The devil is not ignorant of scripture; our Saviour shews us this plain enough, when he mentions how many suitable passages he brought to him when he tempted him; first in the wilderness, then on the pinnacle of the temple, then on the mount. If the scriptures were then extant, one would be inclined to think that Satan had his eye on a certain passage, when he tempted Job to curse God; and Satan knew that if he could have gained this point with Job he should have him safe enough. The passage is in Levit. xxiv. 15. "And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God, shall bear his sin" The devil knew there was no pardon promised for that sin, therefore he laboured the harder. When the devil deceived Adam and Eve, he brought the word of God in his mouth. God had commanded the man, saying, "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Satan quoted twice from this passage; "Yea, hath God said," mark that, hath God said, "Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" The devil quoted again, and contradicted the command; "Ye shall not surely die." I shall have reason to bless God as long as I live, for bringing me through so many temptations; for I declare there are numbers of professors in London, who constantly attend the gospel, that do not know the works of God from the works of the devil. The scriptures inform us; that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy; and if there is a man in the world that can prove that the comfortable testimony of Christ Jesus ever rested in the heart of a man mad, or ever made any man mad,

let him answer this letter; and if God enables me, I will answer him. A man under his first awakenings may be ready to lose his rationality, especially if he be delivered up to the temptations of Satan, as the incestuous person was, for the destruction of fleshly lusts; as you read, I Cor. v. 4, &c. But depend upon it, that if ever the Holy Ghost brings the criminal out of his bondage into liberty, he regenerates the faculties of such a soul. This I know by happy experience.

For a person to suppose that the spirit of love and of a sound mind dwells in the heart of a madman, is as great an absurdity as to say, that eternal darkness reigns in heaven; or that the sin of righteousness shines in hell.

As for his speaking many truths, that has no weight with me. I believe the devils know when they shall be finally tormented; which you and I do not; as appears from their question put to Christ: "Art thou come to torment us before the time? we know who thou art, the Holy One of God." I believe that those assertions which Satan mentioned, to be true, were preventing grace is withheld; "Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life." I believe that the evil spirit that followed Paul, and others of his companions, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, that shew unto us the way of salvation;" I say, I believe the devil told the truth; nevertheless Paul rebuked him; and cast him out, as you read, Acts xvi. 17,18.

It is strange indeed, to think, that a man who, when in his senses, was an Arminian in principle; one that exalts himself to the dishonour of God; who has left his wife and family; lost his senses; lives as a parish charge; whose whole employ is in childish idolatry; who has cast away all hope; and tells us, that if God does not save him through Christ, he will tell him he is a liar (when I know there are many that never will be saved through Christ, and yet God will be true, and every man

a liar); I say, is it not strange that such a monster should be called a prophet of God? I believe if that devil that followed Paul was to preach the same doctrine in our day, as he did then, he would not only be called a prophet, but even the Messiah; "For many," says Christ, "shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many."

Excuse my long letter: I should not have written so much, if I had not been a little inflamed with your curiosity, Sir. "Try the spirits, whether they are of God; for many false spirits are Zone out into the world, therefore believe not every spirit." If the testimony of God's word, and that of God's Spirit in a purged conscience, be not sufficient, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. Farewell; the God of love and peace be with thee; while I remain in cordial affection, reverend Sir,

Thine to command in all godliness,
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row.

Dear Sir,

Yours came to hand, which I have carefully perused; and I own that the fresh reports which you have heard of this prophet go current with us in London, for I have often heard of the same. And as you say in yours, "That he is able, as soon as a person comes into the room, to tell whether he be a saint, a public minister of the gospel, or a wicked man: and that he has begun to exclaim violently against some of his attendants, and to tell them heavy tidings; who it seems are reported to be people of an indifferent character."

The other report also I have heard, namely, about his telling a certain man that he would receive an accident from a beast on such a day, if he did not take care; which, as was reported, came to pass.

But all this is no more than the devil has done before; this is no new feat of Satan; I can find in the word of God that these things have been performed of old. Satan has acknowledged a gospel minister, and reprov'd a sinner too, before now. The devil that said, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation," was partly true, and partly false. That they were the servants of the Most High God, was true; but that they skewed to devils the way of salvation, was false; for God's voice is to the sons of men. If Satan could point out, and cry up a servant of God then, why not now? unless you imagine that the serpent has lost his wisdom by his long practice. Satan knew and acknowledged the Lord Jesus publicly, when thousands of the Jews knew him not. "We know thee what thou art, the Holy One of God." The devils knew that he was Christ; but he rebuked them, and suffered them not to speak. As to the madman's exclaiming against some sinners that have visited him, it is no proof of his being a prophet of the Lord. The devil can rebuke sin, torment the sinner for it, and even cry up good works into the bargain.

Christ said that Judas was a devil; and that same devil rebuked Mary for wasting her ointment; and contended for three hundred pence to relieve the poor; and was sharply rebuked for his liberality. Satan sent seven of his own dear children out of a certain house at Corinth, both wounded and naked, for mimicking the power of the Holy Ghost in Paul; though it was Satan ,at the same time that set them at it. This brings to my mind gnat a precious poet has left upon record: speaking of the cunning of Satan, he says,

Self-denial he can use,
And that from selfish, devilish views;
His nature and his name disown,
And say that devil or hell there's none.

Every deist in Great Britain is a living witness of the above assertion.

That which seems to puzzle you most is, his prediction coming to pass on the man that received a hurt from the beast, and on the same day that it was foretold, as report goes. I have weighed' all the passages that you refer me to, in Deut. xviii. 18th and 19th verses. I will raise them up a prophet, &c. and that whosoever will not obey him, shall be cut off, &c. And the 22d verse of the same chapter; "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing that the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." Which words you say are a scriptural criterion, that if their predictions come to pass, they are the Lord's prophets, &c. Before you can rely upon this, you must prove that they are the Lord's prophets, and that their judgments, lives, actions, and predictions, are agreeable to God's word. But if you suppose that a man, who is filled with inconsistencies, swallowed up in delusions, employed in childish vanities, and bereft of common sense, to be a prophet

of the Most High, you make God the author of confusion, instead of peace.

What will the heathen world say, if it be allowed that the prophets of God are nothing but idiots and lunatics? The man that believes this, is under an awful delusion of the devil, let him be who be will, and God will let him know it. Even the very heathens have used charms to conjure the devil out of people that were mad; and what would such heathens say, if they were to see a tribe of professors, who pretend to be the happy partakers of the Holy Ghost, go to a madman to know the mind and will of God? Oh utter it not in Gath, for it is a greater delusion than the Cock Lane ghost; tell it not in Askelon, for it is more absurd than leaping into a quart bottle!

As for his prediction of the man's accident coming to pass, as is reported, it may be true; the devil has done that before now. All Haman's friends, and Zeresh his wife, advised him to hang Mordecai, and kill all the Jews in Babylon. And as their counsel was to destroy the whole church of God, do you not think the devil was in them? Thus Satan counselled and prompted Haman on, till his pride had ripened him for ruin; but soon after this Satan turned all his counsel and predictions against him, to sink him as fast as possible; for it came to pass, after Haman had arrayed Mordecai, that he hastened, in the bitterness of his soul, to his friends, and to Zeresh his wife, as it is written. "But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered. And Haman told Zeresh his wife, and all his friends, every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, if Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but thou shalt surely fall before him." And before the prophecy was ended, the accomplishment began. "And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared."

That was, to receive his sentence from the king. This prediction came to pass; and yet, none will allow that Haman's wise men or his wife, were inspired by the Holy Ghost. But the devil knew very well that he could not destroy the church of God, nor reverse his firm decree, which was mentioned by Moses, namely, that the name of Amalek should be blotted out from under heaven; which was accomplished at the destruction of Haman and his ten sons, Deut. xxv. 19.

If thou hast any thing more to object, let it be sent and I will answer it if I can; but I never will believe that divine inspiration is the cause of lunacy; or that the blessed Spirit of God bears his sweet anvil-comforting testimony in the heart of a madman. If I was to allow this, I should lie against my right, belie my conscience, and deny all the sweet happiness that I have ever felt. I declare publicly, that I was almost mad before the Lord delivered my soul; but when deliverance came by the Holy Ghost, I was as much in my senses as you are now, and have remained so, for aught I know, to this day. I do not deny but God may leave a man in the hands of Satan till he is mad, and then deliver him by his Spirit, as he did the man among the tombs; but when he was delivered by the Saviour, he sat at Christ's feet in his right mind.

I know Festus told Paul that too much learning had made him mad; but we do not believe what he said; for the Holy Ghost tells us that Paul spake forth the words of truth and soberness. However, I hope God will ever keep both thee and me from all madness, whether it be from heaven or from hell; for wherever madness appears, it is an awful judgment from God; but I defy the whole world to prove that madness is any part of salvation by grace. Fare thee well; the best of blessings attend thee, while I remain.

Inviolably thine, in the gospel of Christ,
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, Sept. 3, 1784

Dear Sir,

I RECEIVED yours, dated August 21st, and am sorry to find you are sunk into such distress: but I must tell you, that I thought you set out wrong at the first.

A man may feel many severe lashes from an unenlightened conscience; which may set him about an external reformation: and by these means he may stop the mouth of conscience with a few dead works. And if such a person attends the gospel, and gets a little light in his head, and this light be attended with a gift of utterance, so that he be able to speak in prayer, and in gospel conversation, he is then ready to judge himself converted to the faith of Christ. This I take to be the beginning of your profession, Sir; and to be plain with you, I think it was pride and blind zeal, that first prompted you to take upon you the ministry of the word. I dropt many hints to you at first about the necessity of a sound and savoury experience, a heart fixed in the faith, and of a well informed judgment, in order to qualify a man for the discharge of the

ministry; but I plainly saw you was bent upon it, though I thought you was not fit for it. Your uncouth way of reprovng every person you met, was very displeasing to me. Storming poor sinners' ears with hell and damnation, without appealing to their thoughts, conscience, or the natural workings of their mind, only hardens their hearts, and drives them further into sin; and sometimes it fixes such a bar of prejudice against the ever-blessed gospel, that they fly from it 12ce as if it consisted of nothing but bell torments.

You are now sunk into the very bowels of Arminianism; and every letter that you send to me fulfils this scripture But deceivers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." I thought at times you seemed to speak a pure language about some few truths of the gospel; but that lamp is now gone out, and I always thought it would; for the Spirit of Christ, and the true oil of grace, I fear, was wanting.

Your fighting against the sovereignty of God, is a proof of your rebellion, not of your faith. Paul found it hard work to kick against the pricks, and you will find it still harder to kick against a mountain of brass, Zech. vi 1. If you had tasted the bread of eternal life, you would not lift up your heels against the sovereign giver. I think my friend is making wretched work for conscience, and this he will feel when God calls him to a reckoning. Your preaching up universal mercy to all the human race, without any regard paid to truth and justice, is very dishonourable to God; and in the end will prove destructive to you, if sovereign grace prevent not. Your own life hangs in doubt, and I do not wonder at it: and how any man can contend for the salvation of all men, while himself is filled with the fears of damnation, I know not. This can be no less than offering violence to your own conscience; and, as Milton says, "Who against faith and conscience can be heard?" However, to preach up such doctrines, while a man's fallen countenance and guilty conscience give every sentence

the lie, is a hard task, and a task that will prove bitter in the end.

Declaring God's saving mercy to all the human race, cannot be called taking forth the vile from the precious; nor is crying up human will and power doing the work of an evangelist. Preaching universal redemption is not rightly dividing the word of truth; he that explains away the doctrine of election, cannot be said to declare the whole counsel of God. While you are trampling on the sovereignty of God, you are no ambassador of Christ. And he that preaches up the delusions of Satan, will make a shocking proof of his ministry.

I have often tried the doctrines that I preach by the great standard; and they are the truths that I received from God himself, and I hope I shall never conceal them, shun to declare them, or ever err from them, be ashamed of them, or a shame to them.

I have lately been led to examine the book of John's Revelation very deliberately, and I find the doctrine of the three persons in the Godhead, the doctrine of eternal election and reprobation, particular redemption, effectual calling, justification by faith, sovereign and all conquering grace, with the final perseverance of the saints, are mentioned and admired by all the spirits of just men made perfect.

But as for Arminianism, there is no mention made of it; your doctrines, of free-will, or free-agency, universal redemption, universal love, final apostasy from grace, and human righteousness, are never once mentioned in any of the hymns of heaven; and I think, As they are perfect in knowledge, they must be better judges than you. No mention is made of your doctrine of any glorified spirit above; therefore they must come from another quarter; and I think they are what Paul calls the doctrines of devils, and I am sorry to see you Sir, sinking so fast into them.

I have often wondered what the apostle Paul could mean by telling us to beware of dogs; but as the same apostle calls the doctrine of election strong meat, I was led to see that the Arminian is that dog who is always gnashing his teeth at that doctrine, and turning that glorious truth into a bone of contention; but it is such a tough morsel, that he cannot rob God's children of it, nor fill his own belly with it.

Every letter that I receive from you convinces me of your dangerous state; and, on the other hand only serves to confirm me in the truths of the gospel. I mention this, that you may give up all hopes of making me a proselyte to your unscriptural notions. Besides, what can I find in you, to tempt me to be one with you in sentiment? For you have no faith, no peace, no joy, nor any life; you own that you have nothing but distress and confusion. I hope God will deliver my poor deluded friend out of that strong hold of the devil, which I hope God will enable me to pray for; and may he favour me with the pleasing view of your establishment in the faith of God's elect; until which I desire to drop all correspondence with you. I hope ever to remain a well-wisher to your soul, but a sworn enemy to every error you hold.

W. H.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XIV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, Dec. 4, 1784.

Dear Brother in Christ Jesus,

GRACE, mercy, and peace, be with thee. I am willing to comply with your request, in shewing you my opinion on the matter referred to; but I think there is an abler hand, that lives near you, of whom you might get satisfaction about that matter. I own the devil's raising of Samuel is a singular history; and when I first set off in the ways of God, it was very puzzling and terrible to me. I have read it till my hair has moved on my head; and; when I inquired of some professors, they told me it really was Samuel the prophet that the witch of Endor brought up. But for my part, I cannot believe it; for God has promised that his people shall be gathered in peace; and that their bodies shall rest in their beds; and I cannot think that it is in the power of the devil to break the promise of God. It is said of those who died in faith, that they yielded or gave up the ghost. And those souls that are committed into the hands of Christ must be safe; the wicked cease from troubling them in that state, and the weary are at rest. I have disputed with people who have laboured with the Hebrew text in favour of the opinion that it was Samuel, but I was never convinced by their arguments.

If Satan can bring a soul out of paradise who departed in faith, and raise a body out of the grave that was once a temple of the Holy Ghost, he is not only the god of this world, but a ruler of the next. However, Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life; and he is too jealous of this honour to give it to his enemy. I do not see any great difficulty arise from his being called Samuel. Men possessed with the devil are called sometimes prophets, when the adjective, false, is left out. Satan you know is called an angel of light when he has

transformed himself; and if he can counterfeit the rays of an angel, why not the mantle of a prophet?

What the pretended Samuel said to Saul, does not seem at all to disprove what I have said; Satan can easily predict the ruin of a man, when a just God has left him in full possession of him. And for the devil to own that the kingdom was given to David, was nothing difficult; for the Lord was with David, and that Satan knew; because all his plots to take away his life had proved abortive.

It was no great difficulty for Satan to predict the fall of Israel; a diligent devil is not idle in a field of battle; and he knows it will go bad with any host, if the God of armies is departed from it.

Saul owned that God was departed from him, and that he answered him no more, neither by prophets nor by dream. And this Satan well knew; for an evil spirit from the Lord had possessed him long before that; and I believe it was that evil spirit from the Lord that led him to the witch of Endor; and, by the permission of God, it was the same that answered him when he came there. You know the scriptures tells us, that if a man rejects the word of Lord, or receives not the truth, in the love of it, that God will send him a strong delusion, that he may believe a lie; and I believe this to be the case here; nor have I a single doubt of Saul's faith in it.

That which seems to puzzle you most, is his saying, "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me," 1 Sam. xxviii. 19. If you suppose that that means they were to be with Samuel in the grave, it is false, for they were not buried on the morrow; or if you think that the supposed Samuel meant they should be with him in heaven, that cannot be credited; for Saul declares that God was departed from him, and you know the blessing is to them that die in the Lord, but not to them who are without God, and have no hope in the world.

The Holy Ghost says, "So Saul died for his transgressions which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that hath a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the Lord; therefore he slew him," 1 Chron. x. 13, 14. Now, if it be granted that the witch really raised Samuel, doubtless it was the Lord that spoke by Samuel: but the above cited passage says, that he inquired not of the Lord, but of the familiar spirit. They therefore that try to prove that phantom to be Samuel, make Samuel an evil spirit, ascending out of hell. I shall say no more about hellish phantoms; only add, that if we keep up a close walk with the dear Redeemer, and enjoy the Spirit's testimony in our consciences, we shall certainly die in faith; and if we make this blessed end, I believe we shall get far enough out of the reach of either devils or witches.

I believe that evil spirits usually appeared to their familiars in the shape of a brute, as appears by the idols that were worshipped. But the devils in that shape would not have done for Saul; Saul says, "Bring me up Samuel;" he wanted counsel from a devil in the shape and garb of a prophet. The woman seeing the devil come up as an angel of light, cried out, I see gods ascending, and I do not wonder at it; for I dare say she had never seen her sweetheart in the rays of an angel and with the gravity of a prophet before. Be not offended at the word sweetheart; God says, they sacrificed to devils, Deut. xxxii. 17; and went a whoring after devils, Levit. xvii. 7.

Farewell; thine to serve,
W. H. S. S.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, July 18, 1785.

Dear Sir,

I HOPE this epistle will find you in a better state of health than I left you in, and heartily wish that the Almighty may sanctify the affliction for the good of your soul. I received your letter, and have carefully perused it, and remain quite unconvinced of any of those evils you charge me with. My long silence was not occasioned by the consideration of your letter being unanswerable far from it, for as it contained no scripture proof, it consequently had no weight with me; in this matter I would answer with pious Job "How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?"

As to my exposing my pedigree in the book of my conversion, which you are pleased to style wickedness, ignorance, and a thing unreasonable, I think God himself hardly stands clear of this your charge; for he exposed the pedigree of Solomon's father and mother to all the world, if the world would read the Bible; and I assure you it was a point of conscience with me, "And why am I judged of another man's conscience?" God made Solomon's pedigree of great use to me in my distress, and he may make my pedigree of use to others in distress also; and for my part, I see nothing in it to displease chaste Christians: it may indeed be offensive to some carnal professors, who have forfeited all the honour God has conferred on the honourable state of wedlock, by defiling the

marriage bed; but then, a minister of the gospel is to use his liberty in the gospel, without standing in awe of such as these.

As I published to the world my spiritual troubles, and the sharp discipline that God brought me under, I thought it was my duty also, to let the world know my base original, and wretched life, that the world might see that God afflicteth not willingly, nor grieveth the children of men without cause, but that it is sin that he visiteth with the rods, and iniquity with stripes, even in them that are the objects of an eternal affection, Psalm lxxxix. 32. And this is so far from being unreasonable, that it directly falls in with the connected chain Of Festus's reasonings, who I suppose you will allow to be a very nervous logician; for he insisted upon it before king Agrippa, that it was a thing that seemed unreasonable to him, to send Paul the prisoner to Augustus Caesar without signifying the crimes laid against him, Acts xxv. 27. But that after Agrippa had found out Paul's faults, if he had any, Festus might have something to write. And it appears to me as unreasonable to send an account of God's severe chastisements into the world, without specifying the crimes that procured these things to these that fell under the rod.

The charge you lay against me of using a borrowed language in my writings, stands on so weak a basis, that it may be blown away with the wind of a sparrow. Your letter that now lays before me, has not a word in it but was borrowed; you were not born a grammarian any more than I; nor was you born with any language at all; for had you been trained up from your infancy among the Arabs, you would doubtless have spoken Arabic; and if I had been trained up from five months old in Paris, I should have muttered something like French.

But if your wealthy father had got his hundreds to spare, and put you to school at a great expense, to learn other people's

language and words, this gives you no licence to reflect on the poverty of my progenitors; for it is God that maketh poor and maketh rich; he therefore that despiseth the poor, reproacheth his maker, Prov. xiv. 31. But if I, by the dint of hard study and observation, am enabled to cope with you, my study and observation rather merit your praise than your derision. However, this charge of yours has no more weight with it, than that of the Jewish Rabbies against Christ, "Whence hath this man all these things, seeing he never learned letters?" And the Saviour's answer may justly be turned on you, "Whatever I speak, therefore. even as the father said unto me, so I speak."

But alas! when men, and especially professors of religion, begin to turn their backs on the Bible, (which is the only true basis of all sound reasoning,) and launch forth to establish their logic on what they got from the schools, the weakest scripturalist, if experienced in the power of truth, may soon overturn all that they can establish; for he that reasons from God, is sure to lose himself in a labyrinth, and leave all his arguments floating on the surface of confusion. God is the only centre where every line of argument may be drawn, and the only fountain of wisdom where all doubts may be dissolved, all controversies end, and the only foundation where every distressing thought about our state can be established. He that reasons with truth on his side up to God, is sure to end well; but he that pursues his argument from the centre, is sure to make a ridiculous finish. This is loudly proclaimed by the writings of the atheists and deists, who have drawn all their lines of creation from God, down to such a ridiculous fancied mass of gendered, or compounded atoms, as will leave to all enlightened posterity an everlasting reproach upon that paradise of fools; and I think the skeleton of a cabbage, properly dissected by an army of caterpillars, is sufficient to rebuke such carnal reasonings both with respect to the creation and government of the world; for they leave every vein of the cabbage leaf centering in one stock, and are

all at the command of God; for the caterpillars are called an army, raised, sent, and mustered by God himself, Joel, ii. 25. Nor do they return till they have accomplished that for which they were sent, as appears by the former quotation; God that sends them can only drive them away; and for my part, I should never care to head that army which God opposeth, if his host consisted only of a hive of bees; for such a regiment, which is never unarmed, if commissioned by God, would be sufficient to rout the most formidable host of men that ever combined together. God's hornet put the land of Canaan into confusion, and a band of locusts, and a troop of frogs, made all the land of Egypt cry for quarters.

The other charge you bring against me for speaking against the form of prayer, and for not using the Lord's prayer, is nothing new; I have had enough of that from other pharisees but you have not brought one scripture proof that contains any sentence against me for that crime, nor does the Bible afford you one.

It appears plain to me, that Abel had his sacrifice to look to, when he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by his faith he has still a voice in the word of God.

Noah had both his altar and sacrifice to look to, when he called on the name of the everlasting God.

Jacob had his anointed pillar, and his Galeed to look to, and here he was commanded to go and build an altar to God, who answered him in the day of his distress.

Moses had the pascal lamb to look at, and by faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.

Israel had the passover, Moses the mediator, and Aaron the priest, set before them, which were all eminent types of Christ. And when they came into the Holy Land to engage in the battles of the Lord, they had Joshua the son of Nun to look to as a saviour, and captain of the Lord's host, whom the Gentiles called Jesus.

The Israelites afterwards had the judges to look to, such as Jephthah, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, &c. And in David's time, they had the ark, a throne of grace, and a gracious king to look at, all types of Christ. And in Solomon's days they had the temple to look to, where all was commanded to look that felt the plague of their own hearts; and here Jonah looked from the whale's belly, and here Daniel looked at the expense of the lion's den. And it is plain, that both Jonah and Daniel received the promised blessing by looking there; and all these types now centre in the one great antitype Christ Jesus, who is called the sacrifice, the altar, the pillar, the witness, the lamb, the mediator, the priest, the captain, the saviour, the ark, the judge, the king, the temple, the mercy-seat, and the veil: and it is to him alone we must all cast our eyes, if we would look for redemption in Israel; "Look to me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is no saviour."

I find that the greatest advocates for the Lord's prayer, are those that appear to be destitute of the spirit of God, and of all people they are the last that should use it; it is the spirit of adoption that cries Abba, Father; and he who is a stranger to that spirit, only compasses his maker about with his lips when he calls God his father; and the Saviour's words are applicable to him, "You are of your father the devil."

However I am no judge over you; but as I cannot find Christ in any covenant character in the Lord's prayer, I take it for granted that it served the disciples for that time, while the

Saviour, the substance of all the above-mentioned shadows, was with them; but they were to see him as their altar, priest, and sacrifice, offered up upon the cross; and after that, they were to receive the Spirit through him, and to offer up their spiritual petitions through the same mediator by whom they received the spirit of prayer from on high; and to this agrees the Saviour, "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name," though ye have often used the prayer that I taught you, yet "hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; and in that day ye shall ask me nothing," as ye have done; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you;" though ye have used the form that I taught you, yet "hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken to you in proverbs; but the time cometh, that I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but shall shew you plainly of the Father; at that day ye shall ask in my name."

And I believe the disciples did as Jesus commanded them, when the Spirit of prayer came upon them; for they prayed in Christ's name, and spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. Nor can I find in all the Bible that they ever used the Lord's prayer after the Holy Ghost came upon them. The Lord's prayer served them very well while the mediator was personally with them, and one of the company; but when the Saviour was exalted at the right hand of the Father, he then sent forth the spirit to testify of him, and to teach them that he was an object of prayer as well as the Father. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." Or if they asked of the Father, it was to be in his name. I have said nothing in all this against the Lord's prayer; I have only assigned my reasons for not using it.

I believe it to be the most compendious and comprehensive set of words in the whole world; and he must be a Christian indeed, in spirit, practice, and principle, that uses it; or else, as

I said before, he will act the part of Ephraim, compass his Maker about with lies. Your asserting that there is the Saviour's name in the Lord's prayer, in "Our Father," Christ, being called the everlasting father, is very weak. To go to God the father, in the name of the everlasting father, is an odd way of expression, and has nothing in it respecting the mediatorial office of Christ. The mediator respects chiefly his manhood, whereas everlasting father respects chiefly his godhead. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." The new and living way of access to God, is consecrated through the veil, that is to say Christ's flesh, Heb. x. 20; and he that goes to God any other way, whether he uses the Lord's prayer, or men's prayers, goes to God as a fool goes.

For my part, I can say the Lord's prayer, being so used to it formerly, with my lips, while my heart and thoughts are all over the world; and I suppose this is sometimes the case with you; and if it is, though you do honour God with your lips in saying the Lord's prayer, yet your heart being far from him, is but vain worship. However, I have no dominion over your faith, nor do I desire that your confidence should stand in my wisdom, but in God's power; nor should I have troubled you on this subject, if you had not begun in that furious manner to cavil at me.

As to what I said against the form of prayer, or church service in the pulpit, it is true; God on the Sabbath day is more abused and mocked by that form, by graceless souls, than he is by all the open profanity that sinners are guilty of all the six working days besides. I insisted upon it, that it is not prayer; and you know it is in general called reading the prayers, or performing divine service. But there is a material difference between praying, and reading of other men's prayers; and as to divine service, the word divine might be left out; for while that service is performed, any discerning eye may see that

there is no divinity operating on the servants, therefore it ought to be called forced service; for when that long harangue is over, the people look as lively as a Papist does when he arrives at the end of Lent, when he is allowed to quit the Pope's stocks, and fill his belly.

Performing of service it is; lip-labour and bodily exercise, that profiteth little. God himself has promised to create the fruit of the lips, but such lips go on without any new creating work of his; that is done to their hand.

Your bringing no proof in favour of it, but Mr. Whitefield and other good men's approving and using of it, has no weight with me; I don't pin my faith upon good men's formality, but upon Christ crucified. Aaron was a good man, but I have no command from God to worship his calf, though he builds an altar, and tells us plainly in his proclamation, that his new-invented piece of service was a feast to the Lord.

Though the Holy Ghost be an infallible Spirit, yet a man inspired is not an infallible man. Peter was inspired, and yet he erred in the matter of circumcision; James was inspired, and yet he says, "In many things we offend all;" and David says, "Who can understand his errors?" and yet the Spirit of God was upon him, and it was in his light that he discovered what errors he did; "For whatsoever maketh manifest is light."

If forms of prayers are sufficient, who had more than the Pharisees had? They made many long prayers; and if the Lord's prayer had been intended to have been used as a sufficient form of words on every occasion, why was the Spirit of grace and supplication poured out on the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost? God does nothing in vain, therefore the spirit of supplication is essential to salvation. God is a spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. I verily believe the form of prayer has a tendency to slacken the operations of the Spirit of God in

many young Christians; and I am sure the greatest enemies to my ministry this day in London, are those lifeless professors, or refined Pharisees, who sit under the gospel, and hope in the form of prayer; and many such would leave the gospel entirely, if the form was gone. This shews, that it only settles sinners on their old leaven; and the gospel is used by such, to make them sit more easy on their old bottom.

However, the Spirit was sufficient to instruct all the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and the Apostles, in the matter of prayer, without any forms of human composition. If you deny the Spirit's sufficiency, you condemn all the prevalent petitions of faith that ever have been put up in the world.

The greatest advocates for a form of godliness, in the days of old, were the Jewish Pharisees; and they were the greatest enemies to the dear Redeemer, and the furthest from the kingdom of God; and why you, a professor of Christ, should undertake their cause, and defend their quarrel, I know not. The word of God, or my own conscience, will never condemn me for enforcing the Spirit's work on the souls of men, nor yet for insisting on his sufficiency on every branch of his enlightening, quickening, and renovating work on the soul; for the gospel itself is a dispensation of the Spirit, which is quite sufficient to make a Christian, and to keep him holy and happy, without being shackled with human forms. This ark will keep on its own wheels, without the arm of Uzza. I must confess I was surprised to hear your weak arguments, which you made use of in so violent a manner when I was last with you, as well as at your rancour in this your letter. I believe you have forgot what you once mentioned to me on the road home, after I had been preaching on the subject of spiritual prayer. You said, with many tears, that this had long been a sore burden on your spirit, namely, because you could not pray. I was amazed when I came to consider your attendance for so many years on one of the brightest preachers in

London, and yet never be able to pour out your soul before God in prayer; and I am more surprised at your speaking so lightly of the blessed Spirit of God, who helpeth our daily infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, especially now you are so near to the verge of eternity. Dear sir, if this oil be wanted in your vessel, after all your profession, wo be to you!

There are many in our day who will lau 4cf gh at inspiration, that will one day cry heartily for it, as the one thing needful. "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." However, if you never could pray, inspiration has not troubled you; therefore you nave no reason to speak lightly of it. You are not confined, sir, to ml ministry; nor did I ever invite you, or any body else, to attend me, nor even attempt to bind them that do. To my own master I stand or fall, and you are at full liberty to choose as much form as you please. But your presence will never awe me in the pulpit, nor shall I alter my subject on your account; for neither my conscience, nor the word of God, condemn me for enforcing the sufficiency of the Spirit, in his operations on the souls of God's elect, as the spirit of grace and supplication. Blessed is the happy soul who has found his way to God, and is favoured with access to him through the rent veil of the dear Redeemer. This is the blessed privilege of all the children of God. The Lord indulge thee with it, before he takes thee hence to be no more seen. Amen and Amen, says

Thy willing Servant in Christ,
W. H. S. S.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XVI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Arminianism Demolished.

Sir,

I RECEIVED yours of June the 6th, and I read it, but with no satisfaction; that which savours of nothing but flesh and blood, can never be savoury to an heaven-born soul; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and will be savoury to the children of the flesh; "but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and will be relished by none but spiritual children. If your matter had sprung from the Holy Ghost, it would have been more palatable to my soul; but as it savours neither of sound reason, nor of divinity, it is like Job's tasteless dish; "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?"

For my part I see nothing in the doctrine of election that is so contrary to sound reason. The woman who is now your wife, was chosen for you by your father, as you have owned to me; and when he proposed her to you, you approved of her, and married her in preference to any other. And I suppose that you would have deemed it daring insolence in any common prostitute. who should have come and called you to an account for not marrying her. And what should you have thought, if all the women in the world had come to you, and demanded your person to have been divided among them in wedlock! would you not have replied, "Every man has a right

to choose his own partner in life: who is to control me in the object of my choice?" Let this sovereign prerogative be granted to your Maker, and the offensive doctrine of election by Arminian practice is established. God the Father made a marriage for his son, Matt. xxii. 2. And Christ says, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord."

The Father brings this dame to his son, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him;" and he accepts her at his hands, and says, This is flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone. "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" Ephes. v. 32.

And though you Sir, are desirous of making the Saviour a polygamist, by putting Leah to bed in the dark, and forcing her upon him by a covenant of wedlock of your own devising, which has been altered ten times, yet the Saviour says, No; she shall not be my wife; nor am I her husband, call her Loruhamah, Hosea i. 6. I will not have her, I will have Hephzibah, my own delight, and no other. "There are threescore queens and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one, she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her."

I will come with another appeal to the court of equity. You, sir, keep several servants; and do you always hire every one that offers his service? Do not you act like a sovereign here? Have you not a choice in them? and do you not send for their character, and inquire after their honesty? Let this privilege be granted to your Maker, and the controversy is ended. God sends his ministerial servants into the market to hire labourers into his vineyard, Matt. xx. 1; and he pitches upon such as you

refuse, for he takes those that stand idle, Matt. xx. 6; and he takes them without any recommendation, which you will not do, for you require a character of their honesty; and yet at the same time you want to thrust a company of thieves into the Saviour's service; I mean such as yourself; who by your preaching freewill, and self-righteousness, rob him of the glory of his arm, and the honour of his merit, all the day long.

Now, sir, you would think it insolent in any ruffian who should come and take you to task for not hiring him; and yet you are cavilling at God for not sending all the world into his vineyard; when it is plain that you make use of four branches of sovereignty in hiring your servants, which God does not do in his. You choose the industrious, but he hires the idle; "Why stand ye here all the day idle? Because no man, hath hired us. Go ye into the vineyard, and that which is right, that shall ye receive"

You choose the strong, the goodly, and the honest; but the Lord chooses the weak, the base, the dishonourable, and them that are despised. You pay a man according to his worth, time, and labour, in which you show both sovereignty and partiality; but the Lord pays the first last, and gives as much to him that wrought but one hour, as to them who bore the heat and burthen of the day: every one received a penny. I know merit-mongers murmur at this, supposing that they shall have more; but their eye is evil in so doing, because the master is good, in giving where it is most needed.

I know the fifteenth chapter of the Corinthians is perverted, to afford a ground for boasting, in promising the greatest reward of glory, to the greatest labourer and brightest Christian; but God's word has cut off that notion; nor is there a word that favours such a notion in all the chapter above cited. The saints are all to come to the unity of faith, and they are all to arrive to the fullness of Christ's stature, to a perfect man in

Christ. I know their cant is, that every vessel will be full; some die young, and they are small vessels, others are of a larger size, but God says no. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old, shall be accursed." Thus it appears, that there shall not be one little vessel and another great; nor is one weak and another strong in the Lord. "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before him." Thus the young vessel is to die a hundred years old; the shortest vessel is to arrive to the fullness of Christ's stature; the weakest is to be as strong as David, the last are to be first; every one received a penny, and the least in the kingdom of God is equal to the angels in heaven, who neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Though it is said of the twelve Apostles, that they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, yet this shews no pre-eminence in a state of glory; for the Gentiles shall judge angels, and the world both, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" "and if the world is to be judged by you, are ye not able to judge these matters?" A two-edged sword is to be in the hand of the elect, to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; this honour have all his saints, Psalm cxlix. 9.

The scriptures declare, that he that overcomes, shall sit down with Christ on his throne, even as Christ overcame, and sat down with his Father in his throne. Christ rewarding every man according to his work, doth not militate against what I have said; there are two sorts of works, the works of the flesh, and the works of the Spirit, and there are no more. And he that is a just God and a Saviour, will doubtless judge and reward both the righteous and the wicked.

It is observable, that when the God of this world has blinded men's eyes, that they then begin to dream of merit, and fly to the bible for some ground of boasting, which is the last book in all the world that a man should fly to for such a ground; for the author of it purposed to stain the pride of all glory; and his word excludes all boasting, unless a man will be content to make his boast of the Lord; which, if he can submit to, he may, as David did, make his boast all the day long.

I shall come with another appeal to conscience; and indeed I would rather appeal to your own conscience, than to the word of God with you, because you seem to be altogether ignorant of it; God has hid your heart from understanding, therefore he shall not exalt you, Job xvii. 4.

When you go to a fair to buy cattle, do you purchase all the droves that are brought for sale? do you not pick out this horse of strength for draft, that horse of heels for your saddle, and such a, particular flock of sheep for your fold, and this and that calf for weaning, and bringing up for your dairy? And is there any in the fair so daring, as to come and abuse you, ridicule you, you call you partial and unjust, because you have not purchaser his old ram goat? Now, Sir, come to the bar of equity, and permit we to speak on God's behalf. God does as you have done; he calls a number of poor wretched sinners, gives them one faith, one hope, one heart, and one way, and calls them his state horses; I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Otharoh's chariots." He calls other poor sinners, and fits them for his saddle, does his business in the world with them, and makes them as his goodly horse in the battle, Zech. x. 3. He brings them sensibly into the bonds of the covenant, puts his mark upon them, and says, there shall be one fold, and one shepherd; and under his tender care, and in his good pasture he makes them grow up as calves of the stall, Mal. iv. 2; and so fits them to suckle others; and you are charging God with injustice, because he hath not

chosen nor purchased the goats; and he declares he will not; for he says, he laid down his life as a ransom for the sheep; and, that in the great day he will separate righteous from the wicked, even as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

By your leave, I will come with another appeal to your conscience.

Out of your four children, John is your favourite; and though it has appeared a great grief to your wife, and you have been talked to about it, yet you cannot hide it; you know I have seen it myself: your affections here are the language of scripture; "Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I have loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste, for the dragons of the wilderness," Mal. i. 2, 3. And though you and many more are cavilling at God, and calling him unjust for this discriminating love, yet God stands to it; and his love to Jacob, and hatred to Esau, is immutably fixed to all eternity. For "Israel," the spiritual seed of Jacob, "shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end;" while, on the other hand, Edom, and all the mystic seed of Esau, are named the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever, Mal. i. 4. Your affections were fixed on this child, probably on the account of his beauty and wit; but it is not so with God; for God revealed to Rebecca his absolute choice, before the children were born, and before they had done either good or evil; and that his eternal purposes might stand touching his election, he told her the elder shall serve the younger. And she acted agreeably to one possessed with the faith of God's elect; for she believes the decree, eyes the promise that God gave her, and uses means to secure the blessing to the chosen, or elected object; even though her husband's natural affection swayed him to determine quite contrary to the

revealed will of God; this was confirmed at the children's birth, by Jacob's holding Esau by the heel; Esau got the start at the birth; but before ever Esau's heel was cleared, Jacob's hand appeared; so now Esau was running to catch venison, while Jacob's hand was conveying the savoury meat, and getting the blessing in his hairy gloves; and though Isaac trembled when Esau came, and owned that Jacob had got it by subtlety, yet he is brought to remember the revealed will of God, and to confirm what himself had done, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed;" and God confirms it again at Bethel.

I will come with another appeal to your conscience, which, I think you cannot be offended at, because you have taken away both the power and the sovereignty of my Lord and Master, and assumed all yourself, by asserting in this your letter, "that you have a power to do good, and a will to choose or refuse good." Therefore, as an ambassador of Christ I come to you; for where can the servant of a dethroned sovereign go, but to those possessed with sovereign power? and according to your letter, you are the man.

I believe, if you were to make your will to-morrow, you would make it greatly in favour of your beloved son; and perhaps cut off one, that you are far from being kind to, with a shilling. God does not go so far; for though he insists upon it, that Ishmael shall not be heir of the providential substance, and promised blessings of Abraham, yet he provides for Ishmael as a Father in providence, and tells him he should live by his sword. Thus God's mercies are over all his works: God loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment; and makes his sun to shine on the unthankful as well as on the grateful, and sends his rain on the just and unjust.

And I suppose it would be taken as a very great offence for any person to ask you why you gave your substance and

homestall to one child, and only an Ishmael's portion to the rest! your reply would undoubtedly be, "I am not accountable to man for these things, but have an undoubted right to do as I please with my own. God says the same, "Why dost thou strive against bun, for be giveth not account of any of his matters?" and salts, if it is not right that he should do as he pleases with his own?

I have perused your letter over and over, and considered it minutely; and the whole of it seems to amount only to this: you are labouring, to prejudice poor sinners against the sovereignty of God your Maker, and to establish your own sovereignty instead thereof. But, if there is truth in the Bible, living and dying in the work and spirit that you are now in, you will never see Christ with acceptance. "Those that honour me will I honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed"

All the human race have sinned, and are in a state of death and condemnation by sin, and it is God's pleasure to have mercy ton some, and those are the objects that himself chose, according to his own good pleasure: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." This he proclaimed from heaven himself; and though there are many that have and still do resist his will, yet there is none that have or ever shall alter it; God is Of one mind, and none can turn him; and what his soul desireth that he doth.

If ten men taken, are combined in one robbery, and being and found guilty, are cast and condemned for the same; yet it lies in the king's breast to pardon one or more of them, though all are alike guilty; and it would be no less than rebellion, if not treason, in you to call your sovereign unjust or wicked in so doing; yet you are guilty of such rebellion against God: to hear the Lord's own voice in the court of equity, "Is it fit to say to a

king, thou art wicked, or to princes ye are ungodly? How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?" But in this God differs much from the king, because a king often pardons without any satisfaction to his law; but God pardons none without a full satisfaction both to law and justice; and though an infinite satisfaction be given both to his law and justice, yet he will not pardon all the human race.

It is plain to me in the word of God, that Christ, as the head of the elect, was set up from everlasting; and it is as plain, that the elect were chosen in him from everlasting; and the natural consequence is, that some were rejected, when the others were chosen; God hath appeared of old to the church in Christ, her head, saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love;" and it is as plain that some were rejected from the same date: they were of old ordained to this condemnation, Jude 4. God's rejection precedes their name; "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."

For my part, I wish that you would mind your farming, and let the word of God alone, unless you could submit to its tuition; or at least lay by preaching, till your understanding be enlightened; for you own that you are in an unjustified state; and if so you are yet in your sins, and God tells you not to meddle. "But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee?" Thou art the man to whom God speaks; you hate instruction, and have cast the sublime doctrines of God's sovereignty, his uncontrollable will, his absolute choice of his people, his imputed righteousness, his promised strength in perseverance, and eternal life as his free gift, behind thy back; thou art the man that hast ridiculed these truths, and committed spiritual wickedness in high places,

even in the church of God, the city which he has set on a hill, and in the assumed character of a minister, the highest office in the church, and in the pulpit the highest place therein. You call God unjust! and a man that declares the whole council of God, and preaches the preaching that God bid him; that such preaching makes God unjust. You declare Christ died for all, and yet Ezekiel tells you there are numbers in hell already, and Christ says, "Broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many go in thereat." Christ by his death satisfied justice in the behalf of the elect, but you say such children of God may fall away, and be damned after all the satisfaction made by Christ; and after that satisfaction is made known, and applied to the elect by the Holy Ghost; though God has sworn that he will not be wroth with them, nor rebuke them; do not you make God both unjust and false by this your blasphemy? By your declaring that human merit is available in point of justification before God, had not you lessen the merit of Christ? and do not you give the testimony of all the servants of God, both prophets and apostles, the lie, who have all declared, that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified? do not you by this mitigate the severity of God's spiritual law? and by driving sinners to it for life, do not you render the gospel of the grace of God of none effect to poor sinners?

While you are declaring that Christ died for all, you in effect declare that he died for none, because you affirm that the redeemed may fall away and be lost; and thus in preaching universal redemption to all, you leave all redemption as a matter of universal doubt, and make it sure to none. However, it is out of the abundance of your heart, that your mouth speaketh; you believe the doctrines of predestination and reprobation too, as firmly as the devil himself does; those doctrines gall you as well as he, or else neither he nor you would vent such malice against them, nor set men to fight with so a high a hand against God for revealing them. "He that

reproveth God, let him answer it." Wilt thou disannul God's judgments, wilt thou condemn God, that thou mayest be righteous? Job xl. 8. "Shall mortal man be more just than God, shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" Why dost thou strive against him, for he giveth no account of any of his matters: he is of one mind, and thou wilt never turn him. Submission well becomes a rebel, and thou must be brought to submission, if ever he saves thee. I desired you, when I answered your last, to trouble me no more with such stuff; but you are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, and therefore you are determined that others shall not rest. As to my publishing my last letter, it could be no offence, as I concealed your name; and I do intend to publish this also, for I am not ashamed of the doctrines of the Lord, though I am ashamed of your rebellion. However, if you can make a shift to creep into heaven by this new system of your own contriving, I have no objection; I could wish that all the human race might be saved; but my groundless wish will never turn the immutable mind of God, nor prevail against his irrevocable decree; and if I was to preach such lies in God's name, as you do, I should have no more success than you have; for God will never set the seal of his own Spirit to ratify a lie; but I see God sets his seal to my ministry daily; and when he first revealed the truth to me, his own Spirit sealed my soul up to the day of redemption at the same time: and I am well persuaded that if I am right, you are wrong; and that if your road be the way to heaven, I can have no hope of getting there; for my road lies full south, and yours full north. However, I bless God, I have not a single doubt but the doctrines that I preach are the truths of God, nor have I a doubt of being saved in them; but as for your part, you own that you are in an unjustified state; and if so, then every curse in the law of God is levelled at your head. And for a condemned criminal in chains, to assume sovereignty, infallibility to himself, and become a dictator both to his sovereign and his judge, is such a piece of insolence as never appeared in any court of judicature in the world. Your

cavilling must be turned into praying; and your fighting against God, into fighting against yourself, if ever you are saved. Adieu. From all blindness of mind, from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism, from hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments, good Lord deliver thee.

Amen,
W.H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XVII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

To the highly favoured Hanna of a sorrowful spirit, at the sign of the Unstrung Harp, in the valley of Baca, between the tree of life and the weeping willow.

I RECEIVED my friend's mournful epistle, dated in the month Nisan, from Abel-mizraim; and am glad to find her removed to the valley. Hope that the Most High will cause bright clouds to arise in their season, and send a shower of blessings, that the rain may fill the pools, and make the once barren heart a springing well. When this happy moment shall arrive, I predict that my friend will find her outward cross more weighty than now it is. A barren heart turned into a springing well, will soon

rise up and overflow its banks, as Jordan did in the time of harvest, which will cause joy, peace, and praise to spring up, so that the very belly will emit its living waters. And depend upon it, that celestial liberty will produce such joyful exclamations and holy triumphs, that will make those that now only sneer at your melancholy, spend their venom in desperation. You will then understand the language of pious Job They that know not the wag of the vineyards, will rebel against the light.

God has wonderfully shewed you the astonishing power of grace, even in its infant state; for he has kept your convictions alive, in the company of hypocritical mockers, under all the daring contempt of deists and atheistical clergy, at the ball, also at the rout, and even in the theatre; all these false pleasures have stirred up that holy indignation in thy soul, against vanity, and served as fuel to keep convicting grace burning. This is as great a miracle, as for a fleeting taper to keep its flame alive in the Bay of Biscay. Of all the ranks of men under heaven, grace meets with the coldest reception among those that are falsely called nobility; and it meets with the hardest struggle in, such a heart as yours, where there is all the pomp and pride of life to cope with; besides perishing wealth, fading beauty, and soul-destroying honour to root up; and a deal of natural and acquired parts and abilities, flying imaginations, towering dignity, and a rooted attachment to pleasure; all which grace has to reduce to the obedience of the cross, which in the eyes of the polite world, is deemed the quintessence of folly. Yet you see God still keeps his own begun work going on, though it be even where Satan's seat is. Let them stuff your hands with novels; if God fills thy heart with grace, they will do no hurt. It is not the fictions of Shakespeare, the fables of Don Quixote, nor the impious jests of Rochester, that can root the word and power of God out of the soul: being compelled to read them, will make you hate them the more; grace will grow in the mind, and keep its

throne in the affections, however opposed, either from without or from within.

"Marriage is honourable and appointed by God, and not to be despised by any." But a husband will not answer their end, in driving away what they call melancholy. Grace reigned in the heart of Abigail, though her husband's name, disposition, and actions, were nothing but folly.

But if Abigail married Nabal after she was called by grace, his churlishness was a scourge on her for her folly; but if she was called by grace after wedlock, it was an humbling cross sent entirely for her good, and so made her marriage with David appear the greater blessing, and to excite her gratitude to God.

I can sympathize with thee; for I know what an insipid thing carnal courtship must be, when it is forced as a rape on the mind. carried on over the shafts of wrath and sting of death, and untended only as a rival to Christ. A wounded spirit is a very improper soil for wanton passions. A soul under real concern, will be sure to erect a bulwark of prejudice against all the fawning flattery of a deistical lover. Such souls can find no more union, than pious Joseph in his exile state, found with his wanton mistress; nor can your soul expect any more pleasure in a deist, than I could in the witch of Endor. It is true, this is the worst trap that has hitherto been set for thee, but God's grace is sufficient to keep thee, and he will do it in answer to prayer, agreeably to his promise.

Compulsion in wedlock is a violation of choice; there is nothing so cross to nature, as to be forced by parents, and bound by law, to a partner in life, where the main cementing bond of mutual affections is wanting; and that man who will attempt to imprison a person, before he has made a willing captive of her affections, goes the ready way to make two people miserable. As an injured lover, he will get into the

strong hold of jealousy, and as a violent plunderer of your person and conscience, he will raise in you a bar of prejudice against himself.

Matrimony is a wretched jarring piece of music, if either of the strings of love be out of tune. A deist can find but little comfort in a broken-hearted consort; nor can a contrite spirit take pleasure in a reprobate mind, or a seared conscience: this is worse than singing songs to a heavy heart.

God alone is sufficient to direct my friend in this critical affair; "Commit thy way to him, and thy thoughts shall be established." For my part, I know not what counsel I can give thee better. I should endeavour to entertain my lover as much as I could with lectures upon the wickedness of man's heart, the woful state of graceless souls, the emptiness of transient enjoyments, the sweet privilege of spiritual prayer, the preciousness of God's word, and the super-excellency of Jesus Christ. And if any thing under heaven will torment his conscience, or provoke his indignation against you, I think that will.

God hath hitherto kept thee from apostasy and his hand is not shortened; nor is his ear heavy; nor have I a doubt but he will make a way for your escape, in answer to prayer.

I thought my friend was too secure before, therefore I cautioned her in my last; true, a sense of fresh contracted guilt, attended with shame, turns in one sense, the sweetest privileges of a child, into the slavery of a convict. But here is no room for a parley; remember it is a throne of grace where pardons are dispensed, and there you must go at last; therefore never give up prayer, though heaven and earth seem in arms against you. Hezekiah was obliged to pray against death itself, and the prophet's message too, and by faith he prevailed.

Go to God, and tell him the worst of it; bless his name, he never changes in his love, though he makes us feel a change in his countenance; be sure to justify God, and condemn thyself; that is the only way to be justified in thy sayings, and clear when thou judgest. One single breath of his Spirit will dissolve the stone, sink the mountains, and make thy standing more firm than before; for it is by these slips that we are taught to know where our strength lies.

Let patience have her perfect work; thy strength is almost gone, and God has promised to appear, when that is the case; you shall find the surety as soon as you have nothing to pay; the shepherd will find thee when thou art sensibly lost. He will justify thee when thou hast willingly passed the sentence on thyself, and lift thee up when truly humbled; and bring thee out into liberty, when thou art well disciplined with thy chains.

I am fully persuaded by the Lord, that thy long night is far spent, and that the day-spring is at hand. The day-star will soon give way to daylight, and then comes the sun of righteousness with healing in his rays. This will rend the veil of ignorance, and scatter the clouds of dejection, and turn the shadow of death into the morning. When this is thy happy case, thy mind will be divinely fortified against all the outward attacks that Satan can make. A few more days will shew my friend whether this prophecy be true or false. Peruse God's word day and night, credit his promise, and expect his promised help; pray without fainting, and always pray against unbelief, for an increase of faith also; for a tender conscience, for filial fear; and above all, for God to reveal his Son in your heart, and then you have got all at once. God forbid that I should cease praying for you a few days more, and you will see the land that is very far off. I have composed your epitaph, which you may have out on your monument, without

deceiving the reader; as soon as you can say from an heartfelt peace, My beloved is mine. Dear Miss Adren.

Thy willing Servant in the Gospel of Christ.
W. H.

EPITAPH.

'HERE lies a saint, a favour'd child of God,
Who in the path of tribulation trod;
Redeem'd by blood, and wed to Jesus Christ,
As pre-ordained, to reign in paradise.

To soul-distress this saint was oft inur'd,
Nor could her mind by vanity be cured
By mental grief her frame was oft impair'd
Nor could her health by human skill be rear'd.

One blessed object, distant from her view,
Constant, tender, loving, kind, and true,
A sacred shaft into her soul convey'd,
Which she could ne'er extract by mortal aid;

She sought relief, each effort prov'd in vain,
The wound was noble, though severe the pain.
No human skill can heal a wounded mind,
A wound immortal needs a balm divine.

The great Jehovah, sovereign Lord above,
Beheld this chosen damsel sick of love;
Unveil'd his face, appear'd inclin'd to woo;
In him she found her health, a husband too.

In love divine her raptur'd soul was fixed,
With o 131 ther lovers he could ne'er be mix'd;

In him she sleeps, in him she'll wake again,
Then ask. no more, her husband knows her name.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XVIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, 5th August 1785.

Dear Madam,

I RECEIVED yours of the first instant, and must confess that it afforded me much comfort, as it served to satisfy me that God still condescended to own and bless my labours. I have found such accounts as yours the best antidotes against fainting in the work of the Lord: and have often perceived that God has sent them, after some temptation, reproach, or opposition has cast me down, as a reviving cordial, and as an encouragement for me to go on in his work, notwithstanding the difficulties that attend it. Tidings of God's approbation is to counterbalance the reproaches of carnal critics; and generally fires the heart with zeal and love, which dispels the carnal fear of man.

I would willingly, Madam, comply with your request, but it takes me up a great deal of time to write a sermon; and as I am so much exercised, I cannot complete it under a month,

for want of time; in the meanwhile the views wear off from my understanding, and I have not strength of memory to relate it in writing as it was delivered; besides the life, warmth, power, quickness of thought, and sharpness of expression which sometimes appear in the pulpit, under a lively frame, go off from the soul when he has done, unless a man has time to sit down and finish it immediately, while it lies fresh on his mind; which is a blessing that has never yet been granted to me.

However, I will here mention a few of the heads of it, as well as I can remember them; and as God owned the hearing of it, to deliver you out of the dreadful temptation, I hope he will own the heading of this epistle, to keep you in the enjoyment of your present liberty.

The unpardonable sin goes by various names, as I find them scattered up and down the word of God. It is called great wickedness; for it is said, that when "the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, that they took them wives of all which they chose," Gen. vi. 2; and also after that, "When the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children unto them; the same became mighty men, which were of old men of renown. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." The sons of God I take to be professors of religion, and some real professors of the grace of God among them; they married the daughters of Cain, which were begotten under the guilt of innocent blood; and perhaps they were partakers of their father's malice and desperation; as God often visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. If this was the case, such mothers would doubtless bring their offspring up in their own persecuting spirit; while, on the other hand, their fathers would instruct them in the worship and ways of God. But as the bloody persecuting spirit of Cain grew up, under the infernal tuition of desperate and impenitent mothers, against all the instruction

and example of their fathers, spiritual wickedness broke forth into the world, and filled the earth with violence; no wonder then they are called mighty men, when grown mighty in spiritual wickedness; no wonder that they are called men of renown, as the desperate brood of Cain could do no less than applaud or renown them for it.

I think that Esau committed the same sin when he sold his birthright, that being typical of the sonship and pre-eminence of Christ Jesus, who is called the firstborn among many brethren, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Secondly. It was a figure of the priesthood, which was annexed to the firstborn, and therefore a figure of the grand priesthood of the Son of God. Thirdly. It was a figure of the privileges of all real Israelites; "Israel is my son," say God, "my firstborn." Fourthly. His birthright was figurative of pre-adoption, Gal. iv. 6. Fifthly. It prefigured a spiritual birth, Gal. iv. 29. Now as his birthright was typical of the sonship, pre-eminence, and priesthood of Christ, and likewise of the pre-adoption, glorious privileges, and regeneration, or spiritual birth of the elect, his birthright was a typical privilege to him; so his father was also a typical man; he was a type of Christ, as the promised seed, and a type of the elect, as heirs of promise. So likewise was his inheritance a typical inheritance; the land of Canaan was a type of the holy covenant, called a covenant of promise; the land of Canaan is called the land of promise. Secondly. It was a type of heaven, which is called the better country; the city of Salem, which was in this land, was a type of the metropolitan above, called a city, which Abraham and Isaac sought, that had foundations, whose maker and builder is God. Isaac's blessing was typical of the blessings of an everlasting gospel; and Isaac's seed a type of all the chosen Israel of God. Now as Esau's birthright was typical both of the sonship of Christ and of his elect, it was holy and sacred; therefore Esau is said to be a profane person for selling it; and as he sold it for a morsel of meat, he

is brought in as making a god of his belly, preferring that, and despising the other; hence it is said, he ate and drank, and got up and went his way; thus Esau despised his birthright. He called God to witness at the sale of it, and swore by his name to Jacob when he gave it up, therefore he could never inherit the blessing without being perjured; nor could he inherit by law, the inheritance being entailed on the firstborn, Deut. xxi. 15-17; nor had he a promise from God to look to. Hence it is said, that "when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." How could Esau inherit the blessing, when the choice of his own free-will was against him? he had chosen the pottage, and despised his birthright; what place could he find for repentance, when the witness of God, whom he called in at the sale, was against him? the oath of God, which he swore was against him; the law of God, which was written in his heart, was against him; this made him cry out, when conscience accused him; there was no promise that he could look at or credit, to afford a ground of repentance; and the revealed will of God was against him "The elder shall serve the younger;" and his own father's declaration was against him; "I have blessed [Jacob], yea, and he shall be blessed." Impenitence and absolute rebellion now took place in his heart; he saw that the daughters of the land pleased not Isaac his father; and that the fear of a marriage with them had caused much grief of heart to his mother, Gen. xxvii. 46. Then went Esau and took two wives, the first in opposition to Isaac, and to Christ his antitype; the second in opposition to Rebecca, and to the church, her antitype; which was a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebecca. Thus Esau was left to the freedom of his own will; and he chose the mess of pottage, a part in this life, as every natural man will do; while Jacob was preserved in Christ Jesus, and called, as all the rest of the elect are.

This sin is called presumption, or a presumptuous sin; and is opposed to all sins committed through weakness, ignorance, or through the force of temptation, as being committed willingly, daringly, deliberately; against light, against knowledge, against clear conviction; rejecting the word of God, and reproaching the God of the word, and that in the open face of his priest or minister; as it is written, "And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him: and it shall be forgiven him. But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people, because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment; that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him." And again; "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates; then shalt thou arise and get thee up into the place that the Lord thy God shall choose; and thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment; and thou shalt do according to the sentence which they shall shew thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee thou shalt do; thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, either to the right hand or to the left. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest, that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away evil from Israel." Thus, Madam there is a sacrifice allowed for the sins committed in ignorance, though dreadfully heinous. By ignorance you must understand it of a person destitute of gospel light and knowledge; and here it was Paul took refuge after his dreadful, persecution of the saints, "But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Mark

that, ignorance and unbelief; but there is no atonement for presumption; hence David prays, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let not them have dominion over me, so shall I be upright before thee, and innocent from the great transgression."

This great sin appears again in the old law; there is mention made of some, who though they did not, like Esau sell their birthright, yet they sold their possession, which was typical of a part in God's covenant; and it went out of the reach of redemption, and out of the reach of the jubilee; redemption prefigured the great ransom of Christ, and the jubilee the liberty proclaimed by the Holy Ghost to the redeemed. "And if a man sell a dwelling-house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city, shall be established for ever to him that bought it, throughout his generation; it shall not go out in the jubilee," Lev. xxv. 29, 30. In a gospel sense, the house holds forth, first the man; the fool built his house on the land. Secondly, it may hold forth God in covenant, who has been the saints' dwelling place in all generations, and he that sells himself to work spiritual or presumptuous wickedness, has sold his soul, his God, and all; redemption will not reach him; the Holy Ghost will not proclaim liberty to him: Satan holds him fast, and justice forbids his enlargement. Thus God shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening, Job xii. 14.

This great sin is called the sin unto death, 1 John v. 16; because the sinner sins out of the reach of the promise of eternal Life; and makes the gospel, which is a dispensation of the grace of God, a savour of death unto death; that is, it convinced him that he was legally dead, and left him spiritually dead under he sentence due to unbelief; inverting by the

height of his crimes the very order of the covenant with respect to himself.

It is likewise called the sin against the Holy Ghost; because the gospel is a dispensation of the Spirit of God that exceedeth the legal dispensation in glory, as much as the sun in his meridian does the minutest star; and the great transgressor sins wilfully, against the Spirit of God which is revealed and promised in the gospel.

It is called the unpardonable sin, because the guilty wretch tramples under foot the blood of the son of God, through which alone he can, consistent with justice obtain a pardon.

The deplorable creature who is left to sin this unpardonable sin, is one who like Balaam has had his eyes opened to see the holiness of God in his word. Secondly, to taste the word of God as Balaam did when God put a word in his mouth, and bid him speak thus; or, as the way-side hearers did, when they heard the word, and anon with joy received it. Thirdly, it is sometimes done over the belly of the fullest convictions, as was the case with the Pharisees, who, as Christ tells you, knew him even while they conspired against his life; as appears by the parable of the vineyard, and the husbandmen. After the master of the vineyard had sent several of his servants, and all met with abuse or death; he having one son, sent him, saying, they will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw him, [mark here their knowledge and confession,] but when the husbandmen saw him, they said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Thus they knew him, confessed him, and killed him; and to this agrees Nicodemus, speaking as the mouth of all the rest, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do the miracles thou dost, except God be with him." Thus they knew he was a teacher sent from God, and that God was with him, by the miracles he performed; for none

could do them except God were with them; and yet all agreed to put him to death, except Nicodemus. Thus they saw and hated both Christ and his father, and really fulfilled that which was written in their law; "They hated me without a cause."

Thus they sinned against their own confessions; against light and knowledge; against all the strong convictions that his miracles produced; and against his holy and innocent life; which two were sufficient to prove him the true Messiah.

But to be short; a man that sins against the Holy Ghost, must be enlightened as Balaam was, and taste the good word of God, Heb. vi. 5; or receive the word with joy, as the way-side hearers did, Matt. xiii. 20; and receive some knowledge of the word which Peter calls knowing the way of righteousness; he must also have his enmity slain by the power of the word as Saul had; and be reformed by it, as Herod was; which the Saviour calls the unclean spirit going out of a man, and leaving him empty, swept, and garnished.

All this may be done on a soul, where the plough of real connexion never drew a furrow; where real faith and pure love never took root; "Having no root, they withered away," that is, their joy withered away; and all their profession was scorched up in a fiery trial, for the want of moisture, Luke, viii. 6; how could it be otherwise when the whole profession was destitute of a broken and a contrite heart? it is said to fall on stony ground, where it had not much earth, where it only floated on the understanding; slew their enmity, and moved their passions; and, for want of moisture, or of the Spirit, the water of life, to soften the soil, and make way for the root, it was scorched; and when the sun was up, it withered away. Joy withered away for the want of a good root, real love is the root of a stable joy, and they withered away from their profession as well as their joy; or, as Peter says, they turned from the holy commandment delivered unto them, for want of a rooted

faith in the mind. Thus their lamp goes out for want of oil, their joy withers for want of a rooted love, and their confession and profession is all scorched in a fiery trial, for want of a rooted faith, and of the soil of a broken heart; and all this is for the want of divine moisture to make it so.

When this is the case, as Peter says, he abandons his profession and reformation; for if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; "For it had been better for them not to know the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

Our Lord calls this a withering away; Peter terms it a turning away from a knowledge and reformation; and Paul calls it a falling away. When this is the case with a man destitute of all rooted experience, Satan will not let him stay there; but, being given up of God, he is led forth into open wickedness, which Paul calls a crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh; be, cause he acts the same part, and appears in the same spirit of them who crucified him at first. And by his open apostasy and wickedness he puts him in his gospel, and in his cause, to an open shame, as they did, who arrayed him, exposed him, mocked him, and scourged him. Such are said to sin with the full consent of their will, after an enlightened knowledge of the truth of being received, Heb. x. 26; insomuch that he exposes to the open contempt of fools the mystery of the cross; and by his profaning the sublime mystery of redemption, he is said to tread under foot the Son of God; and by his open profanity and daring contempt of the Saviour, to count the blood of the covenant, wherewith Christ was sanctified from our sin, (compare John xvii. 19, with Heb. x. 29,) an unholy thing; and by his exposing to ridicule, in profane company, the confessions, the temptations, and

experiences of real believers; and bringing into contempt his own profession, as well as the experience of others, and exposing to shame the church of God; he is said to do despite to the Spirit of grace, because he exposes to ridicule and contempt all that he has learned in the church; and opposes knowingly his real operations on humble and simple souls. Thus, such a monster sins against law, against conscience, against his profession, confession, and reformation; against light, against knowledge, against Christ, against the covenant, and the blood of it; against the joys that he felt; against the convictions that he had from what himself felt, and from what he saw of the power of God on others; and so sins against the Holy Ghost, and against the church of God, the very temple of him. And for my part, I can see no ground of hope for such a man; no place of repentance; no promised warrant for faith; nor any way to escape the damnation of hell; because every door of hope is barred against him, the saints are commanded not to pray for him, nor is there a plea in all the covenant of grace but what he has sinned against. Such men are either left with a seared conscience, a reprobate mind, and impenitent heart, to commit all uncleanness with greediness, or else shut up in black despair, under a fearful looking for of judgment, and in the daily expectation of a fiery indignation from God to devour such an adversary.

Thus, dear Madam, I have sent you some of the heads of the subject; and as it was blessed to your happy deliverance, I hope God will bless this epistle to confirm your faith in Christ, and of your comfortable part and lot in his great salvation. I find many poor, simple, weak souls harassed by Satan about this unpardonable sin, when at the same time there is every appearance of filial fear, tenderness of conscience, anxiety for holiness, contrition of heart, chastity of converse, diligence in the means of grace, fervour in devotion, jealousy of themselves, suspicion of their own bad and deceitful hearts, which appear to me to be things that accompany salvation,

and as far from the marks of an unpardonable apostate, as the east is front the west: but it is the devil's business to weaken a good hope, and to support a bad one; to harden the hypocrite, and distress the sincere; he is not divided against himself; if he was, how should his kingdom stand?

You need not have made that apology in your letter; it is the joy of my soul to be found useful, and the desire of my heart to be more so; therefore you are welcome to draw any thing out of my earthen vessel that the Lord has been pleased to put therein. Dear Madam, adieu; may every essential truth and special grace be with you, while I remain with profound respect, and with a willing mind,

Yours to command in the gospel of Christ,
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XIX

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row,
August 12, 1785.

Dear Madam,

I RECEIVED yours of the first instant, and have reason to conclude that God has heard my prayer in your behalf. The throne of grace, or mercy-seat, is the large room that electing and redeeming love has opened as a common receptacle, or meeting-place for all believing, hoping, praying, and praising souls to meet at; here all prevalent petitions and grievances are cast in; and it is from hence that all favours are dispensed, and all grievances redressed. It is here that every chosen vessel's name appears; here every believer's case is considered; and from hence are all the angels sent with their charges and messages unto them that are, or ever shall be heirs of salvation.

From hence comes the blessed Spirit of God, like a dove of swiftest wing, with the olive leaf of gospel peace, emblematical of a final closure of the floodgates of an ireful deluge by covenant; and of an eternal peace proclaimed through the sweet savour of In immortal and ever-available sacrifice. From hence comes, by the Holy Ghost, the everlasting love of God to be shed abroad in the troubled and disquieted heart of the coming sinner. This love is the immutable and eternal bond of union, which goes from the Father, through the Son, to us; and runs through every circumcised heart in all the world; and through every human spirit Now made perfect in heaven; and holds all the lively, or living It0nes of mercy's fabric fast together, as united to Christ, the chief corner-stone; and 1e08 through him to God the Father, as tile decreitive and glorious fabricator of the whole building. God laid the foundation; and it was he that made our Lord the headstone of the corner; surely this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. All glory to the first founder, and equal glory to the foundation! Amen and Amen, says the most rugged stone in all the building.

This, Madam, is the grand tie of the building, and loving faith in the great atonement is the immortal cement that compacts

the whole fabric together; for the want of this many fall off; the word does not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it.

The redeemed church, thus united to the corner-stone by eternal love, and cemented together by faith in the great atonement, is called a building fitly framed; and, under the divine operations of the Holy Ghost, it grows up into an holy temple in the Lord, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Formerly God dwelt in a tent, and in a tabernacle, wheresoever the children of Israel travelled, 2 Sam. vii. 6, 7; and after that at Shiloh, until the profanity of the priests caused him to forsake it, and give his strength, which was prefigured by the ark, into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand, Psalm lxxviii. 61. After this he appeared as a wayfaring man, or visitor, and only turned aside and lodged with them for a night, Jer. xiv. 8; in a judge or in a prophet; until the days of David, who found out a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him a house; and at his pious and fervent invitation he put his name there, and manifested his glorious presence in it, until idolatry provoked him to leave it to the rage of them, whose idolatrous iniquity brought from Babylon, was by the Israelitish captives carried back again to the land of Shinar, from whence it came, and established there on its own base, Zech. v. 6-11. At their return God took up his residence among them, until they turned his house of prayer into a den of thieves; and a house of merchandize; and then he threatened to leave them; and this he faithfully accomplished after the abominable idols and heathenish idolaters profaned his temple, and provoked him to jealousy; which caused him to go up from between the cherubims, and for a long time to stand only on the threshold. But when the death of his dishonoured, rejected, and murdered son had rent the veil, he went out through the same rent, and broke up housekeeping for good and all; your house

of prayer and royal house is left unto you desolate. Since that tune God dwells not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet; his eye, heart, and presence can never be confined either to a cathedral, abbey, church, chapel, or meeting-house, any longer than while the truth is preached in it, and God's spiritual worshippers worship him in truth. God now dwells in temples of his own building; he looks to him that trembles at his word, and dwells with them that are of a broken heart; such souls are to be his rest for ever, here will he dwell, for he has desired it.

This, Madam, is the building of mercy; and God has said, that mercy shall be built up for ever; not a stone or stake of it can ever be removed or taken down; the foundations and all the materials were chosen by the great founder; and our answer to every foreign ambassador is this, "The Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it." In this mysterious superstructure judgment was laid to the line of the builder, and the Saviour's obedience was perpendicular with it. Righteousness was laid to the plummet, and the Saviour's death was answerable to that; not one of the sevenfold eyes of justice could find a single fault either in the founder or the foundation, Zech. iii. 9. Surely our adversaries may walk about Zion, if they cannot walk in her; and count her towers, and mark all her bulwarks; and tell to all generations that this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death.

Thus, Madam, the elect are the temples of the living God; and God is a little sanctuary to them in all places where they are scattered in the cloudy and in dark days. Oh, what a mystery! for mortals to be an habitation of God through the Spirit. And our hope is, that the chief foundation and corner-stone will one day be revealed from heaven, in all the glory of the Father, and in all his own glory, and in the glory of the holy angels, to bring forth the coping or top-stone of the whole

building; and so shine to all eternity through every living stone of the mystic city; The glory of God shall enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof Rev. xxi. 23.

Surely, when this head-stone shall be brought forth, it must be with the same shouting that has long prevailed with the elect in this world, namely, not by the might of free-will, nor by human power, but by God's Spirit, which will ever teach us to cry out, Grace, grace unto it.

When this happy period shall arrive, all daubers with untempered mortar shall have their walls tried to purpose; and all that have begun to build, without sitting down first and counting the cost, shall be exposed to the same contempt as the ancient Babel-builders were: the saints that ascend the throne, as saved by grace, shall begin to mock, saying, "This man began to build. but had not wherewith to finish." Thus the house built on the sand shall fall, and its ruin shall be great. The great city or mystic Babylon, and all her citizens, as well as her builders and adherents, shall be discovered to the saints in the light of perfect knowledge, as a work ridiculous; and the whole fabric shall appear a confused ruin. But, blessed be God, our hope centres not in the law, as a dead hope in a killing letter; nor does it centre in the Saviour's tomb or sepulchre, that it should be lost in a dead man; but God has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and as the Saviour is exalted, hope follows him up to the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that never fades away; reserved in heaven for all who are kept by the power of God, through faith, to salvation. Surely God has afforded a most blessed foundation, and a most blessed object for gospel hope; and it is to be as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast; and which enters into that God who dwells within the veil of Christ's manhood; that it may afford a strong consolation to all who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them.

This pregnant hope, so big with the holy expectation of eternal glory, shall never leave the hoping soul until it has done its last office, which is, to hold the soul up in the floods of death. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." O blessed anchor I made fast to the cable of immutable love, and is cast into the same anchorage from whence everlasting love came, as the only hold of gospel hope, through the rent-veil of Christ crucified. This shall hold the vessel of mercy in the strongest gales and roughest sea; while thousands shall make shipwreck of the doctrines and of the object of faith. But the real grace of spiritual faith will keep every chosen vessel sound in the doctrines, and sound in the object of faith. With this comfortable hope I take my leave of you; and have ever to subscribe myself,

Dear Madam,
Your willing and devoted Servant in the
gospel of Jesus Christ,

W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XX

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MR. B__, MR. T__, AND MR. P__, CITIZENS.

Winchester Row, Feb. 1, 1786.

Dear Brethren in Christ Jesus,

PEACE, and truth be with you. I thank you for informing me of the malicious report that is gone abroad, relative to a false doctrine, said to have been advanced by me; because it affords me an opportunity of defending myself, and coming forth to the light, as I am not fond of things done in a corner.

"That the Lord Jesus Christ derived all the corruption of fallen Adam from his other, and that he was a sinner in the same sense that we are, either by birth or practice," is a doctrine which the bible never mentions, a doctrine which never escaped my lips. Therefore, Wo, unto him through whom the offence or slander cometh.

That Christ was sanctified and sent into the world, is a doctrine of the Bible, and a doctrine of my heart. That he was made sin for us, in the same legal sense that an engaged surety is made a debtor, is a doctrine of the bible, a truth that I have ever preached, and, I trust, with some degree of clearness. That Christ's human nature was capable of hungering, thirsting, weariness, and fearing, is what the scriptures declare, and what I have often advanced: not with a view to lessen the Saviour's Godhead, or human innocence, but to encourage the timid soul in the Saviour's sympathy towards us in our infirmities.

God the great creditor laid upon him, Christ, the iniquity of us all, as a rigid creditor would lay the whole burthen of an insolvent's debt on the person who became a voluntary surety vv his own act and deed: for the language of justice to such an undertaker is, "He that becometh surety for a stranger, shall smart for it." Our debt was twofold; first the debt of

perfect and perpetual obedience to the perceptive part of the law; and in case of failure, a debt of eternal suffering, as the penal sum due to offended justice, who stands bound by the fourfold immutable ties of righteousness, holiness, faithfulness, and veracity, to see the sentence of the law fully and eternally executed on every transgressor. Thus the Saviour's active obedience becomes our justifying righteousness before God, and is by him, the great creditor, imputed to the debtor, as a full discharge from the unlimited demands of a righteous law, as a covenant of works; and by faith in the penal sum of the Saviour's suffering's, we are justified from the eternal demands of vindictive justice. Hence we are said to be justified by his active obedience to the law; and we are said, to be justified likewise by his blood, Rom. v. 9, 19. By the first we are justified from the strict demands of law as a killing covenant; by the second, we are justified from the dreadful demands of justice, as transgressors of it. Thus the believer is justified freely from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

The sins of all God's elect were laid upon Christ by the great creditor, and they became his own by his voluntary undertaking; and without the offering up of a living sacrifice by his life, and the perfect sacrifice of body, blood, and soul by his death, he could not get discharged from them. A sacrifice under the law, was to live a certain time, and then be offered up, if it was found to be without spot or blemish: but he washed away our sins from himself, by shedding his own blood. "I have a [bloody] baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Hence he is said to be clothed in a garment of human nature dipped in blood; he sanctified himself from our sins by it, and he is said to be clothed with the church, and to sanctify it by the same atonement. Now as the human nature of Christ is called a garment, and his church is called his clothing; by his blood he sanctified the first, from our sins being imputed to him; and by

the application of it he sanctifies and cleanses his church from all sin committed by her; as it is written, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" Thus he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes, Gen. xlix. 11; which I believe to be the gospel sense of the text.

These distinctions, which appear to me to be scriptural, I have often seen needful to insist on, because of the outcry of the Arminian, who, while he says we are justified by his blood, yet laughs at imputed righteousness. He catches at the atonement, to justify him from the demands of avenging justice, and thinks to make himself meet for heaven by his own merit. However, he that becomes a surety, must give a perfect obedience to the precept, and submit to the full execution of the sentence. And the soul that is saved, must not only be washed in a Redeemer's blood, but clothed with the surety's righteousness. He must not only be redeemed, but justified. That God, who made Christ to be redemption, made him also to be righteousness; the law will have a perfect righteousness, and justice will have a full execution of the sentence. It is in vain that the Arminian labours to set law and justice at variance; Christ is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. But the Arminian puts his own perfection in the place of sanctification, and his own merit in the room of his righteousness, and his own infallibility in the place of wisdom; and then he shouts, we are justified by his blood; and laughs heartily at the doctrine of imputed righteousness. Let him go on so, and trust to a justification by his blood, and see whether Moses does not arrest him in the way, for want of a divine righteousness; let him watch the event, and see if the Judge of all the earth will not agree with Moses in the just demand of his laws; I think he will, when he comes in, and sees the Arminian boasting of redemption, and laughing at the same time at imputed righteousness. "Friend, how camest

thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" That was the only thing wanting; he talked of washing, but laughed at a covering; and for the want of that, he was cast into outer darkness. The law is an adversary, and must be agreed with by a perfect righteousness; without this, it will not agree with any one; but will hale the unjustified sinner to the judge, and the judge will deliver the self-righteous to the officer, and the officer will cast him into prison, until he can pay the utmost mite, Luke, xii. 58. The above adversary is the law; it is the work of the law to bring the transgressor to justice; and the business of justice to see judgment done. These are the doctrines which I hold, and which thousands in London have heard me preach, as they are here expressed; and they never were either meant, or mentioned in any other way by me. If any accuser can prove to the contrary, let him step forth, and stand at my right hand, as every accuser ought to do. I seldom deliver a sermon in London to less than some hundreds, therefore, there are living witnesses enough against one false accuser.

After I had delivered a sermon on the following text, "He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes;" some blind and nameless author wrote me a letter, about his coming to hear me, and of his falling asleep, which he was apt to do, and in his sleep he had a dream; he thought he heard me speaking of our Lord's washing, or sanctifying himself from our sins, &c. And as he said he was very apt to fall asleep, and dream, so I took it for granted that he said the truth; for by his letter he appeared never to have been thoroughly awake. And then he rehearsed a number of texts, quite wide from the subject; declarative chiefly of the Saviour's Deity; such as his being the only one, &c. but nothing of his servitude, of his suretyship, or sacrifice; and at the conclusion of his letter, he peremptorily demanded a public acknowledgment of my fault from the pulpit the next lecture night, or to clear the point up, and not to apologise for any slip

of the tongue, &c. and he should be there on purpose to hear it. As I found his letter to be a composition of ignorance, arrogance, and insolence, I gave him a public answer from the pulpit, lest he should be wise in his own conceit. I mentioned some things in his letter, and told him that Christ was twice sanctified, and twice baptized; and bid him go home and learn what that meant; and I fancied that I had answered him according to his folly, because I heard no more of him.

After this, one Michael Whitebread, from Barnet, called at my house, and in discourse mentioned something on the same subject to me. In answer to which, I said that Christ was made sin for us, in the sense above-mentioned; and by his blood shed, or bloody baptism, he washed, cleansed, or sanctified himself from our sins. To which he answered, "The Lord was not defiled." To this I replied, "In him was no sin, yet he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and by paying the price of his blood the debt was discharged." I further added, "That till death, our sins stuck to him," and if he did not sanctify himself from then. by his death, he must lie down in them. But he finished transgression by the sacrifice of himself; and as a proof of it, our great creditor sent a servant to roll away the stone, and take the surety from the prison; and in him all the elect also, for whom he died. With my dead body shall they arise."

I do not see any unpardonable iniquity in the above expressions. 'The dreadful words which that nameless author st 1183 uck at was, my, saying, "In this sense, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes." If I am to be made an offender for a word, my whole offence lies in the word wash; which word I found in my text, and there I left it; and as the scriptures testify of Christ, and are of no private interpretation, I interpreted my text of Christ, and I believe it testifies of him more than any other.

As we are all called debtors, Christ is called a surety, and his death a price; and as we are called captives, his life laid down, is called a ransom; and as he was made sin for us, and bore our sins in his own body on the tree, he sanctified himself from our sins, by his own blood, and the church by the application of it. Sacrifices and offerings under the law, which were all types of Christ, were often washed; nor does washing always imply guilt; Pilate washed his hands in token of innocency, and David does the same when he goes to the altar. What I have said on this head, may be supported by the Saviour's own words: "I sanctify myself," which implies as much. Then says the carnal critic, how can cleansing, or washing, be implied by the word sanctify, when it is applied to God? As for instance, "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself;" "And I will be sanctified in them." I answer, in the same sense that carnal professors are said to pollute and defile God's holy name, Jer. xxxiv. 16; Ezek. xliii. 8. That the above doctrines have been preached by me as I have here related them, can be witnessed, I believe, by some thousands now in London; and before I had been publicly reproached, a plurality of witnesses ought to have been heard, and I privately cautioned; unless the reverend gentleman supposes that the ears of all my bearers were pinned to the sleeve of a whimsical dreamer.

I was informed that the letter came from one Mr. C__d; and as I have no opinion of his character, or of his ministry, I took the less notice of it; indeed a man that talks in his sleep, generally talks nonsense; and 'tis beneath the wisdom of the wise to take notice of it; because dreams often come through a multitude of business, and a fool is known by a multitude of words, Eccl. v. 3; and so I found it; for in my author's dreams there were divers vanities, which I am not to regard, because I fear God.

The above-mentioned dreamer's fables, and the words of Mr. Whitebread from Barnet, were all that I ever heard relative to the above doctrine; not one of my own congregation ever mentioned a syllable about it, unless it was expressive of satisfaction.

However, if these doctrines are, as the reverend gentleman has styled them, The bubble of the day, they appear to me, to be a bubble of the gospel, a bubble worthy of God, worthy of Christ, and worthy of my reverend accuser's most cordial acceptance.

The doctrine of redemption is secured by the oath, promise, and faithfulness of infinite divinity, and its contents are full, free, and everlasting salvation; which ought not to be compared to an empty bubble, a pretension, or a fraud.

If my accuser had applied the epithet of bubble to his own turning seceder, and yet imitating a bishop with his male and female classes and bands; to his singular and unwarrantable mode of ordaining a number of preachers at a time, without a proper call, or the joint judgment of a plurality to assist; in these cases it would have been aptly and judiciously applied: for bubbles of the day these certainly are; and if a few puffs from the lips of truth should cause them to evaporate, they would explain themselves in the author's own terms.

I shall for the present leave that gentleman in the full possession of his assumed authority, and to the enjoyment of his own bubble or bauble, with which he may amuse himself at his leisure, until some pure blast of gospel breath discover it, or a fuller explanation be drawn from me. In the mean time, I hope God will give my dear brethren eyes to see that pride, prejudice, and bigotry are no more consecrated by learning than by ignorance, and ever keep them from sacrificing the benefits of a private judgment, and the blessings of a private experience, either to his shrine or mine.

I remain, your willing and devoted Servant in the vineyard of the Lord.

W. H.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, Feb. 2, 17,913.

Reverend and dear Sir,

YOURS I received, and have well weighed your reasons; and in the balance of the sanctuary they are lighter than vanity. Excuse my accustomed freedom; as so many passages of scripture occurred in the reading of yours, to overthrow the whole of your arguments; and indeed every wandering and unhallowed thought, every unguarded look, every carnal desire, every unworthy thought of God, every cold frame, together with all my secret slips, and backwardness to good, contradict all that you say. A carnal man, averse to all good; alienated from God, dead in sin, and blind to all his interest in another world, to have a power in himself to come to Christ! an object far out of his sight, and to whom he can never stretch a thought worthy of him; a man possessed by the strong man armed, under the government of Satan; led

captive by him at his will, in the strong hold of obduracy; bound in the chain of his crimes; a servant to sin, and a lover of the service; under the curse of God, and at enmity with him! I doubt, sir, this doctrine of yours is attended with another equally as bad, or worse than this; for if you preach up that a man has a power in himself to come to Christ, you must represent Christ in a false light; for the language of every natural man is, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." For if you preach up the sovereignty of Christ, his discriminating love, and his redemption for only particular persons, you will find your own will, and the will of all your hearers reluctant enough, until inclined by grace.

All must allow that coming to Christ at first in a proper manner, is the most difficult part of the work with those who are convinced, by the Spirit, of unbelief. If the sinner has a power to come to Christ, then there is no occasion for God to make him willing in the day of his power, Psalm cx. 3; no occasion for God to enlighten them that sit in darkness; nor to guide their feet into the way of peace, Luke i. 79; nor can there be any occasion for drawing them to Christ; nor can the Saviour's words be established as true by your doctrine, when he says, "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him;" no occasion for Christ to destroy the works of the devil; no occasion for him to open the prison doors to them that are bound; no occasion for the Holy Ghost to make the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the dumb to speak. No occasion for the dead to hear the voice of the Son of God, in order to live; no occasion for the shepherd to seek and find the sheep; no occasion for laying it on his shoulders, and bringing it to the fold. The Lord's talking of bringing the blind by a way that they know not, and of leading them in paths that they have not known; and upholding them with the right hand of his righteousness, and keeping them by his mighty power through faith to salvation, is all useless

according to your doctrine. And all the prayers of the former saints which are left upon record can be no useful precedents for you; such as, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned;" "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe;" "Draw me, and we will run after thee." The man that by nature has a power to come savingly to Jesus Christ must enlighten his own understanding, quicken his own soul, cast Satan out of his own heart, destroy the power of sin, turn the whole current of his own affections, remove the evil bias of his stubborn will, and work faith in his own heart. And he that can do this, has created himself anew, and is in one sense, a creator; nor should I have any objection to fall down and worship such a being; for I know he must be the resurrection and the life that can create a creature anew, and therefore a proper object of worship.

If your modesty cannot brook deification, then lay the doctrine by. But I would wish to know whether this power in sinners, of coming to Christ, be natural or spiritual; if natural, you are indebted to the God of nature for it; and if spiritual, God is the origin of that. If you say, it is spiritual, I ask, Is it inherent, or derived? Inherent, I think, it cannot be; because the sinner is carnal, sold under sin. If it be derived from Christ, then this action of coming to Christ, proceeds from a motion of the new man, and is all of grace. But if the power be natural, it is an act of the old man of sin, and will pass for nothing good with God, because he has commanded us to put off the old man with his deeds.

You are welcome, sir, to such principles; but it is clear that by holding these, yourself and followers are the only losers; for the drawing of God and making willing; his revealed and promised arm in leading; the Saviour's shoulder in carrying, is made of none effect by your traditions. I wish, sir, you would only shut yourself up in your closet for one hour, and meditate upon the glory of God; and when you have brought his

glorious perfections together in your thoughts, and your mind engaged with him, then view him as reconciled in Christ Jesus, and kneel down and say the Lord's prayer to him, while your mind is stayed; and keep your thoughts fixed on the object of prayer all the time you are repeating it; but if your thoughts are scattered after an hundred different things, then try again and again: and if after all your toil, you find you cannot command nor fix a single thought upon God, then acknowledge the truth of God, and say, "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil, and that continually" The above seems to be an easy task; but there is not a freewiller in all the world that can perform it; nor do I believe that there is a spiritual man that can, who has got that prayer by rote. Sensible facts are stubborn things; the devil himself cannot move them; and if, after all your supposed power and ability, you cannot govern one single thought, never say anything more about free-will and human power. You will excuse my boldness in setting you such a task, because it is the best method of discovering temptations; for when the devil puffs us up with a vain conceit of our own power, the best way is to try and exert that power; and though pride may prompt us to deny the testimony of God's word with respect to human weakness, yet when all our efforts prove to be in vain, we are conscientiously convinced, if we are too proud to acknowledge it; thus God makes conscience bear witness to his revealed truth, though he leaves the obstinate will of man to rebel against both word and conscience. Free grace has made my heart and tongue honest enough to own that I am nothing, and that I can do nothing, and yet am blessed with a part and lot in him that has done all for me, and promised to do all in me.

With this blessed hope and honest confession I take my leave of my unknown correspondent, and conclude with gospel anxiety for the destruction of all errors, and for the saving knowledge of gospel truth.

W. H.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, Sept. 10, 1785.

Dear Brother and Fellow-labourer.

I RECEIVED your mournful epistle, and read it with joy and delight, because it is the way that God seems to lead most of his ministering servants; and it is by these trials and oppositions that our call to the work is made clear to us, by the power of God that is manifested in times of trouble.

God gives the renewed soul, designed for the ministry, a desire to be useful; sends others that fear his name to draw matter out of his heart; and such as are comforted by his conversation, importune him to speak in prayer, or to exhort in public. He finds the Lord's presence with him; his mouth is opened to the people; matter springs up in his heart; the people seem refreshed under him; the numbers increase that hear him, and importunities increase also for him to persevere in the work.

Thus the poor simple soul goes on with both wind and tide on his side, and the blessed gale attends both the leader and the led. But when he is fairly entangled in the net, and his hands fixed to the plough, then comes his cross. Now he is burdened in his soul, chained in his spirit, troubled in his mind, and fettered in his tongue; and to the great mortification of his pride, he is often obliged to stand trembling in the gospel pillory.

Now he begins to look about him; Satan tells him that he ran before he was sent; that a single eye is wanting; fools deride him; humble souls condole with him and encourage him; his abilities seem all to be obscured; and the work seems to be an impossibility for any but angels. The well in his heart seems to have lost its spring; the bible appears sealed; he is too confused and troubled at times even to pray; he thinks he has committed an infinite offence in opening his mouth for God; and wishes he had never touched the plough. He is afraid to leave off, and afraid to go on; difficulties before, and terrors behind; evil report on the left side, and good report on the right; critics quibble at him, and simple souls travail for him; hypocrites go from him, and persecutors fall on him.

Now is the time to see whether he ran of himself, or whether God sent him; if he ran of himself, he will surely run back again; when persecution comes because of the word, by and by he is offended, and in time of temptation falls away. But if God has sent him, he will bring him through, and let his supporting hand be known towards his servant, and his indignation toward his enemies.

This is often the way that the Lord deals with his ministering servants. Moses set himself about delivering Israel, when he killed the Egyptian; and set the two combating Israelites at one; supposing that they would have understood how that God by his hand would have delivered Israel; but he that did

his brother wrong, thrust him away, as a prelude to Moses' future oppositions, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Acts vii. 23-27. Thus Moses began the work, and failed; but when God came to set him about it, he frames a whole tribe of frivolous excuses and vain evasions; and, being disconcerted at his own beginning, made him reluctant in making a second attempt. He found it was a difficult work; as he had been pushed away with disdain, and betrayed, for killing the Egyptian, by his own brethren, what could he expect from all the tribes, but worse treatment?

If my reverend and dear brother wades through these fiery trials with fervour, diligence, and becoming fortitude, he will see his way and his calling clearer than ever he has yet done; and they who are entire strangers to these things, never have had their call to the ministry established to them; they may have the testimony of men, but the testimony of God is greater. As to their finding fault and disapproving of your handling this or that text, they are things that we must expect; Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses; and men of corrupt minds, will ever resist the truth, as they did; but they shall proceed no further; for their folly shall be made manifest as theirs also was.

Since I have been in the ministry, I have had masters enough to make a wise man mad; and those who knew the least of God and themselves, were the most forward to instruct me. But as no man can serve two masters, I chose to stick close to the one, and only give the others a hearing.

I was once called on to visit a poor woman who seemed to be in a deep decline; and her state of soul was worse than her state of body. I found her in deep convictions, under sore temptations, and her reason much impaired; after some conversation and prayer with her, I left her, with a full persuasion in my mind that God would bring her out; and told

her that I should see her face shine one day or other, and left her with those words, which it seems never left her, but she often turned them over in her mind: "My face shine, what does he mean by that? my face will never shine, I am sure." I saw the woman no more for a year or two; but one night she had the following dream she dreamt that she was in a carriage drawn by black horses, who took fright, and kicked at so a violent a rate, that she was in danger of being killed by their heels. A man spoke to her, and told her there was a way out behind, if she tried she might make her escape; she did so; but the way was so narrow that she could not get out; the man bid her try again, which she did, and got out; and went into a narrow path, which led her out of danger. She awoke, and behold it was a dream; but as it left much confusion and trouble on her mind, she told it to a professing woman, who advised her to come and hear me on that day; accordingly she did. On the same day my mind was kept in uncommon darkness; I shut myself up to study and pray for several hours; but all in vain; no text occurred to my mind to speak from. I remained much distressed till near the time to preach; and suddenly this text presented itself to me, "I have compared thee O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." I refused the text in my mind, though many things occurred to deliver from it; I tried to get another, but all in vain; and was compelled to preach from that, as a light shined on that passage, and on no other. In handling the words, I observed the chariots of war, which a just God permits at times to go forth for dreadful slaughter against those that he numbers to the sword; as it is written, "And I turned, and lift up mine eyes, and looked, and behold there came four chariots out from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of brass; and in the first chariot were red horses," a war colour The second chariot I represented to be the law, in which God rides to execute vengeance; and the spiritual famine that attended those that were under it, was signified by the colour of the horses, which are said to be black; compare

Rev. vi. 5, 6, with Lament. v. 10, agreeably to Zechariah's vision. "And in the second chariot [there were] black horses," Zech. vi. 2. I endeavoured to shew the danger of those that were in this chariot; and pointed to another which I supposed to be the covenant of grace, or the church of God in that covenant; as it is written, "And in the third chariot white horses;" compare with Hab. iii. 3. As the church in my text was compared to a company of horses, I handled the properties of the metaphor as well as I could; and mentioned the wildness of the horses, to which I compared the wild notions and extravagant courses of sinners; I mentioned the colour of such a state set of cattle, and how exactly they were matched; and brought that to prove Christians to be of one colour in God's sight, whether they had been in a natural state strict Pharisees or loose libertines. The harness and coupling of the state team I mentioned as expressive of the saint's union; in short, I mentioned their being trimmed, tamed, broke, &c. &c.

As soon as I had finished the discourse, the poor woman above mentioned came into the vestry with all the raptures of joy and peace imaginable, and informed me of her dream and troubles; of my having visited her when sick, and of my telling her that her face would shine, &c., and was delivered from that hour. The husband of the woman seeing the glorious deliverance of his wife, fell under soul concern himself; and I believe that they now both fear God, and are alive and well this day.

For delivering of this discourse I was reproached, by a certain professor, to numbers of people; I heard of it from all quarters, that it was a discourse not fit to have been delivered; but you see God sent it to unfold the woman's dream, and to extricate her out of all her distress of soul, which I knew nothing of. Thus God sets his seal of approbation, where wise men pass the sentence of condemnation.

I could produce many more such instances about particular texts being opened and applied to particular persons and cases, which have given great offence to many good people; however there is no tracing the understanding of the Almighty; nor can our hearers prescribe ways and means for him to walk or work by. On him we must call, on him we must rely, and to him alone we must look for direction, and follow that light which he is pleased to give, whether people approve or disapprove.

Depend upon it that these trials and oppositions will, through grace settle thee more and more firm both in the faith of salvation, and in the work of the ministry, which God grant to thy comfort, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I add no more, but my prayers; and remain in gospel love, E
73 ver thine,

W. H.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, Feb. 18, 1786.

My invaluable friend Mr. C__ brought your letter to me, which I was glad to receive; and its contents afforded an humbling cordial to my soul.

I can follow you, sir, through all the courts, laws, and pleas as of corrupt nature; through all the flatteries, insinuations, fair pretences, and false promises of inbred corruption; through all the courts of carnal reason, conscience, equity, and judicature, and describe the various bills and witnesses found in them all against the poor sensible sinner. The intricate windings and labyrinths of mysterious providence, and all the strange operations, changes, cutting discipline, comforts, promises, sweet thoughts, and the blessed sensations of special grace have been the establishment of my faith, and the daily employment of my mind. And, after all these chases, changes, trials, disappointments, arraignments, and condemnations, what has it done? Why it has drove me from the vanities of the world, the pleasures of sin, the religion of nature, the confidence of the flesh, and from all hope of happiness in the things of the world. And the sweet advantage that God has taken of all my trials is, that he has appeared my advocate in every trial; my fullness in disappointment; my portion in poverty; my confidence in adversity; and my refuge in every storm of persecution. His frowns have raised a godly fear in my heart; his absence has set me to self-examination; and taught me to watch his footsteps more narrowly; inquire after him more earnestly, and to prize his presence more highly. Trials, sir, are intended to cripple the old man of sin; the crown of pride is sure to get a blow in every fight of faith; the death of pride is the life of humility, and real honour follows upon it. I am sure that we are gainers by every trouble; more fruit to God's honour is brought forth after the branch is purged; and more peaceable fruits of righteousness are felt in the heart of those who are exercised thereby.

I have often, with a wondering heart and weeping eyes, reflected on the tender care and regard that God has shewn on my behalf; how forcibly he withstands us when we are going wrong; how this little book, or that, this or that promise has been put into my hand, or dropt into my heart, to upset the arguments of erroneous men. When I have put too much confidence in an arm of flesh, my jealous God and Father has caused, for the least offence, such a prop to give way, and leave my unstable soul sinking and staggering, till I was convinced of my folly, and went back again to my immutable friend. When any secret sin has gained ground in my affections, a private rod, or a certain text of Scripture has been forcibly applied, and some humbling thoughts and sharp struggles have produced an abhorrence of it; and afterwards my soul has appeared as a bird let out of a cage.

When I have been indulged with private access to God in prayer, and with much freedom in the pulpit, I have often been lifted up with a vain conceit of my self-sufficiency; but then I have been left to stand in my own strength for a time or two in the pulpit; and the inattention of the hearers, and my own confusion have been quite sufficient to mortify my pride, and bring that Babel building down.

When the approbation and popular applause of a number of God's children have lifted me up, a few scandalous reports and reproaches from another quarter have been sufficient to make me loath such light food. And when I have been in the company of carnal men, about any lawful business, and while I have sat and took notice of their shining parts, and graceless hearts, I have been brought humbly to reflect on what discriminating grace has done for me.

When some sin has been committed, and guilt and shame have risen to stop up the intercourse between God and my soul, the application of a favourable text, or a secret reflection

on past mercies, have humbled and melted my soul; and both pardon and peace have been felt, before my knees have been bowed. Thus the sounding of God's bowels has sweetly dissolved my heart. When I have been going to preach with a dark mind, and a barren heart, and kept in suspense till within a few minutes of preaching time; just as expectation began to fail, a text has occurred, and I have begun with a single ray, and preached till my heart was all on a blaze; then light had been sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; thus the poor servant went up to the passover alone, and about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up and taught. I have murmured at the thoughts of beginning without him, and doubted of his company at the banquet; but the Lord must be waited on, and his time waited for; as it is written, "My time is not yet come, but. your time is always ready." Thus I have shewed, my dear friend, how I go on in the world, and though my path lies between evil report and good report, yet under the management of infinite wisdom, I hope to gain by trading. A watchful eye is a necessary attendant on prayer, and a blessed handmaid to faith. The Lord favour thee with it, is the prayer and desire of one, who in the bonds of love desires to subscribe himself,

Your willing Servant in Christ,
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXIV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, March 20, 1785.

Dear Friend,

I RECEIVED yours, and am willing to comply with your request, as far as the Lord shall enable me. If you read carefully the whole chapter, you will see that the apostle is rebuking some of the professors at Corinth for their abuse of the Lord's supper. Some came hungry to it, and ate to satisfy nature; others came drunken to it, and added to their excess. He tells them that their communing was sinful, instead of holy; that they contracted guilt at it, instead of receiving grace by it. "Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that you come not together for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it. For, in eating, every one taketh before another his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you, shall I praise you in this? I praise you not," 1 Cor. xi. 17-20. The apostle having told them of their faults, goes on to shew the heinousness of their guilt, by telling them first, that they sinned against the dispensation of the Lord, which he had received of the Saviour and delivered unto them. "For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you."

The apostle goes on to shew the guilt they contracted in the abuse of the ordinance; "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you,

and many sleep." These two last verses are what you seem to stumble at. It is not in my power to give you an exact comment on so particular a passage, nor have I time for it. The apostle intimates that bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ. But you will say, why is Christ called bread, and represented by bread? because bread is the staff of life, and in scripture it signifies every eatable. Every temporal necessary to support life lies in these words, "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure;" and when God threatens a guilty land with a dreadful famine, it lies in these words, "I take away the whole staff of bread, and the whole stay of water." Now Christ is both the bread and drink of our souls; God has given us eternal life in him; and all the fullness of the Spirit, called the water of life, is in him also; the promise also of temporal supplies is yea, and amen in him. Thus our life is in the Son; "He that hath the Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life."

But law and justice standing in the way of life, denouncing death, the law must have a perfect obedience, and justice, a full execution before life could be communicated to the dead. To this the dear Redeemer submitted, and offered his life up to justice, as a sacrifice in our room; and so eternal life flows to us through him, and we escape eternal death, by faith in the death and resurrection of him. Hence, he says, "I am the bread of life, my flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed." But these words must be spiritually understood, as he says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." And so the sensible sinner finds it, after he has stood self-condemned before the holy law of God, and exposed to all the wrath revealed in it. As soon as the Holy Ghost enlightens the understanding to see the Saviour on the cross, suffering the penalty in his room, and he is enabled by faith to apply the benefits of his death, or the life that Christ procured for him, to himself, then he finds' his flesh to be meat, and his blood drink indeed.

The whole contents of God's revealed wrath against sin, is held forth to us by a cup of red wine, Jer. xxv. 15: the colour represents the wrath of God, and the endless portion of the wicked, Psal. lxxiii. 10. But the blessed Saviour took the cup of wrath, and the cup of trembling, out of the hand of Justice, and drank it for us, with a willing mind: though he prayed three times, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" yet he obeyed, and willingly drank it, and opposed those that would have kept him from it, "The cup that my heavenly father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" This cup of wrath being drank by the surety, a cup of salvation is held forth to us in a promise; and a cup of salvation it is, when the atonement of Christ is received into the heart by faith; the curse being drank by the Saviour, a cup of blessings is held forth unto us, and this cup of salvation and divine blessings is represented by the cup in the sacrament; and the hand of faith conveys Christ to the conscience, as the grand atonement, while pardon, peace, life, and joy attend the Saviour into the believing soul. Thus his blood is drink indeed.

Now, says the apostle, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" The hardened rebel, the fearless sinner, the self-righteous Pharisee, the insensible wretch, the unenlightened soul, and the unbeliever, are all unworthy; because they are not invited in the word, nor so much as described among the guests that are. Therefore, says the pious apostle, "Let a man examine himself;" for if he eats and drinks unworthily, he is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; that is, he abuses the symbols that represent the Lord's body and blood; he sees not the spiritual meaning of it, he feels not his need of what is signified by it, he profanes the sacred ordinance, and shews himself to be of the same spirit of the Pharisees, who crucified him; and thus he commits spiritual wickedness as they did, and sins against innocent

blood, and is guilty of having a hand in the open crucifixion of Christ; he is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

But if, upon examination, he finds sin his burden, and is humbled under it; if he repents of it, and believes in the Saviour; if he is stripped of his confidence in the flesh, and is made willing to be saved by grace; if sin be hateful, and the Lord loved by him; if he be obedient to the word, and live in the fear of God; then let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup. Those that are weary and heavy laden are called; the lame, the halt, and maimed, are invited; they that are circumcised to love God, are to keep this passover, none are refused that believe; none are cast out that put on the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness, all that hunger and thirst are welcome; and those made willing to close in with the gospel offer, and hold the truth as it is in Christ, have a right by a divine invitation. "Whosoever will, let him come;" "They continued in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The text that seems most to stagger you, is that of not discerning the Lord's body. That is, such as are not enlightened by the Holy Ghost, to see the grand design of the Saviour's assuming human nature, in order to obey the precept of the law. They never saw by faith the Lord's body offered up as a sacrifice for sin; they do not see how God reconciled the world to himself in Christ, nor do they see his body to be the temple in which all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, and therefore they do not see him as the object of faith, hope, love, and worship.

The sacrament is to represent Christ to the eye and hand of gospel faith, so that conscience may receive inward satisfaction from him as the real spiritual substance of those signs. But the blind insensible unbeliever discerns nothing of this; he comes to it as to another meal, or else he makes a Saviour of it, without any gospel views of Christ, and so trusts in an idol; or else he comes contemptuously, and so profanes

it, and then by his wicked life he crucifies the Lord afresh; contracts the guilt of spiritual wickedness by abusing, in the signs, the substance of our great salvation; thus he eats and drinks damnation, to himself, not discerning; the Lord's body.

For the abuse of this ordinance, some disorderly professors fell under the fatherly rod of God; many were sickly among them, and others had so grieved the Spirit, that they were like the drowsy virgins, many sleep; such had neglected self-examination, they had not tried themselves, therefore God examined, tried, and scourged them. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." There is nothing in this chapter against the humble penitent, the heavy laden, the coming sinner, or the tender-hearted believer; but the sins of these daring Corinthians were great, and the judgements denounced against them are awful. But poor weaklings are like the Lord's own disciples, when he told them, one of them should betray him they all cried out, "Lord is it I?" While the guilty was the last that spoke. Excuse haste. The Lord be with you, while I remain thine to serve in the gospel of Christ,

W.H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO F__ W__, AT WALLINGFORD.

Winchester Row, Marylebone,

March 29th, 1786.

Dear Friend,

GRACE, and truth be with you; I have read yours, and can sympathize with you; for I know by woful experience, the wretched bondage and confusion of arminianism; but let none of these things move thee; "What if some do not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid!" If every pretended Calvinist in England was to fall into the errors of arminianism it would never hurt that soul who is soundly fixed on the rock Christ; your faith is not to stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

God often lets Satan loose as he did in Job's days, when he appeared among the sons of God, in order to discover the hearts of men, and bring their secret hypocrisy to light, that poor simple souls may be undeceived.

God has foretold us, That damnable heresies shall be brought in. The discovery of these, is to keep the elect from being ensnared, Job xxxiv. 30; and that the real children of God may be made manifest by their open confession, and warm attachment to the truth, while the others stumble and fall; as it is written, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

When branches fall off from the living vine, they err in their doctrine, and wither in their joy. And indeed, God does but fulfil his word in thier fall; for every branch in Christ that beareth not fruit, but taketh away; if a man abide not in Christ, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered.

A man may appear to bring forth many external fruits, and yet be a branch cast forth after all. But he never can bring forth the genuine fruits of the Spirit without a vital union with the living vine; the bond of which union is, the electing and everlasting love of God in Christ Jesus. He that is a stranger to this bond, has nothing to hold him, or keep him from falling off; and if you look back on the doctrines that you have heard from him, you will recollect that there was but little, if any account of an heart-felt union with Christ that appeared in his ministry. The Almighty sometimes throws down a column in appearance, and at the same time supports some who appear but bruised reeds, or weeping willows. By these things we are taught to know that God is beholden to no man's parts, or abilities; and that he can carry on his cause and interest in the world, without human dignity, learning, or oratory. Besides, when the gospel, or something like the gospel, is brought into what is called a parish church, if there are any that fear God in it, they are herded together with all in the parish; the precious and the vile have both an equal claim on a parish priest, according to the customs or laws of men, though not according to the laws of God; " For," Paul says, " what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? but them that are without, God judgeth; therefore put away from among yourselves all wicked persons.

There is some just cause that has provoked God to send this strong delusion among you, that those who are sound in the faith may fly from it; those that are clean, will escape from them that live in error, 2 Peter ii. 18.

Those among you that fear God, will now speak often one to another, your hearts will get warm and zealous for the truth; you will read the bible for yourselves, and while he is preaching up arminianism, the Holy Ghost will apply bibleism; you will be enabled to exhort one another; you will all unite in

one fold, and God will, sooner or later, send you a pastor after his own heart. If I should come into Dorsetshire this summer, I will, if God permit, call and give you a sermon, if it should be in the high road.

Fighting against the doctrine of election is always the first step that men take when they go from the truth, they having not been able to make their own calling and election sure: election becomes a stumbling-block in their way, and therefore they try to roll it out of their way; and as it seems to be no friend to them, they become sworn enemies to that, and call it the devil's law, because it levels the pride of devilish nature.

As free-will cannot submit to the sovereign will of God in the absolute choice of his people, they are obliged to dethrone the latter, that they may exalt the former.

When this is done, then another difficulty appears fully as bad as the former; for if free-will has got the throne, it must have something to boast of; but imputed righteousness lies as a stumbling-block in the way of boasting; for if justification be by grace, as God declares it is, then we must be brought in debtors to that; but human deification and spiritual insolvency, can never stand together, therefore imputed righteousness must be taken away also, in order to make way for human merit; for that sovereign cuts a poor figure who has nothing to glory in.

For if men were publicly to affirm, that a soul established in the doctrines of free-will and human merit could boast of any security from eternal wrath, it would at once expose their whole scheme, and appear so glaring a falsehood, that a person might give it the lie from almost every verse in the bible. But in order to keep Dagon from losing his deified head and meritorious hands on the threshold before the ark of omnipotent grace, I Sam. v. 4, they tell you, that he is not divinely secured; but that he only holds his sovereignty upon

the performance of certain conditions. A few ifs and buts, are all the columns that he has got to support him; for if he falls from his dignity, which he ever has done, he is sure to be damned; but if he performs his conditions, which he never can do, then he is sure to be saved.

But then this doctrine cannot be established, without removing another grand truth of the bible, which is the final perseverance of God's elect. Thus it appears plain, that no merit-monger has any assurance of his life; all his days are spent in slavish fear and jeopardy; nor do any of them deny this; for the Roman Catholics, who affirm they have done works of supererogation, are so afraid of being damned, that they have heaped up to themselves some hundreds of mediators and intercessors, and yet are still in doubt of safety. Even Bellarmine, one of the brightest of them, said on his death-bed, "That he should be contented with purgatory." Thus all that human merit can do, according to their own account, is to procure a burning limbo for their reception. However, if their obedience will not keep them out of hell, penal sufferings in it will never merit their deliverance from it.

I have read the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, which he has laboured at, in order to overthrow the doctrine of the saint's perseverance; and it is plain, that the parable in the twelve last verses, enforces a forgiving spirit; but if he handles these words to overthrow the doctrine of God's everlasting love, he shews a most wretched hatred to the brotherhood, by his attempting to rob them of so invaluable a blessing. Nor does his enmity rest on man only, for if he handles the account of the relentless householder's servant, to break the frame of God's covenant, he shews an implacable enmity against the truth of God, by setting the Saviour's conditional if against the immutable will of God, instead of bringing the conditional promise to the unconditional, which is making the will of God to depend on the will of the creature. And pray, what is this

but declaring that the stubborn, unmerciful spirit of the sinner is able to frustrate the designs of God?

Where is there a Christian in the world, who, when under the influence of the evangelical repentance, could not forgive a real spiritual brother? And if the doctrines of electing love, and the reigning grace of God in the heart, will not produce a forgiving disposition, is it likely that the doctrines of nature, and the influence of spiritual pride should do it! when truth has said that, "The spirit in man lusteth to envy."

I will be bold to assert, that this gentleman, notwithstanding all his zeal for brotherly love, which shews his spleen plain enough against those that contend for the faith of the saints, and oppose his errors. For if he preaches against the stability of God's covenant, and plunders the judgments and consciences of the saints, of what he himself has held forth to them in God's name, where is his compassion to the brethren? He is not restoring that which he took not away, Psal. lxxix. 4, but he is taking away that which he can never restore.

You have done your duty, as the Lord commands you. Whatsoever he has bid you observe, that you have observed and done; but you are not to do after his works, for he has said and not done, Matt. xxiii. 3.

Real compassion and forgiveness must extend to every spiritual brother that is sound in the faith; but if a man shuts up his bowels of compassion against you, because you faithfully adhere to all your master's will, as he has commanded you, and lets his bowels sound to none, but those that are in his corrupted principles; wherein does his compassion differ from that of fallen angels Milton says,

O shame to men! Devil with devil damn'd,
From concord holds, men only disagree
Of creatures rational.

The learned author's assertion, cannot be contradicted by the word of God, concerning the concord and unity of devils; but their love to one another, meets with no praise from God, whate b8c ver it may do from one another; nor will the affection of deceitful preachers, and false professors meet with any, however they may cry it up themselves.

He has lately sent a letter to a minister in London, which one of my friends got sight of, in which 'he pretends to abhor the name of an arminian, though the letter was full of arminianism. To say the doctrine of God's election is a doctrine not fit to be mentioned but only in heaven, reflects a daring contempt on the Son of God, who came from heaven to preach it; and he saw it so fit for this world, that he scarce spoke a parable without it. None out an atheist would attempt to teach God knowledge, or reason with him about the fitness of doctrines. This is not obeying the word of a master, as a good servant ought to do, but in answering again, and purloining, which chews the servant's insolence. The Saviour tells his disciples to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, more than in their victory over devils; and is A not strange that the doctrines of election, which Christ held forth as a matter of their joy, should now be deemed a degree productive of nothing but horror? But this doctrine had the same contrary effects on the angelic family; election is the degree that confirmed the good angels in their present state, and is the matter of their Joy; but to devils it is an horrible decree, because they were not included in it, and therefore they are desperately enraged at it. This I know to be woful experience; and whoever they are that rage and cavil at it, are on the devil's side in the dispute.

A strange speech indeed, that declaring the whole counsel of God should be rocking souls to sleep in a Calvinist's cradle. However, we can prove from the word of God, that electing love has brought every soul to heaven that ever went there; for all that are with him are called, chosen and faithful. And we can defy all the world to prove from God's word, that free-will; or creature-merit, ever brought one soul there. God help thee to stand fast in the faith, and in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free, and be not again entangled with the yoke of bondage. You are forewarned of such preachers; how that with feigned words and fair speeches, they shall beguile the unstable, and at the same time appear with such outward sanctity, that Christ says, "If it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." Therefore, if you have any regard for your soul, fly from such, as you would fly from the father of lies. Dear brother, farewell; grace and truth be with thee, and the poor scattered flock among you; and I pray God to send you a pastor that shall feed the people with divine knowledge and understanding. Amen, and amen, says thy affectionate friend and brother,

In the kingdom and patience of Christ,
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXVI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Winchester Row, July 6, 1785.

I received my dear brother's epistle, and have considered the matter he wrote to me about. God has not confined us to a single life; but Paul tells us, that the married person is often caring for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; but the unmarried person cares for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. The apostle gives this as his judgment, for he does not pretend to have had any particular command from God for it; yet we know that married people have a deal of trouble in the flesh; and our blessed apostle would have us without worldly carefulness.

However, a man that fears God is not to be burdened with worldly cares how to please his wife; a wife should be an helpmate for man, not a rival of God; nor would any gracious woman desire it.

You are at liberty to marry who you please, if she be in covenant with God, unless such relations as God's law forbids. What she has been matters not; if the dear Redeemer has espoused her to himself, you may take her to wife, if there be a mutual affection between you. Many a Magdalene has made an affectionate wife, after the reception of humbling grace at the Saviour's feet. The gospel contrition of poor Mary would have tied my soul to her, if she had been appointed for me, more close than the celebrated beauty of the fairest atheist in the world. A divine affinity is a strong tie, and is sure to strengthen the other. But take this by the way, if you marry her, you must expect now and then a taunt from some of her old acquaintances; and she may sometimes, even when you are with her, meet with a vulgar salutation from her old companions. I would have you consider before hand whether these things would sit easy, upon your old man.

Besides, God sometimes sends the spirit of jealousy upon a man, and he is jealous of his wife, which is intended to bring iniquity to light, Numb. v. 15; but sometimes it is to put a stop to iniquity in its conception; and sometimes to damp inordinate affections in married people, Gen. xxx. 2. Under such a spirit you might get distrustful of her fidelity; and her past life would serve to feed the fire. What think you of these things as causes and impediments? I hope you will weigh these matters before you take the yoke upon your neck. If you cannot make her pull down her high head before marriage, you are not likely to do it afterwards. I would make her dress like a woman professing godliness, or I would have nothing to do with her. I doubt her heart is not truly humbled; if it was, she would hate even the garments spotted by the flesh. If she dressed like an harlot, and is not one in heart, she acts the part of an hypocrite; and the harlot that mimics in dress the modest woman does the same.

The word of God gives us a true portrait both of the harlot and the woman professing godliness. You read of the short light ury attire of an harlot; of the mincing trip and step of their feet; of the catch and stretch of their neck; of their tires, muffers, noods, and veils; of their ornaments, trinkets, and jewels; of their changeable suits of apparel; of the wanton roll, dart, and cast of their eyes; and of the whore's forehead.

Now I think if her soul has been truly humbled by evangelical repentance, and her heart and affections purified by living faith, that she would take this conspicuous sign down. Why does she keep the sign out, if she has left off business? It ill becomes people who have left off trade, to mock their customers with an empty sign.

Far be it from me to cast a reflection on the vilest mortal on earth that God receives to mercy. But I know that an internal change of heart, by the power of God; will always be

accompanied with an external conformity to the word of God; therefore if she is so dotingly fond of the signs, I should suspect her aversion to the business.

Women favoured with gospel faith are commanded to copy after their royal and venerable mother, whom God himself named Sarah, the royal lady and princess of many. Royal she was, for the King of heaven had crowned her with his blessing; and promised a numerous, natural, and spiritual progeny. "I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations." Male believers ay look to Abraham their father; and female saints may look to Sarah that bare them; for they are her daughters as long as they do well, and are not afraid with any amazement, I Pet. iii. 6. But I doubt your intended will never obey you; it is in vain that she calls you lord, if you cannot prevail upon her to strip herself of her wanton attire; she may call you lord, lord, but that is not sufficient; she ought, in this, to do the things that you say. God has commanded her to dress in modest attire, as becometh women professing godliness with sobriety, and "Not that outward plaiting of the hair, or of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price; for after this manner in old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves."

It is natural for every person to endeavour in dress and behaviour to please the object they love. If God the Saviour be her object, she will dress to please him, and even bathe his feet with tears, arid make a towel of her hair, rather than plait it to offend him, by entangling mankind in wickedness.

But if she is only a feigned professor, in all probability she aims at entangling your person in wedlock; and when this is done, the unclean spirit will return with six more of the same

stamp; and you as an husband will only serve as a screen to her wickedness. I hope you will look before you will leap, as the proverb is, for you know a person habituated to the devil's service can never be a stranger to the serpent's wisdom; therefore you ought to be as wise as a serpent to find her out, the harmlessness of the dove is hardly sufficient.

The Lord direct my young brother in this matter! human counsel will not do, unless God think meet to bless it. If she be a chosen vessel, and effectually called to repentance, you may, under God, be a blessing to her; and a lawful antidote in future against her besetting sin; but if you are deceived by her, the galling yoke will be all your own; and enough to perplex your soul, and bow your neck till the day of your death; therefore pray; and get an answer from God, and he will direct you in the way you should go. Fare thee well.

Thy willing Servant in the gospel of the Lord,
W. H.

Gospel Draught From Nature's Breast, Intended For Ricketty Children.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." - Rom. 1:20.

THE wheel of nature as she rolls, her strange revolving tour,
Her Fabricator's work unfolds, and shews his matchless pow'r;
The spacious earth and spreading clouds, proclaim his sov'reign sway,
And, all conceal'd in nature's shrouds, his potent will obey.

Could woods and groves but bear their part with my enraptur'd soul,

While wisdom to my worthless heart her mystic wraps unfold;
The (lay, the night, the heat, the cold, all magnify thy name,
Both heaven and earth, thy seat and stool, unite to spread thy
fame.

On Day And Night.

"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth
knowledge; there is no speech nor language where their voice
is not heard." - Psalm 19:2, 3.

Now sable night her vail has spread, bedeck'd with solemn
gloom,
Which shews the mansions of the dead, the sinner's endless
doom;
An emblem of my dreadful state, till sov'reign grace appear'd,
Enrapt in crimes of deadly hate, against the storm prepar'd.

The spring of day begins to rise and chase the gloomy shade,
So light divine unveils the eyes and shews the (lark parade;
The morning star, in bright array, portends the joyful morn;
So doth the star of endless day my sinful soul adorn.

His light reveals the gloomy path my stubborn spirit trod,
Obnoxious to vindictive wrath, and yet at war with God;
Each just reflection quick return'd. and brought some crime to
light,
While direful vengeance raga and burn'd, and put all hope to
flight.

What wretched state of deep distress! thus destitute of grace,
Yet skulking in some dark recess, to shun the Saviour's face;
Oh! had the Lord his mercy spar'd, and but conceal'd his light,
Then had my hopeless head been rear'd in everlasting night.

The rising sun shews his return, his warmer rays emit;
All nature would his absence mourn, if he should long retreat;
So doth the sun's Creator rise upon the fruitless soul,
Each parched pow'r receives supplies; he fructifies the whole.

On The Owl.

"I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert."_Psalm cii. 6. "I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and cried in the congregation. I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls." - Job 30:28, 29.

THE nightly watchman of the wood, the grave majestic owl,
An emblem of the pensive mood of my dejected soul;
This lone 1e83 ly ranger don't presume to join the plumed
choir,
His solemn note, so void of tune, no birds of song admire.

When day has left all nature mute, he makes his lonely moan;
Nor do you hear his solemn note till gloomy night comes on
At break of day he quits his charge to those of higher sphere,
And leaves melodious birds at large to charm the list'ner's ear.

So doth the guilty sinner try to shun the rays of light,
And in his gloomy thoughts apply the sable vest of night;
With wounds immortal drove to seek some calm and lone
retreat,
In pensive sadness low and meek to find the mercy-seat.

The vain and the unthinking herd his words and looks discard,
Involv'd in notions so absurd of social aid debarr'd
But when the light divine appears he quits the dark recess,
And leaves his state of gloomy fears, to sing of sovereign
grace.

On Evergreens.

"The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the boab together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious." - Isaiah 60:13.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." - Psalm 1:3.

THE lowly box and lofty pine their native garb possess,
Both cold and heat in vain combine to blast their verdant dress
So shall my sacred root afford his branch a rich supply,
For, saith the everlasting Lord, Thy leaf shall never die.

The piercing hail and violent storm may wave the tow'ring top,
But if the root be good and firm the tree will still bear up;
Its life and strength in many a fold from human sight's
conceal'd.
That while this root maintains its hold the tree can never yield.

My life divine is still secure in one immortal root,
And as the stock and root endure so must the leaf and fruit.
The husbandman so well contrives to spread the sap unseen,
That while the tree of life survives his branches must be
green.

The willow by the water-course receives supply and grows,
Each fibre draws from nature's source to feed the spreading
boughs;
So stands the saint by Shiloh's flood and draws new life
divine,

While faith and love root deep in God, and feed the heavenly mine.

When I survey creation round, thy tender care I see,
In all thy works thy hand is found, and thine immensity;
Thy matchless power still protects the orphan of thy care,
In vain the fiend my soul attacks, when thou art present here.

On The Dew.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily." -
Hos 14:3.

"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon
the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the
blessing, even life for evermore." - Ps. 133:3.

THE gentle rain and nightly dew attend to nature's cry,
And both proclaim the promise true, that I shall never die
Each spreading cloud some favour shows, when they their
drops distil.

The benediction God bestows on favour'd Zion's hill.

'Tis here the Holy Ghost descends, and joyful tidings brings,
Among Jehovah's chosen friends his boundless mercy spring.
Here David's blessing richly fell, with all her promis'd store,
And here eternal life shall dwell, when time shall be no more.

On The Rainbow, Rocks, And Hills.

"For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn
that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so
have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke
thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be

removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee." - Isa
54:9, 10.

"And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved let us have grace." - Heb. 12:27, 28.

THE promis'd bow doth still endure, the world no deluge hath;
So doth that bow my soul secure from everlasting wrath
Its yellow cast, its crimson die, and lasting azure blue,
All shine with unbelief to vie, and prove the promise true.

The stable rocks and rising hills, shew my exalted state,
More firm my soul on Jesus dwells, as fixed there by fate;
The rocks shall rend and mountains quake, and all the globe
shall move,
But God has sworn he'll never shake his kingdom rear'd in
love.

What the' the foe should dare assail Jehovah's plighted troth,
Shall fiends of hell with God preveil, to break his solemn oath?
Nay! sun and moon their circuits run, to skew my state secure.
Revolving planets each in turn proclaim salvation sure.

On The Luminaries Of Heaven.

"Thus saith the Lord which giveth the sun for a light by day,
and the ordinances of the moon and of the stare for a light by
night. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the
Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a
nation before me for ever." - Jer. 31:35, 36.

"For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity." - Isa. 13:10, 11.

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."
- Matt. 13:43.

THE stars that in their orbits shine, this solid joy afford,
That they their glory must resign, when saints shall be
restor'd;
Such from his sphere is doom'd to fall, bereft of all his pride,
Before the great eternal All, and his illustrious bride.

The fickle moon, in borrow'd rays, reproves my moral spots,
Her liquid light to all displays the spouse's secret blots;
But she must take her final wane, and yield her bright array,
Nor must she dare be seen again in everlasting day.

The burning sun shall then assume his long predicted veil,
To shew his face shall ne'er presume, when brighter lights
preveil;
Thus all created lights retire, and all their rays resign,
While in the glory of the Sire, the saints shall ever shine.

O God, the earth, the sea, and skies, proclaim my state
secure,
And thou art bound by numerous ties, to make my standing
sure;
Be still my guide, my sure defence, let love be still display'd,
And when thou take my spirit hence, be thou my present aid.

Lord, what is man! or what am I, that thou should'st thus
engage,
To draw my wavering mind on high, in spite of Satan's rage'?

The self-complete Eternal now, to draw my thoughts above,
Hath deign'd to promise, swear, and vow, to win a mortal's
love.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXVII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV. MR. HUNTINGTON, PADDINGTON.

Rev. and dear Sir,

HAVING, on many former occasions, experienced your willingness to become eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; like a bold beggar, whose courage increases with his prosperity, I once more presume to solicit your charity; nor am I altogether without hope of success, since I find myself encouraged thereunto both by my Lord himself and his servants the prophets. "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out."

The occasion of my troubling you at present is in consequence of reading and meditating on the parable of the merciless servant, in the, eighteenth of Matthew, from the twenty-third to the thirty-fifth verse; who; it appears, owed much, had nothing to pay with, met with compassion from the king, and was frankly forgiven the debt: but is afterwards

brought to account, arraigned, called a wicked servant, and delivered to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due to his lord, he being wroth with him.

The more I have endeavoured to reconcile the difficulties, and harmonize the various parts of this parable, the greater the mysteries have appeared, and the farther I have seemed to get from what I have sometimes apprehended might be the Saviour's meaning in this passage. Nor have I been able to find any commentator, minister, or private christian, that could satisfactorily resolve me on this head; on the contrary, with much regret, I have observed that commentators in general are very profuse on passages of scripture the meaning of which is obvious to almost every reader; while such passages as have profound depths in them, and are wrapped up in spiritual mysteries, are slightly touched, or seldom, if ever, noticed by these Rabbies. With lamentation we may say of such, in Solomon's words, their much study is a weariness to our flesh, and in making many books there is no end; no end to either the reading, the study, or the purchase of them. With great grief and disappointment, I once heard a divine of the Church of England, in speaking of the gold, spices, &c. of the wise men's offerings, quote Henry, Gill, Pool, Guise, Burkitt, and others, and then leave it to his audience to fix the sense from which ever they chose; authors whose works must have cost his poor hearers twenty pounds at least before they could come to a certainty where to settle, or what to believe.

"Now, sir, as my habitation may be too small to contain twenty or thirty volumes folio, my time too short, and my pocket too shallow to purchase; the Lord being still faithful to his promise, who hath said he will send us pastors after his own heart, that shall feed his people with knowledge and understanding; I hope, as a living witness of the truth, you will, When opportunity offers, favour us, in one of your Epistles of Faith,

with your thoughts on the passage; as, I think, I can truly say, this request does not proceed from a principle of mere curiosity, in order to furnish my head with empty speculations, my mouth with vain words, or to tempt the Lord's servant, by proving him with hard questions; but that I may, through your instrumentality, be more thoroughly established in those blessed truths, which have been made more precious to the soul than the merchandize of silver, the gain of gold, the hid treasures of the earth, yea, or even my necessary food. For this purpose, I pray the Lord to furnish you with light, liberty, inclination, and leisure, to comply with my request; which, I make no doubt, under his blessing, may be found effectual. to the establishment and comfort of many of his dear children; and, among the rest, none more so than,

Reverend Sir,
In the name of many others,

Your very sincere Friend,

And

A LOVER OF HIM THAT LOVES YOU.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXVIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV. MR. HUNTINGTON, PADDINGTON.

Dear Sir,

SEVERAL attempts have I made to write you a few lines, but hitherto Satan hindered me: albeit, I am determined now, by the help of God, to perform it, although my labour should be in vain in the end. What I wish to mention to you is, that the Lord hath been pleased of late to bring to my remembrance wonderful deliverances, which he wrought for my soul in times past; and hath showed me the way of which himself alone hath been leading me, in order to humble me. Much of the depravity and vileness of my nature hath been plowed up; and which the tempter had been working up, in order to stir up prejudice and enmity, even against some of the household of faith, with whom I am not worthy to be called a fellow-servant. Here was I, shut up in prison, and groping in the dark, when you lately preached on Matthew xviii. the 23d and following verses; pointing out the Lord's dealings, from first to last, with the ten thousand talent debtor; and, by him, his dealings with me also: and, blessed for ever be the name of Jesus, who, in tender compassion, now came with a visit to me, and made a way for my escape out of the snare of the fowler; so that I began to rejoice with trembling. However, I still feel myself exposed perpetually to his hellish subtlety; but the Lord my God is able to keep me; and his grace is sufficient to melt down this wretched hardness of heart, and to reign over the power and prevalency of my unbelief.

The sermon I refer to was blessed to many others also, as I am well informed; and who desire much to see it printed. Let me therefore request the favour, sir, that you will include the substance of it in the Epistles of Faith you propose shortly to publish.

I suppose you need not be reminded how the Arminians will ever pervert this scripture by their false glosses, and handle it

as an instrument to work mischief, and cast it as a stumbling-block in the way of thousands weak in faith. Seeing it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, I hope you will grant this my petition in the behalf of poor confined debtors. And may the Spirit of the Lord God evermore rest upon you, anointing you, and enabling you, under Christ, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound. For the sake of him who loved and died for sinners, remember at the throne of grace,

Dear Sir,
Your Fellow-Servant,

A PRISONER OF HOPE.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXIX

William Huntington (1745-1813)

Dear Brethren,

I RECEIVED yours; and in compliance with your request, and the request of some others, I will skew mine opinion, by publishing my thoughts on the obscure parable, and submit them to the judgment of the wise; hoping that, as God blessed the: preaching of them, he may also bless the reading of

them. If they meet with the approbation of God, and are of use to those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, I shall not grudge my labour: and, as to what Arminians, or any other set of enemies to the truth. may say against them, I care nothing about; for the good word of such is both a bad omen and a scandal to a servant of Christ; seeing that the master hath pronounced a wo to us when all men speak well of us, for so did their fathers, in heresy, of the false prophets of old.

Matt. 18., beginning at Verse 23-35.

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven like unto a certain king that would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. But, forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant, therefore, fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So, when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest me: shouldest not thou also have had

compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?. And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormenters, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven," &c. By the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God, is sometimes meant, the dominion or reign of grace in the heart: "The kingdom of God is within you" Sometimes it signifies ultimate glory: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world." But here it signifies the gospel of Christ: "Go thou, and preach the kingdom of God." Go thou, and preach the gospel, or tidings, of the kingdom, the glory and majesty of the King of kings; set up his standard to rebels; enforce his laws; describe his throne; skew the dominion of his grace, his hereditary right to government; and proclaim his universal empire, and eternal reign; together with the real happiness of all his loyal subjects; the righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which this kingdom consists; the honour and glory which are freely bestowed on all who come over to his standard, submit to his sceptre, take his yoke upon them, equip with his weapons, and, in his armour, engage in the fight of faith. "The kingdom of heaven"

"Is likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants." The certain king is God the Saviour, who is king of Zion, and king of glory. By his servants are meant chiefly the elect, who are called a seed that shall serve him; and shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation, Psalm xxii. 30. Some refuse his service, and continue to be the servants of sin; but, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee [Christ] shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted," Isa. lx. 12. But the elect are not left to their own will to make such a

choice; they are made willing, in the day of his power, to cast off the yoke of sin and Satan, and to serve the Lord Christ; and they are to call no man Master but him; and those who serve him, them will the Father honour. Not but what all the human race are his servants, for he hath power over all flesh; and, though they reject his service, yet they are accountable to him, as their maker and preserver; and it is he who will pay them their wages for their bad service: "The wanes of sin is death." But then, these are not meant here; for he will not call these to an account, or reckon with them, till the day of judgment. This king would

"Take an account of his servants." That is, he would bring them to books by the ministry of the word. When the book of the law is handled lawfully, its spiritual meaning discussed, and its vast demands enforced; if God send it with power to the sinner's heart, sin revives, and by the law sin becomes exceeding sinful, and the sinner himself appears a transgressor of every precept: this stops his mouth, and brings him in guilty before God. When the book of life is explained, and by the Spirit of God applied, the sinner is brought in guilty of the damning sin of unbelief; and that, as an unbeliever, he makes God a liar: he appears a rebel against the king of Zion, a profaner of his name, an enemy to his religion, and a slighter and contemnor of the offers of grace. When the book of God's remembrance is set forth, and that God will never forget any of their works, but make them give an account of all that is more than yea, yea, or nay, nay; their sins appear in the light of God's countenance, and are set in order before the sinner's face; and when the book of conscience is appealed to, and thoughts begin to accuse, and conscience to do his office, the poor wretch begins to tremble; he feels himself at his Lord's bar, and in his powerful hand; and then, by the ministry of the word, "He is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship

God, and report that God is in you of a truth," I Cor. xiv. 24, 25. This brings the sinner to books; he sees what an infinite account stands against him, and what a sin-avenging God he is accountable to.

"And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents." When the word of God began to be preached, and sinners began to be convinced of their sins, and convicted for them, and forced, by their distress, to fall down and worship God, and sue for pardon; one was brought, not by an arm of flesh, much less by fire and sword, as Papists would compel them to come in, but he was brought by the power of the word and Spirit of God; and driven by a sight and sense of his lost estate, and the anguish and agonies of his soul, to fall down before God; for at such times God comes nigh to the sinner to judgment, Mal. iii. 5, or to reckon with him. So here one was brought

"Which owed him ten thousand talents." What a talent is, I shall not inquire, for I know that these talents are sins, or transgressions of the law; which law demands of the sinner perfect and perpetual obedience; and, in case of failure, Justice says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay;" and demands satisfaction by eternal suffering: not only a beating with many stripes but a binding over, and a casting into, the prison of hell; and declares he shall not come out thence till he has paid the very last mite, which never can be paid; for suffering in hell never can make satisfaction, any more than rotting in a gaol can pay a thousand pounds and therefore, when the gulph is fixed, he can never come from thence. "They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth"

When the Saviour brings in the parable of the creditor and his two debtors, he there says one owed five hundred pence, and the other, fifty; and neither had any thing to pay, Luke, vii. 41. Mary Magdalene seems to be pointed at as the five hundred

penny debtors; and Simon, according to his own thoughts of himself, as the fifty. But this sinner owed ten thousand talents: he was more in arrears than Mary, who was possessed with seven devils; or Simon the pharisee, which sect were farther from the kingdom of heaven than publicans or harlots. Which gives me some room to suspect that this ten thousand talents' debtor had been, not only a law sinner, but a persecutor of the saints, and a desperate opposer of the gospel; and, perhaps, a busy one in putting Christ to death; which, if done against conviction, bordered upon the great transgression. However that be, he owed ten thousand talents; which shews the infinite account which stands against some sinners who, for many years, have been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. And, indeed, who can count the thoughts of his own heart, which are evil, only evil, and that continually? his errors, his lies, oaths and curses? with all his words that are more than yea, yea, or nay nay, his lascivious looks, his filthy acts; together with all the deeds done in the body? If the Palmist cried out, and said, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken bold upon me, so that I am not able to look tip: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore mine heart faileth me," Psalm xl. 12; what may this debtor say? The Redeemer proclaims, "I have blotted out, as a cloud, thy transgressions; and, as a thick cloud, thy sins." And I am sure this black scroll may well be compared to a thick cloud; and a dreadful storm it must discharge, in the great day, to an unpardoned sinner, when the heavens shall reveal his iniquity, Job xx. 27; and this cloud rains all its snares, attended with fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup, Psalm xi. 6.

"But, forasmuch as he had nothing to pay." Which no man hath. The law calls for holiness; but man's conception is in sin; he is shapen in iniquity; his birth, heart and life, body and soul, are nothing but sin; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. The law calls for love to God; but, "The carnal

mind is enmity against him, and not subject to his law; nor, indeed, can be." Therefore as every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil, and that continually, he can no more cease to do evil by his own power, or learn to do good, than an Ethiopian can change his skin, or a leopard his spots. And, therefore,

His lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. "This shews that, as he had sold himself to work wickedness, and indeed we have all sold ourselves for nought, the lord commanded him to be sold: which is to skew us, that the commandment of the law is such, as not only delivers the sinner to the judge, and by the judge to be cast into prison; but it delivers him tip to the devil and his angels, to be tormented by the same devils that he yielded himself a servant to obey. The soul that sinneth shall not only die, the wages of sin being death, but, as he sold himself to the devil, to do his works, Justice sells him to his old master to receive his torments, as a part of his wages under the curse of the law and the wrath of God And, not only himself, was to be sold,

"But his wife and children, and all that he had." By his wife, &c.. is shown, that a desperate sinner often endangers his whole family; especially one who is an opposer of, of an open enemy to, Christ and his gospel. By the law, God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, Exod. xx. 5. A fire not blown shall consume such an unpardoned sinner; and it goes ill with him that is left in his tabernacle, Job xx. 26. All the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods; "They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit," Numb. xvi. 33. An awful instance is that of Achan: "And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his

sheep, and his tents, and all that he had; and they brought them unto the valley of Achor, and they stoned him with stones, and burnt them with fire," Josh. vii. 24, 25. The account of Ahithophel, and his type Judas, is awful upon this head; "Let his days be few, and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he path; and let the stranger spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him I neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. Because that he remembered not to skew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him," Psalm six This commandment of selling him, and his wife and children, and all that he had, is to skew that body, soul, wife and family, if grace prevent not, are often endangered by a desperate sinner, and God may in justice condemn a whole ungodly family with a wicked Hither, for a wife and family are parts of a man's self; and, "All have sinned;" and death is the wages of sin. Then what an awful portion does a vile persecutor, an extortioner, a seducing heretic, and a grinder of the face of the poor, entail upon himself and his offspring, if grace prevent not! Cain left an ungodly race for the deluge; and profane and murdering Esau left a fraternity that are to be called, "The border of wickedness;" as that was the boundary of all sin, and was to meet with its just punishment only there; "And the people against whom the Lord lath indignation for ever," Mal. i. 4. "The servant, therefore,"

Fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord have patience with me and I will pay thee all." This is the way of every sinner, more or less, when the snares of death and the pains of hell invade him. He finds the law calls for works; and to work he promises to go, for this is the way that seems right unto a man, though the end thereof be the ways of death. He promises not only to keep the law in future, but, by superabounding acts of obedience, or works of supererogation, over and above the law's requirements, to blot out the ten thousand talents which are behind; whereas man cannot speak a good word, nor think a good thought, nor raise one affection, to God, nor entertain one thought worthy of him. He is dead in sin, dead in law, and dead in soul, to God. The wrath of God is upon him, for the sentence of death and damnation took place for the first offence; "He that offends in one point is guilty of all." And, as he is spiritually and legally dead, so are his acts of obedience; they are called dead works; nor can a man serve the living God till the blood of Christ hath purged his conscience from these, Heb. ix. 14.

However, he craves nothing of his Lord but patience, and he will pay him all; though we all know that neither the acts nor the promises of a felon under sentence of death stand for any thing, for such an one hath forfeited his life by his wickedness already; and the law will not let him loose again, nor revoke the sentence that is passed upon him, for such an one is not to be trusted. And sure I am that God putteth no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly.

This is the way of every awakened sinner when the law arrests him: though all may not express the same words, yet all go the same way to work; for by the light of nature we know of no other. But, alas! the sinner can never raise his heart or affections to engage in the business, though the fears of death and pains of hell drive him to the task: the strong man still keeps the palace, and holds his possession of the heart,

and will in spite of him; and, though he draw near to God with his mouth, and honour him with his lips, yet his heart is far from him. And Therefore, instead of blotting out the old score, he runs deeper (lady in arrears; for the law requires perfect obedience, and love with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind, and all the strength; and, when all this is done, he is but an unprofitable servant; he has done no more than what is his duty to do. But one act of obedience, with all the heart, never was performed by any sinner living in a state of nature, nor ever will be, nor can be; for without Christ man can do nothing, John xv. 5. And, supposing he could give the law the obedience it requires, and pay off the old score also, the law never promises eternal life in glory, nor can the law give it: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified," nor shall any man living by it be saved. Life in glory is not to be earned; it is, "Not of works, lest any man should boast;" it is of grace, and no more of works. It is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, not to sell it; much less barter it for dead works, or a little eye-service performed by a child of wrath in hypocrisy, and extorted from him by the fear of damnation.

"Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." Self-moving love and grace in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the moving cause and grand source of all our salvation, hopes, and happiness, both in this life and in that which is to come. He loosed him from the galling yoke of the law, and the bondage of it, and from the awful arrest of divine Justice. He loosed him from the bondage of slavish fear, Heb. ii. 15; from the cords of his sins, Prov. v. 22; and brought his soul out of prison, Psalm cxlii. 7; enlarged his contracted bowels, 2 Cor. vi. 13; and set his spirit at liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17. And they who are thus loosed on earth, in heaven are loosed, Matt. xvi. 19; and if the Son make them free, then are they free indeed, John viii. 36; and are no more children of the bondwoman, but of the free, Gal. iv. 31. They have got a free spirit, which is to

abide with them for ever. The Spirit is an eternal gift, promised in the everlasting gospel; secured to us by the everlasting covenant; received of the Father by the Covenant Head, and freely given to all the elect, to produce in us the freedom that the Saviour proclaimed; and he never shall be taken away from Christ, nor from his seed. "The Lord loosed him,"

"And forgave him the debt." Which the Saviour might in justice do; not only because, as Jehovah, he had power upon earth to forgive sins, and because he became the surety of elect, and a surety of the better covenant. As we were under the law, so he was made of a woman, and made under the law; and, as the children were flesh and blood, himself likewise took part of the same: "The Word was made flesh;" and he became man, for man; and was circumcised, and became a debtor to fulfil the whole law, in man's room, and in man's nature. He stood in man's shoes, Ruth, iv. 7; and became a debtor in man's stead, to restore that which he took not away, Psalm lxix. 4, as became a surety for debts, Prov. xxii. 26. A debtor he was to the law, to pay it a perfect obedience; not a jot shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled; and a debtor to Justice, to give an account of our crimes; and make his soul an offering for sin, by dying in our room, and submitting to death, the penalty due to us all. This debt was exacted, and restitution was made: the Father laid upon him the iniquity of us all; and he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, the just for the unjust; and thus. "He was made sin for us," as a surety is made debtor, "who knew no sin;" as a surety who contracts no debt himself, but pays another's, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Thus the surety might justly loose the prisoner, and discharge the debtor, seeing himself stood answerable for all. "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it;" and smart he did, "For it pleased the Lord to bruise him," and it is by his stripes that we are healed.

"But the same servant went out," &c. A pardoned sinner, who is brought out of prison, and made free, is said to enter into the joy of his Lord. He dwells in the presence of God, and finds that in his favour there is life; and, while he abides sensibly in his love, he dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him; and communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son is a heaven upon earth. The pardoned soul is all love, meekness, humility, and devotion, while he abides in the cleft of the Rock; and, by a sensible abiding in the true Vine, he brings forth much fruit; and with Peter, says, "It is good to be here!" knowing that there is both food and safety. His fruit is sweet to the believer's taste; and, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it, and is safe" But the sheep of Christ go in and out, and find pasture; in by faith, out by infidelity; in by the Spirit, out by the flesh; in to be fed, out to be tried. The latter of which seems to be the wretched case here. The same servant went out; out from the comfortable presence of God, from the light of his countenance; from fellowship with him; from a sense of his love, and an heart-felt union by it. From the enjoyment of his favour, he left his first love, wandered from his resting place, and fell from his comfortable standing. Sin got between God and his soul, for nothing else can keep us out of his presence; and when sin is committed, and guilt contracted, then the accuser has got something to work upon. Sin hardens the heart, benumbs the conscience, stupifies the soul, disarms it of filial fear and spiritual tenderness; it divests the mind of its liveliness and activity, and exposes the believer as one that walks naked, stripped of his ornaments, and especially that of a meek and quiet spirit; and many see his shame, which cuts his pride, and disgraces his former bright character. Many young and weak believers see the change; and, finding no simplicity nor savour about him, are apt to shun him; and he who was aforetime as a tabret, becomes a by-word of the people, Job xvii. 6. He perceiving this, grows peevish, fretful, and stubborn he murmurs and complains, and aims at exalting himself. But

all in vain; God resisteth the proud; and, while he regards these things in his heart, God will not hear his prayer. Thus the foolishness of a man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord; and be that thus perverteth his ways shall be known, Prov. x. 9. Which, when known and come abroad, many young Christians shun him; lightly esteem him; and, at times, are apt to speak too freely of his gloomy countenance, unsavoury conversation, deadness in prayer, &c. &c. which, when he hears of, he cannot endure. And which seems to be the case here: for when he

"Went out, he found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest." He found one of his fellow-servants; one employed in the same spiritual service, and belonging to the same royal Master; who had the same cross to carry, the same self to deny, the same work of faith. labour of love, and patience of hope, to do, as he had; and therefore a fellow-servant, employed in the same business, and an equal in the family; and, consequently, his fellow in union, and communion, and in the fellowship of the gospel.

"Which owed him an hundred pence." Which had trespassed, of transgressed against him, by speaking evil of him, or lightly of his profession; seeing his zeal, life, power, comfort, and diligence, were apparently withered; or had injured him in any other way: which, when compared to his transgressions against God, is no more than an hundred pence is to ten thousand talents of gold.

"He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat." A real child of God, when backslidden, and at a distance from God; when his liberty is abused, and he is again entangled either with sin or with the yoke of bondage; filled with the burning rage of cruel jealousy, inwardly chafed in his mind at the

felicity of others, and envying their happiness, knowing how it was with him in months past, is, as to his own. sensations, little better than Saul, when God departed from him, and answered him neither by dream, vision, nor prophet. The wife of Zebedee's request for her two sons to sit at the right and left hand of the Saviour in his kingdom, kindled such a flame in the hearts of the other ten. that they were moved with indignation against the two brethren, Matt. xx. 24. And, when indignation is conceived against a man, and begins to move him. it is no wonder if the constrainin01 power of God does not stop the motion, if he takes him by tile collar What is man, when left to himself, with sin conceived, and the arm of God withdrawn? He will say all men are liar,, curse the day of his birth, and wish the womb had been always big with him. Such a deserted and dejected soul, if he is capable of saying to God, I do well to be angry: or to the Almighty himself, "Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" it is no marvel if he spares not his brother's throat in the day of vengeance; saying,

"Pay me that thou owest." "I insist upon the utmost satisfaction. You have injured me, offended me, trespassed and transgressed against me, and have done me wrong. I insist upon your being separated from the communion of the saints, or proceeded against to the utmost severity of Zion's laws." We are not told what this offence was, nor the particular branch of satisfaction demanded; but it is plain the latter servant had trespassed against him, by the hundred pence that were owing, which he appears to be conscious of. As soon as the former servant collared him, a conviction of his fault, and of his having done him wrong, brought him to an acknowledgment of his debt, and a promise of satisfaction.

"And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." It was a conviction of his having done his fellow wrong, and a

sight of the rage and anger that is wrong haul worked him up to, that caused him to fall at his feet; and there appears also a consciousness in this humble suppliant that his enraged brother was a child of God, though now in a deserted state: else, A righteous man falling down before the wicked is a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." It is clear he had done him wrong; that the hundred pence were due; and it is clear that he was guilty, by his acknowledging the debt, and promising restitution which there is nothing said to contradict; nor is there any thing said in commendation, or in justification of his conduct. He was blame-worthy, as he gave the first offence, and his conscience smote him for it; and, as he was the offender, it was his place to have returned to his brother, and say, I repent: which he had not done; for the injured party found him. However, he fell at his feet, and owned his fault; and addressed him in the same words that he had formerly used at the foot of his Maker,

Saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. "Lay by thy anger, and have patience with me till I may consul the brotherhood, and receive advice what method to pursue in order to make restitution, which shall be done to your utmost satisfaction;" "I will pay thee all," all that God the Saviour requires in such a case, which was as much as an offending brother could say or do to an offended one. But he found the words of the wise man true, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle," which will terminate in the bars of a prison in this matter. This was the case: there was no scaling this wall of prejudice, consequently the city of the heart could not be won or gained; he would neither surrender, submit, give ear, nor come to any terms; neither the bended knee, the confession, nor the promise, moves him: for,

"He would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt." Which spews how pride may influence, and the

devil stiffen, a backslider in heart left to himself He would neither accept his fellow-servant's person, his confession, his bended knees, nor his promise of payment, nor exercise any patience towards him; but went from him, in ail his rage and fury, bent upon some satisfaction which Christ does not require in such cases; for this was the all that the other promised to pay, which this lofty, stubborn child, refused to accept. "He would not; but went"

"And cast him into prison," &c. By prison, is often meant spiritual bondage. "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name." Christ was sent to open blind eyes, and to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sat in darkness out of the prison-house, Isaiah, xlii. 7. The prison appears to me to be this: he left his fellow-servant under a sense of his having given the first offence, or of contracting the hundred penny debt, which the other had a right to demand, and which he had a just right to pay. Secondly: this brother was smote, or stung, with a consciousness of this; and, as he could reflect that the offended fellow-servant was a pardoned sinner as well as himself, and had been loosed from the bondage of sin and the law as well as he, his guilt for giving the first offence stuck close to his conscience; and his not succeeding in obtaining forgiveness of his fellow. laid him open to the buffetings of Satan, on account of the guilt he had contracted, or the woe he had incurred, by giving the first offence. This, under the buffetings of Satan, brought him into bondage, or spiritual imprisonment; and, as he could not obtain forgiveness, the Devil worked him up into the same prejudice, envy, and hatred, against his fellow-servant, that the other had against him; which is death to all comfort, and that which slays the silly one. This, with the tattling of other, in process of time, brought him both into legal and devilish bondage, and made him as inflexible and unrelenting as the other; saying, "I have been to him, and confessed my fault; begged his pardon; offered restitution; and all this upon my

knees; and he would not hear me, nor accept me. I will bow no more, nor sue for-peace or reconciliation any more." Still the sense of his giving the first offence, and of the other's being a pardoned sinner, who was loosed or made free as well as himself, grinds him, as between the upper and nether millstone; like Samson, who ground in the prison under a sense of sinning away his strength, and exposing his soul to the insults of the Philistines; till, in process of time, this suppliant servant got as stubborn and as deep in the mud as the other in the mire, and as fast bound in spiritual bondage, or imprisonment, as the unrelenting one. So he was to pay the debt, by suffering in spiritual bondage, what the other refused to forgive, according to the requirement of Zion's laws.

This conduct of the unforgiving servant offending many in the family, (who justified the submissive conduct of the repenting one,) moved them to agree and carry this matter to the throne of grace, and to beg direction of God: as it seems, according to the scriptures, to be a singular case; and that which puzzled them most was, that both were pardoned sinners, and freeborn children of the freewoman; which, when they had properly considered, and heard deliberately the matter on both sides, they agreed to take it to God himself.

"So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done." When the other servants of the household saw the conduct of both; the submission of the offender, and the unrelenting spirit of the offended; they were grieved at it, or very sorry. They saw what was done: how the one gave the offence, and what it was; the acknowledgment of it, the humble submission used to gain the injured party, and the promise of restitution, or payment of all; and how the other collared him, refused his request and promise both, and went and cast him into prison; which was a widening the breach on both sides. And as some would vindicate the conduct of each;

some the former, as the party offended, and blame the other for the offence; and some the latter, for his refusing to make a second offer, after the first had been rejected; avid, knowing that such a breach might make a division in the whole family, and be bitterness in the end on both sides;

"They were very sorry." Sorry that such a breach should be made where concord ought to reign, especially under the government of a man of peace; and knowing that such a cavity opened, not only disturbs the peace of a congregation, but opens the mouths of the uncircumcised, pleases the Devil, stumbles the weak, and grieves the souls of the just, they all agreed;

"And they came and told their lord all that was done." They laid this singular case before the Lord. As the household of faith could do nothing in it, they carried it to the lord of the household, where the inflexible is sure to meet with a more severe trial. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged [by the Lord]; but when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world," 1 Cor xi. 31, 32. The Lord observes the case; takes notice of the conduct of both parties; hears the prayers of the sorrowful fellow servants; grants their request; and takes the matter in his own hands, by calling the inflexible servant to his bar, whose judgment is always according to truth.

"Then his Lord after that he had called him said unto him thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me." When his lord, the same lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, who had formerly loosed him, and forgave him the debt,

"Called him." Summoned him by a terrible impulse, and brought him, under horrible sensation, to the bar of equity; erected his tribunal in the court of his own conscience, and

appeared in terrible majesty there, as King of Zion, who has his throne and keeps his court there: and a backsliding, stubborn, perverse servant, may well say, as others have done, "Thou writest bitter things against me;" and again "Shewest thyself marvellous upon me." "Fearfulness and trembling are fallen upon me." "My flesh trembleth because of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," Psalm cxix. 120. And well he might; for, "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul." If the Psalmist would have judged himself, he would not have been judged; but, as he neglected that, God by the prophet sets him on the throne, chews him the rich man's cruelty in stealing an ewe lamb, and pleads the poor man's cause who had been robbed of it; calling the old man of sin, or the lust of the flesh, the wayfaring man, who had eaten the lamb; and, when David had passed the sentence of death upon the rich man, God applied the sentence to the judge himself. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged;" but, if not, God does it as here. And in proceeding against him,

"He said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me." "O thou wicked servant!" as he now was a base backslider, a stubborn sinner against light and love, ungrateful to his God, and unmerciful and cruel to his fellow-servant. And no wonder, therefore, that the Lord calls him wicked servant, when he was made so inflexible by a wicked spirit; even as Simon was pushed on by Satan when he began to rebuke the Lord himself; who turned and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan," which, I think, is a more terrible appellation than wicked servant. Judas, for his thievery and hypocrisy, is called a Devil; Peter, for his rebukes, is called Satan; and they told Job that his wickedness was great, and his iniquities infinite, Job xxii. 5. And thism an, for his ingratitude and unmercifullness, is called a wicked servant; which wickedness is aggravated by the

pardon he had formerly received from the Lord: and indeed, if he had not been a pardoned sinner, he could not have been a fellow-servant in a gospel sense, but must have been a servant of sin and Satan; and then the other had not been justified in falling down before him.

"I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me." Not that his desires were the cause of pardon, for God forgives sins for Christ's sake, and Christ pardons for his great name's sake; but this desire of his is brought in against him, because he refused to pardon the small offence of his brother, when he came to sue for one at his feet with the same desire, and in the same words; which the Lord now enforced with a close appeal to his own conscience, saying,

"Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" "Shouldst not thou?" "I forgave thee ten thousand talents, which would have exposed thee to everlasting burnings, because thou desiredst me; and couldst thou overlook or forgive an hundred pence, when implored of a fellow-worm with a suppliant knee? Could not my pity on thee move thee to compassion?" This reasoning together, shews that the trial was held at the bar of equity, and not at the bar of judgment; nor will the Lord use such expostulations with reprobates, but make the heavens reveal their iniquity, and the earth rise in judgment against them; set their sins before their eyes; make conscience do his office, and appear himself a swift witness against them; appoint them their portion, and fix their doom at once: which is not the case here, although it be said,

"And his Lord was wroth." Not in a vindictive way, for, "God has not appointed us to wrath," but in a fatherly way: it is not the wrathful indignation of the judge, but the wrath and displeasure of a father; for God cannot be perjured in his oath. "For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go

over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." "I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.' "I will neither appoint thee to vindictive wrath, nor rebuke thee with flames of fire," Isaiah lxvi. 15. And I have sworn to this. Nor can God be thus wroth with us; for we are redeemed from the curse of the law, and delivered from the wrath to come.

But the wrath here intended is the great heat of fatherly displeasure: as it is written, "For the Lord hath called thee, as a woman forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer," Isaiah liv. 6-8. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses; and the Lord met him, and sought to kill him, Exod. lv. 14, 24. And again, "For I will not contend for ever; neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart." And now mind what follows; "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him," Isaiah lvii. 16-19. If the Lord was wroth with Zion, his own spouse, although he had with everlasting kindness gathered her out of the world, and was wroth with his son Ephraim for the iniquity of his covetousness, why should we wonder at his being wroth with this unmerciful servant? Elihu told Job that judgment was before him; that he had fulfilled the judgment of the wicked; that judgment and justice took hold on him; and bade him beware, because there was wrath, lest the Lord took him away with his stroke," Job xxxvi. 17, 18. Thus it appears that this wrath is fatherly anger, which endureth but a moment. "In his favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"Though thou wast angry with me," says Zion, "thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me," Isaiah xii. 1. Thus the Lord was wroth,

"And delivered him to the tormentors." Mark that! His Lord still, though he delivered him to the tormentors; not to be tormented in hell, for pardoned sinners, made free indeed, never go there; God himself has pronounced the man blessed whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered; and to whom the Lord will not impute sin, such are blessed with faithful Abraham, and it cannot be reversed. God has blessed them, and declared that he will bless those that bless them, and curse those that curse them: and, if he will curse those that curse them, he will not curse them himself; for against such there is no law, and upon such there is no more curse. The Lord does not cut this servant asunder; nor say, Depart from me! nor, Go, ye cursed! Nor does he appoint him his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers; nor deliver him to the officer to be cast into prison, not to come out thence till the utmost mite is paid.

"But he delivered him to the tormentors." He delivered him to be tormented, or tempted, and buffeted by devils; as Peter was left in Satan's sieve, who desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat; and the Lord left him there, that he might know what self-confidence would do for him: but the Saviour had prayed before that Peter's faith might not fail. The incestuous person was delivered unto Satan, 1 Cor. v. 5; and the devil shewed him no favour. "Sufficient," with the apostle, "to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many; so that, contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him; lest, perhaps, such a one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love towards him. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgive any thing, to whom I forgive it, for your sakes forgive I it, in the person of

Christ; lest Satan [the tormentor,] should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices," 2 Cor. chap. ii. Thus he was delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, as it really was, when Paul forgave him in the person of Christ. And if this incestuous person met with forgiveness, so did the unmerciful one, who is the subject of this parable. By the tormentors, therefore, is meant the buffetings or temptations of devils: as it is written, "And they brought unto him [Jesus] all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and those that were lunatic," Matt. iv. 24. This servant might have other torments besides the buffetings of Satan; and think he had, because he is delivered to the tormentors; not iii the singular, but plural number, more than one; and he might be smitten also with bodily affliction, which is called a tormentor; as the centurion told the Lord, "My servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented," Matt. viii. 6. He might also be left with his life hanging in doubt before him, given up to a spirit of bondage, and remain under dreadful apprehensions of wrath to come: as Job felt it, when not only Satan had killed his children, and servants, and cattle, and smote Job with sore boils; but the arrows of God were within him, and the terrors of God set themselves against him. These things will fill a man with all manner of torments: For he that feareth, hath torment, 1 John iv. 18. If the fiery darts of Satan, bodily affliction, the horrors of hell, and the fears of damnation, got hold of him, he was in the hands of the tormentors with a witness; and there he continued,

"Till he should pay all that was due unto him." The difficulty lies in finding out what this sum is that is due from a pardoned sinner. The Saviour, in one of his parables, represents God as the creditor; Mary Magdalene as a five hundred penny debtor; and Simon as owing fifty pence; but this man was ten thousand talents deep. The law's requirements are, perfect

obedience, as hath been observed; and, in case of failure, transgressions bind us over to punishment in the prison of hell. But Mary was forgiven, and this man was forgiven. The surety took their debts upon himself, and answered for them. Mary loved much; which love casts out legal fear, and removes the bondage of the law and this man was loosed, or made free, from the bondage and the demands of the law. His surety appeared in his name, as the son of man; in his nature, the Word was made flesh; in his shoes, to answer for his brother's debts; in his law-place, he was made under the law; a debtor in his room; made sin for us, who knew no sin; and he magnified the law, and made it honourable. He glorified his Father upon earth; he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; he made an atonement for us, and removed the iniquity in one day; blotted out our transgressions as a cloud, and as a thick cloud our sins; and God is well pleased for his righteousness sake, and says he will remember our sins no more, and, when they are sought for, they shall not be found, for there shall be none; "For I will pardon those that reserve." For, "This is the covenant that I will make with them," saith the Lord: "I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." So that, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sins, Heb. x. 16-18; for against such there is no law. And sin is not to be imputed to the surety, and, after satisfaction made, be again imputed to the debtor: this would be terrible proceedings among men; and far be it from God that he should do wickedly, Job xxxiv. 12; and from the Judge of all the earth that he should do wrong, Gen. xviii. 25. Nevertheless, he was delivered to the tormentors,

"Till he should pay all that was due unto him." All that was due unto his lord, who had loosed him, and forgiven him the debt. That the elect, as well as others, are debtors to God by the law, has been proved; for every man, by nature, is a debtor to do the whole law, Gal. v. 3; and that a pardoned sinner is

loosed from that obligation, has been proved also: because he doth not work for life, therefore the reward is reckoned to him of grace, not of debt. Yet we are debtors still. If Christ delivers me from the legal yoke, he tells me to take his yoke upon me. If I am loosed from the bondage of the law, yet bound in the bundle of life to the Lord, 1 Sam. xxv. 29; whose bonds I must not break, nor cast his cords from me, Psalm ii. 3. If I am delivered from the covenant of works, I am under the covenant of grace; and, though redeemed from under the law of Moses, yet I am under the law of faith, and receive grace for obedience to that law, Rom. i. 5; and by this law I am still a debtor; and much is due to the ever-blessed surety; for, as Paul says to Philemon, "Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides." If Philemon owed Paul his own self, because he was the instrument of his conversion; what may Christ claim, who redeemed us from everlasting death; and says we are not our own, we are bought with a price, and therefore must glorify him in our bodies and souls, which are his?

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, Rom. viii. 12-14. here the apostle brings in the hints debtors, not to the law in the members; for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but debtors to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; to mortify the deeds of the body by the Spirit, and to be led by him, as the sons of God.

The saints are debtors also to their neighbours in the flesh, to do good unto all men; that is, temporal good; and to hold forth the word of life, or tell what God hath done for us, if opportunity offers; or to give a reason of our hope, if they ask a reason of it "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise; so that, as

much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

We are likewise debtors to those from whom we received the word of the Lord, or from whom it sounded out to us: "It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are; for if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things."

We are debtors also unto all brethren in the faith by the ties of the brotherly covenant; and are bound to love one another, as Christ hath loved us. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law," Rom. xiii. 8. "Owe no man any thing;" owe him no grudge; and, if you can help it, owe him no money, for, "The borrower is servant to the lender," Prov. xxii. 7. Be not ye the servants of men. But the debt of love, let that stand; that is always owing, and always due.

Thus we are debtors, by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, to live after the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body by the Spirit, and to be led by him. We are debtors to the wise, and to the unwise; debtors to minister carnal things to them of whom we have reaped spiritual things; and debtors to all saints, to love them for Christ's sake. These things Christ, by the law of faith, requires; and they are due unto him; and, when done, they are done unto him. Whatsoever good a man doeth, it is done to the Lord, and not to man, for of the Lord he shall receive the reward. Whatever is done to the least of Christ's brethren, is done unto him; and whatsoever is not done for his sake, or in his name, or to his brethren, is not done unto him. These debts of love and forgiveness the Saviour was discoursing upon when he made application by this parable. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and

tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but, if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And, if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but, if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Separate him from communion and fellowship, and deal with him as you would with an heathen; yet remember he is called a brother. So they dwelt with the incestuous person, till God inclined them to forgive, and receive him upon his repentance. "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Then begins the parable which is an application of the doctrine.

And, according to the above account, both these fellow-servants had done wrong. He that owed his fellow-servant the hundred pence had done his brother wrong; he had not paid the debt of love, but had failed in a hundred instances; and it was his duty to have returned, and confessed his fault to him, and say, I repent; which he did not. The injured party, when he had found him, should have told him his fault; and, when he acknowledged it, to have received him, forgiven him, and have had the honour of gaining his brother; which he did not. But, as the other acknowledged the offence, and begged pardon on his knees, he was in this act to be justified, but not in giving the first offence; for, in order to teach him to bridle his tongue in future, this offended brother was permitted to cast him into prison, till he should pay all that was due unto him, though he was exceedingly wrong in so doing, and for which himself was delivered to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto his lord; due to his person, as his lord; due to him in his members; and to them for his sake, and that in

obedience to the law of faith. Thus the Lord God of recompenses will surely requite, Jer. li. 56.

He was left in the hands of the tormentors till his proud stomach was brought down, his lofty spirit humbled, his consequence exposed, his pride blasted, his stubborn soul crippled, and his inflexible heart broken; and, when the terrors of God and the fiery assaults of Satan had withered trim, he was obliged to sue at the throne of grace for forgiveness; while God., conscience, and scripture, all with one voice, cried out. Forgive; forgive! "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven," Luke, vi. 37. "But, if you do not forgive, neither will your Father, which is in heaven, forgive your trespasses."

Alas! how many strange watchmen have we got in our day, who are monopolizing the gospel, and limiting the Almighty to walk in their steps; for they dare to oppose those whom he sends, unless he will condescend to submit to their humour, and do his work by them. But, if the leadings of Providence break through their bounds, and he thinks proper to make choice of a Peter's mouth, that by him this or that soul should hear the word, and believe, they conceive prejudice against him, which, in process of time, amounts to envy, before which none can stand: and it would be well if it stopped there, that it might only slay the silly one; but the Devil sends such about them as God hates, I mean those that sow discord among brethren: these. like Saul's courtiers, who informed him against David, push him on, in defence of his own honour, till the hatred conceived, which is murder, must be discharged by the tongue in an open pulpit; which finishes the conception, and produces death. And sometimes the Devil and hypocrites will drive such a servant on till he will charge truth itself with errors, obscure a plain text, and belly a faithful witness of Christ publicly, in order to stop or hinder the work of God by a supposed rival, and to keep his own reputation from sinking: which only serves to discover the distance at which he stands

from God, and the wretched spirit that ferments him. "Whose hatred is covered by deceit, [when it breaks out.] his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation," Prov. xxvi. 26. Such an one walks naked, and the discerning soul sees his shame, which makes him desperate against his rival, and awfully rebellious against his God. A man thus left of God, and fermented by Satan, sticks at nothing: he will evade every ray of divine light, and pervert the clearest text, rather than appear to justify any doctrine that is maintained by the object of his envy; yea, set himself against the everlasting gospel, the eternal power of the Holy Ghost, and his own conscience, rather than be supposed to have erred, to have done wrong, or spoken wrong. This slackens the girdle of truth, and the Spirit of bondage comes on; the word of Christ's patience withdraws, and vain jangling succeeds; the man drops both his shield and buckler, loses sight of the mystery of faith, and a sense of the dew of Hermon; and, ere he is aware, he is found among the rebellious in a dry land. Such an one is like a wild bull in a net: he is full of the fury of the Lord, and the rebuke of his God, Isa. li. 20. Every effort that such a man makes to keep up his reputation meets with some rebuke or reproof; disappointment upon disappointment succeeds "God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble." Let such a man promise himself what he may, it is always frustrated. If he decrees a thing, it is not established unto him; nor does the light shine upon his ways, Job xxii. 28.

Let him do what he will for God while anger against his fellow servant rests in his bosom, it is not accepted: "Go thy way," says God, "first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. v. 24. Let such an one preach, pray, confess, weep, or do what he will, God resists him; there is no access to God, nor communion with him. Let him appear ever so zealous in the pulpit, ever so affectionate to the people, caution them, warn them, weep over them, suckle them, swaddle them, invite them, woo them, entreat them, or

whatever he may, he does not partake of the Altar, for still the language of God and conscience is, "Go thy way, be reconciled to thy brother, and then offer thy gift." Nor shall he ever be honoured till he is humbled, for before honour is humility: nor shall he ever find access to God as a reconciled Father till he has acknowledged his offence, and is reconciled to his brother. God will stick to his text while he sticks to his pride: "With the froward thou wilt skew thyself froward;" and, He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." Thus pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall: which makes terrible work for conscience; and to be put lower in the presence of the prince is a terrible mortification to pride. This is being in the hands of the tormentors. His soul is at a distance from God, and is resisted by him: he is buffeted by Satan, ground by envy and malice, in bondage to the law, and swarming with concupiscence; his life hanging in doubt, and tormented with servile fear; hoodwinked by the old veil, confused in his judgment, fettered in his speech, straitened in his spirit, callous in his heart, sinking in his reputation, with a blight upon his joys, and a blast upon his labours while God owns and honours the injured brother, who is the object of his indignation which enflames his rebellion till his heart fretteth against the Lord. Such an one may sometimes be found among the tombs, but never on the mount; for honour shall never uphold any but the humble in spirit, Prov. xxix. 23.

Thus it appears that this parable, which the Arminians have laid in the way of thousands as a stumbling-block, affords no help to their cause, nor any proof in favour of their notion of finally falling from grace; seeing the apostles themselves were threatened with the same punishment, by the tormentors, as the Saviour's application shews.

"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you." You disciples and faithful followers; you apostles, who are to have your names engraven on the twelve foundations of the

heavenly Jerusalem, as the grand Sanhedrim of the spiritual Israel; whom I have chosen out of the world, and bid rejoice because your names are written in heaven; you to whom. I have given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and promised you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the Devil, and nothing shall by any means hurt you; yea, you who shall have an hundred fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting; you whom I leave pronounced clean through the word that I have spoken; and have promised that where I am, there you shall also be; and that I go to prepare mansions for you, and will come again and receive you to myself; in short, you who are to be saved with an everlasting salvation, and glorified with eternal glory, shall be delivered, by my heavenly Father, to the tormentors, as this man was."

"If ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Before, it is said, his lord was wroth; which is manifestly Christ, for we are under the law of the Spirit of life to Christ: and here it is said, So shall my heavenly Father do to every one of you, &c. Which shews that, when the Saviour is wroth with any of his seed, his Father visits their sins with the rod, and their iniquities with scourges. Or, it may denote that, when the Saviour is thus provoked to wrath, his intercession shall not ward off the rod of affection when the folly of a stubborn child calls for it. Or, it skews that Christ and his Father act in conjunction; "For what things soever the Father doeth, those also doeth the Son likewise," John v. 19. Hence observe, that forgiving a brother is heart-work. If ye

"From your heart, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." It is often done in word, when the heart is not concerned; as Saul forgave David, saying, "Is it thy voice? Return, my son David, for thou art more righteous than I:" but, while the evil spirit is still upon him, the breach is sure to open again, and he appears a second time in arms, to take away

his life. So some forgive their brethren in word, when in company with others who enforce it, only for fear of their refusal bringing the whole blame upon themselves, and sinking them and their reputation deeper in the eyes of their friends. But this is only hypocritical and partial; it is loving in word only; the old leaven is still working at the bottom, which soon breaks out again. Envy must be removed before the breach can be closed; for a gap within will soon make a Pharez without: "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit." And if any thing makes a breach in the spirit, it is envy and hatred against a brother; which, in God's account, is murder and, therefore, all pretensions to love, and to good works, are no setter in the sight of God, than Cain's offering; for he is still a wicked servant, and, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind!" Prov. xxi. 27.

My friends, he ye, each of you, careful not to give the first offence, for the wo is to him. Thou mayest act upon the defensive when they become thine enemies without cause, and vindicate thy faith and thy conduct with truth. Nor are we to give up any part of the gospel of Christ to gratify the humour of any: we are to contend earnestly for the faith, to be valiant for the truth, and to keep the good thing committed to us by the Holy Ghost, that dwelleth in us. This ground must be maintained, and every enemy to it opposed. But, there is a way for thee to escape this snare of the fowler, which is envy against a brother: and, consequently, thou wilt escape the punishment executed by the tormentors: First, as was before observed, Give no just offence either to Jew or Gentile, or to the church of God, unless it arises fur the gospel's sake; when this is the case, God is to be obeyed rather than man: Secondly, Defend thy faith, experience, and conduct, as far as truth and conscience will carry thee; which is every Christian's duty: Thirdly, Gain a brother, if thou canst, without nursing his

pride or his errors, without bowing to his folly, and without sacrificing any branch of the mystery of the gospel; for we are not to give up the word nor to nurse the devil in him. We are to give no place to the devil, nor to suffer sin on a brother, nor to fall down before the wicked; but to rebuke the devil, if he comes even in Peter, with a "Get thee behind me, Satan!" If he sins against thee openly, to the injuring of thy reputation, as a saint or servant of the Lord, thou mayest rebuke him before all, that others may fear, 1 Tim. v. 20; for, "Open rebuke is better than secret love." But if, by his errors, his fleshly savour, his conduct in life, and his malice against the saints of God and the power of religion, he appears to be an enemy to the truth, he is not a brother, but an hypocrite. God hath made it manifest that he is not of us. "He that is of God heareth God's word:" he that hears it not, is not of God; nor he that loveth not his brother. He that keepeth Christ's sayings, he it is that loveth him. And, if a man hath not the doctrines of Christ, the same hath not God; nor is he to be received into our houses, nor into the church; much less into the perfect bond of love, which is the bond of the covenant." By their fruits ye shall know them:" not by their external fruits only, for a Pharisee who is a painted sepulchre, may in appearance outstrip Jeremiah in the dungeon, or Job in the stocks; one is at war with the world, the flesh, and the devil, while the other is in alliance with them, but by the fruits of the Spirit, and the good treasure of experience and truth that comes out of a good heart, as well as by their life and conduct; and by the fruits of their ministry, if they are preachers; or seals to it, or souls converted to God by them; as Paul says, "Salute Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ," Rom. xvi. 5. By their fruits ye shall know them."

Furthermore, when thou findest that prejudice is conceived, indulged, nursed, and encouraged, against thee, see that thou draw not forth thy breast to nurse their offspring, nor Harbour their infant at thy door. If prejudice operates upon thy mind,

and the devil labours to fix it upon thee, take it to God; inform him of it; confess it; pray him to remove it; and to give thee an heart to love thine enemy, and a spirit of prayer to pray for him, and prevalency at a throne of grace to prevail with God in his behalf, considering thyself also in the flesh: this shall please God better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs. Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you," is enforced by the Saviour himself.

If a brother in church communion sin against thee privately he is to be told his fault. If he sins against thee openly, to the injury of your character, reputation, or usefulness, deal faithfully with him in open rebuke. If he opposes Christ, or his gospel, confute him; the mouth of a gainsayer is to be stopped: and, if God doth not bless it to his conviction, he will bless it to his confusion, in discovering the rottenness of his heart, that others deceived by him may fly from his shadow. This faithful dealing is better than the flattery, deceitful fawning, or candour, of hypocrites; which consists chiefly in defending the unconverted, justifying the wicked, levelling the walls of Zion, stabbing the power of religion, and uniting Christ and Belial, believers and infidels, together. But, if they are false brethren, deal accordingly Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit;" and this is done when his folly is answered with wisdom, and exposed by truth. When we are commanded not to answer a fool according to his folly, lest we be like unto him, it means, we are not to answer his vanity with vanity, nor his folly with foolishness; for that makes us appear like unto him. The wise man must make use of wisdom if he contends with a fool; whether he rage or laugh; and then he will always differ widely from him. In short, deal faithfully with all men, and thou wilt have the approbation of God, conscience, and scripture, however men may disapprove; yea, and of the children of grace, too: for, though reproof be grievous to him that forsaketh the way, yet he that reproveth him (when the reproof is seconded by humbling

grace, and his pride and stubbornness are dissolved) snarl find more favour in his eyes than he that flattereth with his lips, Prov. xxviii. 23.

There are some to be found in the churches, whether `arse brethren or true it is sometimes hard to tell, who are unstable in all their ways; always biased by the last report, whether true or false; always carried away with the last acquaintance, and wonderfully ravished with every new doctrine, or new observation, whether right or wrong. These, receiving every report. and being easily deceived, are always imposed upon; and are sure never to want tattling visitors: and, when once an evil report of another is brought to such, whether it has any foundation or not, they immediately become your enemies, and spare neither your grace, character, ministry, nor usefulness. These are not the excellent of the earth, nor such as excel in virtue; therefore thou art not obliged to take all thy delight in them, but, contrariwise, make them no part of your privy council: keep them objects of your love, and subjects of your prayers; but make them neither bosom friends nor companions in travail, for thou mayest gain such a brother and lose him an hundred times in a week; yea, two or three such intimates as these will cut you out work enough to employ you all the year round, only by going from John Nokes to Thomas Stiles, to prove or disprove every tale of a tub; which ill becomes the real saint, who ought to mind his business, his Saviour, and his conscience; knowing that it is his witness, and that of his own conscience, which must buoy him up, and bear him out, if ever he end in peace, or stand before the Son of Man with boldness. Furthermore, if such do you any act of kindness, it shall afterward be thrown in your teeth, and proclaimed to the wide world, without considering that he who sows spiritual things has a right to reap carnal things. Such, if they are benefactors, soon repent of their liberality; forfeit the enjoyment of the blessing promised to the secret and cheerful giver; and make their bounty a matter of

reproach, to injure the work and workman of God. I would sooner have three such friends as Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, who were confederate with Abraham, Gen. xiv. 24, than have confederacy with a hundred such Israelites as Reuben, who are unstable as water, and excel in nothing but childish things.

To conclude, my friends: the only happiness upon earth, is union with Christ; and to abide in him is to abide in safety. Neither prejudice nor envy can strike a lasting root in a mind that is truly heavenly, nor brow or flourish in a soul that abides sensibly in Christ Jesus. It is the silly one that is slain by it; and, where it captivates a saint, it proclaims him at a distance from his God: the more he nurses it, the more fuel he adds to his future furnace of affliction; and, perhaps, at last, he may be ranked among those who are saved by fire. If ever thou findest it working in thy- mind, never come from thy knees without a stroke at that; and every temptation that nurseth pride, or moves thee to prejudice, fall to praying for the object that Satan moves thee to hate. To be led by the temptation is giving place to the devil; to act counter to it, is to improve it to the honour of God, and the confusion of the adversary. I have found a heaven upon earth in praying for those who, without cause, have offended and injured me. I have met with the sensible approbation of God to my heart; and my prayer has procured an answer to my own bosom, whether it was heard in their behalf or not: and God, that searches the heart, best knows who they are that, in their heart, forgive their brethren their trespasses. God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed, though his prayer was put lip for his friends; when, in very deed, they had behaved themselves more like enemies than friends; for they had not spoken the things that were right, even of God; nor had they convinced, though they had all condemned, Job.

Be cautioned not to disclose all the secrets of thine heart to every one that says a confederacy! neither cast your pearls

before swine; nor frequent the houses of gossiping professors, where the life and power of religion are wanting, where no unity of judgment, nor union of soul are to be found, and where nothing but tattling and tale-bearing abound. Such are Solomon's woodpile, where strife is generally kindled; and, where there is no tech wood, the fire goeth out. You will find that the objects of their hatred and raillery are, in the general, such as God loves; and their hatred is raised by the knowledge, honour, and power, that attend the just; which lays their superficial profession and hypocritical hopes in the dust. A bosom friend in soul union, whom God has made manifest in your conscience, and who is in your heart to live and die with; who is sound in faith, steady in his profession; harmonious in his confession, consistent in his life, dead to the world and alive to God, diligent in the means, experienced in his heart, and savoury in his conversation; is a friend and a brother indeed! and, when thou findest such an one, stick by him: two or three such as he, at a throne of grace, are terrible as an army with banners. I have known many an hypocrite plucked out of his profession, and cast without the pale of the church; all his schemes blasted; his heart discovered; the prejudiced weakling undeceived; the breach that he had made closed; the object of his hatred exalted; and all this in answer to a few petitions put up by two or three in private, while he himself never knew who dealt the blow. It was this sort of work, in the hand of Mordecai and Esther, that hung Haman at his own expense, and brought Herod to his death by worms: and it was a few fellow-servants telling their lord of the conduct of this unmerciful servant, that engaged the Lord to deliver him to the tormentors. This is the way: and blessed is the man who lets all his requests be made known unto God; for, he may say, as Paul did, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me."

Commit thy way to the Lord, and in all thy ways acknowledge him; and he shall establish thy thoughts, and direct thy steps.

Be not like the horse, or the mule, that have no understanding; and he will guide thee with his eye, and steer thee over many a trap and snare which thou wilt be ignorant of till he discover them to thee. Do nothing without thy God; nor scrape acquaintance with every one who makes a profession, or speaks well of the minister that was sent with the first tidings of peace to thy soul. The Devil has introduced many a child of his with this compliment of the season; and it has served as a key to pick the pockets of the simple in the end. If a man live near to God, and is alive to him, and enjoys a good conscience before him, his feelings, under the influence of the Spirit, will be tender; and such are more discerning, more acute, and more susceptible, than those whose joys are withered, and whose love is cold. Nor will God let such souls, who depend hourly upon him, make a covenant, like the princes of Israel, with every pretended pilgrim that comes with his old sacks, clouted shoes, and mouldy bread, under the pretence of being foreign ambassadors, and coming because of the naive of the Lord our God, Josh. ix. 4, 5, 7; when they were only hypocrites, with lies in their mouths, come to save their lives; and took God's name in their lips to cover their guile; and were cursed, and set to the drudgery of hewing of wood and drawing of water for their pains. It is no wonder the princes were deceived, when they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.

If thou livest in communion and fellowship with the Lord, he will both keep thee and guide thee; he will bar thy heart against those whose hearts are barred against him, and draw thine affections forth to those that love him.; and often turn a pretender inside out before thee, and so exhibit him, as thou wilt see through him as through a glass lanthorn. Like Simon Magus, he shall bolt out something that will be sufficient to convince thee he is in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Thus, my friends, have I complied with your request; and that the publication and perusal of this Epistle may be a blessing to you, and to thousands, is the desire and prayer of,

Dear Brethren,
Your willing servant in Christ,

And for his sake,

Winchester Row, Paddington.
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXX

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MRS. J. C.

Dear Friend,

THE Almighty is a sovereign, and will do as he pleases with his own. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion upon whom he will have compassion. His grace is free, and freely bestowed; and all who have been, or ever will be saved, are saved by it: and that not of themselves; salvation is the gift of God. If he sets

his love upon man, opens the door of faith, and calls him by his grace, his gifts and callings are without repentance. He calls, justifies, and glorifies, without respect to any worth or good disposition, as procuring causes, in us; the whole is of sovereign bounty, in Christ Jesus.

"Despise not the day of small things." Saints grow from babes to children, from children to young men, and from young men to fathers. There is a growth in grace as well as in nature. The Lord will, in due time, reveal himself to thee in a clearer manner, resolve thy doubts, enlighten thy mind, and make thy way plain, and thy interest clear. He hath promised that all his children shall be taught of him; and that they shall all know him, from the least even to the greatest of them. Remember the awful state thou roast in; and be thankful to him that hath made the difference; and thou wilt find him to be the best of fathers, and the Saviour the best of friends. To the Almighty the weakest are as precious as the strongest: the Saviour carries such in his bosom; for it is not our heavenly Father's will that one of his little ones should perish. C 1b63 omit every step of thy way to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps;" and let thy requests be made known unto him. Sighing, groaning, hungering and thirsting, desiring and holy longing, are all accounted prayer in the word of God, and will most surely prevail when Christ is the object longed for rest in no attainment, but seek him perpetually; and press forward to attain every mark that has the promise annexed to it, that secures the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; such as, faith that worketh by love, the pardon of sin, the witness of the Spirit, the testimony of a good conscience, love to God, a good hope through grace, and poverty of spirit. These are the marks which secure the prize; especially the last, namely, poverty of spirit: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," that is the mark, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" that is the prize. However, all the above marks lie in the promise,

and the promise contains the prize. It is the fault of too many, to rest in an empty profession, and to be satisfied with hearing the word without hearing to profit. By perpetually hearing of every preacher, and helping to support various places, many expect to be saved, though still settled on their old bottom; and only make use of the means of grace to manufacture dead works; and so clothe nth a covering that is not of God's Spirit, and add sin to sin. flow many will cry out in that great day, when once the master is risen up, and hath shut the door, saying, Lord, Lord! open to us! And he shall answer and say unto them, I know you not whence ye are. Then shall they begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity! Luke xiii. 25-27. Hearing the gospel, and partaking of the Lord's supper, was all they trusted in, We have eaten in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets: and, as they had trusted in hearing, instead of the object preached; and in eating the Lord's supper, instead of spiritually eating his flesh and drinking his blood by faith; and used the means of grace to work out a legal covering, taking his new cloth to patch their old garment; the rent is made worse, Matt. ix. 16. And they are justly styled workers of iniquity, being nothing but wolves in sheep's clothing. But I am persuaded better things of thee; and therefore, as my beloved daughter, I warn thee, that thou mayest not come short of tile rest that remains to the people of God. Seek to tile Lord to remove every burden, and thou wilt find rest to thy soul; and, while one doubt, scruple, or gainsaying voice, remains in the court of conscience, besiege thou the throne of grace; get God, and scripture, and conscience, and the Spirit's testimony, on thy side; and thou wilt then make straight paths for thy feet. Importunity in prayer takes the kingdom by force; and, as it suffereth violence, give thy soul no rest till God sends forth his righteousness as the light, and his salvation as a lamp that burneth, Isa. lxii. 1; and then thou wilt not be shut out of the wedding-chamber for

want of oil; for salvation by grace is a lamp that never goes out.

Wonder not at the adversary's buffeting thee at the Lord's table. If thou wast one of his presumptuous, hypocritical fancily, he would not serve thee so: it is his business to embolden the wolf, and worry the lamb. He is not divided against himself; he has a breastplate for the infidel, Rev. ix. 9; and a dart for the believer, Ephes. vi. 16. But he can do no more than he is suffered to do; and, depend upon it, he will never do thee any intentional good: the latter is neither in his nature nor in his power. The hypocrite, who is under him, can bring no more to the house of God than his lips, his sin, his carcase, and his clothes. He cannot bring his heart, nor his affections This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me: but in vain they worship me, Matt. xv. 8. But the saint can send his heart, spirit, and affections, to the house of God, when the carcase and the clothes are both at home: "For I verily as absent in body," says Paul, "but present in spirit." And again, "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you iii the spirit, joying, and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." The saint hath got the wings of a dove, Psal. xviii. 13; while the pinions of the hypocrite are clogged with an ephah of wickedness, and a talent of lead, Zech. v. 6, 7.

travail on, my daughter, and be in pain to bring forth; endure the struggles of flesh and spirit, like a true Shunamite; and be diligent in the means of grace, and fervent in prayer; and thou wilt not tarry long, like Ephraim, in the place of the breaking forth of children. The last principle shall reign; for that is the first and eldest in existence, though corruption he the first with respect to communication: "The elder shall serve the younger." Grace took its rise in eternity, but sin in time, and grace shall have the pre-eminence. We had life in the second

Adam before we died in the first, and were complete in the Lord from heaven before we existed in tile flesh. These things are riddles to those who are blind, and cannot see afar off; but, as God hath revealed them, they belong to us. A swarm of corruptions, and a legion of devils, round about an awakened sinner, is like the Syrian army that compassed the city of Dothan; a formidable host of cavalry and infantry against a single man: but the prophet said,

Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them," 2 Kings, vi. 15, 16. The jawbone of an ass, in the hand of faith, has left a thousand Philistines dead on the field; and, were there ten times as many devils, two saints, in the hand of a Saviour, would put ten thousand to flight.

The best midwife in spiritual labour, is Love: that casts out all fear, and brings the new-born soul into liberty; and without satisfactory enjoyment of this, rest not contented. The Lord hath promised it, and do thou sue it out. Thy Saviour bids thee ask, that thy joy may be full; and that text tells thee when to leave off, namely, when thy heart can contain no more. Thou art welcome to write to me as often as thou wilt: but, where yon send one epistle to me, send fifty to the Lord; and, if he does not send a verbal answer, he will make me send a written one in his name. Excuse haste: the oil runs, but every page is full. Dear friend, the Lord be with thee, is the prayer and desire of,

Yours to command,
In Christ Jesus,

Winchester Row, Paddington.

W. H.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REVEREND B. N.

Reverend and dear Sir,

I WISH thee much of the presence of God in this thy affliction. You know we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. I trust this sickness is not unto death, in the least sense, but to answer some wise purpose, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby, in some future usefulness, when humbling grace operates, and patience has had her perfect work. The walls of our earthly tabernacle are often wounded, and often healed, but never whole. They are brought down to the grave, and lifted up; their beauty often consumes like a moth fretting a garment, and again their youth is renewed like the eagle's; but they seldom continue long in one state. You know, sir, by woful experience, that the tenant is a leper; you have sensibly felt the plague of leprosy; and, if the tenant be corrupt, the walls must undoubtedly be infected. He that has felt the plague of the heart must be sensible that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. Under a sense of this, many have covered their upper lip, and cried, Unclean! unclean! Lev. xiii. 45; or, "I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." It is the eye of our great High-priest looking upon the sinner that discovers the raging infection, and by the same is the leper healed. Though all are infected, all feel it not. It is when the leprosy becomes a plague that he is brought to the priest, Levit. xiii. 9. And, when he sees himself

all over infected, and no part clean, in his own eyes, then the priest is to pronounce him clean by the command of God. Those who are pure in their own eyes, who have only a white spot or rising in the skin; who have quick raw flesh, never quickened by the Spirit to feel the deadly infection; are to be shut up, and pronounced unclean. He who feels himself wholly infected, and he that is plagued with a burning boil, are both pronounced clean; but he that hath only got a white spot, and white hairs in it, is pronounced unclean to the end of the chapter; for he neither feels the plague of leprosy, nor knows the plague of ignorance. Grey hairs are here and there upon Ephraim, but he knoweth it not; he hath not cried unto me with his heart; he is a cake not turned, Hos. vii. 8, 9, 14. Thus God sees not as man sees: man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart; and blessed is the man whom the Lord hath pronounced clean, and to whom he will not impute sin. Surely it is well with such a tenant, though the house of his tabernacle be far from being sound, and he will be complaining, though in tile and of Canaan, and often coming to the priest, Saying, "It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house," Lev. xiv. 35. And it is a rare thing to find a house without it.

"Then the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest go in to see the plague." We must be self emptied, or emptied of self; and self must be denied, if we would be favoured with the soul-satisfying visits of the priest; for as all fullness is in him, and we receive from his fullness, so there must be an emptiness felt in us before the good treasure be communicated.

"And afterward the priest shall go in and see the house" that is, after it is emptied; not swept and garnished, for that makes the matter worse. It is the trembling sinner the Saviour looks at, and the broken and contrite one that he visits: nor is it the

whole, but those who are sick of the plague, that need the great physician.

"And he shall look on the plague; and behold, if the plague be in the walls of the house, with hollow streaks, greenish, or reddish, which in sight are lower than the wall." If the plague appears with hollow streaks: hath made any deep impressions, so as to reign in the mortal body, and be obeyed in the lust thereof, or gained ground on the afflictions: and, by guilt contracted, left visible marks or traces of its venomous infection, either greenish or reddish; any streaks of hypocrisy, like the green fruitless fig-tree with its verdant leaves and barren boughs: or reddish; any sins of scarlet hue, or crimson dye, Isa. i. 18; which in sight are lower than the wall; have sunk deep, and infected the soul.

"Then the priest shall go out of the house, to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days." You have known, sir, what it has been to have the Lord stand at the door, and knock; but it is far worse, after taking possession of his temple, and filling it with his presence, for the glory of his majesty to go up to the threshold of the house, Ezek. ix. 3; as if going to leave it. But to shut it up is worst of all: "I am shut up, I cannot come forth," saith the Psalmist. And when these seven days will be ended, we cannot tell; but we may pray, as the Psalmist did, "Return, O Lord, how long?" "And let it repent thee concerning thy servants."

And the priest shall come again the seventh day, and shall look." Blessed be God for that, that he is not to go for good and all. And the seventh day is a poor Sabbath indeed, if the High-priest doth not come, for there is none but he to bless the sacrifice; and, if he gives us but a look, it is enough to let us know that he is alive, and that he has not forgotten to be gracious. A look was enough to melt Peter; but if he neither smile, speak, nor look, it is a dreadful seventh day indeed! it

is not the Lord's day with us, much less one of the days of the Son of Man.

"And if the plague be spread in the walls, then the priest shall command that they take away the stones where the plague is of all plagues, a hard, impenitent, unrelenting, undissolved, and rebellious heart, is the worst. When this stubborn thing is demolished, the plague is half healed. But the Lord hath promised to take away the stony heart out of our flesh, and to give us a new heart and a new spirit. But both smiting and burning must be endured before this is done: "Is not my word like as fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. xxiii. 29.

"And they shall cast the stones into an unclean place without the city." Nothing cuts a worse figure in Mount Zion, the city of our solemnities, than impenitent hearts, and spirits that are hard and obstinate.

"And he shall cause the house to be scraped within round about; and they shall pour the dross that they scrape off without the city, in an unclean place.' This scraping is to get dead Works and worldly cares from the heart, earthly vanities from the mind, ignorance from the understanding, and stubbornness from the will, as well as guilt from the conscience. Nor is the sinner a little chafed under this operation: but the intent of it is to take away his sin; that, after he has repented in dust and ashes, the dust may be carried into an unclean place; which is a more fit place for it than the temple in which the Lord dwelleth.

And they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones." Wise master-builders, or even common workmen, such as need not to be ashamed, who rightly divide the word of truth, will be always careful to bring forth the stone of help to the sensibly infected sinner, who begins to feel his

hardness; and point him to the stone with seven eyes, as the only way to get rid of the stony heart.

"And be shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house." This mortar, it seems, was not proof against this walking pestilence; and it is a rare thing to find an house that has nit been, or at times is not, daubed with untempered mortar. Those who seduce God's people from the High-priest, instead of bringing them to him; and cry, Peace, peace! and he hath not sent peace; are said to build up a wall, and to daub it with untempered mortar, Ezek. xiii. 11, 12; which is all to be scraped off, and other mortar is to be taken. Which shews that a religion of human invention is of no use in the plague of leprosy; and that such daubers only heal the wound slightly; and, in such fatal cases, are physicians of no value. Other mortar must be got; the word of truth must be brought; the priest must look on the house; and faith must be mixed with the word, and exercise itself on the efficacy of the priest's propitious look; before it can be properly plastered.

"And if the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken away stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plastered." As it most surely will; for who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no Good thing," saith a wise master-builder, who had been employed in plastering many a house. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain," says one, " and washed mine hands in innocency; for ail day long I have been cleansed, and chastened every morning;" Psalm lxxiii. 13, 14. The plague, therefore, will undoubtedly break out again; and, when this is the case.

"Then the priest shall come and look." Blessed be God for that; the priest is to look again. Those who are perfect to the flesh have nothing for this priest to look at, or to do; for they

are not troubled as other men; neither are they plagued as other men.

"And behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house; it is unclean." According to this, there is no getting perfect in the flesh; it will lust against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: which is a fretting leprosy; for it hath caused fretfulness in the minds of many who live under the propitious eye and tender care of him who is a priest for ever and ever after the order of Melchisedec. On which account we are exhorted in the following manner: "Fret not thyself because of evil doers;" much less to pervert our own way till our heart fretting against the Lord, Prov. xix. 3. According to the following account, the fretting leprosy seems to be somewhat like an incurable disease; and they who never fretted under it are so foolish in their inward thoughts, as to think that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations, Psal. xlix. 11. But the house of the sensible leper is unclean. Whatever such a patient may be as considered in his priest, or whatever he may be in the eye that hath looked upon him, he is, as considered in himself, a leper; his house is infected; and, in the eye of this law, his house is unclean: and, therefore

"He shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place," Lev. xiv. 45. The house shall be broken down: the earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved; the celestial inhabitant must be unclothed; the stones of it, all its impenitency and hardness of heart; and the timber, the ribs of the body, and all the bones, together with all false confidences; and the mortar of the house, must all be pulled from the house, and the whole materials be carried forth without the city. The keepers of this house must tremble, and the strong men must bow themselves, and those that look out of the windows must be

darkened; man must go to his long home, and the mourners must go about the streets, Eccles. 3-5. And the whole house must be carried without the city of Mount Zion, as it is a city for the living, not a receptacle for the dead. And be carried out into an unclean place. The grave is the house appointed for all living, Job xxx. 23. An unclean place it is; a place of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness! Matt. xxiii. 27.

"Moreover, he that goeth into the house, all the while that it is shut up; shall be unclean until even." He that goeth into this house after the priest hath looked upon it, and is gone from it, shall be unclean until even: which skews that there is no confidence to be placed in the house after the priest is gone from it But the eye and the heart of the patient is to be toward the priest; for the patient had no other object to look to, or to trust in; and, for another visit, he was to exercise his faith and patience. His whole trust was to be in the pitiful eye of the priest; and whosoever went into the house was to be unclean: which shews that all trust or confidence in the flesh, when the Lord is withdrawn, contracts filth in the sight of God. Such shall be unclean until even; but, when joy cometh in the morning, it is removed: and, when the night of death cometh, in which no man that fears God can work., it is to go, with the rest of the materials of the house, into an unclean place. And, after the evening of the world, and the midnight cry of it, no more uncleanness shall be found among this sort of lepers, who look, and trust alone for their perfect healing, to this priest, who is our only physician, and the only balm of cure.

"And he that lieth in the house shall wash his clothes, and he that eateth in the house shall wash his clothes." Which shews that, when the priest is gone out, and the house is shut up, there can be no real rest in it; and he that eats in the house, or banquets in it, after the priest is gone, feasts not upon the fatted calf; and therefore must wash his clothes, for he contracts filth by unhallowed food, and by covering himself

with a covering that is not of God's Spirit. He must wash his garments, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb: and, if he lie in the house, he must be purged from his carnal security, for it is sinful ease The priest is gone, and he rests securely in his absence, instead of seeking him in the streets, and in the broad ways.

"And if the priest shall come in, and look upon it, and behold the plague hath not spread in the house, after the house was plastered; then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed." There are some who, after being called by grace, and well plastered with well tempered mortar, keep their eyes continually on the priest; who neither wander from him, nor feed, nor get rest, without him; and who are cut off by death in their first love, and may be pronounced clean every whit; as the High-priest said of his followers, "Now are you clean through the word that I have spoken unto you" But, if they live long upon the earth after their effectual vocation, they will need washing; as the Saviour said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." And he said, "Not my feet only but also my hands and my head." But the Lord replied, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." But, if he gets into carnal ease, he must wash his robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"And he shall take, to cleanse the house, two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet and hyssop." There is no cleansing that can be applied without the hand of faith; nor virtue but in the object of faith, who is perfect God, and perfect man; two natures in one person. Man cannot cleanse for want of efficacy, and deity will not cleanse without shedding of blood. The Lord from heaven, and the son of man, the root of David, and David's offspring, can do it. But none but this Christ can: he must be David's son, and David's Lord, that performs this work. And cedar wood must be taken, which prefigured the Lord's humanity. The temple was built with cedar; and Christ,

the temple in which dwells all the fullness of the God-head bodily, is a top twig from the highest branch of the high cedar which was planted on Mount Zion, as a shelter for all fowls of every wing, Ezek. xvii. 22, 23. And scarlet, or scarlet wool, the wool of the lamb; which prefigured the atonement of Christ: One of the coverings of the tabernacle was badgers' skins dyed red; and, if ever our persons become tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, we must be washed in the blood of the Lamb. He that is our high-priest is red in his apparel, and all his garments like him that treads a wine vat; he is clothed in garments dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. And hyssop, which is a bitter herb; and was to be used in striking the blood of the paschal lamb on the doorposts, and here in cleansing the leper. "Purge me with hyssop," says the Psalmist, "and I shall be clean." Christ is the wall of our salvation; and the fragrance of his offering is like the smell of hyssop that springeth out of the wall, 1 Kings iv. 33; for there is a sweet savour in his name, and in his offering; for he offered himself, an offering of a sweet smelling savour, acceptable to God, for us.

"And he shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel, over running water." It was in the earthen vessel of human nature that Jesus died; and they were all lepers, in the worst. sense, that killed him; for they who were made clean through his word had no active hand in it. And over running water. He offered himself, through the eternal Spirit, to God, which is the water of life; and it is the cleansing efficacy of that atonement, flowing with the operations of the Holy Ghost, that makes the Spirit such a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God: for there can be no gladness without pardon and peace; nor can there be either of these without an application of the blood of the cross.

"And he shall take the cedar wood," a branch from David's top, and no other.

"And hyssop," the herb that was used in striking the doorpost; which is t 180a he sweet odour of his sacrifice.

"And the scarlet wool," the blood and covering of the lamb.

"And the living bird," which represented the deity of Christ; for he that made atonement for us is the first and the last, the Almighty. Man cannot make his own heart clean, much less ours. "And he shall dip them in the blood of the slain bird." Which shews that the efficacy of the Lord's atonement arises from his divinity; on which account the Lord of life and glory is said to be crucified, and the church of God to be purchased with his own blood.

And in the running water." Which skews; that it was through the eternal Spirit that he offered himself; and by the same Spirit are the benefits of his cross applied to our consciences, when we are brought to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

"And sprinkle the house seven times." Seven is a number of perfection. Christ is called a stone with seven eyes, and a lamb with seven horns; and the Holy Ghost, because of his perfect gifts and various operations, is called the seven Spirits of God. There was a sprinkling of us, in the purpose of God, when Christ -undertook for us; and a sanctifying of us, when Christ suffered without the gate; another, in blotting out our sins when he entered the Holy of holies; another, when we came to Mount Zion, and to the blood of sprinkling, and many times since; and again, before we go hence, that we may appear without spot before God; and another, when these our vile bodies shall be changed, and these robes shall be made white in the blood of the lamb; when mortality shall be swallowed tip, and immortality be put on.

"And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird." Without shedding of blood there is no remission; nor can there

be any cleansing without the running water; for he saves us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. "And with the living bird;" for without the living God none can be cleansed; "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you," saith Jehovah. "And with the cedar wood." It must be the Son of David. "And with the hyssop." The sweet smelling savour that the Redeemer made. "And with the scarlet wool" The covering of the lamb, or the robe of the Saviour.

"But he shall let go the living bird out of the city." However precious the death of Jesus may be to a poor cleansed leper, yet he should have higher thoughts of the Redeemer's divinity, than to think it could expire by death. Eternal life absolutely considered, or he that says, "I live for ever," cannot die. And he that said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up," is more than man. It was the temple in which the Godhead dwelt, the weaker part, that went to the wall. "He was crucified through weakness." Eternal, self-existent, and ever-living divinity, absolutely considered, cannot expire. In union with deity, the human nature died; and by the omnipotence of divinity the dead body was raised. "But he shall let go the living bird out of the city "

"Into the open fields, and make an atonement for the house; and it shall be clean." This is the law for all manner of plague of leprosy; and a precious law it is in the gospel sense of it, and in the hand of our great high-priest: and so all will allow who have been forced to cover their lip, and cry, Unclean! unclean! and put their mouth in the dust, if so be there might be hope; and, after all this, have been cleansed, and brought to the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins.

According to this law, sir, the house is to be broken down; this earthly tabernacle is to be dissolved; this earthly house is to be put off. But, blessed be God, it shall rest in hope; it shall be set up again; the ruins will be raised, the breaches made lip;

and this tabernacle of David, that must fall, shall be set up as at the first, and in a better state: and not a cord, or a stake; be ever loosed or moved again: it shall be a tabernacle and a sanctuary for evermore.

Seeing we have such hope, we may use great plainness of speech for in nothing shall we be ashamed, as we stand in Christ Jesus; for we are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power.

I did not think, Sir, to have sent you such a long scroll; but, happening promiscuously to meet with this leper, I could not get rid of him; and, being infected with the same disorder myself, my pen ran nimbly on, respecting the Lord's dealings with him. And, as you are confined to your room, I thought it might serve to employ your mind: for any employment is better than listening to Satan, to carnal reason, or to unbelief; for these enemies never prophesy any good of us, but evil; for which reason I wish they were all confined to their own prison, anti kept both bound and dumb, till thou return in peace. Let patience have her perfect work. When resignation takes place, the field is won. Grace must reign, and faith must prevail. You know the old man is crucified, and the cross will stick close to him; and it is through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body. If there were no cross upon the old man's back, he would, at times, be ready to outrun the new man. Wisdom keeps a whip for that horse, and a bridle for that ass: the one mortifies him; and the other checks him, lest he should be too restive for his rider. Sin shall not reign, nor shall the old man ever conquer the new one.

The Lord be with thee, and strengthen thee upon the bed of languishing, if there, and make all thy bed in thy sickness, agreeably to his promise; and then thou wilt have to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." I shall add no more but my prayers: and remain,

Reverend and Dear Sir,
Your willing Fellow Servant,

In the kingdom and patience of Christ,

Winchester Row, Paddington.
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV. MR. HUNTINGTON, PADDINGTON.

Dear Sir,

I HOPE you will excuse my not thanking you sooner for your, kind letter; but it was not in my power. I now humbly thank you. It came in due time, when I stood much in need of consolation; and I found it powerful. I thank you, sir, in Christ's name, for your prayers, advice, and comfort, and kind offers of assistance, and for permitting me to write to you. I thank the Lord, for the present I am tolerably well situated; though, in the winter, I shall not be able to come to the chapel only on the Lord's day. This is a great trouble to me; but I have left it to God, and begged submission to his will, and am enabled to trust and look to him to fix my bounds and direct my steps;

and, as I have food and raiment, I hope to be therewith content, as God knows I have known the want of both; and the Lord has wonderfully upheld me and brought me through, and I trust he will accomplish the good work that he has begun in my soul, and then all will be well: for I well remember a certain passage coming with power to my mind when I first sought the Lord, and when I was in very great distress, both spiritually and temporally. When every door seemed to be shut, and help, I thought, could arise from no quarter, these words came; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." And, blessed be the name of the Lord, I have found it so: if not entirely fulfilled, it is in part, for I begin to recover in circumstances as I increase in faith. But faith is the Lord's work; for I find I can do nothing of myself: and this I humbly beg of Christ, that he will carry on the work of faith with power. I have great reason to be grateful; for God has done great things for me indeed. I am under great obligations, also, to M. C. in Margaret-street, as she was, under Christ, the means of bringing me to seek the Lord; and, when I was in great distress, relieved me, and proved herself a Christian indeed; for we were but strangers. And much I thank you, Sir, for your kindness; may God repay you with every good thing! How different when I went to the popish priests, who knew me, and my family, from a child; and had received many favours from my father, and had known me in very different circumstances! They told me they could do nothing for me; that they had not seen me at confession, nor at sacraments, for some time; and, therefore, could do nothing for me. This was true; for I had been seeking the Lord, and began to see through all their abominations, even before God had visited me with soul distress: for, since the first time I heard you preach, I never went but once; and then I could not join with them in prayer, nor have ever since thought of any of their prayers, or saints, but with horror; and, I trust in Jesus Christ, I never shall, as I am well convinced of all their hypocrisy, for, when I

was in France, I saw how they blinded the people, and led them into all manner of error, and prohibited their reading the word of God. And when I reflect how the Lord hath brought me out of darkness into the glorious light of the gospel, it fills my heart with gratitude and love that such a work should be done for such a wretch as me! But I find, as you beautifully observe, that the Lord will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; and that, if he did not first choose us, we never should choose him: and yet I am sometimes sadly distressed; but I thank the Lord I am much happier than when I first wrote to you. I have found several of my prayers have been answered, such as the Lord has enabled me to put up, and I hope in time, the Lord will clear all my doubts. And, oh! my God, may I never be one of those that come near to thy kingdom, and after all are shut out! as you observed from your text last Lord's day; "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Pray, dear sir, for me, that I may be clothed with Christ's righteousness, and may not be found wanting.

Pardon me, Sir, if there is any thing in this letter that offends; and likewise for intruding so much on your time, as I know you have much to do. And, if it be God's blessed will, may you be long kept preaching for the edification of souls like mine, and the benefit of all your hearers; which is the sincere wish and prayer of,

Dear Sir,
Your much obliged,

And grateful daughter in Christ,

J.C.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MRS. J. C.

YOUR letter came to hand, which I perused with comfort. A spiritual growth is visible, which confirms me in your eternal election, and that of God.

As you have unexpectedly sent me two letters; the first of which I answered, and the contents of which satisfy me that the work is of God, I shall now relate, for your comfort, something that passed between the Lord and my spirit concerning you.

The whole day, on the evening of which you first heard the word from my mouth, was a very cloudy and dark day with me. The bible was a sealed book, and no passage presented itself to my mind for a text: I read, meditated, and supplicated; but all, to appearance, in vain. I was three hours in the chapel study before the time of worship came on; but still my mind was bedouded, and nothing offered itself for my subject. The more I read and prayed, the more was my mind bewildered, until within a few minutes of the time of preaching: and no small degree of peevishness, fretfulness, and distress, invaded my mind: till, all on a sudden, these words darted through the cloud, and a glorious light shone on them: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house: so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him," Psal. xlv. 10, 11. When I was informed

that a female Catholic was smitten by the discourse, I could but admire the suitableness of the text; a text in which your sex, your family, your own people in communion, your father's house, and false worship, were all pointed out. Your attention was called for, your beauty desired, and your worship claimed, by the Lord, the only Christ of God and Saviour of men, and who hath condescended since to manifest himself to be thy Lord in everlasting covenant. I was comfortably persuaded, as soon as I heard that a Catholic was there, by the distress that I felt and by the manner in which my text came, and the method of handling it, that it was sent of God for your salvation. Nevertheless, when Mrs. C. told me that you desired to speak with me, I was afraid to comply with your request, knowing the mystery of iniquity that the papists are in, the doctrines of devils which they hold, and the depths of Satan that they speak, Rev. ii. 24. To which strong delusions God has, in just judgment, given them up, that they might believe a lie, and be damned, Thess. ii. 12; for giving up and ridiculing the scriptures; and suffering their souls, senses, and pockets, to be plundered by such crafty seducers, who lie in wait to deceive; whose portrait is so exactly drawn; whose coming is set forth by the coming of Satan in Paradise; whose doctrines are so clearly foretold; whose deceivableness of unrighteousness is so clearly pointed out; the world wondering after the beast is so fully described; and the cursed end, both of the whore and her family, laid down, as it is written; "I will cast her into a bed, and all that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds; and I will kill her children with death," Rev. ii. 22, 23. And all this in that blessed, though much despised book, that he who runs may read it.

Knowing these things, and that natural conscience, when awakened, natural convictions, when stirred up, and natural passions, when moved, go a great way in appearance, and much resemble convictions given by the Spirit of God; I was

therefore determined to keep you at a distance, that law and conscience, truth and error, grace and corruption, if it was grace, might have a fair combat: and that the matter might be settled between the Saviour and yourself; being fully persuaded that the determination would be either to make you a Christian indeed, or a more desperate Catholic.

When you sent the second time to desire an interview, which I refused, I entreated the Saviour to keep you from me, though I felt for you in your distress, lest I should be deceived by natural convictions, or Satanic frenzy, or the flowings of natural passions; and so heal the wound slightly, crying, Peace! peace! when the Lord had not spoken peace; which is often done by physicians of no value; and which wound will always break out again, unless the efficacious balm of atonement reach the bottom. The last time that I entreated the Saviour for this thing, namely, that he would keep you from me, and heal you, and bring you out of your trouble himself, and make you a convert of his own; and pleaded his prerogative alone to search the heart, and my wants of discernment and penetration to look through a disciple of antichrist; while I was thus pleading, the Lord spoke these words to me, "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them," Jer. xv. 19. From that hour I was persuaded that I was to look upon you, and receive you, as a child of his; nor have I doubted of your salvation since. But it is the witness of the Spirit in your own conscience, and not my testimony, that must establish your heart: and, blessed be God, I perceive with comfort a growth in you; and grow you will, for God hath given you an obedient ear, and a teachable spirit, which will turn to your own account. The veil of ignorance will gradually open as the sun of righteousness arises and shines, and no small degree of divine comfort will attend the healing beams; which will leave a bright path from the illuminated understanding to the throne of God, who gives us the light of

the knowledge of the glory of himself in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

The Lord is not confined to places of worship; he will be a little sanctuary in all places where thou shalt seek him; and will be found of them that seek him with all their heart. Nor will he be wanting in the displays of providence: he will point out many ways of escape; open many doors; raise up many friends in times of need; give thee many love-tokens; and make thee know, believe, and feel, that he careth for thee, which will so powerfully establish thy faith, draw forth thy love, and engage thy attention and admiration, that thou wilt feel his gracious presence on every side, and not be able, at times, to muster up one single doubt of thy part and lot in his everlasting salvation.

When all these signs come to pass, when these blessed jubilee days visit thee, thou wilt be indulged with no small degree of nearness, access, boldness, and holy familiarity, at a throne of grace. Then I counsel thee to minute down the sweet visits, happy deliverances, comfortable manifestations, choice love-tokens, and precious and powerful promises; for these may be wanted in time to come; as saith the wise man, "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many, Eccles. xi. 8. 'These minutes which I counsel thee to make may serve as so many land-marks in some future cloudy and dark day; and as reviving cordials in days of adversity yet to come: for, "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the son of Man, and ye shall not see it," Luke xvii. 22. These blessed seasons will undoubtedly come to pass: and in those days thou shalt surely know the Lord; Yea, saith the Lord, "They shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold it is I!" Isa. iii. 6. When these things come to pass, read this letter, and remember my counsel: and let not thy joys engage thy attention so, as to forget thy

minuting them down; for thou wilt afterwards be ready to conclude, under some future heavy temptation, that the whole impression is defaced, and both mind and memory robbed of all.

And farther be admonished, my daughter. Scrape no acquaintance with professors without letting me know who they are. Choose your company, and call upon such as I will some day recommend, who will be fellow-helpers of thy faith, and furtherers of thy joy. You know they are not all maidens that wear white aprons; nor are all chaste virgins espoused to Christ who carry lamps. Many an Israelite has been found to be a leper, and many a splendid professor in our days has got the plague in his head. At present, take good heed to thyself, and watch the handy-work of the Saviour, which lies between him and your conscience; and in future, when established, thou wilt be able to judge for thyself.

I should be glad to know how the work has been carried on in thee from the beginning. I long for a narrative of it; which you might begin, and send me, a little at a time, in a letter, as opportunity offers; and you will greatly oblige,

Dear Daughter,
Your affectionate Friend and Father,

In the faith of the gospel,

Winchester Row, Paddington.
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXIV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV. MR. HUNTINGTON.

I HAVE the happiness of acquainting you, that by your instrumentality God hath begotten me again to a lively hope: which, I trust, will lead me to the enjoyment of that inheritance which will never fade away. A father, and a son of consolation, thou hast been to me; for God hath administered divine comfort to my soul by your writings, which, under God, have brought me out of the deepest distress: therefore, with propriety, I may claim the above relation to you.

I have long desired to write to you, but could not get an opportunity: but being now at leisure, and having it in my power to send you a brace of the largest sort of geese that fly in our country, as a present, I hope to receive, when you are at leisure, a line or two from you, which will be esteemed an excellent present to me.

I have for some time been a member of a church at Cranbrook, the place of your nativity: but, alas! I have been zealously affected, but not well; nor did I ever know the truth as it is in Jesus till now. God hath wonderfully blessed the reading of your books to my soul; and hath applied to my heart, by his Spirit, the glorious mysteries that he hath committed to you; for which I shall have cause to praise him so long as I have any being. He hath given me clearly to see, and feel too, the war that is carried on between the flesh and the spirit: for, when I would do good, evil is present with me;

but, blessed be God, grace is to reign, through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ.

But, O sir; how was I wounded, when a minister of this country, and one that would fain be called orthodox, told me that he had more respect for Mr. Wesley than he had for Mr. Huntington! This came close to me, seeing God had given such a blessed testimony to your writings, and had attended the reading of them with such power to my soul. I could not help telling him that it was natural for people to love their own relations; and I know there is a spiritual love that runs through the hearts of all God's spiritual family. Wesley's doctrine and yours are as much opposite as east and west: I have felt the rottenness of the former, and the stability of the latter.

On reading your "Naked Bow of God," my soul within me was fired with love to Jesus, to see such a wonderful display of divine judgments; which is a manifest proof of his abounding love to the faithful preachers of his word. Blessed be his name for the riches of his grace in choosing, calling, ordaining, and sending out, such a servant; by whom he has proclaimed liberty to many captives, bound up many broken bracts, and opened the prison doors to numbers bound with the cords of their sins. In all your works I find such a heavenly train of divine and experimental knowledge, and the Spirit of God so powerfully applies the same to my heart, that my very soul rejoices in God my Redeemer.

The "Innocent Game for Babes in Grace" hath been a sweet cordial to me: therein I clearly saw the second birth, which so few professors know any thing savingly of. But, before I conclude, I must tell you how your "Bond Child brought to the Test," sat with me, when I perceived that you had brought a minister into the mess to whom I was warmly attached. I was greatly distressed; nor did my distress leave me day or night till God had weaned my heart from him that had zealously

affected me; and then, blessed be God, I found the reproofs of a friend to be better than the kisses of an enemy: and I bless the Almighty for your honest dealing; and return you thanks, sir, for your faithfulness.

I find, indeed, the good Spirit of God, like living water, springing up within me into everlasting life. My pen cannot express, neither will my paper hold, nor is it in my power to tell you, the Love that I feel in my soul to you and your God; for you have been the instrument, in the hand of the Almighty, of converting m from the error of my way.

Pardon this long scrawl. The farmer, W. G. and a few more of our little company, join in christian love to you. I shall be thankful to God for an answer, if it be but short: and conclude with a quotation from your works, "When it is well with thee, remember me." I hope the present will come safe.

R. M.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO R. M.

I RECEIVED my son's rapturous letter. It seems to be dated from the mount of transfiguration; and, I suppose, he says in his heart, "It is good to be here." So it is, my son: and I would have thee continue there as long as thou canst make try standing good; and say, in these thy days of prosperity, "I shall never be moved; thou, Lord, of try goodness, hast made my hill so strong."

The ancient saying is applicable to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen," Gen. xxii. 14. Call it, therefore, Jehovah-Jireh; for thou wilt now see, and taste too, the sweet provision that God has made for his own elect. Thou mayest look down, and take a survey of heathen Kings, Princes, Dukes, Earls, and all other poor crawling worms, that are beneath tree; while every thing but Christ seems to be less than nothing, and lighter than vanity. The prophet Isaiah got so high, that he not only saw the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off, but he says the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers; the earth itself as the drop of a bucket, or as the small dust of a balance. This is heavenly climbing, indeed! But take care, my son, how you come down: for Moses broke both the tables at the foot of the mount; and Peter, James, and John, after they descended, were foiled with a devil that could not be moved but by prayer and fasting.

These banquets are sweet foretastes, earnest, and pledge, of the glory that shall be revealed in us; the droppings of the san 1597 ctuary, that lead us to the enjoyment of the true tabernacle; the streams, which lead to the river of pleasure, and the fountain of life. But I must inform thee, that from the mount some part of thy way will be rough and crooked, until thou come into the valley of Shaveh, which is the King's dale; when and where bread and wine will be much needed, Gen. xiv. 17, 18.

The blessed Redeemer hath promised to make his servants fishers of men, and, bless him! he fulfils his promise; and I thank him for every fish that is taken, whether by me or by others; and hope to continue baiting my hooks, and casting my nets, and leaving the event to him who hath promised success, as long as I live. Some nibble for a while, till they feel the hook, and then they are off; others are hooked, and held fast. Some play with the line; but you have run away with the bait. Sometimes the net catches two or three at a time, fit for market; and sometimes I catch a shark, a porpus, or a mermaid; which are ready to devour the poor fisherman himself; until they can break through the net, and make off. But, when the Lord of the fishery stands on the earth and sea, and swears that suffering times shall be no longer, Rev. x. 5, 6, the net which was cast into the sea, and which gathered of every kind, shall be full; the angels will draw it to the shore, and sit down, and gather the good into vessels, but hast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth, Matt. xiii. 47-50. From which dreadful end the Lord hath, in mercy, delivered us.

I see no reason why the devil should be the only claimer of the name Legion, for we are many, as well as he: "And they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." This text has been a cordial to me in the midst of the reproach and opposition that I have met with in the course of my ministry. The approbation of God, the witness of his Spirit, and the impression of his seal, is all that can be expected from heaven in the behalf of an ambassador sent by him. The approbation and testimony of hypocrites and worldlings is both a curse and a scandal to a man of God: "Wo unto you, when all men speak well of you."

I am not allowed to approach many pulpits; therefore I am determined to publish from the press what God is pleased to impress on my soul, that I may cast my hook where I am not allowed to speak for myself; and it hath so well succeeded hitherto, that I do not know which hath been the most useful, the words of my mouth, or the scribble of my pen. However, I am for fish, or nothing; for a mere outward reformation brings nothing home: a man must be converted, otherwise he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; therefore I hope to endure what falls to my lot for the elect's sake, not for the world, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, 2 Tim. ii. 10.

Take no heed to all the words that are spoken, my son; but fear thou God, and his king; and meddle not with them that are given to change. When men become surfeited with Christ and his gospel, it is manifest that they never attained to any thing of him but his name; and, when they depart from their profession of that, the world and sin soon find them out, and hold them fast and, if grace prevent not, they will eventually drown them in destruction and perdition. Christ Jesus and good works always go together. It is the branch that abides in the vine which bringeth forth much fruit; and shall be purged, that it may bring forth more. The promise and righteousness of God stand engaged to make the elect fruitful: " They shall bring forth fruit in old age, to shew that the Lord is righteous." In Christ is our fruit found; and they that will have none of him shall have barrenness enough.

Those who take forth the vile from the precious are to be as God's mouth. The gospel is to be preached in all the world, for a witness against some, and to convey a witness to others: it is a savour of death unto death, and of life unto life. While souls are converted, and hypocrites discovered, the work of God goes on; and such ministers are a sweet savour unto God, in them that perish, and in them that are saved.

I wish none to love me but those who love Christ; nor do I wish any minister or ministers to speak well of me, but those that speak as the oracles of God. As Christ was, so are we in this world: if they love him, they will not hate us; and if they keep his sayings, they will not reject ours. If they have got the same experience with us, they must defend our testimony, or speak against their own. Those who are made free by the truth will be valiant for it; and those who are blessed with the faith of God's elect will earnestly contend for it, as it was delivered unto the saints.

Thy safest place is at the Saviour's feet; thy happiness and fruitfulness depend on a close union with him, and walking in him. That thou mayest long enjoy the light of his countenance; walk in the faith and love of him; watch his hand, and cleave to his heart is the prayer and desire of,

Dear Son,
Your joyful Father,

And willing Servant,

In Christ Jesus,

Paddington, Jan. 3, 1790. W. H.
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXVI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV. MR. HUNTINGTON.

Rev. Father in Christ Jesus.

I PRAY you to excuse my not answering your letter immediately, as I am not mistress of my time. The Lord knows how happy I should be in such employment! But it is otherwise appointed, and I am content. Dear Sir, I never can sufficiently thank you for your last fatherly letter; such comfort I never before experienced. Yours brought me joyful tidings, that you do not doubt of my eternal election; and that the Lord told you to look on me as one of his children, and to receive me. I cannot tell you, sir, the half of what I felt on the occasion; my joy seemed quite full for a little while. May the Lord increase my faith, make me grow daily in his grace, and never more suffer me to neglect the means he hath appointed to save such a sinner as I am! I sometimes enjoy very happy moments, but they are of short duration. Satan buffets me much at times: but I am enabled to see that he has not the power over me which he once had; for I can no longer be happy in the company I used to keep, nor with the vain amusements in which I once delighted. I am never so happy as when I am left alone to reflect on what great things the Lord hath done for me: and yet, dear sir, to you I must own with conscience that I am but a babe in faith, and very weak. Not that I think the Lord is not able to pardon me; God forbid I should! but I have found myself out, that I have been a desperate sinner and, though I do not now practise what I used to do, yet I am never satisfied with myself; nor am I as yet assured of my entire part and lot in Christ. The devil is continually coming with "If you could do this, or that;" and I know I can do nothing. And at other times, again, I am favoured with many happy moments, many comfortable assurances; and yet I am not thoroughly happy, for there is a

powerful application of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ still wanting.

You tell me, sir, it is the witness of the Spirit in my own conscience that must establish my heart. 'Then, dear sir, I will tell you truly, that the Spirit does not bear witness to me that I am sure of heaven; for I am sometimes almost without hope, and ready to give all up; and can neither pray nor think of any thing good: and yet, in the midst of aft these doubts, fears, and contradictions, I am often told, as if whispered in my ear, that I shall be happy in time. Many texts have come with power to me, when in great distress; such as these, "I will never leave thee" nor forsake thee Trust in the Lord, and he will bring it to pass." These, and many more, have come with power; and yet unbelief hath stept in, and chased all these comforts from me.

You see, dear Sir, I am not established; but I will wait on Lord, and beg of him to enable me to keep what comforts I have; and to help me to press forward, as I have been enabled to see that there is salvation in no other name but in that of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as the Lord hath made me sensible that I am in the right road with respect to the means of his own appointment, and hath brought me out of darkness, and from all manner of popish abominations, it plainly appears that he careth for me therefore, I patiently hope, in God's good time, to be set at liberty, and that the Lord will reveal himself to me; and then I shall be happy, for, until that blessed moment comes. I shall be all fears. I repeat, that I do not doubt but the Lord is able and willing, but still I am all fears. The Lord enables me to have a good hope through grace; I am now going to the chapel: and shall, no doubt, find comfort there.

Dear Sir, Friday morning.

I HAVE not been able to conclude this letter: and, if I had more time, I would not send it, to trouble you with my doubts

and fears; for if you, sir, can be for a month without comfort, and shut up, as you was pleased to tell us on Sunday evening, how much more may I expect it! Never more, I trust, shall I fear, nor murmur, while I have such a friend and advocate with God as our dear Redeemer. I cannot sufficiently thank you for all your goodness in praying for me, for the comfort I have received from your letters, and likewise your fatherly care for future conduct in life. I shall pray the Lord to enable me to observe all your directions, and will scrape no acquaintance with any one without informing you. I have very little time for company; Providence hath placed me at the head of many worldly people, where I am often obliged to work sixteen hours out of the twenty-four. I mention this, Sir, lest you should think me neglectful in answering yours. I am very ignorant, but will write, as the Lord shall enable me: however, it will not be in my power till Sunday.

I hope, dear sir, you will not be offended with me for deferring to send this before; but I did not mean to send the beginning of this letter after I came home on Sunday evening from the chapel, for God, by your mouth, had eased my mind: for if you, and such a great man as the apostle Paul, could be deprived of comfort, and straitened in spirit, well may I endeavour, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.

Dear Sir. I long much for the jubilee days you mention; those love-tokens, and secret visits, from the Lord Jesus Christ. But I feel I am not worthy; never did I seem so little in my own eyes as now. I have been very proud; and the Lord hath done well in humbling me, for I have been a desperate sinner, but I never found it out till now. The Lord hath done great things for me; and I will, with his assistance, let you know all. But, dear sir, be not offended at me, that I do it not immediately, as it is not in my power; but on Sunday, between the hours of chapel, I will, if the Lord permits me, begin.

I once more thank you, sir, for your goodness; and humbly beg the continuance of your fatherly prayers, advice, direction, and attention: all which shall, in God's name, be punctually obeyed by

Your much obliged,
And grateful Servant and Daughter,

In Christ Jesus,

J. C.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXVII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MRS. J. C.

Dear Daughter in the Faith,

I WAS joyful in heart, and grateful to God, at the reception of yours; joyful to find you so comfortable; thankful to God for a blessing to my last, and making me a fellow-helper of your joy. The excellency and power of religion is all of him; therefore 't'our faith stands not in my wisdom, but in the power of God.

What I said touching your election I shall not retract; my conscience bore me witness, and my confidence was founded on the testimony of scripture: "Knowing," says Paul, "brethren beloved, your election of God" Paul knew they were elected, because they were beloved of God; which love in God is the self-moving cause of election, and is an everlasting love. And Paul knew God's love to them by their love and attachment to him; "We love him because he first loved us." God's love to us is from eternity, ours begins in time; and it is his love shed abroad in the heart that draws forth ours to him.

Paul knew their election, because his gospel came not unto them in word only, but also in power: and if so, the kingdom of God was not only come nigh unto them, but was set up in them by the power that was manifested; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power: and grace must reign through righteousness unto eternal life: therefore, where this power is experienced the kingdom of God is erected; and it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom; it is one of his gifts that is without repentance, 1913 and therefore shall never be taken from us, but must be enjoyed for ever; as it is written, "And in those day shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed and the kingdom shall not be left to other people," Dan. ii. 44, "But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever," Dan. vii. 18. These things Paul perceived in those Thessalonian converts; and that his gospel was accompanied with the Holy Ghost, who enlightened them to see sin, quickened them to feel it, convinced them of the evil of it, and gave them cutting convictions of it, and, having convinced them of sin, of the need of righteousness, and of the certainty of a judgment to come, he then wrought faith in their hearts, applied the promises with power, testified of Christ to them, and assured their hearts of free salvation in him; which was soon discovered to Paul by the work of faith, labour of love, and

patience of hope. The first work of faith is to lay hold of Christ, and bring him into the heart, that he may dwell there. The chief labour of love is to keep all beloved sins, and all the objects of inordinate affections, with every rival of Christ, out, that he may have the pre-eminence in us. "He that loveth father, mother, wife, or children, or even his own life, better than me, he is not worthy of me." The patience of hope consists in exercising patience toward the object we hope in; in bearing whatsoever cross or trial may lie in our way to the kingdom; and to persevere in the way of his appointment, in expectation of the promised glory hoped for. These things the apostle took notice of in the Thessalonians; how they became followers of him, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, as you did; and how they turned to God from idols, as you have done from the host, images, angels, saints departed, dead men's bones, and all uncleanness, to serve the living God instead of these vanities; and to wait for his Son from heaven, with the glory that is to be revealed, instead of purgatory, or hell, from which there is no redemption; as it is written, "They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth."

Be not discouraged by temptations, nor dismayed at thy instability. After thou hast suffered a while, the Lord will strengthen, stablish, settle you, 1 Pet. v. 10. Temptations are the common lot of all; the same are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. When the strong man armed keeps the palace, his goods are in peace; but, when a stronger than he dispossess him, he is enraged; and, having lost the throne of the affections, the fort royal of the heart, and the wretched loyalty of the will, he then begins to besiege the soul with his fiery darts, or uses his infernal policy, in spreading nets or traps in our way in order to regain his lost dominions either by storm or by stratagem. And, although he knows that he can never re-enthone himself in the heart where Christ is formed the hope of glory, nor regain the loyalty

of the subdued will, nor get any service from the renewed mind; yet, being desperately enraged, and himself being in a desperate case, which can never be remedied, nor hardly worse, he pursues with unremitted violence, like an engine of mischief bent to its work. He desired to have Peter, that he might sift him as wheat, though he knew he could not destroy him; and, perhaps, it may be an easement to his infernal mind to spend his boiling venom on the objects of mercy, who, he knows, can be no longer faithful to the unrighteous mammon. It may in some measure gratify him to annoy our peace and happiness; render us ungrateful to God, and unfruitful to him; as well as hinder us from being instrumental of further injury to his accursed interest, which is sometimes done by speaking of what God has done for our souls; which sometimes, under God, disturbs his carnally-secure possessions, and disquiets his reign in the hearts of the children of disobedience. And furthermore, though the Saviour will ever have the loyalty of the submissive will, the service of the renewed mind, and the affections of a circumcised heart; yet Satan hath still got a law in the members, which will oppose that of the mind; and the corrupt part will still adhere to the law of sin. This wretched leaven, by the assistance of a lie, he conveyed to the hearts of our first parents; which entitles him to the twofold character given him by the Saviour, namely, the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning. This bane is derived by natural generation to us all; the best of saints have groaned under it, nor is there one individual on earth free from it. Death entered into the world by sin; through grace, sin shall go out by death: and, when the mortal bodies of the saints are quickened, raised, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ, then shall mortality be swallowed up of life, and death be swallowed up in victory. "O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but, thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, be thou steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the

Lord; forasmuch as your labour hath not hitherto been, and I trust, never will be, in vain in the Lord.

I am glad to find you obedient in all things. An account of God's dealings with thee will be very acceptable. Make no apology for troubling me; it is a pleasure when God makes it useful. Nothing discourages me, or troubles me, but labour in vain. I am bound, in duty to God, to watch over and serve those whom he is pleased to bring in the bond of the covenant; and hope he will make me a pastor after his own heart to feed you with knowledge and understanding, and to present you as a spiritual virgin to tile bridegroom of the church. That you may walk worthy of God unto all well-pleasing, and be blessed with tile light of his countenance, and the testimony of his Spirit, is the desire and prayer of,

Dear Daughter,
Your affectionate Father in the faith:

And

Willing servant in Christ Jesus,

W.H.

No. 29, Winchester Row, Paddington,
Feb, 16, 1790.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXVIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV. MR. HUNTINGTON.

Dear Father in Christ Jesus,

WHEN I was first taught to call upon the Lord, I was in great distress, had been three years out of any settled employment; always spending money, and getting none, or very little; till at last the Lord brought me to know what it was to want the common necessaries of life. There had several places offered, but there was always something prevented. In this distressed situation I continued for several months. I used to go to chapel regularly; but, as I did not go to confession or the sacrament, I was not much attended to by the priests; as they never made any inquiry but for those who are rich, and I being poor, this altered the case. But, to speak the truth; my heart was not in their devotion; why, I could not tell. As I was in distress, I went to see if these gentlemen would relieve me, as some of them had known me from a child; but their hearts were as hard as a stone; not one grain of charity or love have they to their fellow creatures; they are all for self. After I had met with a refusal from one of these gentlemen, he told me to call at their quarterly meeting, (but this I never did; for, though I was in great distress, I could not bear to be exposed like a beggar; this, I know, was pride, and I had likewise time to starve before this quarterly meeting came on) at which time they would do something for me, but that I must first come to confession. This I promised to do, but never went; nor did I receive the favour promised.

I called on Mrs. C. who was but a stranger to me: she gave me some employment, and was very kind to me. We were once speaking of devotion, and she mentioned you, sir. I had heard of you several times before, but never seemed to think any thing about hearing you. I told her I should be glad to hear you, as I was very uneasy both with respect to spiritual and temporal matters. Mrs. C. did not at this time know how desperate my situation was: she knew I was not blessed with a good partner in life, and that was all. But, as domestic affairs are not properly any part of my narrative, I shall forbear running into them.

I went, sir, with Mrs. C. to hear you, and was very much pleased with your discourse; and that night I begged of the Lord to instruct me, but I felt no particular sensation. I continued to go to the Catholic chapel in the week days, and to yours on Sundays: but I found I could not join with them in prayer, for you, sir, without knowing me, generally threw out some hints in the sermon I used to hear against popery, so that I could not bow down with reverence to the altar, nor sprinkle myself with holy water; the ceremonies seemed all to be very different to what they used to be, but I still continued to come to 'your chapel, and sat in the free seats.

In this manner, I believe, I continued for two or three months. Mr. C. lent me a bible. This blessed book I had not: for the priests take great care to keep their deluded flock in utter darkness; they will neither go to heaven themselves, nor suffer others to get m; but I find, by that blessed book, they shall have their reward. I used to read this book by stealth, otherwise I should hare been laughed at: and, whenever I opened it, I either found something to comfort or condemn me, there was always something for me.

Dear sir, I will tell you all. I have cried till my heart has been like to burst, and could hardly tell whether it was for my sins or

for the distress I was in. Mrs. C. lent me your "Bank of Faith:" this added much to my comfort; for, though I wept over it by the hour, yet I felt myself happier than I had ever been in the popish chapel.

In this manner I went on, till, one evening, I seemed to wish greatly to hear you. I had then purchased a ticket, and sat where I now do. That night it rained very hard, but I was nevertheless' determined to go; and this was the very night to which you, sir, allude in your last. The text was "Hearken, O daughter! and consider; incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him," Psalm xlv. 10, 11. You, sir, had no sooner given out the text, than something told me it was all for me. I thought you singled me out. Every word came with power. It was then the Lord told me he would be my Lord, if I forsook all; and that moment I felt I could. My heart was ready to break. I wanted no book to teach me to pray, nor the intercession of any saint: I could ask the Lord for all I wanted; and, during the whole sermon, was enabled to go on with you, and in prayer also. Though the discourse was long, it seemed to be but a moment; and, when I went out of the chapel, I felt as if I had left all my comfort behind me. You see, sir, how soon the devil stripped me!

In my way home, I called on Mrs. C. as she had been prevented from coming. I told her of the comfort I had received, and felt that I was certainly wrong in continuing in the catholic church; for I now plainly saw that the Lord had nothing to do with their ceremonies; and yet I had not courage enough totally to condemn them, having been always brought up in that persuasion, though baptized by a protestant minister. I could not bear the thought of my father, and all my relations, being lost. I did not know what to make of election; for, in the catholic persuasion, they are all taught to believe a purgatory: and this I once believed firmly; for, as I never was

taught or enabled to look farther than the law, and as I saw plainly it was not in my power to fulfil that law, it was a comfortable thought that, after we had paid the uttermost farthing, we should be released. But I used to pray that I might have my purgatory here on earth. I was but a bad catholic, for I always excluded every saint in the conclusion of my prayer; and, after having run through the catalogue of them, I always concluded with "To thee only, O Lord, I look, and call, and depend, for assistance; in thee only I trust!"

Before I was sixteen years of age, I wished to be a protestant; and I remember my father was in great trouble about it; but I was not altogether pleased with them neither. I once heard a Mr. De Coetlogon at the Lock Chapel, who pleased me very much; this was ten years ago, but I still continued a Roman catholic, and in going to France was confirmed one; though even there, my relations used to call me a heretic, because I did not adhere so closely as they wished to the ceremonies of the church. But the Lord was pleased to convince me by his word, that elected I must be if I ever got to heaven; and, knowing what a sinner I was, this put me quite at a stand what to do. I thought, if God should be pleased to call me by death, that I was neither catholic nor dissenter, and seemed to have my religion to choose. Mrs. C. comforted me as well as she could, but I could not take comfort. Just in the midst of all this, a governess's place offered, but I found myself incapable of it. I had my religion to choose; my circumstances were very much deranged, and my mind was torn a thousand ways how to procure the common necessaries of life: which was a cross I had not then learned to bear; but I have found since, that the Lord did well in humbling my pride, and taking away my finery; and I now trust he will enable me to learn how to abound, and how to suffer need; and, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I would sometimes throw myself on my knees, and beg the Lord to direct me what to do; for the devil was always buffeting me, and telling me that my father and all my friends

were catholics; and that, if I did my duty, that was all that would be required of me. In this manner I continued between doubts and fears; but I never went but once to the catholic chapel after that sermon, which I am now enabled to see the Lord was pleased to call me under by your mouth. I could not join with them in prayer, nor use their holy water, as they call it; for I saw plainly, if I had nothing but holy water to wash away my sins, in sin I must remain to all eternity. But, praised be the Lord! I am now, at times, enabled to trust, in the blood of a Redeemer, and to call the Lord my God. But, dear sir, it is but for a moment, and then all is lost again; but yet I am better and better.

The case of poor Job, in your discourse on Sunday last, afforded me great comfort. I must not forget telling you, sir, with what comfort I was once favoured in reflecting on that tried man; and do not be offended if I tell you my dreams, as I look upon you, sir, to be an interpreter, one among a thousand, Job xxxiii. 23. You will be able to tell me, if I had not ground for hope from them.

One night, when I was very miserable both in body and mind, I dreamed that I was very thirsty, and could not get water from any place. I thought I did not know what to do, for I was ready to famish. I looked up to heaven, and saw, as it were, waterspouts, as clear as crystal, coming down from heaven; not like rain, but like spouts of water. I was much distressed what to put under, in order to catch the water; but I looked to the ground, and there I saw several red pitchers, which I thought I filled, and lifted them up at arm's length in order to fill them. This is all that I remember, for I then awoke with a violent pain in my arm.

I derived great comfort from this dream: I thought I could see that the Lord would have mercy on me, and help me, which I have lately found to be true; for, when I could get help from no

quarter, the Lord then appeared, who is a present help in time of trouble, and I was enabled to see it. All this helped me on. Mrs. C. wished me to let you know, sir, the distress that I was in; but I begged her not to do it, lest you might think that, in order to get relief, I would change my religion.

I hope, dear sir, you will excuse my breaking off so abruptly, but I have something that I am obliged to attend to. I will, if the Lord permits, send you more of this narrative this week: but do not, dear sir, be offended, if it should not be in my power, and believe me to be, with sincerity,

Your ever obliged,
And grateful servant and Daughter,

J.C.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XXXIX

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MRS. J. C.

Dear Daughter in the Faith,

"THE Lord recompense thy work of faith; I and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou

art come to trust!" How clear, at times, doth the blessed word of God shine! and how punctually is every part thereof fulfilled! heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the scriptures of truth shall ever pass away. "All that the Father hath given me," saith the Saviour, "shall come to me; and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Well may the prophet say, he shall gather his sheep out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy, and in the dark days, Ezek. xxxiv. 12. You are a living witness of this truth, for the kingdom of the beast is full of darkness, Rev. xvi. 10; and popery is called the mystery of iniquity, 2 Thess. ii. 7; and their doctrines the depths of Satan, Rev. ii. 24. Yet there have been, still are, and will be, some of God's elect found, even in the bosom of that mother of harlots, Rev. xvii. 5; which the Lord hath, still does, and will call out, before that beast be slain, his mystical body destroyed, and given to the burning flame, Dan. vii. 11. As it is written, "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." Thus, as God called Lot out of Sodom befo 17c5 re they suffered the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7; so will he call his elect out of that spiritual Sodom, and Egypt, Rev. xi. 8; before she be utterly burnt with fire, Rev. xviii. 8.

I perceive in your narrative what I have observed in many, lamely, that although the elect are by nature the children of wrath, even as others; and are without God, and having no hope to the world, yet they are preserved in Christ Jesus, and called. And there it a particular providence that hovers about them all the days of their vanity, even from their infancy; as may be seer, in the singular preservation of Moses, and of Samuel; of Jacob also, from his struggling in the womb to his visions at Bethel; and in Joseph, from his childhood to his death. God preserved David wherever he went; and taught

Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that he healed them, Hos. xi. 3. Many false Messiahs and deceivers, called thieves and robbers, came into the world before Christ, and drew away multitudes; but the sheep, the chosen sheep, did not hear them, John x. 8. God will have his own elect, and in God's time they shall all make their calling and election sure. There is a time for every purpose; a day of salvation, and a set time to favour Zion: and in that acceptable time God hears us, and in that day of salvation he succours us, 2 Cor. vi. 2.

Conclude not, under every disagreeable sensation or sudden change, that all is lost: God gives us everlasting consolation and hope through grace. Joys and comforts, at first conversion, are fluctuating, to keep us tender and watchful; and, by sudden and short visits and withdrawments, the Lord makes himself known, and familiarizes himself to us. When the day-spring from on high visits us, we discover the wretched works of darkness, both in heart and life; and, when we come to bring the discoveries we make of ourselves to the light of the word, there are always some deeds to be reprov'd; yet the earnest language of the awakened sinner is "Search me, O Lord! and try me, and lead me in the way everlasting." And, by taking heed to the sure word of prophecy, the day-dawn and the day-star arises in the heart; which forebodes the brighter rising of the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his beams.

He that hath a dream, may tell a dream; and he that hath God's word, may speak it, Jer. xxiii. 28. God has promised to pour water on them that are thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: and, as he has given thee an hunger and thirst after righteousness, being sensibly self-condemned both by law and conscience, he might shew you by a dream that he would in future extend peace to you like a river, the streams of which make glad the city of God. We are all by nature earthen

vessels, and but red pitchers at best. Adam's name signifies red earth; and he was a pitcher that was broken at the fountain, and we in him, and therefore are fitly called broken vessels, Psalm xxxi. 12. You know God has promised to give his people a new heart, and to put his Spirit within them; and if he puts the water of life into thy heart, it will surely spring up that everlasting life, This will make the red pitcher a vessel of mercy indeed, for this is the good treasure promised.

I do not wonder at thy awaking with a violent pain in thine arm, for an arm of flesh is soon weary in well-doing. It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and, when the hand of faith gets a fast hold of the heart, it will bring it to the fountain, where thou mayest drink so as never to thirst again: but, without this hand of faith, there is no catching the streams, nor drawing water out of the wells of salvation, the fountain is so high, and the well is so deep. I have no doubt but you will see empty pitchers enough, that want filling, when thy own cup runs over; and thou wilt lift them up at arm's length to procure the blessing for them, and often think thou hast done it: but in this the poor widow that came to Elisha will exceed thee; her sons told her there was not an empty vessel more: which tidings will never be brought to thee; nor wilt thou have much labour in setting by that which is full, even though the oil continues to spring. In this thy labour will be great, and thine offspring few, or else thou wilt differ from all that have gone before thee. However, we read of two sinners being brought to the Lord by the instrumentality of women; Ruth by Naomi, and Naaman by a little captive girl of Judah: and I take it that thou wilt try to bring many empty pitchers to the fountain of life, but thy arm will ache again and again before thou wilt fill them. However, I believe the dream to be certain, and the interpretation to be sure.

I was informed that, in your affliction and deep poverty, charity abounded to the riches of your liberality, in mustering up a

contribution to procure your father's release from purgatory. Is it true? And is there no redemption in the catholic church for the deceased poor whose surviving friends are without money and without price? If there be not, the whole proverb is confirmed, "No Penny, no Paternoster." Blessed be God, that redemption and salvation for such sinners as you and I, is of God, and not of man; of grace, and not of works; free, and not to be bought with corruptible things, such as gold and silver. We are redeemed with the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, instant in prayer, watchful, and observant of the dealings of God; and thou wilt never know the want of a gracious Father to call on; nor of his bounteous supplies in times of need; nor of a ministering servant, to watch over thee, and attend on thee. Farewell. Grace and peace be with thee; while I remain,

Dear Daughter,
Thine affectionate Father,

And willing Servant,

In Christ Jesus,

Winchester Row, Paddington.
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XL

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO A. J.

Beloved Friend,

Your letter came to hand; but, having many things to attend to, I could not answer it before. I sin no stranger to your situation; but God is a little sanctuary to his people in all places whither they may come; and will ever be a present help to all that call upon him, and feel after him. He was with Joseph in Egypt, David in Gath, and Daniel in Babylon. Wherein a man is called, therein let him Abide with God; and, having food and raiment, let him be therewith content: and, if he is trot, God shall appoint him a worse portion, that he may know the value of this.

Some of the sweetest hours that ever I enjoyed, or, perhaps; ever shall enjoy, in this world, were at Sunbury in Middlesex, And at Ewell in Surrey; where I had no friend, but he that loveth at all times; no brother; but he that was born for adversity; no father, but the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort; no spiritual neighbours, bid the elect angels; no mother, but the heavenly Jerusalem; no fellowship, but with the Father and the Son; no communion, but with the Holy Ghost; no delights, but in heavenly things; no teacher, but the Almighty; no comforter, but the Consolation of Israel; no amusements, but in the covenant of grace; do constant companions, but faith, hope, and charity, these three. Now, consider what a situation I must be in it. I had no hypocrite to

ensnare me and expose me; no impostor, to mislead me; no apostate, to stumble me: and, when you have considered my former state, then compare it with your own, and you will, upon the whole, find cause enough to complain; I mean, of your wretched discontent and base ingratitude, for it is no less.

Thou hast no call, my son, to take a dog by the ears: thou hast no business with free-willmongers; children of grace are not called to these, but from them; not to union with such, but to a separation; nor to communion with them, but to come out from among them. Darkness and light, Christ and Belial, believers and infidels, are to have no fellowship or concord. Thou hast forgotten the proverb that speaketh to thee as to a son; "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge," Prov. xiv. 7. If thou canst find one of the excellent of the earth, stick to him, one confederate is enough: Abraham and Lot, Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, Joshua and Caleb, Samuel and David, Peter and John, Paul and Silas, and all the seventy, two by two, are proof of this. But so it is: Jeremiah wished for a place of wayfaring men, that he might leave his people, and go from them; and David wished to leave Gath, and dwell in the courts of the Lord's house. The former got into the dungeon; and the latter united with Ahithophel, and numbered the people, till he lost seventy thousand.

I have been longing, for these fifteen years, for a residence in a wood, being sick of such a public life; but my friend wants to live in a crowd. Thus, under the devil's cursed influence, both are discontented and ungrateful; and I believe God will punish the murmuring both of Mr. Huntington and his friend. I doubt thy heart is too much set upon a certain Hagarene near St. James's. I must say to thee, upon that matter, as Samuel said to David: "As for the asses, set not thy mind upon them, for they are found," but it is upon their old common again; read

Jer. ii. 24. R. J. has done with religion, and it is high time thou hadst done with her. Give thy mind to reading, meditation, and prayer: these are means in which God is found, consulted, and conversed with; and, when the light of his countenance is enjoyed, thy wants will be few, and thy complaints still fewer. But, if Jehovah be withdrawn, thy complaints will be numberless; nor will all terrestrial good repair the loss, or fill the vacancy, of an absent God. That thou mayest walk with him, live in the fear of him, and behave so as to bring glory to him, is the will of your heavenly Father, and the earnest desire and prayer of

Your affectionate Friend,
And willing Servant in the gospel.

W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XLI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV. MR. HUNTINGTON.

Reverend Sir

UPON hearing you preach, on Wednesday evening, June the, 2d, in Mr. Foster's meeting, if I am not greatly mistaken, I

heard you assert, that our Lord Jesus Christ is God, and there is none beside him; a just God and a Saviour, and there is none beside him. But, upon my asserting that you did speak thus, I have been opposed by some who heard the discourse, and who say that you did not so express yourself; nor will they believe me that you meant it so, or that you do believe that he is God and that there is none beside him; and I am called a false witness concerning you in this matter of importance. Therefore I shall be glad, if you think it not too troublesome, that you would give me a line or two upon that subject, to prove that you do so believe, and did expressly assert it; and then you will greatly oblige

Your humble Servant and Well-wisher,
(As far as you go in the truth, and no farther)

SAMUEL CROUCH.

Godalming, June 8, 1790.

P.S. I hope you will back your answer to me with portions of holy scripture, for conviction of the truth. I shall be obliged to you, if you will suit it to answer me in a few days on this matter. Farewell.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XLII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MR. SAMUEL CROUCH, GODALMING, SURREY.

Dear Friend,

I CANNOT now remember particularly every word that dropped from my lips in the discourse to which you allude; but, I believe, you heard nothing from my mouth but what was proved from plain scripture proofs. That our Lord Jesus Christ is the self-existent and eternal God, is a truth that can never be denied. He is the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, the Almighty, Rev. i. 8. The mighty God, Isa. ix. 6. He is the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Isa. xlv. 11. He is God upon his throne for ever and ever. He laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands, Heb. i. 8, 10. He is the Lord of Hosts, the King of Glory, the Lord mighty in battle, Psalm xxiv. 8-10. "The true God and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. These incommunicable names and titles can be given to none but to him whose name alone is Jehovah, and who is the Most High over all the earth, Psa. lxxxiii. 18. Jehovah will never give his glory to a creature, nor his praise to graven images. It was the spirit of Christ that preached in all the prophets: it was he that declared the righteousness of the gospel, by Noah, to the spirits that are now in the prison of hell, 1 Peter, iii. 18-20. "Who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? have not I, the Lord? And there is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." This is the God that hath saved my soul, and the God that, I hope, will save my dear friends at Godalming. He is a just God and a Saviour there is none else;

there is no God to the exclusion of him. " Whosoever denieth the Son, hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also," 1 John ii. 23. This is our God, and he is the God of our salvation: there is no Saviour besides him, for there is salvation in no other name. There is no God besides him; there is no God to the exclusion of him, for he and his Father are one. Israel's God is one Lord the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, are one, 1 John v. 7. When the Father draws your soul to Christ, John vi. 44, and you receive grace for grace from the fullness of Christ, John i. 16, and the Holy Ghost operates on your heart as a comforter, guiding you into all truth, and bearing witness with your spirit; then you will know what Paul means when he says, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God [the Holy Ghost], and of the Father, and of Christ," Colos. ii. 2. Has the anointing taught you all things? then, even as he hath taught you, you shall abide in him, 1 John ii. 27. And, if the Spirit teaches you all things, "Let that which you have heard of him abide in you, and ye shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."

These are things so plain, that he who runs may read them they are the oracles of God; not a jot or tittle shall ever pass away. The scriptures cannot be broken; the scriptures of truth cannot deceive. He that denies these things errs, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus write; and therefore conclude, wishing you the heart-felt experience, and the soul-satisfying enjoyment, of the greatest and sweetest benediction that ever was dropped from heaven; namely, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all!" Amen, amen!

Your willing and affectionate friend and servant,

W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XLIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV. MR. HUNTINGTON.

Reverend Sir,

ACCEPT these few lines from a stranger to your person, but not a stranger to sonic of your writings; such as, your "Kingdom of Heaven taken by Prayer," "Bank of Faith," "Arminian Skeleton," and "The Rule and the Riddle." And I love them all very much, because you prove them from the scriptures of truth. Yet, you seem to be of a different opinion from some divine writers upon one particular matter relating to regeneration, which is the principal occasion of my writing to you. You seem to think that ho person can be brought into the light of the gospel from a state of sin and wretchedness, but by severe convictions, or a terrible law-work upon their consciences: but some divine writers say, that God often draws sinners by the cords of love, which is the state of your sincere supplicant at this time, or the devil, with his sophistical train, is deceiving him. But I will give you a description of my

state; and your opinion, in answer to this, how my soul stands with God, will be gratefully accepted.

I am an inhabitant of Trowbridge, in Wiltshire; have sat constantly under the word for about eleven months; and, the first time I ever heard it preached, the subject was election, which I did not like, as I conceived the scriptures set forth no such things; but I thought I would examine them strictly, which I had never done before, and see if I could find a doctrine. Accordingly, I perused the New Testament attentively, and found it to be a truth revealed in several places, and particularly in the ninth chapter of the Romans and the first chapter of the Ephesians. And, from that time, I went to hear the word constantly, and found the scriptures opened to me more than ever they had been before, having always sat under a blind guide before that time, and thought then that I knew all things pertaining to salvation; and was endeavouring to work it out, never considering that it must be God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. But now I find I can do nothing at all, and am rather doubtful, sometimes, whether God will do anything for me or not; but this I know, that I must either be saved by the faith of Jesus Christ, wrought in my soul by the Holy Ghost, or I shall never be saved at all. At present I do not find the condemning power of the law in my conscience, as you speak of; nor any divine operations of God's Spirit on my heart, as I hear many speak of; and still I love his children and his ways, and would rather be one of his adopted family in Christ Jesus than be possessed of all the riches of the world; and I pray to God day and night, and that with a sincere heart, that I may know myself more and more every day; that I may know the truth as it is in Christ Jesus: and that I may come to the knowledge of salvation, either in your hard, experienced ways, or in any other way agreeably to God's will. And still I cannot find much alteration in my heart, and whether I have begun in the Spirit, or the Spirit hath begun with me, I cannot tell; but God grant it

may be the latter. Your answer to this would be gratefully accepted by

Your humble and sincere supplicant,
T. J.

P. S. If you please, direct for T. J., Trowbridge, Wilts.

Is not your riddle The carnality of a Christian?

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XLIV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MR. T. J., TROWBRIDGE, WILTS.

Dear Sir,

I RECEIVED your letter, and have considered the contents of it; and I must confess that I do differ in opinion from some divine writers respecting the work of regeneration; but, at the same time, I aver, that neither their opinions nor mine are of any value, unless they are supported by the word of God. God is a free agent, and has an indisputable right to do as he pleases with his own. And it is clear that all sinners are not of an equal size; all debtors are not in equal arrears; some owe ten thousand talents, some five hundred pence, and some

fifty; but, by the law, all are insolvents; every mouth must be stopped, and all the world must become guilty before God. As there are different sites of sinners among God's elect, so there are different measures of fatherly chastisements used at the conversion of them. All do not sink so deep in the horrible pit as David, nor do all feel the arrows of wrath like Job the terrors of the law like Paul, or the plague of the heart like Asaph. God works all things after the counsel of his own will: we are not to draw lines for him, nor to limit the Holy One of Israel; yet we are to enforce and abide by the lines that he has drawn: and by these I confess that I do not know what some divines mean by God's drawing sinners with the cords of love; for, although I have experienced a comfortable measure of the love of God, yet they treat of a drawing by love that I do not understand. That God sometimes begins a work on a sinner's heart by a promise, and sometimes by a threatening, or terrible sentence; sometimes by allurements, and sometimes by terrors; sometimes attracts by love, and sometimes deters by anger; sometimes appears at first as a propitious Sovereign, and sometimes as an angry Judge; I readily grant: but, to be drawn by the cords of love so as to feel no sting of guilt, no remorse of conscience, no bitter reflections on past folly, no sense of God's displeasure against sin, no rebellion nor evil motions of corruptions, no opposition from unbelief, no doubts about our state, no fear of a future reckoning, no evil tempers nor evil tempter opposing this work of grace, no repentance nor godly sorrow; this is such a drawing as I do not understand, and it is a drawing that the Bible knows nothing of. To be begotten, but never quickened; born again, without travail or labour; healed before they are wounded; absolved before they are insolvent; justified without arraignment; saved before they are lost; banqueted before they hungered; refreshed before they thirsted; sound in faith, but never tried; a new creature,, but no old man; at rest in Christ, but never weary; in the path to heaven, and no tribulation; a soldier, but no war; a labourer, but no toil; a

servant, but no work; a wrestler, but no antagonist; a follower of Christ, but no cross; of the true circumcision, but no self-denial; a law in the mind, but none in the members: such an one must needs walk boldly because against him there is no rising up.

That God draws souls with the cords of love as with the bands of a man, is true; but God's love to my soul doth not screen my back from stripes, but it procures them: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth chasteneth him betimes." "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" I have been intimately acquainted with several persons, who informed me that they were drawn by love, without either rebukes, chastisements, or terrors; and I must confess, that they continued under their drawing for many years, and were drawn a great way, to a great degree of knowledge; and some of them to eminent gifts, and to cut no despicable figure in the ministry; and others to build chapels, and to contribute largely to the support of them. And I have lived to see them all, except two, drawn into the world again, into sin, into the bondage of the law, into desperate hatred to Christ, and to them that love him, and one even into deism and no wonder, when they were unacquainted with the plague of the heart, a contrite spirit, godly sorrow, and repentance unto life.

Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord knoweth them that are his; and it appears to me, that God hath begun his good work in you, and doubtless he will carry it on. If the Lord has made thee sensible of thy weakness, and that without him thou canst do nothing, depend upon it, that he will perfect his strength in thy weakness; work in thee, and direct thy work in truth. It is no small part of a work of grace to bring a man off from trust in his own heart, and reliance on his

own arm: when thy strength is all gone, and thy righteousness appears to be nothing but dung and dross, he will appear; "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength;" and then thou wilt say, as others have done: "Verily, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength" It is the Lord that pulls down and builds up; he maketh the self-sufficient faint, and bids the weak say, "I am strong."

If thou lovest his children, and his ways, thou must love the Father that begat those children, and him that is the way to him; these earnest desires to be put among his children, to be guided and directed by him; to submit to his will, and to be saved in his own way; to seek with sincerity, and pray day and night; are things that either go before, or else accompany salvation; they neither spring out of the soil of nature, nor do they come by chance; therefore, patiently wait, and quietly hope, for the salvation of God; nor pray either for trials or terrors, but pray for grace, mercy, and peace, through Christ Jesus; and depend upon it, that thou wilt find and feel, sooner or later, as much corruption and bondage; accusation and temptations; doubts and fears; conviction, dejection, and distraction; as thy heart will be able to bear up under, let thy faith be what it may. So I predict, slut so thou wilt confess; or then wilt greatly disappoint

Thy affectionate friend and, servant,
W. H.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XLV

William Huntington (1745-1813)

To Mr. Universalist.

Sir,

YOUR very polite epistle came to hand; and, by the contents of it, you are greatly disgusted at the doctrines contained in my answer to Mr. Skinner: however, an atheistical advocate will do no credit to him, nor dishonour to me, but contrariwise.

Your letter, sir, contains the doctrine of reprobation, as well as my book; only I take it from the scriptures, and you from your own head; I attribute the decree to God, and you assume it to yourself; God reprobates the wicked, and you reprobate the just. Hence we both agree that there is such a doctrine, and that there are such persons as reprobates, otherwise I cannot be one.

As you style yourself an Universalist, you are, doubtless, a man of universal religion, well acquainted with universal doctrines, and must have acquired universal knowledge. And, if so, where shall we find a man so discreet and wise as thou? Who so proper to be appointed over this business? Who so capable of deciding the controversies of Zion, as thou, most noble Universalist? And, I nope, thou wilt undertake it, as thou knowest that we have such numbers of pestilent fellows who hold the same opinions as Paul, that well-known mover of sedition, and ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, Acts

xxiv. 5; whose mouths must be stopped, otherwise universal religion will never obtain universal establishment in peace and quietness. If thou wilt undertake to bring these two pools together, under thee we should, doubtless, enjoy great quietness, and a very worthy deed would be done to this our nation by thy providence; which must be always accepted, in all places, and with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding, that I be not farther tedious unto thee, I pray thee, of thy clemency, to permit me to state them as God hath revealed them; and, if thou canst break down this middle wall of partition, remove these irrevocable decrees, and overturn these two mountains of brass, it will, doubtless, redound much to the honour of thy universality.

Two Mountains.

"And the mountains were mountains of brass." - Zech. 6:1.

"THE Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Jer. xxxi. 3.

"Jacob have I loved:" Rom. ix. 13.

"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Rom. viii. 29.

"Thou, Israel, art my servant; Jacob, whom I have chosen; the seed of Abraham, my friend. I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away." Isa. xli. 8, 9.

"Who hath saved us, and called us according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest, by the appearing of Jesus Christ." 2 Tim. i. 9, 10.

"The Lord hath made all things for himself." Prov. xvi. 4.

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. v. 9.

"They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine." Isa. xxix. 21.

"Behold, this child is set for the fall, and rising again, of many in Israel." Luke ii. 34.

"For they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity." Jer. xxxi. 34.

"I thank Thee, O Father! Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast revealed these things unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight." Luke x. 21.

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved. To the one we are the savour of life unto life." 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

"He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the in mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." Matt. xiii. 11, 12.

"If the Prince give a gift to any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons; it shall be their possession by inheritance." Ezek. xlvi. 116.

"By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name." Rom. i. 5.

"When they heard these things, they glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentles granted repentance unto life." Acts xi. 18.

"And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock! And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other Bands; and I fed the flock." Zech. xi. 7.

"And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people. All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed that the Lord hath blessed." Isa. lxi. 9.

"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." 1 Cor. ii. 7.

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on scorpions and serpents, and over ail the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by no means hurt you." Luke x. 19.

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Acts xiii. 48.

"But there shall not an hair of your head perish: in patience possess ye your souls" Luke xxi. 18, 19.

"This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." Isa. xliii. 21.

"I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me." Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

"But the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Rom. ix. 8.

"Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." John xv. 19.

"He that is of God, heareth God's " John viii. 47.

"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty. They shall behold the land that is very far off." Isa. xxxiii. 17.

"We are of God. He that knoweth God, heareth us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth." 1 John iv. 6.

"I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." Isa. 1xv. 1.

"Yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Prov. vii. 26.

"I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up the broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Ezek. xxxiv. 16.

"The Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness." Rom. ix. 30.

"Thus said the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat; My servants shall drink; My servants shall rejoice; My servants shall sing for joy of heart." Isa. 1xv. 13, 14.

"Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house! And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it." Luke x. 5, 6,

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty." I Cor i. 27.

"Thy people shall be willing." Psalm cx. 3.

"They shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." Isa. xl. 31.

"And the hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants." Isa. lxvi. 1:4.

"He shall choose our inheritance for us; the excellency of Jacob, whom he loved." Psalm xlvii. 4.

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isa. liv. 13.

"I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may obtain the salvatopm which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." 2 Tim. ii. 10.

"And Jesus said, Fur judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see." John ix. 39.

"He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Isa. lxi. 1.

"Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." John xvi. 13.

"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." John x. 8.

"Behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." Isa. xxviii. 16.

"When ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb." Isa. lxvi. 14.

"And upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. xvi. 18.

"Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." 2 Tim. ii. 19.

"My sheep hear my voice; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John x. 27,28.

"I am the Lord your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your king." Isa. xliii. 15.

"My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, from henceforth and for ever." Isa. lix. 21.

"For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." Isa. liv. 9.

"And, many that are last shall be first." Matt. xix. 30.

"But few chose." Matt. xx. 16.

I pray for them which thou hast given me." John xvii. 9.

"I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John xx. 17.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." John xiv. 27.

"And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Rev. xxii. 11.

"These waters shall come thither, for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." Ezek. xlvii. 9.

"And all the trees of the field shall know, that I the Lord have exalted the low tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done it." Ezek. xvii. 24.

"Faith was reckoned to Abraham in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of the uncircumcision; and he received the sign of circumcision, that he might be the father of them." Rom. iv. 9-12.

"Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name, for I have created him for my glory: I have formed him, yea, I have made him." Isa. xliii. 6, 7.

"He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root. Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." Isa. xxvii. 6.

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." Mal. iii. 17.

"And ye shall be gathered one by one. O ye children of Israel." Isa. xxvii. 12.

"It is not the will of your Father, which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Matt. xviii. 14.

"And I will take you one of a city, and two of a tribe; and I will bring yea to Zion." Jer. iii. 14.

"And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Isa. xxxv. 8.

"And I will give you pastors after my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Jer. iii. 15.

"These things have I spoken you, that in me ye might have peace." John xvi. 33.

"And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Dan. xii. 1.

"Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. xxv. 34.

"Whom he did predestinate, them he called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. viii. 30.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star." Rev. xxii. 16.

"And they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." Mal. i. 4.

"But Esau have I hated." Rom. ix. 13.

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 23.

"They are brass and iron, they are all corrupters. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." Jer. vi. 28, 30.

"Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him." Amos, v. 18, 19.

"The Lord hath made even the wicked for the day of evil." Prov. xvi. 4.

"A Rock of offence to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed." 1 Pet. ii. 8.

"But the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand." Dan. xii. 10.

"Behold this child is set for a sign that shall be spoken against." Luke ii. 34.

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God."

"I thank Thee, O Father! Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Luke x. 21.

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that perish. To the other we are a savour of death unto death." 2 Cor. 1 15, 16.

"But to them it is not given. Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables." Matt. xiii. 11-13.

"But if he give a gift to any of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty: after, it shall return to the Prince." Ezek. xlvi. 17.

"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." John x.26.

"For when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Heb. xii. 17.

"Then said I, I will not feed you That that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another." Zech. xi. 9.

"And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name." Isa. 1xv. 15.

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." Jude, 4.

"And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." Ezek. xiv. 9.

"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish! for I work a work in your days; a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 41.

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." Matt. xxiv. 11.

"For it is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour." Isa. xxvii. 11.

"Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." Matt. x. 17, 18.

"They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." Rom. ix. 8.

"But because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John xv. 19.

"Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."
John viii. 47.

"Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? Where is the receiver? Where is he that counted the towers? Isa. xxxiii. 18.

"They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. Hereby know we the spirit of error. 1 John iv. 5.

"Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am ye cannot come." John vii. 34, 36.

"Let the weak say, I am strong." Joel, iii. 10.

"But I will destroy the fat and the strong: I will feed them with judgment." Ezek, xxxiv. 16.

"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Rom. ix. 31.

"But ye shall be hungry; but ye shall be thirsty; but ye shall be ashamed; but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." Isa. 1xv. 13, 14.

"Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house! And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it." Luke x. 5, 6.

"Thus saith the Lord, that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish." Isa. xliv. 24, 25.

"So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that sheweth mercy." Rom. ix. 16.

"And his indignation towards his enemies." Isa. lxvi. 14.

"I will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them." Isa. lxvi. 4.

"Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see, hear, understand, convert, and be healed." Isa. vi. 10.

"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thess. ii. 11.

"And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see might be made blind." John ix. 39.

"Behold, he breaketh down and it cannot be built again. He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening." Job xii. 14.

"And his breath shall sift the nations with a sieve of vanity; and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err." Isa. xxx. 28.

"Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2 Tim. iii. 13.

"And he shall be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin, and for a snare, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." 1sa. viii 14.

"From the time it goeth forth, it shall take you; for morning by morning it shall pass over, by day and by night; and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report." Isa. xxxviii. 19.

"A rock of offence; and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and snared, and be taken." Isa. vii. 14, 15.

"How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth I They perish for ever without any regarding it." Job iv. 19, 20.

"But ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." "Ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come." John x. 26; vii.21.

"They shall lie down together; they shall not rise; they are extinct; they are quenched as tow." Isa. xliii. 17.

"Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." John xiv. 17.

"But the heavens and earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Pet. iii. 7.

"But many that are first shall be last." Matt. xix. 30.

"For many be called." Matt. xx. 16.

"I pray not for the world." John xvii. 9.

"Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do." John xx. 17.

"Think not I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to seed peace, but a sword." Matt. x. 39.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." Rev. xxii. 11.

"But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be, healed; they shall be given to salt." Ezek. xlvii. 11.

"And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, and dried up the green tree: I the Lord have spoken and have done it." Ezek. xvii. 24.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised." Jer. ix. 25.

"But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption." 2 Pet. ii. 12.

"Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth. He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither." Isa. xl. 24.

"For while they be folded together as thorns, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." Nah. i. 10.

"They shall not be gathered nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth." Jer. viii. 2.

"Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever." Numb. xxiv. 20.

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left; two shall be grinding at the mill, the one taken, and the other left." Matt. xxiv. 40, 41.

"The unclean shall not pass over it; no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon." Isa. xxxv. 8, 9.

"Wherefore behold, I send unto you prophets; and some of them ye shall kill, crucify, and scourge in your synagogues; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed from the blood of Abel." Matt. xxiii. 34, 35.

"I speak not this of you all, I know whom I have chosen." John xiii. 18.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Rev. xx. 15.

"Tophet is ordained of old: yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. Isa. xxx. 33.

"This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God." Job xx. 29.

"If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." Rev. xxii. 18.

These, sir, are some of the things which the Almighty has revealed, and what is revealed belongs to its; and we are commanded to proclaim upon the house-tops what he hath spoken to us in secret. And why shouldst thou be offended at the faithfulness of another man's servant? If these things are any parts of the counsel of God, they must be declared, otherwise we cannot acquit ourselves as Paul did, who had not shunned to declare the whole of his counsel. These absolute wills and shalls are fixtures that will never be moved. God is of one mind, and none can turn him. The word is gone out of his mouth in righteousness, and his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. He will, at the great day of accounts, bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his just dealings as the noon-day. Let God be true, but every man a liar.

W. H.

P. S. You see, sir, I have found out another name for you, besides that of Universalist.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XLVI

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO THE REV MR. HUNTINGTON.

Reverend Father in Christ Jesus,

I HAVE, first, to beg you will not be offended at my not writing before, as it was not in my power; and, secondly, to thank you kindly for your letter, &c. which gave me great comfort: for which I am both grateful and thankful; and may the Lord reward you a thousand fold in the world to come, for in this world there is nothing worth wishing for. I bless God, I am enabled to look on it, and every thing in it, as dross. This must be from the Lord, for never was there any one that loved it better, nor ever entered with more willingness into all the fooleries, than I have done.

Dear Sir, I am greatly comforted every time I hear you. The Lord is pleased to make you, Sir, a messenger, of many joyful tidings to my soul. You tell us, that we must have a change of heart, and be spiritually circumcised. This the Lord is daily doing for me: for I can tell you, dear sir, with truth and great joy, that I could not now be happy with the same people, nor the same amusements, as usual; nor could I, as I have done

often, (to my shame I speak it) be a day without prayer. I never, till now, thought of calling myself to an account for trifles: if I did not commit any capital crime, I thought it was all well. I used to go to confession, get absolution, and come away quite satisfied that I had done my duty: but, blessed be God, I can now say that the Lord has imbittered these things to me; and I trust, this springs from the change of heart you speak of.

1488 You ask me, sir, if it is true that, in my great distress, I contributed to procure my father's release from purgatory? You have been informed true as to the thin, but wrong as to the time. In my distress, it was not in my power to have raised five pence, much less five shillings; which was the sum I gave to the priest, and likewise three shillings for myself; and was fool enough, at that time, to believe I was right. This happened six years ago. I was then at Cork, in Ireland, and had a tolerable income, and therefore could spare the money; but am now very sorry I did not better employ both my time and money.

You ask me, sir, if there is no redemption in the Catholic Church, unless it is purchased? I answer, No; for they believe that, if they do not satisfy God with prayers, fasting, and alms, in this world, or leave money for the priests to do it after their death, or that of their relations, they must remain in purgatory till they have paid the utmost farthing by suffering. And this, sir, was what I once believed; and thought with myself, that when I died, if I had not satisfied God for all my sins, I should be excluded his blessed presence until I had atoned for all my crimes by enduring the torments of that place. And this is what I thought was purgatory, and that I should then be received into heaven. So you see, clear Sir, that this purgatory was a well-spun device of Satan, which never once seemed to want any thing but the works of the flesh to get to heaven: for although, in the Catholic persuasion, for religion it is none,

their whole ceremony is nothing but the imitation of the passion, as they call it, or suffering, of our blessed Saviour; and though they have continually a cross before them, which, they say, is to put them in mind that Christ died for them; they never once raise their thoughts to God. I speak for myself, and I think, I may speak for the mall: for, if they did, they would trust in him, and look to him, for salvation; and would soon see as now I do, that they never can get to heaven but through Christ; and would find that there is no need of a crucifix to put them in mind of Christ's death; for they would find such comfort in the faith of it, that it would hardly be ever out of their minds; and they would wait, and think the time very long, till Jesus told them he died for them, as I do, for, dear sir, I find there is one thing wanting to make me completely happy; notwithstanding, at times, I have great comfort, and can see plainly that the Lord careth for me.

I received several answers to prayer after I had read your Bank of Faith, and was frequently enabled to trust in the providence of God; and, if I did not get what I prayed for or wanted, I was led to believe I was happier without it. In this manner I went on. I begged Mrs. C. would let me come to the chapel some sacrament Sunday, which she did, and I sat in one of the free seats; but, during the ordinance, I felt myself very unhappy in being excluded, and secretly wished for the crumbs that fell from the table. The Lord then told me, that this was the way of administering that ordinance, and not with the host. I then begged Mrs. C. to ask if I might be admitted to speak to you. She told me, I had better write; but, not knowing how or what to write, I therefore declined it. I begged the Lord to direct me, as I had now learned to pray without a book; and I soon saw the effects of my prayers, both in providence and in grace, as you well know by my present situation; and, blessed be God! I have been enabled, when passing through the streets, to return him my most humble and hearty thanks for his mercies. And one morning, after having had some very

severe trials in domestic affairs, as if a voice had spoken to me in the street, I was saying to myself "What must I do to appear genteel in this new line of life I am going into?" The voice said "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." But, having two doors opened in providence at once, I was puzzled to know which situation to choose. On my knees, I begged the Lord to direct me, and to choose for me, and to let me make choice of that which would turn out most for my soul's good. I now began to be so fond of Providence Chapel, that its very name seemed to point out which place I was to choose; but I left it to the Lord. I could now call upon God in prayer, and find myself greatly relieved. It was the Lord's will that I should get the place I am now in; which led me to see that the Lord appoints all things, and fixes the bounds of our habitation.

These are some of the things which I had seen in my dream; but, I trust, there is more meant by the dream than mere providences. The Lord make me grateful and thankful for all his benefits; and may I never forget the many favours I have received at his hands.

I hope, dear sir, you will excuse my delay in writing, as I am much engaged in the affairs of this life. Blessed be his holy name, who hath made me a willing hearer; and

Your ever grateful daughter, In Christ Jesus,
J. C.

William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XLVII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MRS. J. C.

Dear Daughter in the Faith,

I RECEIVED yours. Make no apologies for not answering mine before. Business must be minded. God joins diligence in business and fervour in spirit together. As the Spirit of God flows into the heart, the spirit of the world creeps out. The hands can work for men, while God keeps possession of the heart; and, as heavenly things gain esteem, the things of the world grow into contempt; "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, out the Spirit that is of God; that we may know the things that are freely given us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. A believing view of Christ crucified, crucifies us to the world, and the world to us. When a soul lives to God, he dies to these things. Where the joys of heaven flourish, earthly joys wither. May the Lord continue these vanities in the same contemptuous light in which they now appear, and then thou wilt dwell on high, and see the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off The wise man's words will be verified; The way of life is above the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath."

Thou art indebted to the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, for every consolation. It is he that unstops the deaf ear, clothes his word with power, sends the joyful sound into the heart, and fastens his word, as a nail in a sure place. Pardon, peace, and reconciliation, are joyful tidings to a sin-

sick soul; they are Solomon's good news from a far country, which is as cold water to a thirsty soul.

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When God breathes on the senseless sinner the breath of life, he can no more live without prayer than a beggar can live without bread. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to draw the soul upward. When the mind is once influenced by the Divine Spirit, nothing but divinity can satisfy it. "My soul thirsteth for God, yea, for the living God!" saith the Psalmist: "when shall I come and appear before God?" while the mind and thoughts are swarming about the fountain of life, the thoughts of God's heart, and the words of his mouth, drop on the new-born soul like ripe fruit into the mouth of the eater. "How sweet are thy thoughts toward me!" saith the Psalmist: "how great is the sum of them!" and thy word is sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb! Psalm xix. 10.

I wonder not at your satisfaction with absolution. A dead soul as satisfied with dead works, when the strong man armed keepeth the palace, his goods are in peace. It was the devil in the priest that heard your confession and gave you absolution; and it was the devil in you that sent you home satisfied with it; for, as none can forgive sins but God alone, so none but the devil could ever embolden a carnal priest to attempt it, or a senseless wretch to expect it. The whole is palmed upon Satan, who is the arch seducer, and the only founder of this devilish absolution; on which account the recipients of such absolution are charged with giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, while the priest is speaking lies in hypocrisy, I Tim iv. 1, 2.

It is popish underwriter has no more than five shillings for insuring a vessel of wrath from purgatory to heaven, how comes it to pass that there is a livelihood for so many in the trade? or, are there different prices, according to the property

of the survivors? If five shillings will redeem a brother, or pay a ransom to God for his soul, purgatory will be thinly inhabited. I question not that the Saviour paid ore than this in tribute to Caesar, and a much higher price for our redemption; so that procuring of it by corruptible things ceaseth forever, Psalm xlix. 6-8.

It is a well-spun device of Satan, indeed; and, one would think, it were impossible that a person of common sense could ever believe it. "If a man keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" and heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle of the law shall fail; "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" and, "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of a man that he should repent:" therefore, no satisfaction can be made by the sinner, who is under the sentence of death, and which is executed in part, the wrath of God abiding on him. Besides, the law of God never promised eternal life, and glory in heaven; both of these were secured in a better head than Adam; and given to Christ, and to the elect in him, before Adam was formed. They come by a covenant of grace, not of works; and are secured by the purpose and promise of God, and by the Saviour's blood and righteousness; not by our legal obedience; much less by illegal obedience to the doctrines and commandments of men, which turn from the truth. Of this, my daughter, be assured, that neither the angels of heaven, nor Adam in paradise, could ever merit any thing at the hand of God. A perfect and perpetual obedience to God's will is claimed, both of angels and men; this all his creatures owe, and it is no more than their reasonable service; and, when they have done all, they are but unprofitable servants; for how can a creature be profitable unto God? Job xxii. 2; or what can they do for God that eh cannot do without them? Or what can they do for him that he is not the efficient cause of, and agent in them? "He put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly," Job iv. 18. If neither angels nor innocent Adam could

merit aught at the hands of God, how can rebels make satisfaction to injured goodness and offended justice, when our wickedness is great, and our iniquities infinite? Job xxii. 5. If the Saviour himself had been anything less than self-existent, independent, and eternal Jehovah, he could never have redeemed his brethren, nor paid a ransom for them, nor have brought in an everlasting righteousness. It was his being equal with God, when he made his obedience divine. It is called an everlasting righteousness, and the righteousness of God; "For their righteousness is of me," saith Jehovah. And it was his being the word that was with God, and that was God' being made flesh, and offering himself through the eternal Spirit to God; that sets him forth, in the word, as the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him, for vain is the salvation of man. But Israel is saved, in Jehovah, with an everlasting salvation, and no wonder; for, "He that is our God, is the God of salvation;" therefore Israel shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.

It is good, my daughter to cite thyself at a throne of grace, and call thyself to an account for every offence. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." If this be neglected, God summons us to the bar of equity; and, "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

It is strange, that lying in goal should pay debts. An earthly creditor calls for money; and, could the debtor lie a thousand years in prison, the creditor is still the loser. So God's law calls for obedience, which is love to him with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength; and this must be with freedom, willingness, and cheerfulness, before it can be called obedience; otherwise, it is eye-service, or extorted labour, and not righteousness. All short of this is disobedience; and the unrighteous cannot enter into the kingdom. And who can suppose that he curse and wrath of God in purgatory, or in the

torments of hell, working eternal death in a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, nor can be, can produce such a cheerful obedience as this from sinners, who will look up, and curse both their king and their God? Isa. Viii. 21. If the offers of grace, mercy and truth, do not win the sinner to reconciliation, there is but little expectation of its being accomplished b indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish: "They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." It is the living, the living, not the dead, that praise the Lord.

Blessed be God, that thou wast a child of darkness, and a servant of sin, once; but you are now light in the Lord. Walk as a child of light, and serve God in the newness of the Spirit, and thou wilt have thy fruit unto holiness, and thine end everlasting life.

I wish thee every blessing that heaven hath promised, and thy heart can desire. And remain,

Dear Daughter,
Thine affectionate Father,

In the faith of God's elect,

W.H.

Winchester Row, Paddington
William Huntington

Epistles of Faith

Letter XLVIII

William Huntington (1745-1813)

TO MR. PARKER, EXMOUTH, NEAR EXETER, DEVON.

Sir,

IF you have either conscience or fear left, you might justly expect that I should commence hostilities against you, and pursue you with the unremitting rigour of a Syrian. Surely you must have forgotten whose daughter in the faith you married. During the time of your courtship, I was politely invited to your house, and made an acceptable guest; but, no sooner had my presence granted consent to the marriage, and you obtained the full possession of my daughter, than you treated the parent with cold indifference; neither have you paid any respect or reverence even to my cloth. What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughter, as a captive taken with the sword? Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away, if not with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp; yet I might have sent thee away with counsel, caution: petitions, and blessings? Thou hast not suffered me to take my leave of my daughter. Hast thou done wisely in so doing? Knowest thou not, that it is in the power of my hand to do you hurt, either by striking you out of my will, or cutting you off with a shilling? Could not all the charmers in the great metropolis hold your soul a willing captive? How is it that you have broken all our bands asunder, and cast our cords from you? Besides, you never staid to see what portion or inheritance there is for you

in your Father's house. If I had beguiled you with Leah; if ye were counted strangers to me; if I had sold you; if I had changed your wages; or, if I had quite devoured your money; you might well have set your face toward Mount Gilead, and I might have been content, but you know this was not the case.

And what can I do this day unto this my daughter, or unto the little one that she has borne? As to gathering stones, and turning them into witnesses, that is a work none can perform but he who raises up children unto Abraham. Nor am I willing to undertake the making of a new covenant, choosing rather to abide by that which is made ready to our hands. "If thou shalt afflict my daughter, or if thou shalt take another wife besides my daughter, no man is with us;" therefore you know who is witness, and what will undoubtedly be the consequence.

Before you took your journey, did you propose to go by the way of Mizpeh? Did you ascend the watch-tower, descry the leadings of Providence, and follow hard after him who has promised- to go before us, and to be our reward also? Did the angels of God meet you, as a guard by the way, and as a sure token that your way was not perverse before him? Hast thou found a Bethel since thou left us? or any manifestation of divine goodness and approbation, which has constrained thee to anoint a pillar, in commemoration of your happy deliverance from Blackfriars and Titchfield-street? Or, have you had one absolute promise applied by the Spirit, to assure your heart that you shall not make a Moabitish voyage of it; go out full, and return empty?

It is safe abiding under the wings of the Almighty. He keeps his court in Zion, and is a protection there; and has promised, that he will abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread: nor has he ever been a barren wilderness to those who cleave to and put their trust in him. Your very name

appears big with meaning. Parker signifies a park-keeper, or deer-keeper; one who is generally prowling about among the herds: but who would have thought that, after being so many years an established citizen of Mount Zion, thou wouldst, in thy declining age, have become a ranger of the forest? If, like Israel of old, we are forced into exile, the Lord promises to be a little sanctuary in all places whither we may come. Or, if God calls for a seven years' famine, and says to the Shunamite, "Arise, thou and thy household, and sojourn where thou canst sojourn;" she goes, in obedience to God: and, when she has served her apprenticeship, and returns, Gehazi shall be at court on the very day that she cries to the King for her house, and for her land; and a certain officer shall be appointed to restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the land, since the day that she left it until now, 2 Kings, viii. 1-6. But if, like the prodigal, we make a peremptory demand of our portion, gather all together, and, without a divine warrant, set off into a far country; we may bring leanness into our souls, but we shall never gain much by trading.

It is an unconditional promise in Christ Jesus that secures the things of this life, and of that which is to come; and it is the blessing of God that multiplies them, and the presence of God that sweetens them, and makes a very little suffice. But, if we provoke God by giving way to a distrust of his providence, and he withdraw the light of his countenance from us, we shall soon find a tincture of Mara in every earthly enjoyment. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety:" but, when Satan gets at the head of affairs, a man generally goes on after the counsel of his own will; and it is very rare that such an one consults any but the prophets of the grove, whose counsel is sure to stand with his own humour. Ahab had a multitude of these, but no safety. "A fool," says the proverb, "utters all his mind at once, but a wise man keeps it in till afterwards." I belong to the former, for I am weary with holding in. There were three that had a joint hand in thy flight, and they are

Satan, Covetousness, and Unbelief, and these three are two; and there are three that bear witness against it, namely, William Huntington, my daughter, and Mr. Parker's own conscience; and we three agree in one. Had either of us been consulted, and followed, the journey had been postponed to all eternity.

I am in a great strait: I long to be present with thee, and to change my voice; but alas! alas! thou art got too far from the first witness; who, then, shall I appoint over this business? My daughter, she is the second witness, but she is the weaker vessel; besides, " Her desire shall be to her husband, and he shall rule over her." I must appeal to Conscience, then; and to Conscience I will go, for I have none like-minded with him, who will naturally care for your state; for every one seeketh his own, not the things that are Christ's.

'Conscience, I charge thee to keep this commandment without spot; and, as thou art commissioned to act under the great king, that thou magnify thine office: yea, I adjure thee, that thou tell my dear friend Parker nothing but what is truth, in the name of the Lord. Tell him, that the root of all evil is a hinderance to the enjoyment of divine love, and that infidelity was the cause of his quitting the service of the sanctuary. Tell him, that unbelief and Covetousness have turned many a fruitful heart into barrenness, pierced hundreds through with many sorrows, and drowned thousands in destruction and perdition. Conscience! Conscience! I say, I will that thou affirm these things constantly to my friend, without preferring him before me. Tell him, that he is indebted to the God of grace and providence for all that he has, whether in hope or in hand; and that he accumulated both under the wings of the Lord God of Israel, for it was but little that he had before he came there; and, as God was able to give it, he is as able to keep him in the possession of it: and that it is ungrateful, unscriptural, and unreasonable, to cleave to God till an

independency be procured, and then adhere to the devil for means to secure it. Tell him, Conscience, that this thy complaint of his unbelief, and demand of trust in God, and gratitude to him, is no more than his reasonable service; and who knows but that thou mayest be commissioned and brought into the power for such a time as this; and that thy service, at the long run, may be accepted of my friend?

'Conscience, I know a proof of thee, and have an high opinion of thy fidelity; and I know that thou art a wise magistrate, and knowest what thou oughtest to do; therefore hold him not guiltless. I leave no occasion to pray that thou mayest be delivered out of the hands of them that do not believe, for thou art a valiant one; thou canst hurt them, but the devil himself can never destroy thee. Therefore do the work of a faithful magistrate, and make full proof of thy commission. Proceed against him with the utmost rigour of the law, and pursue him like an officer that needs not to be ashamed, and not like one who does the work of the Lord deceitfully. Have at him like one in authority: be deaf to every plea but those of the Spirit, of the chief Shepherd, and of atoning blood. Compromise nothing with him; take no bribe, to blind thine eyes therewith: and spare not his soul for his crying; peradventure thou mayest do him good in his latter end. Summon him at the receipt of this; harass him, accuse him, reprove him, rebuke him, weary him, silence him, and smite him; for, if thou dost not wound him, he will wound thee. Ring a perpetual peal in his ears; subpoena every loyal thought of his heart upon the jury; and awake up every fear, conviction, terror, and torment, that you can muster together, to attend the inquisition. Heaven itself hath authorized thee, and empowered thee. Go, therefore, in this thy derived might, and thou shalt deliver Israel. But, if he plead innocent, or if he attempt to puzzle thee, so as to involve the case, and baffle thy evidence by evasive terms and carnal quibbles, by calling his sin 1540 prudence, care, discretion, good decorum,

frugality, &c. &c. I charge thee, Conscience, before God, that thou listen to none of these things; but tell him, in the original it signifies Mammon, alias the root of all evil, alias idolatry, alias covetousness; and that God hates it; that such persons cannot serve God and Mammon; and that he must be purged from it, or be damned: "For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." No man can enjoy peace that lives in it; no man can be saved that dies in it. Insist upon these things, and appeal to God himself for confirmation. "Let no man despise thee." If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained my brother; but, if he neglect to hear thee and the scriptures of truth, wipe the dust off thy feet against him, and tell him, that the kingdom of God has often come nigh unto him. If thou deal thus with him, thy mouth shall not reproach thee so long as thou livest. But I hope better things, though I thus write; and I trust the Lord will give thee favour in the sight of the man, that thou mayest bring his soul out of Egypt. If thou be inquired of, tell them that thou art one of my companions in travel, a fellow-labourer, and very profitable to me for the ministry; yea, a good servant of Jesus Christ, and the glory of the churches. While he reads this, be sure to bear thy inward testimony to it, by virtue of thine office. Divine truth can never be shamed, nor justly blamed; therefore stand fast, and acquit yourself like a man. If he offers to bribe thee, by setting up a prayer-meeting in his house; or by giving, now and then, a trifling alms to the saints, mind what I say; thou art not sent to one of an hard speech, whose words thou canst not understand; thou knowest his voice, and he knows thine, therefore, tell him, that these things may be found where the old leaven of covetousness was never pinged out. A liberal heart is better than a handful of alms. God loveth a cheerful giver, not a bribe.

I have now done my duty; and these things I commit unto thee, friend Conscience, that thou mayest by them war a good warfare, and insist upon every Israelite's holding fast both faith

and thee. Thou knowest that I am warranted to appeal to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Having, therefore, made my appeal to thee in behalf of faith in God, I adjure thee to be faithful to thy charge: and, if he puts away concerning faith, he must make shipwreck. Therefore, say not thou, A confederacy, to him, nor bid him God speed, lest thou be a partaker of his evil deeds. Keep thyself pure.

I Furthermore, if he be highly offended, and intimates, that his age and wisdom, his right of private judgment, his well-planned measures, his unbiassed reason, yea, reputation, &c. &c. are infringed, &c. and that candour, moderation, lenity, soft words, smooth speech, and a mantle of love, should be used, &c. &c. pay no regard to these things: the counsel is good, but not at this time. Tell him, thou art much older than his father; and hast reproved even kings, for thy Master's sake, ere now: and as for candour, &c. these things will do to employ the tongue, and nurse pride; but they will neither do to live by, nor die by. Be sure, let him not write to me till thou hast brought him, with humble confession, to his knees. Be strong, and of good courage, and neither fear him nor spare him; for, if we can bring him to himself, and back again to his Father's house, we shall find more favour in his eyes than they who send him away.

'O Conscience! my constant friend, and faithful admonisher; who hast been a succourer of many, yea, and of myself also; whose praise is in all the churches, so that we need not speak any thing, I charge thee to do thy diligence, and get to Exmouth before winter, and there preach the preaching that I bid thee. If he tells thee, that Sanballat and Tobiah set thee on, and that thou art a disturber of the peace, &c. tell him, it is no such thing, for thou art assisted by the voice of one crying in the wilderness, who demands straight paths for our feet; and, so far from being a disturber of the peace, thou art the very seat of peace, and a disquieter of false peace and carnal

ease only. His way is now perverse; therefore thwart him, wince, mock him, turn out of the way, kick up, start at every thing, crush his feet against the wall; and, if thou canst not dismount him, be sure to throw his countenance, if thou even fall under him: any how, rather than carry him to the drawn sword. Never mind his smiting, nor his threatenings. Tell him, thou art his ass, upon which his countenance has ridden ever since thou wast his; nor wast thou ever wont to do so unto him while he kept on wisdom's way. And if he gets him back again into the right path, he shall find thee as sure-footed as ever, but not till then.

'O Conscience! my true yoke-fellow, fellow-helper, and fellow-soldier! that the great King may second every motion of thine, accompany thee on this embassy, and crown thy honest Labours with abundant success; is the desire and prayer of

'Thy once open and avowed Enemy,
'But now reconciled Friend,

'And willing Co-worker,

Winchester Row, Paddington. 'W. H.'
William Huntington