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THE
NATURE of FAITH,
CONSIDERED IN A
CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE
BAPTIST MINISTERS and MESSENGERS,

Assembled at KETTERING, in NORTHAMPTONSHIRE,

June 5, 6, and 7, 1781:

Maintaining the important Doctrines of three equal Persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal Election; original Sin; particular Redemption; free Justification by the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness; efficacious Grace in Regeneration; the final Perseverance of Saints; and the Independency, or congregational Order of the Churches of Christ inviolable.

To the several Churches they represent, or have received Letters from, meeting at Nottingham, Sheephead, Leicester, Sutton-in-the-Elms, Arnesby, Foxton, Clifton, Oakham, Soham, Kettering, Walgrave, Northampton, Road, Olney, Carleton, and St. Alban's; as also the many Churches not yet in the Association, who, notwithstanding, countenance it, by the Attendance of their Ministers and many of their Members:—

Dear Brethren,

BEING met at the time and place appointed, and after unitedly paying our grateful acknowledgments to our gracious God for the favour, and seeking his presence and blessing, we proceeded to the perusal of the letters from the several Churches, and were, we trust, suitably affected with the different accounts transmitted to us. We greatly lament the low estate of religion in *some* of the Churches, and rejoice in the comparative prosperity of others. We wish that all may be stirred up to greater *fervency*, and *frequency* in *personal* and *social* prayer, to the strengthening the things which remain, that are ready to die. A supine and indolent spirit, ought to be dreaded, and watched against. And every duty performed as in the sight of God, and prospect of eternity. We entreat you to search the scriptures with diligence, deliberation, and prayer; in order to an increasing acquaintance with the truth, as it is in Jesus. That being under it's genuine influence, you may walk as becometh saints, and adorn the doctrines of GOD your Saviour in all things; for which purposes, take care of grieving the Spirit of GOD in any instance.

Look to him for those illuminating, enlivening, and sanctifying influences; which are absolutely necessary to evidence your relation to Christ, and right to eternal glory. Take care of a light and trifling spirit in religion. Consider, that those subjects which involve your eternal interest, and from whence your support, and comfort as christians, immediately flow, undoubtedly claim a precedence in your esteem, and demand your closest attention, and most diligent enquiry; in order to a proper acquaintance with their *nature*, and genuine *tendency*. Several things are represented in scripture as necessarily connected with salvation; it therefore becomes every expectant of glory, if he would not be ashamed of his hope, to examine impartially what those things are, and whether he is or is not the happy subject of them.

In our several annual letters we have endeavoured to explain and recommend to your serious consideration, various truths of infinite importance; which we wish may be reviewed with attention and care. If you are the happy subjects of God's salvation, you will cordially receive and desire increasing acquaintance with it's various attendants. And of all the lovely train, there is nothing by the oracles of truth more fully and frequently asserted as inseparably connected with it, than *repentance towards God*, and *faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; which were the common grand topics of apostolic ministrations.

In our last letter we treated of the *former*, and we hope it will not be thought unseasonable now to adress you on the subject of gospel *faith*, about the nature of which, many christians seem greatly perplexed, owing perhaps, in some measure, to inattention; not duly considering the different senses in which the term is used, not only in scripture, but in common conversation. In order therefore to obtain clear and determinate ideas of special faith, it may be proper to make a few explanatory remarks respecting faith in general.

1. By faith is sometimes intended uprightness, or the virtue of integrity; as in 2 Thef. 3. 2. Deut. 32. 20. Rom. 3. 3. Math. 23. 23. In the same sense it is used in common speech. Hence a treacherous, perfidious conduct in nations to each other, is called a breach of public faith.

2. It frequently refers to the power of working miracles, as in Math. 17. 20. Mark 2. 5. Acts 14. 9. and in various other places in the new testament. And the same term is still used in a sense somewhat similar. For, when miraculous productions are now ascribed to men; or marvelous effects are pretended to flow from inadequate causes, the wise and considerate frequently say, respecting such things, *we have no faith*.

3. By faith, is in scripture most commonly meant *a belief of the truth*. Yet, 4. It is frequently put for *the truth believed*.

So in common language faith is used to express the things believed, as well as the act of believing. When a person has made a declaration of his religious sentiments, what is more common than to say *this is my faith*; and others to speak of it as a *confession of faith*? And one creed is commonly called the *Belief*, because it contains the principal articles of the christian faith, being a summary, or the substance of it's capital truths. Thus in common speech, faith is spoke of not only *subjectively*, by which we mean the act of believing, of which the believer is the subject; but *objectively*, by which is intended the *matter* believed, or the objects faith has in view.

Agreeable to this necessary, easy, and common distinction, the scriptures

ures treat of the saints most holy faith ; which faith the great and profound apostle gives a clear and comprehensive definition of in a few words, when he enters on the important subject in his letter to the believing Hebrews, chap. 11. v. 1. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* The first part of the definition seems to respect things believed, or the substance and compendium of truth ; which being precious to the real believer, is therefore represented as the object of his hope, and which he longs for the enjoyment of. *Objectively* considered, Christ and the substance of gospel truths are called *faith*, being what every real christian believes, or in which he places full confidence as matters of fact. Though no christian, while in this world, is fully acquainted with the whole compass of truth, yet being taught of God, they are all led into the *sum* or *substance* of it. For we know in part, and prophecy in part. (1 Cor. 13. 9.) If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine* which is according to godliness. † For the meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way. ‡ Being all brought to acknowledge and confide in the substance of truth relating to salvation, they are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith, as delivered to the saints, Jude 3. And to stand fast in the faith, (1 Cor 16. 13.) To stand fast in one spirit and one mind, striving together for the *faith* of the gospel. (Phil. 1. 17.) Thus it is said Paul preached the *faith* which he before destroyed. Faith, in the sense in which we now speak, is in scripture represented as the matter of justification. It was accounted to Abraham for righteousness, (Rom. 4. 3--9.) i. e. not the things which he *did*, but what he *believed* was the ground of his acceptance with God. For the just shall live by his faith. But alas, how many have been tossed to and fro with the winds of false doctrine, and instead of *holding fast their confidence*, have made *shipwreck of faith*, and lost all conscientious regard to truth. This was the lamentation of the apostle, for in his day the propagators of error *overthrew the faith of some*. See 1 Tim. 1. 19. Thes. 1. 13. Tim. 5. 12. 2 Tim. 2. 18. That is, they did not abide in, but departed from, the doctrine of Christ, 2 John 9. Oh that the several Churches we represent, and now address, may ever continue as steady pillars in support of truth ! That Jesus may say of each, as he did to the church of Pergamos, Thou holdest fast my name ; and hast not denied my faith. Rev. 2. 13.

The second branch of the apostles definition relates to faith *subjectively* considered, or the § act of believing ; which he observes, *Is the evidence of things not seen.* Believing appears to be nothing more nor less than the prevalence of evidence in the mind. Without evidence *real*, or *supposed*, there can be no believing. A man cannot believe that to be

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* John 7, 17. † 1 Tim. 6. 3. ‡ Pl. 25. 9.

§ Some are so curiously critical (or captious) as to be displeas'd with those who call believing an *act*. It is not an *act* they say, because " a man cannot help believing when evidence appears sufficiently clear." Can a person help desiring that which he esteems the chief good ? Are desires therefore no acts ? The mind cannot help *thinking*. Are thoughts no acts on that account ? It is strange, that because a man cannot avoid *act*ing, therefore he does not act at all. If believing be not an act of the mind, there are no mental acts of any kind. For there is no mental act in which *perception*, and *volition*, is more concerned.

To compare believing to *respiration*, *perspiration*, and the *circulation* of our blood, is to darken council with words without knowledge ; seeing none of these motions of animal nature, are the effects of *understanding* and *choice* ; and therefore are neither

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true which he does not think is a fact; and none can think that a fact which he imagines there is no reason to believe is true. It would not be more absurd to say, a man may be well *acquainted* with that of which he is *ignorant*, than to assert a man may believe that to be true, which he apprehends there is no evidence of its reality? Faith may be *false*, as well as *feigned*: but even the belief of a *lie*, supposes the person apprehends it is a *fact* when he believes it. Faith, whether true or false, natural or spiritual, is a crediting report made, or representation given, of persons and things. Faith in, and disbelief of what is reported, whether relating to things *sacred*, or *civil*, are the necessary effects arising from the different apprehensions persons form of the evidence produced in favour of the reality of what is designed to be propagated. When persons relate matters of fact, from their own knowledge and observation, *evidence* in such a case will to others appear clear, or doubtful, according as their opinions are of the judgment, and integrity, of those by whom the report is made. This being the case, designing men have always pretended to considerable advances towards perfection, and infallibility; knowing that the greatest absurdities will be generally credited, provided the propagators of them be held in reputation for wisdom, and uprightness. On the other hand, persons of the greatest integrity and consummate understanding, as the blessed Jesus, and the holy prophets and apostles were, have through *prejudice* been disregarded, and their well-authenticated testimony treated with contempt, through the subjects insisted upon being disagreeable to the corrupt dispositions of men; and contrary to their pre-conceived ideas and prevalent opinions. The enemies to divine truth have in all ages resisted the Holy Ghost, in respect of the evidence he has given of its reality and nature. Therefore seeing such receive not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thes. 2. 10, 11. Such deluded souls were led to a false faith, or the belief of a lie, through enmity to the truth, and a regard to the signs and lying wonders referred to in verse 9. Again, it may be proper to observe, that faith, or believing, may simply relate to the existence of persons, or things, *without* including their adhering qualities; because we have evidence of the being or reality of various *persons* and *things* whose properties we can have no faith in, those not being explained in the report concerning them. But where *qualities*, or their true nature, whether *good* or *bad* are likewise described, faith, in such a case, is essentially deficient, unless these are believed to be what they are, as well as the *existence* of that to which they belong or adhere. There may be faith in the reality of persons and things where there is none in the *reported* quality or character. For instance, every one to whom the report has come, believes there has been a succession for ages, of persons at Rome, called

criminal nor *commendable*. The greatest villain may sweat profusely, have good lungs, and a regular pulse; and a good man may have an asthma, or be in an high fever, without incurring guilt; otherwise it would be a horrid sin to die; seeing a total *cessation* of animal motion, does then take place. It might be proper for such adepts in criticism, to try their skill in settling the point with the apostle James, who speaketh in this wise, "Thou *believest* there is a God thou *dost* well," James 2. 19. There is need of a critical exposition of the apostle's words, for the benefit of the public; that they may learn how to *do well* without *doing* any thing; or how *well doing* comports with the idea of total *inactivity*.

called popes; but though it has likewise been reported that they were Peter's successors, and Christ's vicegerents on earth, yet blessed be God, many have no faith in that matter, because on due examination there is no proof, or *evidence*, to support the claim. On the other hand, the Jews believe that Jesus Christ was in the world, but though there is *full* evidence of his being the *Messiah*, yet they have no faith in him as such, owing to enmity against him, and criminal inattention to the concurrent testimony of the scriptures of truth, which their fathers fulfilled, in condemning of him. They do not see that the mosaic dispensation was done away in Christ, not through want of evidence, which shines with more than meridian brightness, but because of the blindness of their hearts: upon which there is a veil to this day, and will remain till sovereign grace shall turn them to the Lord.* Once more; faith frequently, in common affairs, as well as in religion, respects *interest and claim*. But to support *such* a belief requires evidence of a *relative* nature. Who ever laid claim to a kingdom, or even a cottage, *merely* on account of believing the description of it. However firm a person's persuasion be of the *existence* of such a place, and though he likewise believes that it is beautiful for situation, yet *common sense* checks presumption, and teaches the necessity of evidence of *personal* right, in order to appropriating faith, or a believing it is his own. Dear brethren, we wish it to be observed and remembered, that believing of *every* kind is founded on *evidence*. A persuasion however *firm*, which has no evidence to *support* it, is not *faith*, but *fancy*.

These few general observations we hope, if duly considered, will tend to make the *scripture* account of *true* faith, more easy to be understood; and likewise to illustrate the apostles definition of it's *complex* nature, i. e. as it relates to the *things* believed, and the *act* of believing things unseen: which may, with the strictest propriety, be said to arise from *the evidence of invisible realities*.

Having made these few general remarks for the purpose of elucidating the subject, we shall now endeavour to explain the nature of saving faith, or that believing with which the salvation of the soul stands connected in the scriptures of truth. And as we live in a period wherein the *nature* of faith is not only misunderstood by many professors, but it's *necessity* denied, and a dull, partial morality made the all, or whole of religion; it is therefore equally necessary we should endeavour to point out it's *real importance*. As it is *your* edification and comfort, in connection with God's glory, which we have principally in view, and wish to promote, we therefore intreat you, dear brethren, to unite with us in fervent supplications to the divine throne, for a blessing to accompany the attempt, that it may not be in vain, but crowned with great success.

By faith in Jesus Christ we understand a cordial belief of the truth, as it is in him, or related to him. And a true scriptural faith in the Son of God is divided in the volume of inspiration, into *three* distinct branches, which, as we have observed, is the case respecting faith in common.

First, believing that things declared in the report of the gospel concerning the Saviour, are real *facts*, and not *fables*. Evidence of their being so, ariseth from a conviction of the divine original of the holy scriptures, which testify of him.

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There is sufficient evidence that holy men spake as they were moved by the holy ghost. Were men quite impartial, and diligent in their enquiries into the divinity of the scriptures, they would be constrained to acknowledge them as the true sayings of God. And if the testimony of men be received and credited, surely the testimony of God is greater. Who that considers the nature of *deity*, and *humanity*, and observes a *contradiction* in the reports made by them, can forbear saying, *Let God be true, and every man a liar.* Rom. 3. 4.

The things relating to Christ's person as God, and his complex capacity as Emanuel, God in our nature, are asserted, and their truth demonstrated in the sacred pages. The language by which such truths are therein revealed is plain and strong, suited to convey *intelligence* and carry *conviction* to every *conscientious* enquirer. The same may be said concerning his offices, undertakings, relations, blood, and obedience. And *thus saith the Lord* is a sufficient evidence of matter of fact, though in various instances the nature and modes of truth established by his authority, may infinitely transcend the comprehension of finite beings. But, in such instances, God does not require men to believe *how* things are, the *modus* or manner of which are not explained, or revealed. That would be to require faith without evidence of fact, contrary to his *wisdom*, and *equity*. It is criminal not to believe the mystery of godliness, and that it is without controvery great. But the *mysterious nature* of a revealed truth is neither the *object* of faith nor the *subject* of human understanding. No reasonable objection can be made against God's requiring his creatures to believe the *reality* of divine *mysteries*, or that some things *are*, though the manner *how* they are, remain an impenetrable secret; seeing it is the same in a vast variety of instances, respecting faith in common, or the general belief of mankind, in regard to the things of nature. The doctrines of *gravitation*, and *cohesion* of matter are generally believed, though no one pretends to know, or believe *how* these things are.

In regard to the various doctrines, and ordinances of the gospel, they are so intelligibly made known in the scriptures, that men have believed, and may without *supernatural* illumination, believe and defend them, considered *simply* as matters of fact. Simon the forcerer, believed, and was baptized. And many believed for a time who forsook Jesus and walked no more with him. Thou believest says St. James, there is a God, thou dost well; but the devils believe and tremble. Satan believed and acknowledged, as well as the apostle Peter, that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God.* Such a faith is so far right, and absolutely necessary to salvation; for, faith the redeemer, *except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* † But though necessary, it is awfully deficient, as it does not prove it's subjects to be in a safe state; it does not influence to love and obedience, but is dead, being alone. James 2. 17. Therefore

Secondly, True faith, or a believing unto righteoufness, includes in it an *approbation* of Christ, and the gospel. For in the word of God not only the *reality* of things are established, but their *nature*, and *qualities*, are declared, and exhibited. Therefore, as the apostle observes, it is not only *a faithful saying* (or what may be depended upon as a fact, but likewise) *worthy of all acceptation*, (as containing intelligence infinitely good, and desirable, as well as true,) *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,* 1 Tim. 1. 15. The *preciousness* of Christ, and the

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* Mark 3. 11. † John 8. 24.

suitableness of the gospel to the helpless and miserable condition of guilty men, are subjects on which the scriptures copiously treat, and beautifully illustrate their *intrinsic* worth and soul-saving efficacy; and which only true christians really credit and cordially embrace: for though the carnal professor may be *sound* in the faith, as it relates to the *theory* of religion, and believes the *same* things considered simply as a *system* of established *facts*, which the real christian does, yet being under the dominion of sin, and destitute of spiritual discernment, he does not behold the *beauty* of divine truths, and therefore does not believe an *essential* part of the gospel report; but respecting their *intrinsic value*, transcendent *excellency*, and infinite *glory*, they are *unbelievers*: though they give a cold assent to various things, as matters of fact, yet in respect of the *marrow*, and *soul* of the gospel, *on* which the saints *feast*, and *by* which they are *influenced*, they have no faith. Hence those who receive not the truth, in the love of it, that they might be saved, are absolutely described, and treated as *unbelievers*. 2 Thef. 2, 10, 11. Those who have no faith in the *loveliness* of Christ, and to whom the evidence of gospel glory is *hid*, are destitute of an interest in salvation, having believed in vain.* But those who receive and *fully* credit the gospel, considered as tidings of great joy, they not only believe the *truth* of the divine report, relating to *facts*, but the evidence of it's containing *good tidings* of good things, they clearly perceive; and therefore earnestly desire the full possession and enjoyment of them. Agreeable to the aforesaid view of things, the apostle, when speaking of true faith, as exemplified in the old testament saints, says, concerning Christ and gospel blessings, they were not only *persuaded of them*, as matters of fact, but *embraced them* as the chief good. Heb. 11. 13.

You will perceive, dear brethren, the propriety of considering *approbation* of Christ and the gospel as essential to true faith, if you attend to the scriptural account of it; as influencing the minds of the godly, towards it's glorious object, and blessed author: and whilst you read, we wish you to reflect on your own experience, whether your souls have, or have not, felt the genuine operations of this *precious faith*. It is necessarily presupposed in the gospel, that the human race are in a guilty, impure, and helpless state; for the end of Christ's incarnation was to procure pardon for, and convey purity to, the sons of men.

The design of his offering up himself as a sacrifice, was, that they might be delivered from punishment. He bore the threatened curse, that they might escape the tremendous vengeance of the justly-offended Deity, and be brought into an happy state of amity and friendship with GOD; be rendered capable of serving him with chearful obedience, of enjoying sweet communion with him here, and uninterrupted felicity hereafter; where their souls will see and enjoy the infinite *beauty* and *bounty* of Jehovah, for ever and ever. These being the kind designs of our condescending Saviour, he therefore has not only procured for them, by his obedience and death, a legal title to perpetual bliss, and opened a way to the celestial world; but in order that they may be *fitted* for such a state of spiritual enjoyment, the Holy Ghost is sent to convince of sin, and give them a due sense of obligation to their saviour, and a proper view of the moral perfections of the great Eternal. By his infinite operations, they become the subjects of new sensations, being made alive or delivered from the state of spiritual insensibility, in which they lay, when dead

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in trespasses and sins. In consequence of an internal change produced by the Spirit of God, the understanding, which was before in total darkness, respecting the spirituality of divine objects, now perceives the propriety of Jehovah's government, with the direful effects flowing from their unprovoked revolt, and criminal opposition to his rightful authority; from thence intelligence is conveyed to the conscience, of dreadful danger, and impending ruin. Conscience being roused, ascends the seat of judgment, and pronounceth the awful sentence of death, in the most terrific manner; thereby the passions are alarmed; *fear* trembles, and the *imagination* pictures future misery in ten thousand awful forms; *hope* sickens, and in agony expires; the *will* is perplexed, and knows not what to do; would be glad to escape approaching ruin, and flee from the doleful sound of damnation, which echoes through the soul. But where, O where can the sinner run for safety, or how shall he be screened from eternal tribulation, anguish, and unutterable woe? Former refuges fail, being all swept away by the deluge of wrath. And the frightened soul feels herself surrounded with the heart-searching omnipotent, in the character of a sin-avenging God. In the above alteration, which by the Spirit of God is produced, and extended through the soul, is even included the *primary*, or first actings of faith, by which the scripture testimony concerning the nature of God; the equity, spirituality, extent, and perpetuity of his law is credited, and approved as *holy, just, and good*; and the divine solemn declarations respecting the *hateful nature* of sin, it's infinite *demerit* and *damning* tendency are no longer doubtful, but most firmly believed. However, being now the subject of a principle which reveres, and pays close attention to the word of the Lord, and hearing of a favour graciously provided for self-ruined sinners of the human race; the guilty, but now renewed soul, is disposed to make a serious and diligent enquiry into the truth of the reviving report, which being done, the important fact is found not only established beyond a doubt, but the evidences of the infinite *ability* and *suitableness* of Jesus the favour, and the necessity of his great salvation, appear clear, full, and decisive. For the salvation in it's nature and extent, is adequate to all the desires and utmost wishes of such a person, because it consists not only in a freedom from the punishment due to him, but also from it's power and pollution. This being the case, true faith operates in every power of the soul. *It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*, which believing is copiously described in scripture, as *corresponding* with, and *exactly agreeing* to, the various representations of Christ, it's peculiar object. In all which descriptions, *evidence* and *approbation* of the *excellency* of the truth believed, are connected, illustrated, and established. From the many instances which might be given, we shall select the following few:

1. Faith in Jesus is called a receiving of him, John 1. 11. 12. Col. 2. 6. and when so, it frequently respects the testimony concerning him being believed, and properly regarded. See John 3. 32, 33, 36. Thus, when Paul besought the Lord to shew him the path of duty, Jesus appeared to him and said, get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me, i. e. they would not believe it. Acts 22. 18. Christ is represented as a kind, compassionate visitor,* for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and says, I will see you again. Behold I stand

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* Luke 1. 68. John 16. 22. Rev. 3. 20.

at the door and knock, &c. Now when such an idea of Christ is given, what so proper to represent the actings of faith towards him as a cordial reception of him, or the soul giving Jesus an hearty welcome. Again, faith is called a receiving, because Christ is set forth as God's unspeakable gift to the sons of men; believing in him as such, is the soul's glad acceptance of the inestimable favour. A gracious God says *I give*, the language of faith is *I take*. *Isai.* 42. 6. *Psal.* 16. 13. *Rev.* 22. 17.

2. Christ is frequently compared in the scriptures to a place of safety, and is represented by a *refuge*, an *high tower*, an *house of defence*, an *hiding place*, a *covert*:* and by other figures which tend to shew the necessity of an application to him for deliverance from danger, which convicted sinners view themselves exposed to without a possibility of escaping, but as found in him. This being the case, the description of faith is beautifully diversified, for believing in him considered as a refuge, &c. would be improperly called a *receiving* him as in the former instances, therefore it is denominated a *fleeing*, or *running to him*, and an *abiding in him*. He is to the saints an *house of defence*, to which they continually resort, and has been their dwelling-place in all generations: for to him the righteous run and are safe, there being no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Hence the apostle, and with him every real christian, wishes above all things to be *found in him*. *Phil.* 3. 9.

3. If we consider Christ as lifted up for the healing of wounded souls, as the brazen serpent was in the wilderness, for the cure of the bitten Israelites: In that respect, and in *every other* in which he is set forth as an object to be *viewed*, faith in him, as such, is called a *looking to him*.

His compassionate language to miserable sinners is, Behold me, behold me, *Isai.* 65. 1. Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be ye saved. Accordingly it is written, They looked to him and were lightened, *Pf.* 34. 5. and saints run the race set before them, looking to Jesus. They see him who is invisible. For though they now see him not with eyes of flesh, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, *1 Peter* 1. 8.

4. He is called the hidden manna, the bread of life, and is to his people as rivers of water in a dry place. When so represented, believing in him is described by different terms, and illustrated by the natural acts of *eating and drinking*,† because the soul's support and spiritual vigour is entirely dependent on him, who is it's meat indeed and drink indeed; therefore, faith in him as such, is with the greatest propriety, represented not by *looking to him*, as in the former case, but by *living upon him* and *by him*, who is the only fit nourishment for immortal and heaven-born souls.

5. When Jesus is described as a liberal friend and generous benefactor, or represented as a physician, captain, and counsellor, or whatever character amongst men be brought to illustrate and set him forth, as one to whom the gathering of the people should be; in those cases faith, or a believing in him, is, with beautiful propriety, called a *coming to him*. Hence he says, He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst, *John* 6. 35.--37. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, *Matt.* 11. 28.

6. In a word, a cordial belief of divine truth is differently denominated, as the various articles of faith, relating to Jesus, are treated of in the

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* *Pf.* 18. 2. *Heb.* 6. 18. *Isai.* 32. 2. † *John* 6. 33. to 58.

faered scriptures, or his infinite excellencies described. For instance, believing is called a trusting in him, when respect is had to his veracity and ability. I know, saith the apostle to Timothy, whom I have believed, (or trusted) and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day; and to the saints at Ephesus he says, In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, 1 Tim. 1. 12. Eph. 1. 13. It is evident that *trusting* and believing are used by him as synonymous terms, meaning the same thing; and there is nothing abstruse or difficult to be understood in the expression; for what more common than to say of a person of known integrity and unblemished reputation, when any thing is declared or promised by him of which others doubt, *he is one that may be trusted, you may rely on his word*: meaning you may believe what he says. And respecting a person of an opposite character, men of prudence frequently express themselves thus, "We have no *faith* in what he relates; he is not to be *trusted*; we cannot *confide* in him; we can have no *dependance* on what he says; we can place no *confidence* in him." The obvious meaning or design in using the above terms is to express one simple fact, which is, *that such a man is not to be believed*. Thus it appears, that the various names given to faith or believing, do not, if duly considered, render it's nature doubtful or difficult to be understood, which some have apprehended: But on the contrary, there is a *beautiful* and *necessary* diversity and *admirable* propriety in the terms used by the Spirit of God, in explaining the delightful and important subject; which we apprehend, if properly attended to, would convince the impartial enquirer, that true faith consists in *a cordial belief of divine truth*, arising from the evidence of it's reality and nature.

We proceed briefly to consider the third branch of faith, or faith as it respects *personal* interest in *spiritual* blessings. Believing in *this* sense as much depends on *evidence* as either of the former. That which does not equally belong to all men, or is not every one's property, cannot fairly be claimed by any one, without giving evidence of personal right; for those whose right it is, must have something by which their claim may be proved genuine, which others have not.*

Faith, in the sense in which we now speak, is a believing the divine testimony respecting *who are the sons of God and heirs of glory*. We wish you, dear brethren, to consider, that the descriptions God has given of such, do not relate to their natural birth nor their abilities. Their descent, condition, situation, and connections in life, and every thing merely of an external nature and kind, are immaterial. For God is no respecter of persons. Their internal dispositions, and holy conversations, are the only criteria by which they are distinguished. The Lord, through
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* Some indeed apprehend that all men ought to believe that Christ is their's, and they are his, because they suppose his love and death extended equally to all the human race. It is granted, that such a faith or a firm persuasion of personal interest in Christ is quite consistent with the aforesaid hypothesis. For he who believes Christ loved and died for every man, has as good a right (in his own apprehension) as any man, to say *he loved me, and gave himself for me*: he cannot think otherwise, unless he happens to doubt of his humanity. There is no need of personal holiness to prove his claim. All that is necessary in that case is to demonstrate he is one of the human species, and not a brute, for it is not likely that any will suspect his being of the angelic order.

the riches of his sovereign grace, makes them to differ from others and their former selves, and then minutely describes the difference made, and kindly connects the promise of salvation to all the genuine actings of those new principles, of which they are the happy subjects. Those only are the heirs of salvation to whom the Lord it's author declares it belongs. Consequently none are warranted by the scriptures to believe the blessings of the gospel are their *own*, any further than as their characters answer to the *descriptions* given of those who shall be saved. Some there are who seem to be under an awful delusion, apprehending that true faith and it's soul-destructive opposite, unbelief, always respect personal interest. They urge men to believe firmly that Christ is their's, even while there is no *evidence from scripture, sense, or reason*, that he is so. But though there is no evidence of the thing believed being *true*, yet it will, it is said, be found a *fact*, if they can but firmly believe it; and to doubt of personal safety is accounted by such the damning sin of unbelief.* This sentiment is thought to be countenanced by the apostle's words, *he that doubteth is damned*, Rom. 14. 23. that is, *if he eat*, not otherwise. So that doubting was not what Paul so severely censured, but the eating of that which the person had not satisfactory evidence was lawful to be partook of. In consequence of which, so far as respected *that* action, he stood *condemned* in his own conscience, and likewise by God, and good men. Therefore every one ought to be persuaded in his own mind, respecting what is lawful and right, because he who thinketh any thing unclean, to him it is unclean. And should not every one be equally concerned to obtain evidence of the reality of what he believes? For falsehood will never become a fact though men should strain every nerve in striving to believe it. There is not the least intimation in scripture, that a person *ought* to believe Christ is his own, in order that he *may* be his; or that if a man can but firmly believe his sins are pardoned, all his transgressions shall be forgiven. The sacred scriptures require no man to believe a thing is true which is not *previously* revealed as a fact. For faith does not give *existence* to what is believed, but the very existence of *faith* is owing to the evidence of truth. A man would be treated as an idiot, were he to plead in a court

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of

* It is somewhat singular that this notion of faith, as consisting in an assurance of personal interest in Christ, which was in the last age reckoned a distinguished tenet of those that were then called *Antinomians*, should be principally maintained by the most zealous *Arminians* of the present day.

The well-known leader of the *Arminian Methodists* has been frequently charged with duplicity and ungenerous artifice, but perhaps one instance which has been hitherto unnoticed, will be found, upon examination, to exceed these for which he has been most severely censured.---We refer to his most *partial* and *mutilated* abridgement of *president Edwards's account of the life of David Brainerd*; the original of which we so warmly recommended in our last annual letter. We should apprehend that whoever compares the genuine account with Mr. Wesley's extract in vol. xii. of his works (Bristol edit. 1772) would be unable to forbear suspecting that his grand design in this performance was under pretence of giving his people the substance of Mr. Brainerd's experience, to keep them from perusing a book replete with the most striking evidence of the holy tendency of the doctrine of grace. No publication we ever yet saw is better calculated to sap the foundation of Mr. Wesley's erroneous principles than the genuine life of Brainerd. It was therefore very politic, but very unfair, in this manner to curtail a history which has such a tendency to confirm those principles which are called calvinistic, and to give the most powerful confutation of Mr. Wesley's usual misrepresentation of them. He himself can hardly pretend to shew a more eminent example of self-denial, meekness, humility, forgiveness of injuries, zeal for God's glory, love to mankind, and an ardent thirst after universal holiness, &c. than Mr. Brainerd. Yet it is most evident, from the true narrative of his conversion, that it

of judicature his right to an estate, *merely* upon his being credibly informed, and therefore firmly believed, there was one of great value, lying and being in such a place: though he should add that the belief of it's being his *own*, has afforded him unspeakable pleasure for a *long* time; yea that he has not had one doubt respecting his title, for several years, such pleas would be regarded no further than as mournful indications of insanity.

It might be well if persons would try their skill on things of less moment than what involves their eternal welfare; and if they find they are successful in *converting* common *falsehoods* into *facts* by the power of faith, then may they entertain some comfortable hope that all will be *well* at last, provided they *firmly* believe it, although at the present there is *no evidence from scripture, sense, or reason*, that they are in a state of safety.

But if they find they cannot convert one single falsehood into a fact, they ought to be cautious, and tremble, least what they believe *without* evidence of it's reality, be swept away as a refuge of lies, and their souls mourn at the last with bitter lamentations, that they rejoiced in a thing of nought.† But dear brethren, we hope better things of you, though we thus speak. You have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, and been taught of him, as the truth is in Jesus. We beseech you to examine yourselves whether you are in the faith; whether you are included in the description God has given of saints, as such, in the scriptures of truth. Do you cordially receive and embrace Jesus the saviour, for those purposes for which he is given of God, as has been mentioned? If so, such a reception is an evidence you are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, John 1. 13. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. It is the will of God that those who have fled for refuge to the

it was plainly founded in a clear, strong conviction and undoubting persuasion of the truth of these things, appertaining to these doctrines which *Arminians* most object against, and which his own mind had contended most about before. And his religion all along operated in such a manner as tended to confirm these doctrines. And he particularly declared, that when he lay a long while on the verge of eternity, he saw clearly the truth of these grand doctrines of the gospel, which are justly styled the *doctrines of grace*, and never felt himself so capable of demonstrating the truth of them. P. 230.

All this Mr. W. with the most crafty and culpable care, has studiously concealed, as well as Mr. B.'s sentiments concerning the nature of faith, though Mr. B. so strenuously opposed that idea of it which Mr. W. maintains: and particularly when a little recovered from that violent fit of illness at Boston, about three or four months before his death, he gladly embraced an opportunity which offered to bear a very full, plain, and open testimony against that opinion that the *essence* of saving *faith* lies in believing that Christ died for me in particular; and that this is the *first* act of faith in a true believer's closing with Christ---declaring, in a long conference with a gentleman who had publicly defended that tenet, that the essence of saving faith was wholly left out of that definition, and that he never had greater *assurance* of the falseness of the principles of those who maintain such a faith, and of their dangerous and destructive tendency; or a more affecting sense of the great delusion and misery of those that depended on getting to heaven by *such* a faith (while they had *no better*) than he lately had when he was supposed to be at the point of death and expected every minute to pass into *eternity*. Compare p. 9, with Wesley p. 35.---p. 230, 231, with Wesley p. 326.---p. 233, with Wesley 327.---p. 236, with Wesley 330. We recommend with peculiar earnestness Mr. Edwards's just observations on Mr. Brainerd's life, for which he received the thanks of several members of the classis of Amsterdam, the book having been translated in Holland, and was highly approved by the university of Utrecht.

† Amos 6. 13. Prov. 5. 13.

the hope set before them, should have strong consolation, for which purpose he has confirmed the promise of salvation with an oath—see Heb. 6. 17--19. The compassionate Jesus has described the people who are blessed, and shall be blessed, as poor in spirit, holy and humble, mourning under a sense of sin, and of a meek and merciful disposition, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and being the subjects of heart purity, they long for full conformity to God; they love to promote peace amongst men, and yet their regard to divine truth is such, that they are for it's sake willing to forego the sweets of social friendship amongst men, and to suffer persecution and slander—see Matt. 5. 3--12.

Those who love God and his holy image wherever they see it, who approve of his authority, and hope in his mercy, or admire the equity of his government, and the *grace* of his gospel; in a word, those who humbly depend upon Christ, and are truly devoted to him, to all such, whether ourselves or others, the promises of salvation are made. It is a revealed truth, that such shall not perish, but have everlasting life; to which truth we are called by the authority of God, to give the fullest credit: for all of such a description may truly say, this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his son. Now he that believeth this to his own comfort (if he be not deceived) hath *the witness in himself*, or a consciousness of his need, and approbation of Jesus the saviour, to whom, and to whose cause, he feels a union of affection. For he that is joined to the Lord is of one spirit with him—see 1 John 5. 10--11. 1 Cor. 6. 17. Thus being assured of the fact, by faith as founded on the divine testimony, it should be the concern of every such believer to arrive at the assurance of hope, as to it's fulfilment in respect of themselves in particular. It is an incontestable fact, that he that hath the son, hath life; and he that hath not the son, hath not life, John 5. 12. And whosoever believeth as the scripture hath said, setteth to his seal that God is true, John 3. 33. And he that believeth not God (respecting the final salvation of all that are spiritually united to Christ) hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his son, who came to save his people not in but from their sins, Matt. 1. 21. Be concerned; brethren, we entreat you, to discover the truth of your faith by your works: ever remember that it is by holy obedience that your faith is proved to be of a genuine kind. *If we say that we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. He that sayeth I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. He that sayeth he abideth in him, ought himself to walk even as he walked. We have not written to you because you know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. These things we have written unto you that BELIEVE on the name of the son of God (with a cordial approving faith) that ye may KNOW ye have eternal life. And that ye may believe on the name of the son of God with appropriation as well as approbation—see 1 John 5. 9--13.*

You will perceive we hope, by what hath been said, the specific difference between true faith and that cold unanimating assent, which formal and profane professors may give to religious subjects; the reality and connection of which may be perceived, where *blindness* prevails respecting the spiritual glory and beauty of divine truth. Nor is real faith less distinguishable from those groundless persuasions and airy fancies which elate the minds of some. For scriptural faith is founded on a

slow faith the Lord, whether it relate to simple matters of fact *that things* are, or their revealed nature and quality respecting *what they are*, or relatively considered *whose they are*; therefore believe not every spirit, but try them by that touchstone of truth, the divine *testimony*. Religion is of a nature infinitely important, and calls for the greatest caution and circumspection; a deception therein is of all others the most dreadful and dangerous: it is that to which men are the most liable, and of which they are the hardest to be convinced; especially those who are taught to believe without evidence. For being under the dominion of self-love, and deaf to reason and revelation, they are apt to believe every thing of a soothing nature. *Comfort* instead of *conformity* to God is to them the all of religion, and when that is obtained by a delusive persuasion of future happiness, every attempt to deliver them from the fatal snare is treated as an unpardonable insult, or an instance of such cruelty as merits their warmest resentment and most vehement and (in their own esteem) most virtuous indignation. Such an one being held by the cords of this sin, he cannot (while so) deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand (Job 5. 22. Isai. 44. 20.) being taught the art of believing it into a truth. His *presumption* and *pleasure* by turns mutually support each other; for being *confident* he is *comfortable*, and being *comfortable* he is therefore *confident*; all is well. For according to such people's sentiments, a man must be right, provided he thinks so, and does not fear being wrong. As if the apostle, when he said *let us fear*, had meant *let us ruin faith*, Heb. 4. 1. How very striking is the contrast drawn by the Holy Ghost between those of the above character and such who are wise to salvation. *The simple believeth every word, but the prudent looketh well to his going. A wise man searcheth and departeth from evil, but the fool rageth and is confident*, Prov. 14. 15, 16.

As a conclusion of this particular, permit us to observe, that though faith in all the saints is *like precious* in it's nature; yet it is very different as to it's degrees in distinct persons, and in the same persons at different times. One says, Lord if thou canst do any thing. Another's language is, If thou wilt thou canst make me clean. And the disciples of Jesus, in a time of darkness said, *We trusted it had been he*. To whom he addressed himself when they were in a state of hesitation, in the following kind and yet cutting words; O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt.

Every child of God is possessed of what is in it's nature an evidence of an interest in Jesus, but they have not always light enough to discern it. Therefore, who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant (the blessed Emmanuel) that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, Isai. 50. 10. who does not despise the day of small things. Ye weak of the flock, consider that the compassionate Jesus will gather the lambs in his arms, carry them in his bosom, and gently lead them that are with young, Isai. 40. 11. May each of the Churches be *cautious* without being *cruel*. Let none be admitted into your communities but such as give evidence of the reality of their faith; and such as are weak in the faith receive ye, Rom. 14. 1.

We shall now briefly consider the importance of special faith in general.

1. Without true faith in Jesus there is no salvation to be expected from him. By grace are ye saved through faith.* He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.† He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten son of God,‡ whom he hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. § Neither is there any other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. || Though men devise ten thousand methods of salvation, yet if the scriptures be at all regarded, none will avail but faith in Jesus. However, faith may be decried as insignificant, and virtue (though partial) be extolled as intitling to future bliss: we wish you to remember what the redeemer hath said, I am the way, and no man can come unto the father but by me. ¶ And as to the various pleas urged in favour of those whose deportment is decent, though destitute of faith, we have only to say, that according to the scriptures we ought to dread being found among them who shall have their portion in a future state *with unbelievers*—see Luke 12. 46.

2. It is by faith we become acquainted with the great and gracious designs of God. Reason could never have found out the method of salvation; or whether it was possible for God to justify a sinner, consistent with his natural purity, and the righteousness of his government. All the philosophers on earth, and angels in heaven, could never have discovered how the perfections of Deity could be glorified, and sinners saved. But now this wisdom of God is opened up, and displayed by the gospel, which faith receives and surveys, with profound reverence and holy wonder. Faith enters into, and discovers the very immanent acts of God. The secrets of Jehovah's heart are laid open to faith, through the intelligence brought by Jesus, the messenger of the covenant, who lay in his bosom. When faith ascends mount Calvary's summit, to view the suffering saviour, with the causes and consequences of his dolorous death, what a prospect opens to the believer's view! a boundless eternity presents itself, (Acts 4. 27. 28.) in which faith beholds the sovereign love and solemn transactions of Deity, in favour of the sons of men, when as yet there was none of them. In consequence of which covenant engagements, Jesus, in our nature, became a sacrifice to punitive justice, that the sinner might be saved and treated as the friend and favourite of God.** Faith likewise looks forward to an endless duration of celestial pleasure and heavenly bliss, to which every person and perfection in Jehovah stands engaged (through the merit and mediation of Jesus) to bring his chosen to the full possession and enjoyment thereof.

3. Not only information, but consolation is owing to faith: men, as the subjects of it, are pronounced justified; and by it they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and have access into the grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in hope of promised glory. Rom. 5. 1--4. Hence Timothy was sent by the apostle to the Thessalonians to comfort them concerning their faith. 1 Thes. 3. 2. It is by faith saints are declared to be the sons of God, and in union with Christ Jesus. It is by faith that all we, out of Christ's fullness receive, and grace for grace. Faith views all the divine perfections with pleasure; and righteousness, so much injured by

* Eph. 2. 8. † Mark 16. 16. ‡ John 3. 18--36. § Rom. 3. 25. || Acts 4. 12. ¶ John 14. 6. ** John 1. 16. 10. 17. 18. Acts 2. 23. John 17. 23. 24. Prov. 8. 35.

by man's transgression, shines with peculiar lustre in the believers salvation; and as engaged in his favour, it is in the gospel, *Revealed from faith to faith*. Rom. i. 17. If you are true believers, you have reason to rejoice evermore,* even with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. For all things are your's, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.
1 Cor. 3. 22, 23.

4. It is essential to acceptable worship. He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and likewise what he is, even a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.† Without faith our worship would be unmeaning dull formality. But by faith the beautiful character of God is surveyed; his authority revered; and the noble ends of his holy institutions understood and pursued. Through faith the heart goes out to, and follows hard after God.‡ It stimulates and regulates the soul in the exercise of all her mental powers. Fear flies from those appearances and paths which faith points out as evil and pronounceth dangerous. Hope and love, with a crowd of attendant desires, go forth in eager pursuit after that good which faith discovers in the great Eternal, as the souls satisfying portion. § By faith the soul enters into the holy of holies, and finds access to God through the blood of Jesus. In the course of private and public duties, the believer enjoys, at times, sweet nearness to God, reverend and holy freedom with him, cheering expectations from him, and inexpressible delight in him. On the other hand, confession, supplication, praise, and prayer, are even offences to God where faith is not: without faith ordinances are unprofitable; preaching is of no advantage, except it be mixed with faith in them that hear it: baptism and the Lord's supper avail nothing without faith; they are only signs and figures of spiritual things, and it is only by faith the sacred significancy of these appointments can be discerned, and an attendance to them accompanied with true pleasure and real profit. It was by faith that Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. By faith Moses kept the passover—see Heb. 11. And indeed so important and necessary is it in religion, that without faith it is impossible to please God. || For whatever is not of faith is sin. (Rom. 14. 23.)

5. True faith is an invariable friend to holiness, and the source from whence real virtue flows. It purifies the heart, and is denominated by them who well knew it's nature *a most holy faith*. (Jude 20.) The believer by faith considers him with whom he has to do is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and his mental language often is *thou God seekest me*. ¶ By faith God dwells in his heart, and his heart centers in his God. Faith looks to the Holy Ghost, in the character of a sanctifier, as well as to Jesus the saviour. And the believer's soul is as much concerned to have conscience *purified as pacified*. His faith gives full credit to the solemn declaration, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Heb. 12. ¹⁴²⁰ *A living faith is an avowed enemy to dead works, and the best promoter of holy obedience*. It is true, that in point of justification or *personal acceptance with God*, faith stands in opposition to the works of the law, and cannot bear a coalition, between the *grace of God*, and the obedience of men. But for other purposes, faith approves of the connection, and cannot bear the idea of a separation. So strong
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* 1 Thes. 5. 16. † Heb. 11. 6. ‡ Pl. 63. 7, 8. § Pl. 103. 1--5. Pl. 116. 12.
|| Heb. 11. 6. Rom. 8. 8. ¶ Heb. 4. 13. Gen. 16. 13.

and close is the friendship between faith and holy obedience, that a disunion would be it's destruction. As sayeth the apostle, Faith without works is dead, being alone. James 2. 17. Do we therefore make void the law through faith? God forbid; we establish the law. Rom. 3. 31. As it is the very nature of faith to believe the divine testimony, there is nothing it more fully credits than that true christians are not without law to GOD, but under the law to Christ. (1 Cor. 9. 21.) Faith therefore points to a period, which *hope* longs for the arrival of, when the righteousness of the law shall be fulfilled *in us*, as well as it has been *for us*. Rom. 8. 4. In a word, faith prefers holiness to it's own existence. It was brought into being (if we may so speak) for the purpose of forming sinners for heavenly bliss, and accompanying them to the entrance on perfect purity. Then will faith (and likewise it's companion hope) expire like good old Simeon, who in raptures of joy said with the saviour in his arms, Now letteth thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

6. Gospel faith is absolutely necessary to support the soul under the trying vicissitudes of life and the agonies of death. Many are the afflictions of the righteous* in passing through this vale of tears. Various distressing dispensations and buffeting temptations combine to depress their spirits, and crush them down into deep despondency.† But faith, in the precious promises with which the gospel abounds, inspires the mind with *calmness* and *courage*. Does the world appear a formidable foe? This is the victory whereby we overcome it, even our faith. 1 John 5. 4. The language of GOD is, *Be content with such things as ye have, I will never leave you nor forsake you*. Faith enables the believer with the apostle to reply, *So then, we may boldly say the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me*. Heb. 13. 5, 6. Faith views Jesus at the helm of all human affairs, and is persuaded every thing shall work together for the good of them who love GOD and are called according to his purpose. †

Again, GOD declares all things under the sun are vanity. || A belief of this prevents elevation in outward prosperity, and inordinate anxiety in the darkest providences; and influenceth the soul to forsake *senseless* for *invisible* enjoyments, and in the most trying season with composure to say *all is well*. §

When faith enables us to view GOD as our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, the conclusion is, therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. (Ps. 46.) For in such a scene of confusion and horrid desolation, faith rises up from amidst the ruins of nature, and leads the happy soul to a kingdom which cannot be moved, to a city whose foundations are as *firm* and *durable* as Jehovah's throne. "His hand the good man fastens on the skies, and bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl." ¶ Do the saints tremble under a sense of their own weakness and folly, when called to combat with the powers of darkness? Yes; they are dismayed when they consider the *force*, the *fury*, and the *fraud* of that *infernal* host. But when faith brings the cheering

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intelligence

* Ps. 34. 16. † 2 Cor. 12. 7. † See Eph. 1. 21, 22. Rom. 8. 28. || Eccles. 1. 2.
§ Heb. 3. 7. 2 Kings 4. 26. Mark 7. 37. ¶ Night Thoughts, No. 4.

intelligence, *the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*, (Rom. 16. 20.) their souls anticipate the victory, and in triumph sing, *We are more than conquerors through him that loved us*: for each believer may with confidence say, “ I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heights, nor depths, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 8. 37-39.

The last enemy is generally on various accounts the most dreaded; but how often have timorous faints been triumphant when called to grapple with death: they have dared to look the king of terrors in the face with sweet composure; and with courage say, O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory. Believing views of Jesus as *Jehovah*, and a persuasion of his presence in that perilous period will make the feeble faint become as David, who with holy boldness said, *Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Ps. 23. 4.*

Read dear brethren, read with a spirit of emulation, the triumphs of faith in Heb. 11. as exemplified in those worthies, whose names are enrolled in the eternal records of fame, and whose souls are landed safe on the peaceful shores of immortal bliss. O that all of you may be followers of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises; that at last you may receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. And may you and we, in our daily addresses to the divine throne, never forget the disciples request, but make it our own, crying with holy fervour to the divine Jesus, *Lord increase our faith!* Finally brethren, pray for us who are for Christ's sake,

Your willing servants in the gospel.

Signed on behalf of the
associate brethren, by

ROBERT HALL, Moderator.

B R E V I A T E S.

On Tuesday evening we met at the usual hour, after time spent in prayer and a moderator chosen, the letters from the several Churches were read, and minutes made of their contents. The opportunity was then concluded in prayer.

On Wednesday morning about six, we met for prayer, in which several of the ministers were engaged.

At or about ten, the public meeting began—our brother Evans of Foxton prayed—after which brother Sutcliffe of Olney gave a brief account of the nature and design of the association—brother Ryland, senior, of Northampton, preached from Rev. 3. 2. *Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die.* Brother Smith, of Oakham, prayed, and brother Hall, of Arnesby, preached from 1 Co. 13. 13. *Now abide faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.* Brother Gill, of St. Albans, concluded the public meeting with prayer.

The afternoon was spent in considering divers cases, and in the evening public worship was again attended to.

Brother

Brother Booth, of London, preached from 1 John 4. 11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

The contents of the circular letter were afterwards read by the moderator, and being approved, was ordered to be printed.

Thursday morning we met for prayer and communicating the dealings of God with us, as ministers, during the last year, which we still find mutually advantageous. Near twelve, the association was concluded with prayer by the moderator.

State of the Churches since the last Association :

Added upon profession of faith and experience, - - -	59
By letters of dismission from other churches, - - -	6
	<hr/> 65
Dead, - - - - -	25
Excluded from church communion, - - - - -	18
Dismissed to other churches, - - - - -	5
	<hr/> 48
	<hr/>
Increase, - - - - -	17

N. B. The next association to be held at **OLNEY**, on *Wednesday, June 5*, (*Whitsun-Week* not being suitable on the account of fairs in that neighbourhood.) Brother *Hopper* and brother *Guy* to preach ; in case of failure brother *Fuller* and brother *Gill*.

The ministers and messengers to meet the evening before.

* * Put up at the Swan.

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