four famous treatises: Mr. Guthrie's 'Trial of a Saving Interest in Christ;' Mr. Marshal's 'Gospel Mystery of Sanctification;' Mr. Boston's 'Human Nature in its Fourfold State;' or Dr. Doddridge's 'Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.' If any profane person, who desires to be converted, enter into the spirit of those books, he thereby becomes twofold more a child of hell than he was before." (Page 436.)

Such is the doctrine, such is the spirit, of Palæmon! condemning the whole generation of God's children; sending all his opponents to hell at once; casting arrows, firebrands, death on every side! But I stop. God be merciful to thee a sinner; and show thee compassion, though thou hast none for thy fellow-servants! Otherwise it will be more tolerable, I will not say for Seneca or Epictetus, but for Nero or Domitian, in the day of judgment, than for thee!

A LETTER

TO

A GENTLEMAN AT BRISTOL.

BRISTOL, *January* 6, 1758.

SIR,

YOU desire my thoughts on a paper lately addressed to the inhabitants of St. Stephen's parish, and an answer thereto, entitled, "A Seasonable Antidote against Popery." I have at present little leisure, and cannot speak so fully as the importance of the subject requires. I can only just tell you wherein I do or do not agree with what is advanced in the one or the other.

I agree with the main of what is asserted in that paper, allowing for some expressions which I could wish had been altered, because some of them are a little obscure, others liable to misinterpretation; indeed, so liable, that they could

scarce fail to be misunderstood by the unwary, and censured by the unfriendly, reader.

But I cannot agree, that "obedience is a condition of, or antecedent to, justification," unless we mean final justification. This I apprehend to be a considerable mistake; although, indeed, it is not explicitly asserted, but only implied in some parts of that address.

I entirely agree with the author of the "Seasonable Antidote," in the important points that follow:—

"That a sinner is justified or accounted righteous before God, only through the righteousness" (or merits) "of Jesus Christ; that the end of his living and dying for us was, that our persons first, and then our works, might be accepted; that faith is the hand which apprehends, the instrument which applies, the merits of Christ for our justification; that justifying faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit; that He evidences our being justified, by bearing his testimony with our spirits, that we are the children of God, and by enabling us to bring forth, first the inward, and then the outward, fruits of the Spirit; and, lastly, that these fruits do not justify us, do not procure our justification, but prove us to be justified; as the fruits on a tree do not make it alive, but prove it to be alive." (Pages 33, 34.)

These undoubtedly are the genuine principles of the Church of England. And they are confirmed, as by our Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies, so by the whole tenor of Scripture. Therefore, till heaven and earth pass away, these truths will not pass away.

But I do not agree with the author of that tract, in the spirit of the whole performance. It does not seem to breathe either that modesty, or seriousness, or charity, which one would desire. One would not desire to hear any private person, of no great note in the Church or the world, speak, as it were, *ex cathedrâ*, with an air of infallibility, or at least of vast self-sufficiency, on a point wherein men of eminence, both for piety, learning, and office, have been so greatly divided. Though my judgment is nothing altered, yet I often condemn myself for my past manner of speaking on this head. Again: I do not rejoice at observing any thing light or ludicrous in an answer to so serious a paper; and much less in finding any man branded as a Papist, because his doctrine in one particular instance resembles (for that is the utmost

which can be proved) a doctrine of the Church of Rome. I can in no wise reconcile this to the grand rule of charity,—Doing to others as we would they should do to us.

Indeed, it is said, "Dr. T. openly defends the fundamental doctrine of Popery, justification by works." (Page 3.) Therefore, "he must be a Papist." (Page 4.) But here is a double mistake: For, 1. Whatever may be implied in some of his expressions, it is most certain Dr. T. does not openly defend justification by works. 2. This itself, justification by works, is not the fundamental doctrine of Popery, but the universality of the Romish Church, and the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. And to call any one a Papist who denies these, is neither charity nor justice.

I do not agree with the author in what follows: Dr. T. "loses sight of the truth, when he talks of Christ's having obtained for us a covenant of better hopes; and that faith and repentance are the terms of this covenant. They are not. They are the free gifts of the covenant of grace, not the terms or conditions. To say, 'Privileges of the covenant are the terms or conditions of it,' is downright Popery."

This is downright calling names, and no better. But it falls on a greater than Dr. T. St. Paul affirms, Jesus Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises; yea, and that better covenant he hath obtained for us, by his own blood. And if any desire to receive the privileges which are freely given according to the tenor of this covenant, Jesus Christ himself has marked out the way,—"Repent, and believe the gospel." These, therefore, are the terms of the covenant, unless the author of it was mistaken. These are the conditions of it; unless a man can enter into the kingdom, without either repenting or believing. For the word *condition* means neither more nor less than something *sine quâ non;* without which something else is not done. Now, this is the exact truth with regard to repenting and believing; without which God does not work in us "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

It is true, repentance and faith are privileges and free gifts. But this does not hinder their being conditions too. And neither Mr. Calvin himself, nor any of our Reformers, made any scruple of calling them so.

"But the gospel is a revelation of grace and mercy, not a proposal of a covenant of terms and conditions." (Page 5.)

It is both. It is a revelation of grace and mercy, to all that "repent and believe." And this the author himself owns in the following page: "The free grace of God applies to sinners the benefits of Christ's atonement and righteousness, by working in them repentance and faith." (Page 6.) Then they are not applied without repentance and faith; that is, in plain terms, these are the conditions of that application.

I read in the next page: "In the gospel we have the free promises of eternal life, but not annexed to faith and repentance, as works of man," (true; they are the gift of God,) "or the terms or conditions of the covenant." Yes, certainly; they are no less terms or conditions, although God works them in us.

"But what is promised us as a free gift, cannot be received upon the performance of any terms or conditions." Indeed it can. Our Lord said to the man born blind, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam." Here was a plain condition to be performed; something without which he would not have received his sight. And yet his sight was a gift altogether as free, as if the pool had never been mentioned.

"But if repentance and faith are the free gifts of God, can they be the terms or conditions of our justification?" (Page 9.) Yes: Why not? They are still something without which no man is or can be justified.

"Can then God give that freely, which he does not give but upon certain terms and conditions?" *(Ibid.)* Doubtless he can; as one may freely give you a sum of money, on condition you stretch out your hand to receive it. It is therefore no "contradiction to say, We are justified freely by grace, and yet upon certain terms or conditions." (Page 10.)

I cannot therefore agree, that "we are accepted without any terms previously performed to qualify us for acceptance." For we are not accepted, nor are we qualified for, or capable of, acceptance, without repentance and faith.

"But a man is not justified by works, but by the faith of Christ. This excludes all qualifications." (Page 13.) Surely it does not exclude the qualification of faith!

"But St. Paul asserts, 'To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness.'"

True: "To him that worketh not." But does God justify him that "believeth not?" Otherwise, this text proves just the contrary to what it is brought to prove.

But "our Church excludes repentance and faith from deserving any part of our justification. Why then do you insist upon them as qualifications requisite to our justification?" (Page 19.)

Because Christ and his Apostles do so. Yet we all agree, they do not deserve any part of our justification. They are no part of the meritorious cause; but they are the conditions of it. This and no other is "the doctrine of Scripture, and of the Church of England!" Both the Scripture and "our Church allow, yea, insist on these qualifications or conditions." (Page 21.)

"But if repentance and faith would not be valid and acceptable without the righteousness of Christ, then they cannot be necessary qualifications for our justification." (Page 22.) I cannot allow the consequence. They are not acceptable without the righteousness or merits of Christ; and yet he himself has made them necessary qualifications for our justification through his merits.

But the grand objection of this gentleman lies against the Doctor's next paragraph; the sum of which is: "The merits of Christ were never intended to supersede the necessity of repentance and obedience," (I would say, repentance and faith,) "but to make them acceptable in the sight of God, and to purchase for them" (I would add, that obey him) "a reward of immortal happiness."

I am not afraid to undertake the defence of this paragraph, with this small variation, against Mr. Chapman, Mr. Nyberg, Count Zinzendorf, or any other person whatever; provided only that he will set his name to his work; for I do not love fighting in the dark.

And I, as well as Dr. T., affirm, that "to say more than this concerning Christ's imputed merits," to say more than, that "they have purchased for us grace to repent and believe, acceptance upon our believing, power to obey, and eternal salvation to them that do obey him;"—to say more than this "is blasphemous Antinomianism," such as Mr. Calvin would have abhorred; and does "open a door to all manner of sin and wickedness."

"I must likewise affirm, that to talk of imputed righteousness in the manner many do at this day, is making the imaginary transfer of Christ's righteousness serve as a cover for the unrighteousness of mankind." (Page 26.) Does not

Mr. Ch-p—n do this at Bristol? Does not Mr. M—rd—n, at London? Let them shudder then, let their blood run cold, who do it; not theirs who tell them that they do so. It is not the latter, but the former, who "trample Christ's righteousness under foot as a mean and vile thing."

I firmly believe, "We are accounted righteous before God, justified *only* for the merit of Christ." But let us have no shifting the terms: "*Only* through Christ's imputed righteousness," are not the words of the Article, neither the language of our Church. Much less does our Church anywhere affirm, "that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the ungodly, who have no qualifications;" (page 28;) no repentance, no faith; nor do the Scriptures ever affirm this.

The reflection on the general inference, I so entirely agree with, as to think it worth transcribing: "If you have faith and repentance, you want no other signs or evidences of your justification. But if you have not these, to pretend to any other assurances, tokens, feelings, or experiences, is vain and delusive." Does he know any one who maintains, that a man may be in a state of justification, and yet have no faith or repentance? But the marks and evidences of true faith which the Scripture has promised, must not be discarded as vain or delusive. The Scripture has promised us the assurance of faith, to be wrought in us by the operation of God. It mentions "the earnest of the Spirit," and speaks of "feeling after the Lord," and finding him; and so our Church, in her Seventeenth Article, speaks of "feeling in ourselves the working of the Spirit of Christ;" and, in the Homily for Rogation Week, of "feeling our conscience at peace with God, through remission of our sin." So that we must not reject all "assurances, tokens, feelings, and experiences," as "vain and delusive."

Nor do I apprehend Dr. T. ever intended to say, that we must reject all inward feelings, but only those which are without faith or repentance. And who would not reject these? His very words are, "If you have not these, to pretend to any other feelings is vain and delusive." I say so too. Meantime, he is undoubtedly sensible, that there is a "consolation in love;" a "peace that passeth all understanding," and a "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." Nor can we imagine him to deny, that these must be felt, inwardly felt, wherever they exist.

Upon the whole, I cannot but observe, how extremely difficult it is, even for men who have an upright intention, and are not wanting either in natural or acquired abilities, to understand one another: And how hard it is to do even justice to those whom we do not throughly understand; much more to treat them with that gentleness, tenderness, and brotherly kindness, with which, upon a change of circumstances, we might reasonably desire to be treated ourselves. O when shall men know whose disciples we are, by our "loving one another, as He hath loved us!" The God of love hasten the time!

I am,
Dear Sir,
Your affectionate servant,
JOHN WESLEY.

THOUGHTS

ON

THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

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1. A TRACT has lately been published in my name, concerning the imputed righteousness of Christ. This calls me to explain myself upon that head; which I will do with all the clearness I can. But I quarrel with no man for thinking or speaking otherwise than I do: I blame none for using those expressions which he believes to be scriptural. If he quarrels with me for not using them, at least not so frequently as himself, I can only pity him, and wish him more of "the mind which was in Christ."

2. "The righteousness of Christ" is an expression which I do not find in the Bible. "The righteousness of God" is an expression which I do find there. I believe this means, First, the mercy of God; as 2 Peter i. 1: "Them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God." How does it appear that "the righteousness