

*Clear Light put out in obscure
Darkness.*

BEING AN
EXAMINATION
AND
REFUTATION

OF
Mr. *Thompson's* SERMON,

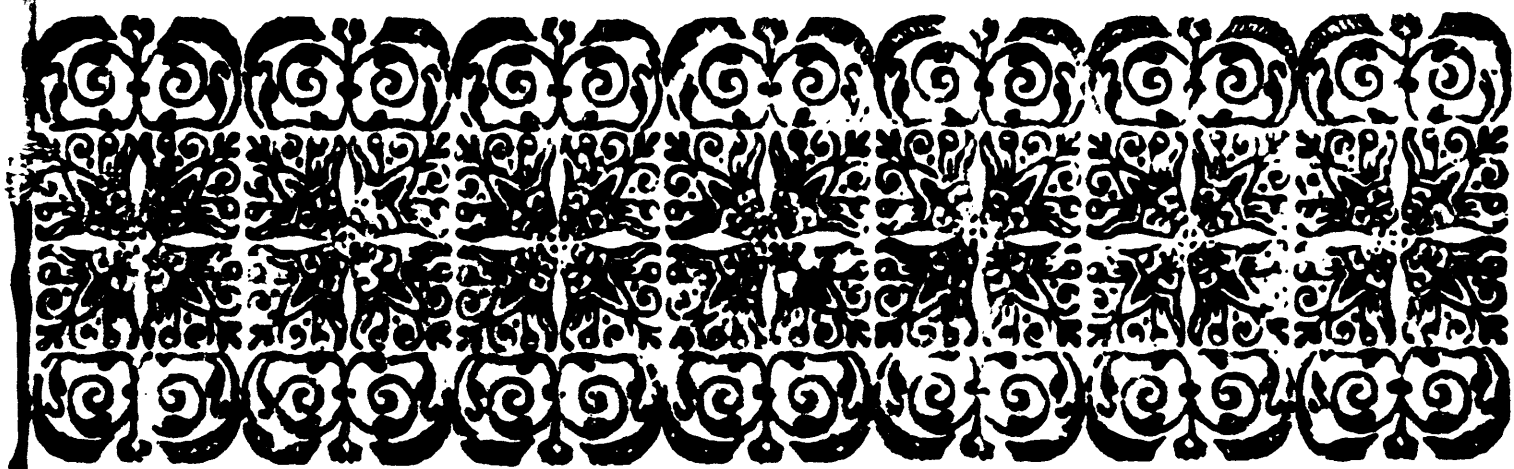
ENTITLED,

*The Doctrine of Convictions set
in a CLEAR LIGHT.*

By *SAMUEL FINLY,*
Minister of the Gospel.

ISA. vii. 20. *To the Law and to the Testimony; if they
speak not according to this Word it is because there is
NO LIGHT in them.*

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T H E

Examination and Refutation.

BECAUSE I design all convenient Brevity in this Controversy, I shall only observe for Introduction, That our Oponents have often, in their Prints, boldly challenged us, to attain either their Doctrines or Conduct: They have defied us to show any Corruption of Truth in their Principles, or Scandal in their Practices. Well tho' the Task be unpleasing, yet since they made it necessary, I have accepted the Challenge, and would long since have enter'd upon the Business; but was delay'd, partly thro' Want of Opportunity, by means of my necessary Itinerations, partly thro' Disinclination to Controversy, and partly because my Time was more delightfully employ'd. But having a Prospect of an Hour's Leisure now and then, I pass over other Obstacles, for the sake of the Publick. I design, first, to consider their Doctrine, and postpone the Examination of their Conduct till another Opportunity, except such Parts of it as come occasionally in the

A 2

Way

Way, because 'tis not likely to be so ensnaring to sober Persons as their Doctrines may be. I have singled out in *Thompson's* Treatise of Conviction, whereby to examine their Doctrines, partly because he pretends as tho' he were for Reasoning the Matter soberly : (Whereas the other Members of the Synod, in their Queries, and Examination, and as they say, Refutation of Mr. *Tennent's* Remarks on the Protestation, have laid aside, seemingly, all Pretence to Sobriety, and betake themselves to Outrage and Banter : They go on like Men swallowed up of Passion ; like Men that look on themselves baffled, and therefore grow desperate, and care not what they say) partly because he treats of important and concerning Subjects, in which Perversion of Truth is most dangerous ; and lastly, because he is a principal and leading Man among them, to whose Words the rest give much Heed, and whose Doctrines they have generally embrac'd, applauded and recommended, as I can prove, if need be.

The first Passage I need remark, is in his Preface, Page 6. where he tells, " That one Motive of making
 " his Sermon publick, was our industrious represent-
 " ing him and his Brethren, to our Hearers as if they
 " deny'd the Assurance of Faith was at all attainable in
 " this Life ; that they deny all discernable Workings
 " of the Spirit ; that a Person may be in a State of
 " Grace and know nothing of it, and the like." Now put the Case we had really represented them so, I think it would not be wholly groundless, as may further appear in the Course of this Debate. I suppose Mr. *Thompson* speaks in Concert with his Brethren for most Part : I know not how he comes, in this Place, to use Words of a seemingly different Import from theirs ; for the Members, in their Examination, &c. Page 117, do strive to ridicule us for saying, That a Man (one adult) cannot pass from a State of Nature to a State of Grace, without knowing it ; and tho' our Lord has made the

Comparison universal, between the Blowing of the Wind and Workings of the Spirit, and has used the Pangs of Travail as a fit Resemblance of them; yet they puff at us for comparing the Discernableness of the Spirit's Operations to such Things, calling them *impertinent and far-fetch'd Comparisons* (which is enough to fill one's Mind with Horror who knows them to be Scripture-Comparisons :) "For, say they, tho' the natural Birth is not without sensible Pains, ordinarily to the Mother; yet the Babe knows but little, if any thing, and remembers far less of them." Now, will not this Way of Reasoning cut off the Discernableness of the Spirit's Work in Conversion altogether? and yet will Mr. *Thompson* charge my representing of this with Falshood, since their Words are so plain? Besides, one of his Brethren, disputing with me about Assurance, urged thus, "How can one be assured, seeing he is still guilty of some Sin or other?" Now let this Reason for the Want of Assurance be consider'd, and see if it will not cut off the Attainableness of it in this Life altogether. 'Tis true, they will sometimes use Words of a sound Import, that they may not seem wholly to reject our publick approv'd Standards: But what Account can we make of that, when their Scheme cuts off, in Fact, what they own in Words.

I pass on, without remarking any thing further, 'til I come to Page 12, where the main Body of our Controversy begins. The general State of the Case is thus, viz. Mr. *T*---*n* accuses us of holding several Doctrines, which he designs to refute, as being erroneous, or Wood, Hay, Stubble, discrepant from Scripture and the Analogy of Faith; and he ushers in the Debate with as fair a Promise as any Man could desire, viz. That he will give a FAIR REPRESENTATION of these Doctrines, as he apprehends them, and then proceed to the Refutation of them. Whether he left these Words, as I apprehend them, to be a Salvo for the Non-performance

mance of his Promise, in case we should scruple his fair Representation, I know not: But if he did, I would observe, that it will not salve the Case much, unless he had sufficient Grounds from us of his apprehending the Matter so: For if his Representations, so far as we deny them, cannot be warranted from the Strain of our Words or Writings, then it will be a fair Conclusion, that Mr. *Thompson* apprehended us so of his own Choice and good Pleasure; and perhaps it may fairly appear to be so, e'er all be done.

I proceed to his Representations; and that I may avoid all needless Multiplication of Words, I purpose to transcribe only so much of his long Representation of Doctrines as I deny to be fair; and when I have stated and confirm'd the Truth, will discant upon his Doctrine.

The first Article is of preparatory Convictions; wherein he represents our Doctrine thus, Page 13.
 “ These Convictions must be so great, and fill the Heart
 “ with such a Degree of Fear and Terror as to bring
 “ the Person unto the very Brink and Border of *Despair*
 “ before he be fit to have the Consolations of Gospel
 “ Offers and Promises apply'd to him; and consequently
 “ both the Wound and the Cure must make such deep
 “ Impressions on the Mind and Memory that the Person
 “ can never forget it, but can assuredly date his Conversion therefrom. Now all this we deny to hold, and ever have; nor do I see what Authority Mr. *T---* has to impose such Doctrine on us; nay, he does not pretend any, but draws the Bow at a venture: He is careful indeed to be somewhat equivocal, particularly in the Word *Despair*. If he means Self-despair, we own it to be our Doctrine, that a Person must not only come to the Border of it, but wholly into it, before he is brought to Christ. And if he hold the contrary, he must take up the *Arminian* Weapons. But if he mean Despair of God's Mercy through Christ, I know not well how to free him from the Crime of wilful Slander.

Again,

Again, these Words, *Before he be fit to have the Consolations of Gospel Offers and Promises apply'd to him*, do contain such a Confusion of Ideas that I hardly know what he means to accuse us of by them: Whether by [*fit*] the Merit of Congruity; or by applying Gospel Offers and Promises he means a declaring the Promises of the Gospel made to Believers, or a persuading them of their Interest in them, or exhorting them to take hold of them; or whether he means the gracious Invitations of Christ address'd to Sinners, and seeks to accuse us of refusing to declare them to any, until they be on the Point of despairing of Mercy, I know not. The latter seems probable from some other Passages of his Book: But we can, with a good Face, deny the Charge, and call the World to witness for us, that we have not shuned to declare to Sinners the free Mercy and Grace of GOD, and have besought them, in his Name, to embrace the Offers of Pardon and Peace.

Again, it is not difficult to conclude, that Mr. T--- holds the Reverse of what he condemns as Error in us: And from the other Parts of this Representation one may already gather, that he holds these Things, 1. That Conviction of Sin and Misery does not or must not go before a Work of saving Grace, and is not necessary: 2. That the Terrors of the Law ought not to be preach'd in order to raise such Convictions: For these are the opposite Doctrines to what he further charges against us here. In both these he and the *Moravians* will agree; and he and we differ: For we assert the Necessity of preparatory Convictions as God's ordinary Way, and that they are commonly wrought in the Soul by Means of Preaching the Law and its Terrors. Now, by observing what Parts of his Representation we deny, the true State of our Doctrine will appear. We do not hold that every one is brought under the same Degree of Terror, or that all have a like Sight and Sense of Sin and Misery, or continue a-like long under the same Distress.

Distress; or have Convictions begun and carried on alike sensibly or observably, so as a Person can assuredly date his Conversion therefrom: No, for such Circumstances are at the Sovereign Pleasure of God, who may uphold the Sinner by a greater or less Degree of a distant Hope of Mercy, and so prevent his Terrors proportionably; or may discover the Terrors of his Wrath more or less clearly, and show him the Sinfulness of his Nature in such a Measure as seemeth him good, or prevent the Soul, by a gracious Discovery of Christ, in a short Space of Time. None of these Things we ever pretended to determine: For who can limit the Holy One of *Israel* wherein he has not limited himself? But whatever Difference may be in such Circumstances, yet we say, that in adult Persons Conviction of Sin and Misery is previously necessary to receiving Christ by Faith; and that the Demands of the Law, and its terrible Threats, must be awfully set forth, in order to convince the Secure of Sin and Misery. We assert, that this is the Order established of God, and is agreeable to Scripture and the Nature of Things, as also to our approved Standards of Doctrine: For why? If the Law should not be preach'd, wherefore was it added to the Gospel Dispensation? It was added, says the Apostle, *Gal. iii. 19.* because of Transgressions. But why should it be added because of them, if not to convince Men of Transgressions, and hereby become a School-master to bring us to Christ, *Gal. iii. 24.* As a School-master it teaches us our Sin and Misery, and sends us to Christ for Pardon and Peace. Again, if the Terrors of the Law ought not to be preach'd, *in an awful Manner*, why does Christ and his Apostles preach them so? What can be their Design herein if not to convince Sinners of their Misery as well as of their Sin? If the Law is to be preach'd at all, why not the Sanction of it also? If it be not God's Method of Working to convince us of Sin and Misery, I see no reasonable Plea for its being preach'd

preach'd at all in the Christian Church; because by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin, *Rom. iii. 20.* Now, if 'tis an Error to strive to convince Sinners of their being in a graceless Condition, in order to bring them to believe in CHRIST, then it is also an Error to preach the Law to them at all; because it has a Tendency to convince of Sin and Misery. We must either separate the Knowledge of Sin from the Law, or separate the Law from the Gospel-Church, if it be wrong to aim at the Conviction of Sinners thereby; and truly Mr. T---n's real Strain is, to reject the Law as a School-master to bring Sinners to Christ. This is the *proton pseudos*, the Foundation-Error of his erroneous Composure. 'Tis true, he owns, in P. 41. "That the Terrors of the Law are to be preach'd to Sinners:" But what avails that, since his whole Strain is opposite to such a Principle? Shall a sound Word save an unsound System? If so, we might account the *Moravians* as orthodox as he; and truly his Performance will be found, upon Examination, to be as inconsistent, equivocal and heterodox as theirs; and as I utterly despise the silly, ill-natur'd Subterfuge of catching at some wrong Words or Sentences and expounding them contrary to one's whole Strain, so I refuse to allow that some sound Sentences should defend an heterodox Strain from Censure. Let Mr. T----- then be consistent with himself, and either own the Doctrine of preparatory Convictions by the Law, or else deny the Preaching of the Law under the Gospel-Dispensation altogether. But further, as the Necessity of preaching the Law with its awful Terrors to Sinners, does evince the Necessity of legal preparatory Convictions, so does the whole Strain of Scripture. It is the Order of GOD, *John xvi. 9.* when he (the Comforter) is come, he will reprove the World---of Sin; because they believe not in me. If Mr. Th---n's Doctrine were true, the Words should be thus, He will convince of Sin, when they do believe in me. But if this

be an absurd Gloss, then the Words hold forth what he calls ungracious Convictions: So in *Rom. viii. 15. Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to Fear.* The Words imply, that they had once receiv'd him as a Spirit of Bondage. Besides *Acts ii. 37. and ix. 6. and xvi. 30.* where we have the Instances of *Paul*, the Jailor, and Three Thousand at once pricked in their Hearts, do prove this Point. Also the *Westminster Assembly*, in their Doctrine of *Effectual Calling*, and the *practical Use of Saving Knowledge*, do hold forth the Doctrine I contend for. This I take for granted here, designing to rescue them from Mr. T's Perversions afterwards.

Besides, this Doctrine is proven from *Gal. ii. 19. For I thro' the Law, am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God.* I know not what Sense Mr. Th---n could give this Text, consistent with his own Scheme. The Apostle, by the Law, was convinced he could not be saved by it, and this he makes preparatory to his living to God.

Again, this Doctrine is illustrated by the *fiery and brazen Serpents*, in *Num. xxi. 6.* compared with *John iii. 14.* where the *brazen Serpent* is proven to be a Type of *Christ*. Now, as the Israelites did not look to the *brazen Serpent*, with any View to get Healing by it, until they were first stung by the *fiery Serpents*, so neither will a Sinner look to *Christ* for Pardon and Justification, until his Conscience be stung by the Law, threatening Wrath and Condemnation to him, while he is under it. The same is shadowed forth by the *Man-slayer's* flying to the *City of Refuge*: But he did not betake himself to it, until he saw himself in Danger of perishing by the *Avenger of Blood*; neither will the Sinner take Sanctuary in *Christ*, until convinced that the Justice of God pursues him for his Offences. The same Doctrine is held forth by the Parable of the *Prodigal Son*, in *Luk. xv. 14, &c.* who would not return to his Father's House, until he found himself perishing.

Again,

Again, the Necessity of preparatory Convictions is evidently imply'd in all those Epithets given to Faith in Scripture. Such as, fleeing to Christ, leaning, taking hold, staying, resting, receiving, eating, drinking, hungering, thirsting, &c. All these, I say, do plainly suppose a previous Conviction of Danger, Weakness, Want, Weariness, Poverty, Leanness, and Misery. Will one flee for Refuge who sees no Danger? or seek for Rest when he is not weary and heavy laden? Will he sell all for one Pearl, when he is not convinced of its being better to him than all his Substance? Will he depend on another for what he has himself? or seek Healing when he feels no Hurt? No: 'Tis highly unreasonable to suppose it. 'Tis true one may seem to fly to Christ, and think he depends on him; but if he is not convinced of Danger first, he cannot fly with a View to obtain Shelter. He may look to him, but if he feels no Wound, it cannot be with a View of being healed. So we read of some, that stay themselves on the God of Israel, and make Mention of him, but not in Truth, nor in Righteousness. *Isa. xlviii. 1, 2.* For why? They were not feelingly convinced of their Weakness and Insufficiency, and hence they did not stay themselves on him with a View of getting Strength, and such other Things as were necessary, and therefore did not stay themselves on him in Truth and Righteousness. True Faith is a real, affectionate, entire Dependance on Christ, for Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption; but one cannot in Deed and in Truth depend for these Things, without a real and full Conviction of the Nothingness and Insufficiency of his own Righteousness, &c. Nay, without such a Conviction, he has no Reason to offer, why he does believe in Christ; he comes to him rich, and encreas'd with Goods, and may expect to be sent empty away. Faith without Conviction is a meer Compliment; for 'tis not a reasonable Service; nay 'tis contrary to the Structure of the human Soul;

tis antiscrptural, and a plain Delusion; 'tis a *Meravian*, yea, a *Popish* Faith. Surely God acts with Man as a reasonable Creature; but we could not say so, if Mr. *Th---n*'s Scheme were true. Methinks a due Consideration of what is said already, might make him and his Votaries tremble, and cut down their Hope like a Tree, and shake such a false Foundation to the Centre: For his own Doctrine represents him as an Husbandman that sows his Seed among Thorns, without first plowing the Ground: And I may well apply, on this Occasion, those Words of the Prophet, *Jer. iv. 3, 4. Break up your Fallow-Ground, and sow not among Thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the Fore-skin of your Heart, ye Men of Judah, and Inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my Fury come forth like Fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the Evil of your Doings.*

What is said, may suffice at present, seeing I shall have frequent Occasions of adding more Arguments, in the further Examination of what Mr. *Th---n* advances against this Doctrine. He proposes in *Page 15*, to come to a direct Refutation of it; but first he will prepare his Way by laying down some Observations concerning the Spirit's Work in the Soul. These are four in all, and the Substance of them is as follows.

1. That the Graces of the Spirit are infused at once, and not first one, and then another.

2. Of Consequence, wherever one Grace is visible, all others are there too.

3. That they are not so distinct as to exist independently of each other, being radically one entire Principle of Grace, putting forth itself in various Actings, according to the Occasions and Objects it meets with.

4. That wherever one Grace is in Exercise, others are also in Exercise with it.

From whence he draws two Inferences:

1. That as soon as this gracious Principle is implanted, so soon the Sinner is delivered from the Guilt and Power of Sin.

2. That

2. That so soon as one is converted, he begins to exercise some Grace or other.

In all these Particulars I pleasantly agree with him ; and if nothing worse were advanced, we might walk together. But Mr. *Th---n* designs hereby to prepare the Way to a Refutation of the Doctrine of preparatory Convictions; and in order to carry his Point, he takes it for granted that Conviction is a Part of this Principle of Grace, in these memorable Words, pag. 22. where he supposes one converted by an awakening Sermon: “ ’Tis
 “ most rational, says he, to think, that this new Principle
 “ of spiritual Life would exercise and put forth itself
 “ in Convictions, or in Soul-wounding and affecting
 “ Persuasion of the Person concerning his own sinful,
 “ miserable and perishing State, together with his Need
 “ of a Saviour.” Now if Conviction of Sin were indeed a Part of this Principle of Grace, I would grant that his foregoing Observations were much to the Purpose ; but unless they have prepared the Way to prove this Point, they will be of no Service at all to his Scheme. That they no Way tend to prove this, will be self-evident by comparing the Conclusion with each Observation, thus: 1. The Graces of the Spirit are all infused at once, therefore Conviction of Sin is a saving Grace. Or, 2. Wherever one Grace is visible in its Exercises, all other Graces are in the same Person ; therefore Conviction is a Grace. Or, 3. All the Graces of the Spirit are one entire Principle of Grace, and therefore Conviction is a Part of this Principle. Or, 4. Where one Grace is in Exercise, others are also in Exercise with it at the same Time ; therefore Conviction is a Grace. Now every one may see how wide the Conclusion is, and thereby discover that Mr. *Th---n* has taken the whole Matter for granted, that should have been proven. Ought not Mr. *Th---n* to have considered, that Supposition is not taken for Proof by judicious Enquirers?

However

However he goes on to reason from this Supposition, *viz.* “that this Conviction is the first discernible Fruit “or Exercise of the new Principle of spiritual Life;” of consequence “it must then be accompanied, yea “proceed from a Principle of true Faith” Now that we may have a clearer View of his Scheme, it is necessary that we stop here, and enquire what this Faith is which he calls true. Why, ’tis that “whereby the New Convert is, as it were, constrained to believe the threatening of the Word, and its Declaration of the Person’s sinful perishing State by Nature.” I confess this is a new Convert of a new Kind, for he has a new saving Faith. If this be true Faith, I would not scruple to call *Judas* a true Believer; for he believed the Threatning of the Word, and had an affecting Soul-wounding Persuasion of its Declaration of his perishing State when he went and hanged himself.

Mr. *T---n* tells us elsewhere “that ’tis not to be “doubted but many knowing formal Professors, do “really, that is, not feignedly trust in the Righteousness of Christ, and not at all in their own.” See his Treatise on Government, Page 40. Now, to trust really, that is, not feignedly in the Righteousness of Christ, and not at all in their own, even tho’ they have much of it, being knowing formal Professors: This, it seems, is a graceless Faith, without all Controversy; but to be as it were constrained to believe the threatening Declarations of the Word, &c. is the true Faith of Mr. *T---n*’s Christians. Is not this to put Light for Darkness, and Darkness for Light; Sweet for Bitter, and Bitter for Sweet; Good for Evil, and Evil for Good? But then, to salve this, he tells us, that “it must be accompany’d also with Love to God, Hatred of Sin, true Faith of Gospel-Promises, of Christ’s All-sufficiency and Willingness to save penitent, turning Sinners,” &c. But by what Necessity of Consequence must Conviction be accompany’d with these? Does a
 Person’s

Person's Conviction of his perishing State by Nature necessarily infer Love to God, &c.? Surely the Consequence is ridiculous? he is affectingly persuaded of his perishing State by Nature; therefore he loves God, and believes truly in Christ, &c. Mr. T---n calls his Convictions saving, and yet the Man is convinc'd of his perishing State; he is persuaded of it, but it's a Principle of saving Grace that puts itself forth in this Persuasion; he is truly convinced of his being in a miserable Condition by Nature, yet he is then truly converted. How punctual is he in the *Moravian* Scheme? But Mr. Th---n will say, that all this follows on the Supposition of Conviction's being a Fruit of this Principle of Grace. Yes, no doubt, suppose any thing, and then any thing will follow. Suppose Ignorance to be the Mother of Devotion, and then it will follow by necessary Consequence, that it's a Sin to seek after Knowledge. Suppose Drunkenness to be a Duty, and then it will follow, that it's a Sin to be sober; or suppose legal Conviction hinders Conversion, then it will follow that legal Conviction is a Sin. Now, Mr. Th---n's Supposition being false in Fact, his Consequences drawn from it, makes the Whole to be like a Castle in the Air, a stately Structure without a Foundation, a very Heap of Contradiction and Inconsistency. Well, but if there can be any Instance given, whereby his Hypothesis may be supported, then his Conclusion will stand good.

Now, he thinks the Thief on the Cross is a notable Instance, Page 23. For "his Prayer to Christ did certainly proceed from a true Faith which accompanied his Conviction." But what is this to the Purpose? that the Thief on the Cross did repent and believe truly in Christ, none of us doubt; but that his first Conviction proceeded from Faith, or was accompanied with it, in Mr. Th---n's Sense, I never heard before, nor can I take Mr. Th---n's Assertion for Proof.

He is at much Labour to instil this Principle, that Faith, and other Graces, do accompany Conviction; tho' because they are only Concomitants they may not be discernable, and consequently not concluded to be Actings of true Faith. Among other Graces that are Concomitants to Conviction, Hope is one; yet he owns this may be undiscernable too, in Page 23. Now, since Mr. *Th---n* accuses us of Preaching, that Sinners, before Conversion, must come almost to Despair; might I not here ask, what is the Difference between his undiscernable Hope, and being just on the Border of Despair? Nay further, is it not by far the most rational to think that a convinced Sinner should be in such a dismal Plunge than a real Convert? Mr. *Th---n* only represents us as holding such Opinion of convinced Sinners, before Conversion; but he himself speaks of real Christians. And because his Words are something remarkable, I shall give them just as they stand, Page 23.

“ Altho' as yet, the *poor trembling Convert* would
 “ reckon it great Presumption to rank himself among
 “ the Number of true Converts, and yet for all his
 “ being conscious of his loathing himself and hating
 “ Sin, will of Course raise some Degrees of Hope, tho'
 “ perhaps *not discernable*, that the present Exercise he
 “ is under, may at last prove to be the Beginning of
 “ true Repentance and Conversion in him.” What
 Wonder now, that Mr. *Th---n's* Success in the Ministry is undiscernable to himself, since he may have much, and yet the Hearts of his own People not discern it, according to his own Scheme? He has found a Way to make himself and them both easy together.

Mr. *Th---n* has now given us a View of Conviction consider'd as a leading Grace, and first discernable Fruit of converting Grace; and if we attend him two or three Pages further, he will give us Suppositions of Conversion, wherein other Graces may be principal, and Conviction only a Concomitant. In Pag. 24. he proceeds

proceeds thus, “ Now suppose a Person to be converted by an inviting comfortable Sermon, is it not natural and rational to expect, that divine Grace, then infused into such a Soul, would immediately put forth itself in some spiritual Exercises suitable to the Entertainment which he is entertained withal ? ” Some of these Exercises he specifies, Pag. 25, as “ Love and Gratitude to God, Admiration of his undeserved Grace, Resolutions to turn and cleave to him ; yet these would be accompanied with Faith, Conviction, Humility, ” &c. Now this Account of Things seems as tho’ it might just agree to the *Stony Ground-Hearers*: They immediately received the Word with Joy, but we hear nothing of their Conviction : So is the Case with Mr. *Th---n*’s Christians. They may love and delight in the Doctrine, but can tell no Reason why, only it’s a comfortable Sermon. Nay, from the soothing, soft Words Mr. *Th---n* uses, one would be almost tempted to think, that his Convert might have been asleep, and not so much as hearkning to the Word, until he is converted, and “ then begins to attend, and with Greediness drink in what he hears, with Affections suitable to his Entertainment, which is soft, sweet and encouraging, like a spiritual Song of Love.” ’Tis true he has Conviction, if he did but know it ; but forasmuch as it is only a concomitant Grace in the present supposed Case, it may be indiscernable, “ and his greater Degree of Convictions might be reserved until he might find another Entertainment better suited to excite them.” These are new and strange Thoughts about Conversion, uncouth Ideas. But now Mr. *Th---n* himself will help us to explain away all these Marks of his supposed Convert, by his own Rule ; for if a Person may really, *that is*, not feignedly, trust in the Righteousness of Christ, and yet be graceless ; why may he not also really, *that is*, not feignedly, love God, and admire his undeserved Grace, and resolve to

turn and cleave to him, and yet be but a *Stony-Ground-Hearer*? For, the *Stony-Ground-Hearers* received the Word with Joy, which implies both Love and Admiration. Well, but suppose them to be converted, then their Joy would be true; so Mr. *Th---n* supposes his Hearer of the comfortable Sermon to be converted, and then of Consequence his Love and Admiration, &c. is right and true: Yes. Here again I must have Recourse to the old Maxim: Suppose any thing, and any thing will follow. But let Mr. *Th---n* know, that I do not take his Hypotheses for granted as to this Manner of Conversion. Perhaps he will urge, as in Pag. 24. that “sure it cannot be deny’d but that such [inviting, encouraging] Sermons have a Tendency to draw Sinners to Christ with Cords of Love.” I grant it; and what then? Why, Mr. *Th---n* would suppose that a Sinner converted by such a Sermon of Love, would not have any discernable Convictions, because his Exercises would be according to his Entertainment. But how does this Consequence follow? I will say, Suppose one be converted by Means of a terrible Sermon, he will straightway be fill’d with Love; and would Mr. *Th---n* conclude, that therefore he had no preceding Convictions? Is it not plain, that a Sermon of Love has as native a Tendency to convince as any other? especially if a Minister be describing the Nature or Properties of true Love? May not a Sinner be convinced that he has not this Love? and is not this Conviction? It is so. But this kind of Conviction Mr. *Th---n* abhors, because if a Person be convinced of his being graceless, this is legal, ungracious Conviction, which he labours against. Well, now the Way is prepar’d, to come to a direct Refutation of our Doctrine in this Point.

In Page 27. he proposes to make it “appear, that all such Convictions as are void of true Grace, are so far from being necessary Preparatives for Conversion, that

that they are rather an Impediment to it." This is new Divinity in the Mouth of a Protestant *Calvinist*, without Doubt. One might here ask, Does a Man's Knowledge of his Poverty hinder him to beg? or the Pain of his Disease hinder his seeking a Physician? Or is it an Hinderance to building on a new Foundation, that one is first convinced of the Rottenness of the old? If not, then how can it be an Impediment to a Person's coming to Christ, that he sees himself at present in a lost Condition while out of Christ?

But however it be, Mr. *Th---n* is for pursuing his Point; and in order to prove the above Assertion true, he allows, 1. "That there are such common Convictions, arising from a natural Conscience, or a common *Work of the Spirit*, or both, which may, and often do fall short of Conversion." But then, to prove the Point yet a little Degree more clearly and fully, he allows, 2. "That these common Convictions may be sometimes succeeded with true Conversion." Now, before we go too far, and lose Sight of his Concessions, let us observe, That these Convictions may be from the Spirit of God, and also may be succeeded with Conversion: And would not every one conclude, that the Holy Spirit would not take such a Method, as would, in its very Nature and Tendency, be an Hinderance to Conversion, when he intends to convert? And how then can Mr. *Th---n's* Notions consist well together? Indeed he seems as tho' he had been aware, that some-body might reason after this Manner from his Concessions, and therefore he hastens to stop such a Reasoner's Mouth, by saying, "But when it is so, the Conversion following cannot be justly reckoned the proper Effect of those Convictions." Very true, indeed: For if Conversion were the proper Effect of Conviction, then Conviction would be the proper Cause of such Conversion. But what then? I verily thought Mr. *Th---n* was designing to prove, that such Conviction, in its very Nature, did hinder Conversion;

and I did not expect him, instead of that, to tell us, that Conversion is not the proper Effect of Conviction: For tho' it be not, yet that is no Proof of its being hinder'd by such Conviction; unless it were a sure Maxim, that every Effect is hinder'd by every Thing that is not its Cause; and if so, then we might reason thus, Every thing hinders every thing to be done. Or does he think, that his proving Conversion not to be the proper Effect of Conviction, is enough to show, that Conviction, in its Nature and Tendency, cannot be preparatory to Conversion, unless it be the Cause of it? If his Words be any thing at all to Purpose, they must intend this.

Now I would ask, Whether putting off our old Cloaths be not a necessary Preparative to putting on of a new Suit, when yet it's not the Cause of it? Is not the Destruction of Legal Hope, a necessary Preparative to Gospel Hope, yet not the Cause of it? Is not quitting Dependance on our own Righteousness, a necessary Preparative to our depending on the Righteousness of Christ, tho' not the Cause of it? And here I may add, That a Conviction of the Insufficiency of our own Righteousness to justify, is a necessary Preparative of our quitting Dependance thereon.

However, tho' Conversion be not the Effect of Convictions, yet Mr. *Tb-* allows, that "it may be occasioned by them, as it may be by the Commission of some gross Sin, which deeply wounds the natural Conscience." Well, and is not Wounding the natural Conscience, a plain Conviction? So then Sin occasions Conviction, and Conviction occasions Conversion.

Now, Reader, from the Whole you may observe these Things, *viz.* That tho' common Convictions may be from the Spirit of God, yet they occasion Conversion only in the same Sense as some gross Sin; and consequently, as ever we would resist Sin, so should

we resist such common Motions of the Holy Spirit (*infandum dictu!*) as tend to convince of Sin. For why? tho' they may be succeeded with Conversion, and may occasion it, yet in their very Nature they are an Hindrance to it; and whatever hinders it, ought to be resisted, and abhorred: But especially they are to be avoided, if the Holy Ghost do convince of Misery too, and the Soul be fill'd with confounding Fears; then this is the Language of Unbelief, and Satan's Temptations, and no better than Sin; nay, not only a Sin, but a great Sin; not only a great Sin, but a *very great* Sin. Such are the Instructions given us by this Master of *Israel!* worthy to be branded with the Name of HORRID BLASPHEMY! *O tempora! O mores!* What shocking Considerations are these!

Obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit.

Now, Mr. *Th-----n's* owning such Convictions to be from the Spirit of God, and yet giving them the Name of Sin, Unbelief, and no better than Satan's Temptations, makes my Remarks appear evidently just. If any doubt that I have gone too far, I will give his own Words, in Page 34. "As for these Soul-shocking and
 " confound Fears, which are the native Attendants of
 " Convictions when there is no Sight of a Remedy or
 " Relief, and which seem to be driven at, by some
 " Preachers, as a main Ingredient of their preparatory
 " Convictions, I say, these Fears and Terrors are at
 " the best but the Language of Unbelief and Satan's
 " Temptations, and consequently are in their very
 " Nature a very great Sin." Now 'tis evident that what is here spoken, may be the proper Consequence of the Spirit's convincing of Sin and Misery: Nay, such Convictions he himself ascribes to the Holy Spirit, in Pag. 27. where he brings in *Saul, Judas, Ahab, Herod, Felix, Agrippa*, and the Stoners of *Stephen*, as Instances of that Conviction which may be from a natural Conscience, or a common Work of the Spirit, and may fall short of Conversion. How-

However the Way is so far prepar'd to make it appear that such Convictions as are void of Grace, are a great Hindrance to Conversion.

But in order to make the Point plainer, Mr. *Th---* in Pag. 28. proposes some Distinctions between these ungracious, common Convictions, and "those which are of a saving Nature, which are a Fruit of saving Grace." Now before we proceed further, I would enquire into the Propriety of this Term, *Saving Convictions*. The Words do appear to me contradictory Terms, unless thereby were meant Conviction of Righteousness and Judgment: But this he pretends not.--- I am well enough aware, that he would urge his Supposition to answer my present Enquiry; but I have resolved not to take it for granted, but will try once for all, whether it will stand good. I will take his own Definitions of Conviction, that out of his own Mouth he may be condemn'd. In Pag. 22. he defines it, "a Soul-wounding and affecting Persuasion of the
" Person, concerning his own sinful, miserable and
" perishing State, together with his Need of a Saviour." Pag. 34, 35. "To believe that we are in a perishing
" State by Nature, and that we certainly shall perish,
" if we continue in that Estate; that unless we repent
" and truly believe in Jesus Christ, that is, cordially
" accept of him as offered in the Gospel; unless we
" be born again: To believe, I say, and be firmly
" convinced of these Things, and to be suitably affected
" with them, according to the Momentousness of
" their Nature, doth certainly belong to these Con-
" victions, which make up a Part of Conversion, and
" are the first sensible Exercises of a new vital Prin-
" ciple." Another summary Definition we have in Pag. 39, 40. *viz.* "A Persuasion of the Person's na-
" tural, sinful and miserable State, according to the
" Word, the Heart and Conscience bearing Witness
" thereunto." Now, I say, according to his own
Defi-

Definitions, the Words, *Saving Convictions*, are a Contradiction in Terms. If Mr. *Th--n* contradict this, he is obliged to prove, that a Person cannot be convinced or perswaded of his being in a miserable, perishing Condition by Nature, until he be in a State of Grace; that he cannot be convinced of his Need of a Saviour, until he has a Saviour; that he cannot be convinced of the Necessity of believing, unless he does believe; that he cannot believe he will certainly perish without Regeneration, unless he be Regenerate; that his Heart and Conscience cannot bear Witness to his miserable Condition by Nature, unless he be truly gracious: In a Word, He must prove, that a firm Conviction of these Things does infer and suppose a State of Grace by Necessity of Consequence; and then he will find more Difficulty, than in affirming the Case is so, or taking it for granted. But since it is absolutely impossible for him to prove these Things, his Supposition falls to the Ground, and the whole Fabrick at once is dissolv'd. How exactly do such Marks of Grace, tend to lull Formalists in the deepest Security, until they go down into the Pit with a Lie in their right Hands? But perhaps, if all should fail, Mr. *Th---n* has left these Words as a Back-door to go out at, and escape the Task, *viz.* "And to be suitably affected with these Things, according to the Momentousness of their Nature." Now Nobody can tell how much he would contain in *suitable Affections*. For, one who is convinced, that he must believe in Christ, or perish, will not be said, perhaps, to be suitably affected according to the Greatness of the Affair, unless he does truly believe in Christ. If Mr. *Th---n* for a Shift would use the Words in this Latitude, and at the same time make them Part of his Definition of Convictions, the Shift would be plainly ridiculous; for then his Convictions would be so extensive, that Faith and Regeneration would only be a Part of them.

Again

Again 'tis worthy of Notice, how devotedly Mr. *Th---n* adheres to his own Scheme in all these Definitions: For why, he cautiously guards against putting any Article among them, that would imply a Conviction in the Sinner of his present perishing State: For if he did believe himself to be just now in a miserable Condition, it would have a Tendency to shock his Soul, and confound him with Fear, which would be *a very great Sin*, says Mr. *Th---n*. He would have him convinced that he has been in a miserable State, that he is so by Nature, but no Sinner must draw such a shocking Conclusion, as that he is *now* in a bad State, lest thereby he should sin, and hinder his Conversion. A graceless Sinner is in a bad State, it's true, yet it would be a Sin for him to believe such a Truth, much more to be shock'd with the Thoughts of it. Mr. *Th---n* will allow him so much Hope as will be indiscernible; but yet for him to doubt whether the Lord will save him, is to affront his Mercy in an high Degree. Pag. 23. compar'd with Pag. 34. where he has these Words, *viz.* " Surely to fear or doubt whether the Lord can or will save us, after he hath given such Proof of both, is to affront both his Power and Mercy in an high Degree." The *Antinomians* hold, that Faith is only a Persuasion in a Person, that he shall be saved. Mr. *Th---n* asserts, that it is an high Affront to divine Mercy, to doubt whether God will save: And for my Part, I cannot see much Difference between a Persuasion that he will save us, and not doubting but he will save us. I grant it is an Affront to the Power of God to doubt whether he can save me; but I deny that it's an affronting of his Mercy to doubt whether he will save me; for he may pass me by, and a Thousand more, without any just Impeachment of his Mercy. He has given abundant Proof of his Power to save, and his Mercy in saving; but he has not said that all shall be saved: And therefore nothing can rationally remove my Doubts, but sufficient Evidence that he will save me.

me, even me. But not to doubt, meerly because he is merciful and powerful, without Evidence of my Interest and Propriety in these Attributes, is evidently and demonstrably an *Antinomian* Faith. In a Word, Mr. *Thompson* and the *Moravians* may walk Hand in Hand, as to their Notions of preparatory Convictions by the Law, for any thing appears as yet. If any doubt this, I would only refer them to Count *Zinzendorff's* Discourses, or Mr. *Tennent's* Remarks thereon. Nay more, the Church of *Rome* maintains Mr. *Th--n's* Doctrine distinctly. For Proof of this, I need only transcribe a Passage from Mr. *Perkin's* Reformed Catholic, *London-Edit.* 1616. pag. 567. where he represents the Popish Doctrine of Justification thus, *viz.*

“ The Ground is Faith, which they define to be a
 “ general Knowledge, whereby we understand and
 “ believe that the Doctrine of the Word of God is
 “ true. Things proceeding from this Faith are these,
 “ A Sight of our Sins, a Fear of Hell, Hope of Salva-
 “ tion, Love of God, Repentance, and such like.”

Now, compare herewith Mr. *Th---n's* Doctrine, in pag. 22. where he tells us, that “ Conviction of Sin
 “ is the first discernible Fruit of a Principle of spiritual
 “ Life ; that it proceeds from true Faith, whereby the
 “ New Convert is, as it were, constrained to believe
 “ the threatenng Declarations of the Word, against his
 “ sinful perishing State.” Compare also his Remarks on the Three Thousand, &c. *Acts* ii. 37. Nay, compare his Doctrine in general on this Point, and see an exact Conformity between it, and the Doctrine of *Rome* herein. Let this be consider'd, and then say, whether the invidious Insinuations, and groundless Calumnies, of Popery, &c. so liberally cast on us by our Opposers, might not have been spared ?

But now at length we come to his Distinctions between ungracious and saving Convictions, wherein, I suppose, his great Strength lies ; for hitherto he has had nothing to prove his Point.

Now, for Brevity's sake, I will only make one Observation on all his Distinctions, which is this, *viz.* That he has described Gospel-Repentance, and calls it Saving Conviction; which is certainly an Imposition on the Ignorant and Credulous, and a manifest Perversion of the Use of Language. What! to substitute one Word in place of another, contrary to the known Acceptation of the Word? How awkward, and abusive! Can it possibly be Mr. *Th---n's* Opinion, that Conviction and Repentance are the same Thing? Unless he prove this, all his Distinctions will amount, in their Sum total, to nothing, with respect to his present Argument. 'Tis true, Repentance does presuppose Conviction; yet they are no more the same than the Relative and Antecedent are: And because 'tis impossible for Mr. *Th---n* to prove them one and the same, his Cause is nothing better'd by these Distinctions; therefore I pass over them, as altogether foreign to the Purpose.

At last Mr. *Th---n* comes to the winding up of his Argument, and triumphantly asks, in Pag. 34. "How much *Judas* was prepar'd for Conversion by his Convictions and Terrors?" Here Mr. *Th---n* makes Conviction and final Despair the same Thing. No Wonder he starts at the Notion of legal preparatory Convictions, if he look upon them under the Notion of an utter Desperation of Mercy. But unless he prove that Conviction and Despair are one Thing, and that every ungracious convinced Sinner is on a Level with *Judas*, his Query will not be convictive to me. But had he bethought himself, he answered this Question before he asked it, in Pag. 33. where he observes, that "*Judas's* Conviction was not accompanied with the least Prospect or Probability, or even a Possibility of Relief, which raised his Terror to that fatal Height it came to." But the Conviction of others may be accompanied with a rational Probability and Prospect

“ of Relief.” Now Mr. *Th---n* may take this for a sufficient Answer to his Query. However he is resolv’d to have a Conclusion, and makes it positively thus, *viz.* “ That such ungracious Convictions tend
 “ rather to scare a Person from Christ, than draw him
 “ unto him ; as appears (says he) by the too common
 “ and ordinary Consequence : For either they drive
 “ the Person to Despair, and an Halter, with *Judas*,
 “ or to drown and stifle his Trouble and Terror with
 “ a dissolute and licentious Life, or thirdly, to rest
 “ upon an external lifeless Profession, together with an
 “ outward Reformation, and perhaps to trust to some
 “ good Work by way of Merit to appease an offended
 “ Deity.” I shall answer his Assertions by proposing a few convictive Queries, which he may answer at his Leisure, *viz.* How has it a Tendency to scare a Person from Christ, to be first convinced that he’s undone for ever, unless he come to Christ, and be found in him? Does a Sense of Hunger natively tend to scare a Person from eating? Or how does Conviction of Sin, under the Sound of Grace, natively lead to Despair, and an Halter? Does Conviction of the dreadful Nature of Sin, engage a Person to continue in it? Or has this been the *common and ordinary Consequence* of Conviction at this Day? Or will a Person naturally trust to, and rest upon some good Work by way of Merit, because he is convinced that there is no Merit in it? If so, then contradictory Propositions may both be true; and any thing may have a natural Tendency to be every thing; and tho’ Mr. *Th---n* and I are of opposite Sentiments, yet we may both be exact’y right.

Mr. *Th---n* has drawn up a grievous Indictment against some Preachers of the Gospel, pag. 34, 35. who
 “ insist only on avenging Justice, and industriously,
 “ as it were, hide, and draw a Vail over the lovely
 “ Attribute of divine Mercy. And hide from convin-
 “ ced Sinners all Sight of any Remedy or Relief.”

I dare say such Preachers ought to be cashier'd. In Opposition to such he very well observes, " That the whole Tenor of Scripture is at once to represent the eternal GOD as a just Avenger of impenitent unbelieving Sinners, and a gracious, merciful, sin-pardoning GOD to all humble, penitent, believing Souls." Now, by the Way, if God be represented thus to Sinners, has not this a Tendency to confound them with Fear, while unbelieving? Does Mr. *Th--n* ever represent him so? If he does, is it his Hope that none of his Hearers will be shock'd with Fear, until they are Believers? Or what Method does he take to prevent this Effect? How contradictory is this? To acknowledge that God is to be represented as the just Avenger of impenitent Sinners, and yet deny the native Influence of such a Representation on their Consciences? To acknowledge the Preaching of the Law, and yet hold legal Conviction, which is attended with Fear and Confusion, to be a Sin? If it be a Sin, and if Mr. *Th---* speaks of God, and of his Law, such Things as tend to fill the Ungodly with Terror, and convince of Misery, then he becomes first a Tempter, and afterwards an Accuser.

However, to pass this, let us enquire to whom the above Accufation belongs. No doubt Mr. *Th--n* is desirous that we should be understood, tho' not express'd. But all that have heard us, can witness for us, that the Charge is false. We agree with Mr. *Th---* in pag 41. that " both the inviting Doctrines of the Gospel, and Terrors of the Law, are to be preach'd to Sinners." And let the World, who have heard him and us, witness whether we have not practis'd this Doctrine much more than he or his Brethren: Let them witness who invited them most constantly, earnestly and importunately, to come to Jesus Christ, and be reconciled to God thro' him: Who used the most melting Persuaves, taken from his glorious Excellency, the Charm
of

of his Beauty, the Sweetness of his Love, the Fulness of his Merit, and Freeness of his Grace? Let them witness, who perswaded them by the Terrors of the Lord, and besought them to escape from the Wrath to come, by a speedy Flight to Christ, the Refuge of guilty Sinners: Nay, let them witness who spoke most closely to their Hearts, and whose Doctrines were so manifest as to have a Testimony of their Truth and Certainty, from their Consciences: Let even those who hated us, bear Witness, whether the Spring of their Aversion was not this, that they could not bear the close Application of the Words of Truth; their Consciences were scorch'd by it; they could not endure that which was spoken, because we never prophesied good concerning such as they, but evil, while in their present State.

Now what amazing Hardiness is it in Mr. Th---n, to insinuate that we " industriously hide all Sight of any Remedy or Relief " from convinced Sinners, when the World knows, that Invitations, Expostulations and Entreaties, that Sinners might come to Christ, with Declarations of his Fulness, &c. has been still one main Ingredient of our Sermons? Alas! he and his Brethren have no Way to salve themselves, but by nick-naming our Invitations, &c. and bitterly calling them Rantings, Roarings, Ravings, and such like.

Now, having weighed Mr. Th---n's Premises and Conclusions, let us yet attend him, while he obviates, and solves all our Objections that are of any Weight, and utterly razes our Foundations. He seems, in p. 36. as tho' he would " calmly and deliberately enquire, " whether there be any *Colour, Shadow or Appearance,* " of a Foundation for such preparatory ungracious " Convictions among the numerous Instances of Con- " version recorded in Scripture. " Well, he pitches on the most likely Places, viz. Acts 2. 37. and 9. 6. and 16. 39. where are the Instances of three Thousand pricked

pricked in their Hearts, of *Paul*, and the Jailer. As to the three Thousand, they being pricked in their Hearts, said, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* Mr. *Th---n* observes, that herein they express “ a
 “ Soul-affecting Perswasion of their perishing State,
 “ their Hope of finding Mercy with God, their Desire
 “ to know how Mercy might be obtained, with a full
 “ Purpose and Resolution to comply with the Terms
 “ proposed in order to obtain it.” In p. 37 he says,
 “ It is plain to every unprejudiced Person, that these
 “ Particulars were and must be the Actings of saving
 “ converting Grace.” Mr. *Th---n* may call me a pre-
 judiced Person, if he please, that so his Assertion may stand
 good ; but I can very calmly contradict him in this,
 and assert, that I do not find an Evidence of the least
 saving Grace among all these Particulars ; and I will
 appeal to all judicious Christians, whether there be any
 thing in them, but what is the natural Result of
 Self-Love : Unless their affecting Perswasion of their
 perishing State be saving Grace, none of these Particu-
 lars can lay Claim to it : For their Desire to know
 how Mercy might be obtained, and Resolution to do
 any thing to obtain it, is a native Consequence of the
 aforesaid Perswasion of Misery ; and tho’ it implies
 Love to themselves, yet not the true Knowledge of
 God ; a Desire of escaping Misery, not Love to Jesus
 Christ. I suppose a Person on the Brink of Despair
 would naturally ask the same Question ; and one in
 Extremity of Anguish would condescend to accept of
 Relief on any Terms. As for their Hope, I presume
 Mr. *Th---n* would allow it to be indiscernible ; all that
 their Hope will prove, is only this, that tho’ they were
 convinced, yet they did not despair like *Judas*, there-
 by discovering, that Conviction and Despair are not
 the same : But unless Mr. *Th---n* had proven, that
 they could not possibly have had this Hope of Mercy,
 without true saving Grace, he has done nothing to the
 Purpose ;

Purpose; but this he cannot do, without showing that every graceless convinced Sinner is in Despair of Mercy, that Conviction is Despair, and so Absurdities would be endless. But let the Scripture determine, v. 41. *Then they that gladly received his Word, were baptized.* After Peter preach'd the Gospel, they received it; their Faith came by hearing, and not before; after their importunate Query Peter tells them what they must do, then they embraced his Word. The Scripture says, *Then, Mr. Th---n* says, No, they receiv'd it before. Chuse, Reader, which you will believe. So then, a Knowledge of Misery, Probability of Mercy, a Desire of escaping Wrath by obtaining Mercy, contain not the saving Knowledge of Christ, and the Way of coming to God thro' him, which no true Believer is ignorant of. I can hardly forbear thinking, that if Mr. Th---n had seen what Ferment the three Thousand were in, he would have oppos'd it, under the Notion of preparatory ungracious Convictions.

It seems amazing how he can venture to make the Jailor a Believer, when first alarmed: What did ever any find as a Mark of Grace in his Astonishment and Trembling, before Mr. Th---n? It no-where appears that he had so much as a doctrinal Knowledge of the true GOD, before this time, much less of his Gospel. His Actions, Posture, and Words, do only discover a Soul fill'd with Horror and Anguish, that knew not what to do to be saved: If the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God had shined on him in the Face of Jesus, why did he not rejoice, as he did so shortly after, v. 34. when he heard and received the Gospel of Salvation? Mr. Th---n, methinks, should have had some stronger Arguments than he has advanced, ere he had contradicted the whole Body of orthodox, pious and learned Divines, that have gone before him.

As to the third Instance, *Paul* himself will declare against Mr. Th---n's Gloss, in the strongest Terms. For
 he

he tells us, in *Rom.* 7. 9, 10, 11. that *the Commandment slew him, and he died, &c.* And could he be both dead and alive at once? Also *Gal.* 2. 19. he shews, that he was *dead by the Law*, before he did *live to God*. And many other Places to the same Purpose might be quoted, but let these suffice.

In Pag. 39. he brings in *Lydia*, the Eunuch, the Multitude at *Cornelius's House*, as “ Instances of Conversion, wherein no Notice is taken of any down-casting Convictions at all; but the first Effects of converting Grace, were Faith, Love, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.” The Force of which Argument is plainly thus much, There is *no Notice taken* of down-casting Convictions, therefore there was none. By the same Rule I will prove, that they had always a full Assurance, and uninterrupted Joy, because there is no Notice taken of any Change in their Frame. Does Mr. *Th---n* think the Scripture is an universal History of all Particulars in the Conversion of every one whose Conversion it mentions? If not, why does he make an Argument from its Silence? 'Tis plain that what is spoken of these Instances, will agree to the Case of any converted Person, however deep his preceeding Convictions were. *Lydia's Heart* was opened, so is the Heart of every one that receives Christ. The Eunuch rejoiced, so did the Jailor when he believed; and every Christian is as much pleased with Christ as they; and surely they would be no less joyful in him, that they were first deeply convicted of their Misery without him. Besides, I should not be singular in my Judgment, to say, that the Eunuch, and *Lydia*, were both converted before the Time we hear of them; and Mr. *Th----n* cannot prove the contrary.

In the same Page Mr. *Th---n* lugs in the *Westminster Assembly*, to patronize his Opinion; affirming that “ they took no Notice of any preparatory Conviction; “ that in the practical Use of saving Knowledge, and

“ in the Description of effectual Calling and Repen-
 “ tance, Convictions are taken in as a Part of Conver-
 “ sion, and not as only preparatory to it.” Indeed
 no-body can hinder Mr. *Th---n* to say what he pleases.
 He is resolved to take no Notice of preparatory Convic-
 tions, in Scripture ; and I cease to wonder that he takes
 no Notice of them in the Assembly’s Performance. But
 I wonder why he does not say that we mean saving
 Convictions too, The Assembly describe the Work of
 the Spirit in effectual Calling, as being introduced by
 convincing us of Sin and Misery ; and this Conviction
 they put in Order before the renewing of the Will, or
 receiving Christ as offered in the Gospel ; and yet re-
 ceiving Christ, is the first Act of Saving Grace, for,
 without Faith it’s impossible to please God, to love him,
 or repent aright, &c. Therefore ’tis evident that they
 make Conviction of Sin preparatory to Faith. See
 Larger Catechism, Quest. 72. *What is justifying Faith?*
Answ. Justifying Faith is a saving Grace wrought in the
Heart of a Sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby
he, being convinced of Sin and Misery, and of the Dis-
ability in himself, and all other Creatures to recover him
out of his lost Condition, not only assenteth to the Truth of
the Promise of the Gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon
Christ, &c. What can be plainer than preparatory
 Conviction here ? Now, since we set the Case in the
 same Light, why may not Mr. *Th---n* charitably hope
 that we mean the same sort of Convictions as the As-
 sembly ? But how can Mr. *Th---n* hold up his Face,
 when this venerable Assembly do plainly declare against
 his Meaning of their Words, in all their other Writings ?
 And did they not know what their own Doctrine was,
 as well as he ? If he say that still they mean what he
 calls Saving Convictions, he may as well tell us, that
 there was never any such Thing as Preparatory Con-
 victions spoken of ; that they have no real Existence in
 the Nature of Things ; nay, that the very Notion is
 E Infallible,

ineffable. I might quote Numbers of Passages from several of those very Divines who were Members of said Assembly, directly contradicting Mr. *Th---n's* Scheme; as Dr. *Twiss*, *Burgess*, *Gouge*, *Burroughs*, *Greenhill*, *Goodwin*, &c. as well as Numbers of other orthodox Divines in that Age. But for Brevity's sake, shall content myself with one, out of many Passages that might be quoted, from that eminent Divine Mr. *Flavel*, whose Praise is in all the Churches, who liv'd in the same Age with the Divines of the *Westminster* Assembly, and knew their Doctrine as well as any. See Vol. I. *London* Edit. 1740. p. 280. *Method of Grace*, where, speaking of the Antecedents to Faith, he observes, that

“ Conviction is an Antecedent to Believing: Where
 “ this goes not before, no Faith can follow after: The
 “ Spirit first convinces of Sin, then of Righteousness.
 “ *Joh. xvi. 8.* So *Mark i. 15.* *Repent ye, and believe*
 “ *the Gospel:* Believe it, O Man, that Breast of thine
 “ must be wounded, that vain and frothy Heart of
 “ thine must be pierced and stung with Conviction,
 “ Sense, and Sorrow for Sin: Thou must have some
 “ sick Days, and restless Nights for Sin, if ever thou
 “ rightly close with Christ by Faith. It is true, there
 “ is much Difference found in the Strength, Depth
 “ and Continuance of Conviction, and spiritual Trou-
 “ bles in Converts; but sure it is, the Child of Faith
 “ is not ordinarily born without some Pangs.” Presently after he observes, that “ Self-Despair, or a total
 “ and absolute Loss in ourselves about Deliverance,
 “ and the Way of Escape, either by ourselves or any
 “ meer Creature, doth, and must go before Faith. So
 “ it was with those Believers, *Acts ii. 37.* *Men and*
 “ *Brethren, what shall we do?* They are the Words of
 “ Men at a total Loss: It is the Voice of poor distressed
 “ Souls, that saw themselves in Misery, but knew not,
 “ saw not, nor could devise any way of Escape from it,
 “ by any thing they could do for themselves, or any
 “ other

“ other Creature for them. ” Excuse, Reader, my giving a Passage more than I intended. In Page 298. he observes, that “ none are convinced of the compleat
 “ and perfect Righteousness of Christ for Justification,
 “ until first convinced of Sin; and consequently no
 “ Man will, or can come to Christ by Faith, till
 “ Convictions of Sin have awakened and distressed him.
 “ This being the due Order of the Spirit’s Operations,
 “ the same Order must be observed in Gospel-Offer
 “ and Invitations. ” Thus far Mr. *Flavel*.

But I proceed. There is nothing in Pag. 40, 41, 42, that requires any new Remarks. But in Pag. 43, his Observation of the Eunuch is somewhat remarkable: He went on his Way rejoicing. “ No doubt, says Mr. *Th---n*, he had so much Conviction of his perishing State without a Saviour, as was necessary to make him prize and willingly embrace an offered Saviour, who being at the very first, as it were, presented to the View of his Faith, did prevent those Terrors which otherwise might have accompanied his Conviction. ” What can be the Meaning of this mysterious Passage? Without any Jeer, I know not how to unriddle it. He had so much Conviction as made him willingly embrace a Saviour, and yet this Saviour at the very first presented to the View of his Faith. How is this? Had he Faith before he willingly embraced the Saviour? If not, how could the Saviour be presented to the View of his Faith, when he had none? If he had, then what need of so much Conviction as would make him willingly embrace the Saviour? Can we think that Mr. *Th---n* means now, that Conviction is a necessary Preparative to Faith? What? And had the Eunuch a Sufficiency of preparatory Conviction both before and after Faith, and yet the Jailor none until after he believed? If Mr. *Th---n* can make better Sense of his Words than I do, he may do Justice to himself when he pleases.

Now he comes in Pag. 43. to sweep away our last Refuges. He thinks there is not the least Foundation, no, not the least Shadow of a Foundation in Scripture, to build the Necessity of preparatory Convictions on, save *Rom. viii. 15. For ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to Fear.* Well, and may we not build this Doctrine on this Text, if contained in it, as well as on other Texts the Doctrines contained in them? Mr. *Th--n* in Pag. 45. grants we might, “ if there
 “ were any other plain Scriptures of a parallel Mean-
 “ ing: But to build a Doctrine on one Text obviously
 “ capable of a different Meaning, better agreeing to
 “ the Scope of the Context, and while such a Tenet is
 “ contrary to the current Testimony of Scripture, and
 “ Analogy of Faith, is both unfair and dangerous.” He has saved the Toil of quoting Divines and Commentators, frankly owning they are against him; and intimates that there’s not much Danger, always provided they do not stretch it beyond his Measure. Well, but let us hear his different Meaning of the Text. In Substance it is this, That “ by the Spirit of Bondage
 “ is understood that servile Disposition of Mind which
 “ every unconverted Sinner is under the Power of,
 “ viz. The reigning Power of Sin and Satan, which
 “ cannot but give constant just Ground for Fear and
 “ Terror: But it’s not from the Spirit of God excit-
 “ ing legal Convictions in order to Conversion, but
 “ from their natural Conscience without the Spirit of
 “ God.” Tho’ he prefers this Interpretation, yet he seems not very well fixed in it, while in p. 46. he asks,
 “ why the Text may not rather be understood of the
 “ first saving Convictions of the Spirit, which are
 “ commonly accompanied with some Degrees of Fear
 “ and Terror?” He seems willing it should mean almost any thing, if preparatory Convictions be excepted. But why does he prefer this new Exposition of the Text? He gives two Reasons: 1. Because the
 Apostle’s

Apostle's Scope is to set forth the great Privileges of Believers, compared with their unbelieving State. 2. Because the Scripture often gives the Denomination of *Spirit* to the Temper of Mind, good or bad. I grant both these: But I ask, Is it usual in Scripture, to say, by way of Contradistinction, that one *receives* his own Spirit? If not, then Mr. *Th---n's* second Reason is no Reason at all, for his present Purpose; because the Apostle speaks of their having *received* the Spirit, which must refer to a Spirit they before had not. In short, I do not see that his Reasons have the very least Tendency to prove his Point. For, is not the Privilege of Believers equally clear, by showing that the Spirit of God, who convinced them of Sin and Misery, while graceless, was now become a Spirit of Adoption witnessing their Sonship? That whatever Fears of eternal Wrath they might afterwards conceive, were not from the Spirit of God, who would never be a Spirit of Bondage to them again? Which Word, *Again*, plainly shews that he once was a Spirit of Bondage. Now, is there any thing in this Exposition, but what is perfectly agreeable to what Mr. *Th---n* owns to be the Scope of the Place? And yet it is directly contrary to Mr. *Th---n's* Exposition; and consequently his Exposition is not most agreeable to what himself owns to be the Scope of the Place. For any one may see, that the Apostle speaks of the same Spirit, as being both a Spirit of Bondage and Adoption; because after he has been a Spirit of Adoption, he will not be a Spirit of Bondage *again*: And this is a Reason why the Text cannot be understood of what Mr. *Th---n* calls Saving Convictions, because thereby the Holy Ghost would be a Spirit of Bondage to a converted Person, which the Apostle flatly denies. For, can he witness that they are in Bondage when they are not? O horrid! Or is it usual in Scripture, to call saving Grace by the Name of Bondage? Well, whether Mr. *Th---n* will or not, the

Text

Text, we see, must be understood of preparatory Conviction, and therefore this Exposition cannot possibly be contrary to the current Testimony of Scripture, or Analogy of Faith, but rather perfectly agreeable to both, as is also proven before.

Mr. *Th-----n* loads our Doctrine with horrible Consequences: One of which is, that it encourages false Professors, and deceives them, by making them, among other Things, “take their Trust in the Mercy of God “and Merits of Christ for true Faith.” And he insinuates that they may do this, and yet not hate Sin, not accept an whole Christ. I am sure the Words he uses, in their common Acceptation, are expressive of true Faith, which is trusting to God thro’ Jesus Christ; and can one really and truly do this, and not have received Christ in all his Offices? Until he tell us what he means by these Words, I must let them pass either for false Divinity, or the veriest Jargon. Or is Mr. *Th-----n* about to make all Words equivocal, that he may confuse his Reader’s Mind, and find crooked Alleys to get out at? In a Word, I am no way concerned about his Consequences: All the bad ones imaginable will fall upon his own Scheme; it is Wood, Hay, Stubble; discrepant from Scripture, Reason, and the Analogy of Faith: ’Tis not for Edification, but Destruction; and those who trust it, lean on a broken Reed.

The next two Articles of Charge against us, are but one compleat Charge, and may be propounded under one Head, as follows, Pag. 58, 59. *viz.* “That all true
“ Converts are as sensible of their converted State, of
“ the Grace of God in them, his Love to them, his
“ Spirit working in them, as they are or can be of the
“ Truth of what their outward Senses do perceive;
“ And consequently, that all who are not thus assured
“ of their gracious State, are certainly in an uncon-
“ verted State.” To prove his Charge, he adduces

the Judgment of one Brother, whom he heard preach, " That the true Convert is as sensible of these Things, " as he would be of a Wound, or Stab, or Blowing of " the Wind ; " and in Conversation that same Day asserted, " that the true Believer is always thus assuredly " sensible of these Things whenever Grace is in Exer- " cise. " I may here observe, that it's bad Logick to say, One of our Brethren preach'd and spoke thus, therefore all of them speak the same thing. And 'tis as bad to say, This Brother affirmed, that Christians are assured when Grace is in Exercise, therefore he affirm'd that they are always assured whether Grace be in Exercise or not. Again, I have learned by Experience, that it's necessary to make some Allowance, as to the Truth of Mr. *Th---n's fair Representation*, for I have Reason to judge that said Brother would make some Distinction as to the Degree of Exercise, unless he spoke unusually. But what need of more than this Observation, *viz.* That Mr. *Th---n* has made an equivocal Representation of our Doctrine ? And truly it seems to be studiously equivocal : For in his stating of it here, according to both the Preaching and Conversation of this Brother, at most it comes only to this, *viz.* That all true Christians are sensible of their gracious Exercises, whenever Grace is in Exercise ; and he reasons against a quite different State of the Case. Again, the Words, *Sensible of these Things*, are equivocal : For they may only signify, that a Person is conscious of his having such Exercises, whether he knows their Nature or not : But Mr. *Th---n* reasons as tho' it had been said, They all know the Nature of these Things always. In a Word, he has not advanced one Argument against our Principle, as himself has represented it. He does not accuse us of holding that all true Christians are always assured of their being such ; yet this is the State of the Question he reasons against. The Point he should have proven (had he intended to

oppose

oppose his own Representation of our Doctrine) is this, viz. That all true Christians are not sensible of these Things when Grace is in Exercise. Perhaps he thought hardly any-body would notice so little a Word, as, *always*; and that he might insensibly croud it into his Reasonings, and so delude the unwary Reader, by so slyly missing the State of the Case.

Now, seeing the Case is thus, I might justly forbear to enter any further into the Argument; but for the Satisfaction of others, I will shew our Doctrine in the Point, and then confirm it, before I remark upon Mr. *Th---n*'s Thoughts about it.

In order to clear the State of the Case, observe, that we do not hold all true Christians to be always assured of their gracious State, as Mr. *Th---n* insinuates we do. The World can witness for us, that we hold, and still have held, the contrary: For, has it not been our constant Practice in our Sermons, to clear the perplexed Cases of doubting Christians? And does not that Practice imply, that we look on some to be real Christians, who doubt they are not? Nay, we know, that a Believer who has had full Assurance, may lose it so far, as, for a Time, actually to despair; and, with *Heman*, may count himself *free among the Dead*. Psa. 88. 5.

Again, we do not assert, that every individual Believer has a full, and undoubting Assurance, at some Time or other, before his last Hour; for we know not every thing, that absolute and divine Sovereignty may do, or forbear, consistent with his revealed Will, whose Ways and Thoughts are so high above our Conception and Comprehension. Yet we believe, that even such Christians, as do walk most in Darkness, have their *lucid Intervals*, have sweet, refreshing, and satisfactory Intimations of God's Love; have some Peace and Joy in Believing, and Rest in Jesus Christ: For behold, even distressed *Heman*, in Psa. 88. 1. can call the Lord God
his

his own Saviour; which appropriating Title, plainly implies, a refreshing Degree of Confidence in God, as his God, his Salvation. But whether this Confidence be such in every individual Believer, as wholly excludes all Doubting for a Time, is what we do not affirm, reverencing the Sovereignty of God.

In the next Place, for clearing the State of the Question, let it be observed, That by Assurance I understand such a well-grounded, firm Perswasion and Satisfaction of a Christian about the Safety of his Soul, as wholly excludes all uneasy Jealousies, Doubts and Fears. Again, this Assurance may be well distinguished into transient and fixed. I call that Assurance transient, which passes away, and seldom out-lives the sweet Sensations and Manifestations, by which it is produced. I call that Assurance fixed, which is the Fruit of a constant high Degree of Grace, or a long Tract of Experiences, and which is retained even when the Believer walks in Darkness and has no sensible Manifestations.

Isa. 50. 10.

This fixed Assurance, tho' many Believers have it, yet many may and do want it thro' this Life, because of the Weakness of their Faith. But the former, transient Assurance, tho' we do not assert it is universal, yet we cannot but contend, that it is general and common for true Believers to have it, at some Seasons. Now, 'tis this Doctrine I am to confirm; and methinks the Truth of it will be evident by the following Considerations, *viz.*

1. The Metaphors used by the Holy Ghost to express the inward Sensations of Christians, do evidently prove, that they have the most certain Evidence of God's gracious Manifestations to their Souls; such as Tasting, Feeling, Seeing, Hearing. *1 Pet. 2. 3. 2 Cor 3. 18. Song 5. 2, &c.* From all which we may easily deduce this Doctrine, *viz.* That spiritual Objects are as certain and evident to a Believer's Faith, as material Objects

are to his outward Senses. Hereby also true Religion appears to be a living Principle, discernible in its very Nature. To confirm this Observation further, let us consider, that Self-consciousness is inseparable from the human Soul, she cannot receive any new Sensations or Ideas, but at the same time is conscious of receiving them, and of all her Actings. This is granted on all Hands. But then it may be objected, that tho' the Soul is unavoidably conscious of her own Sensations and Actings, yet may be ignorant of their Nature. This also must be granted. But if we prove, that God not only gives good Things, but also gives to know them. it will alter the Case : For tho' the Soul of herself cannot certainly know her own Case, yet, if God has promised to give Believers the Knowledge of his Gifts, shall we make void his Promises, and explain them away, by our own Reasonings? Because we can conceive it possible, in the Nature of Things, for all Believers to be destitute of Assurance thro' this Life, shall we say, it certainly is so, when God has said the contrary? Yea, let God be true, and every Man a Liar.

Now, 2. it is quite evident, that God's Promises of Light, Assurance of his Love, Peace of Conscience, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, are made to Believers in general. So *Gal. 4. 6. Because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* Here the Apostle makes Adoption, or Sonship, to be the very Ground and Reason of giving the Holy Spirit; and the Work of the Spirit thus given is to assure Believers of their Sonship, enabling them to cry, Abba, Father. Now this Reason holds good with respect to the Sons of God in general, and not only some few. The same thing is observable from *Rom. 8. 15.* where it is spoken of, as the common Privilege of Believers, to have the Spirit of God witnessing with their Spirits, that they are the Sons of God. So in *1 Cor. 2. 12. God has given us [Believers in general]*

his Spirit, that we may know the Things that are freely given us of God. Rom. 14. 17. *The Kingdom of God--- is Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* Now every true Believer has the Kingdom of God within him, and consequently has Joy in the Holy Ghost, which necessarily implies Confidence of his Salvation. Also in Rom. 5. 2. it is given as a real Christian's Character, to rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God.

It is also the blessed Privilege of Believers in common, to have the Earnest of their future Inheritance. *Eph. 1. 14.* And we know an Earnest is Part of the Payment, and not something specifically different from it. Now this Earnest will contain in it Assurance, and all the other sweet Concomitants of it. But I might proceed *ad infinitum*, should I quote the numberless Promises, that are so great a Part of the sacred Oracles; and unless it can be proven, that they are not made to Believers in general, my Conclusion must unavoidably be admitted, *viz.* That Assurance of God's Love, Peace of Conscience, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, are the Benefits of such as are justified, adopted and sanctified: And if any true Believer at all, pass thro' this Wilderness without some transient Assurances, it must be resolved into divine Sovereignty, as aforesaid. I might add many more Arguments, and also bring Numbers of Protestant Divines, to confirm what is said, but have not Time.

I know not why Mr. *T. . .* has quoted the Confession of Faith, and larger Catechism, since he has not accus'd us of holding that all Believers are always assured: For 'tis evident that what we say is most agreeable to our excellent Standards: Nay 'tis impossible to make our Confession & Catechisms a consistent Scheme, unless we say, that Believers in general have the above-mentioned Benefits of Assurance, &c. tho' all have them not always: And if we take a complex View of the whole Scripture, we shall find the same Doctrine

contained in it. It is true we sometimes find a Saint in Distress, walking in Darknes, having no Light, mourning, afflicted, tossed with a Tempest, and not comforted, in bondageful Fear, &c. But then we find him also rejoycing, his Light being come, and the Glory of the Lord having risen upon him. *Isa.* 60. 1. We hear of his Beauty as well as his Athes, the Oil of Joy as well as Mourning, and the Garment of Praise given for a Spirit of Heaviness. *Isa.* 61. 3. For God will not chide continually, nor keep his Anger for ever; but, tho' Weeping may endure for a Night, Joy will arise in the Morning. As for *Hebr.* 2. 15. the preceding Context evidently refers it to the Mosaic Dispensation; tho' (for aught *we* know) it may possibly, in some Measure, be verified in some Instances, under the Christian Dispensation, who may be kept in distressing Anxiety the greatest Part of their Lives, having now and then only some lightsome Seasons, not amounting to a full Assurance. But if it be so, it can be no Cloak to unhumbled, unexercised, unbroken Professors, who are willing to hope at a Venture, that their Case is good.

But I shall now proceed to examine some of Mr. *Th---n's* Reasonings upon this Head. In Pag. 51. he thinks, I suppose, he has landed us all very deep in gross Absurdity, while he argues that our Scheme excludes the Duty of Self-Examination altogether: For thus he points his two-horned Argument, *viz.* " If
 " every true Convert is thus sensibly assured of his
 " gracious State, then Self-Examination is altogether
 " shut out of Doors as needless, both to the Regenerate
 " and Unregenerate; the Regenerate need not exa-
 " mine, for he's already assured; the Unregenerate
 " need not, because he is, or ought to be assured of his
 " Unregeneracy, seeing he's not assured of his Con-
 " version." Now it seems very strange, how such a
 Logician

Logician could imagine this to be the native Consequence of the Principle he pretends to refute. For,
 1. Tho' every true Convert were thus sensibly assured of his gracious State, yet, if he be not thus assured always, it cannot *altogether* exclude Self-Examination, seeing it is needful in such Times as Assurance is wanting. By the same Logick I can prove, that Joy in the Holy Ghost excludes all Sorrow altogether; for if every Believer has Joy in the Holy Ghost, then Sorrow is shut out of Doors. Perhaps Mr. *Th---n* would be ready to answer, that tho' he has Joy, yet not always, and therefore does now rejoice and then mourn. Well, and may not I say as much about Self-Examination, and not reject it altogether?

But 2dly observe, that Mr. *Th---n's* Argument excludes either Assurance altogether, or else Self-Examination: For, according to his Notion, when any Christian attains Assurance, then it comes to pass, that Self Examination is altogether shut out of Doors as needless, with respect to him. So then, if Mr. *Th---n's* Notion be right, there must either be no Assurance, or no Self-Examination. Therefore,

3diy, Tho' every true Convert were always assured of his gracious State, yet I see not how Self-Examination would be excluded hereby; seeing there are many Things about which a Christian should examine himself every Day, as well as his State: I am perswaded, the most assured Christian does use Self-Examination as much as the most doubtful, tho' not just about the same Point. And if Mr. *Th---n* think himself assured of his gracious State, and yet makes no Use of Self-Examination, I will venture to assert, that he knows not the Life and Exercises of a Christian. Now the Reader may judge, whether ours, or Mr. *Th---n's* Scheme, does most exclude Self-Examination.

Mr. *Th---n* is industrious to prove, that a Christian must be converted some considerable Time before he

can have Assurance; and makes bold to appeal, in p. 53. to all assured Christians in the World, that it is so. I grant it may sometimes be so, even as to a transient Assurance, and perhaps generally so, as to a stedfast Assurance: For it is very evident, that young Converts do not commonly hold fast the Rejoicing of their Hope from the Beginning to the End, firmly and fixedly: But that it is always so, I deny; for, methinks I can abundantly prove, that real Christians have, mottly, Assurance, presently upon their first Conversion, however transient this Assurance may be. And, perhaps, I shall not find a stronger Text to prove it, than one of those which Mr. *Th---n* brings against it, viz. *Eph. 1. 13.* the Words of which, in the Original, are thus: *'En 'w kai pistéusantes 'esphragísthete tô pneúmati tês 'epaggelías tô 'agío.* In whom also when ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise. Now the Word *pistéusantes*, being *Aoristi primi*, signifies *Presently after*, as it were the next succeeding Minutes or Hours, and not a long Tract of Time; as every one knows, who understands the Signification of the *Greek Tenses*. So then, if this Sealing is to be understood of Assurance, the Text will prove, that Believers have Assurance of God's Love, at, or about the Time of their first Believing, or presently after it. Now this Gloss is abundantly confirm'd by what we find recorded of Believers in Scripture; particularly in the *Acts*, who when they believed in Christ, were filled with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory. So was the Case of the three Thousand, in *Acts 2. 41, 46.* and of the Jailor, in *ch. 16. 34.* And we no sooner read of *Samaria's* receiving the Word, but presently we read, that *there was great Joy in that City. Acts 8. 8.* And whence could this Joy arise, but from their Perswasion of Christ's Love to them in particular? We find Peace, Joy and Assurance appropriated to Faith, in *Rom. 15. 13.* and *Heb. 10. 22.* And if God give Strength
to

to act Faith vigorously at first, wherein appears the Absurdity of Assurance at first Conversion? Surely Men do err. not knowing the Scripture, nor the Power of God. I hope Mr. *Th---n*, when he considers these Things, will no more appeal to *all* assured Christians for the Confirmation of his Assertion: For I am persuaded, that Multitudes in this Age, as well as in the Times of the Apostles, can testify against him, and warrant their Testimony from the Word of God.

The other Text he brings to prove his Point, is as little to the Purpose, *viz.* *Rev.* 2. 17. where a white Stone and new Name is promised to him that overcomes; by which he understands Assurance of God's Love, which, says he, in p. 52. " is promised as a
 " Reward to the Overcomer, which presupposeth
 " Fighting for some Time, in our spiritual Warfare
 " against the Powers of Darkness, and a Person must
 " be converted ere he can fight spiritual Battles, and
 " consequently must be in a State of Grace some Time
 " before he attain to the Assurance thereof, signified
 " by the white Stone and new Name, which is pro-
 " mised as a Reward of the Victory."

By this Argument Mr. *Th---n* may easily prove, that no Christian has Assurance in this Life, because the Victory is not compleat while one Enemy is able to keep the Field; unless his assured Christian be perfect and sinless: For if he have Sin, he must war against it all his Days, and then, according to Mr. *Th---n's* Exposition, he cannot have Assurance till he be in Heaven. This Consideration may sufficiently expose his Argument. Alas! that a Master in *Israel* should so pervert the Words of *Israel's* God.

On the Whole, it seems to me very plain, that wherever Mr. *Th---n's* Doctrine is entertained, it has a Tendency to weaken the Hands of God's People, and to keep wretched Formalists secure, encouraging them to slumber on, until they go down into the Sides of

the Pit, and that with a Lie in their right Hands. B since Truth is the Mean appointed by God, to sanctify, strengthen, encourage and comfort his People; to discover Hypocrites, and alarm Sinners in general; therefore, as I have proven our Doctrines true, it cannot have a Tendency to produce the contrary Effects.

In Pag. 59. we arrive at Mr. *Th---n's* fourth Article of Charge against us, which is, That we hold, "a true Christian by a while's free Conversation with another, will know whether he be converted or not." He owns he cannot assert "that this Doctrine has been preached out of the Pulpit, yet the Substance of it is asserted by Multitudes that are fallen in Love with those Novelties, says he, that are in Fashion at this Time. And that the Practice of some Ministers, and their Admirers, who rashly judge and condemn other Ministers and People to be carnal, does necessarily presuppose the Belief of this Tenet, and a Claim to this Spirit of Discerning." This is, in Substance, the Charge, and the Proof of it. Wherein I observe,

I. That he has confusedly, and unfairly, stated the Case, while he represents it as tho' we held, that every true Christian, as soon as converted, could readily distinguish all Saints and Sinners which he freely converses with; whereas we doubt not, but many Hypocrites may be qualified to gain the charitable Approbation of judicious Christians; and also, that Believers, whose Evidences are less clear, may be misapprehended and misjudged: Neither do we imagine that every Christian has his spiritual Senses equally exercised to discern between Good and Evil; for 'tis evident that some are more penetrating, thro' long Experience, than others. Now, when Mr. *Th---n* imposes a different and contrary State of the Case on us, and reasons against it, he is employed to no better Purpose, than a

Child, who for Diversion makes a Man of Straw, then sets Fire to him, and triumphs in the Victory.

2. I observe, he charges us with claiming a Spirit of Discerning; by which, I suppose, he means that extraordinary apostolick Gift of knowing the State, perhaps the eternal State, of Persons infallibly by Inspiration. Now, if he means this, and says we claim it, he plainly contradicts himself, by saying, that we pretend to know Persons by Conversation. But if judging of a Person, by comparing his Words with Scripture, be what he calls a Spirit of Discerning, then I see nothing extraordinary in it; nor is the Accusation so formidable as to make some of us start from it, when justly stated. I suppose Mr. *Th---n* would pretend to know, whether a Candidate was skilful in Divinity, by conversing with him about it: And may not one who is judicious, and experimentally acquainted with the Things of the Spirit of God, pretend to know whether another be also acquainted with them, by close, free and familiar Conversation about them, without claiming a Spirit of infallible Discernment? 'Tis true, Mr. *Th---n* and his Brethren are fond of dubbing it with the Title of *Rash Judging*; but I cannot believe that Judgment rash which is founded on Evidence. Many People are easily perswaded that a Judgment is rash, if it be severe; and I suppose Mr. *Th---n* and his Brethren do know this: But a short Consideration will see, that Severity and Rashness widely differ. I presume Mr. *Th---n* will allow, that I am to judge of his Thoughts by his Words, fairly understood; or else must say, that he does not speak as he thinks; this I could not so readily know without something extraordinary: But if I take it for granted that he speaks his Mind, I may then judge him to be erroneous at Heart.

But however much Discernment Mr. *Th---n* may think I claim, yet I confess it is hard for me to discern what he means in Pag. 60. where he says, that “an

“ holy Life gives Ground with a moral Certainty to
 “ judge well of a Person’s State ; but to judge con-
 “ cerning a Work of Grace in the Heart of another,
 “ is more than any Mortal can do.” Now, by what
 Means can we judge well of his State, and yet not
 judge concerning a Work of Grace in the Heart ?
 What is this ! Ground for a moral Certainty of their
 good Estate, yet horrid to judge of their having a Work
 of Grace in their Heart ! Does he mean that one
 may judge of their State by their Actions, but not of
 their Hearts by their Words ? He seems to distinguish
 between their good Estate, and a Work of Grace in
 the Heart. However I must leave it so, until he ex-
 plain it.

In the same Page he asserts, that “ the Apostles
 “ knew not *Simon Magus* to be in the Gall of Bitter-
 “ ness, until he bewrayed himself by his Ignorance of
 “ the Gift of God. That *Peter* and the other Disci-
 “ ples did not know *Ananias* and *Saphira*, until it was
 “ revealed in a supernatural Way.” Tho’ I know not
 any Proof he has for his Assertion, yet be it so ; and
 what then ? *Simon Magus* discovered himself ignorant
 of spiritual Things, and then he was known : Well,
 and if another bewray Ignorance of the Things of God
 now a-days, why may not Christians pretend to know
 this ? Would any ordinary Christian have Need of a
 Spirit of Discernment, to judge that *Nicodemus* was
 ignorant of the New Birth, after hearing him talk of it ?
 And are all the Ministers and People, who oppose God’s
 Work at this Day, so sound, and judicious in spiritual
 Things, so upright in their Lives, that we cannot judge
 many of them to be ungracious, without having Re-
 course to a Spirit of Discerning to account for our
 Judgment ? I trow not.

In Pag. 61. he is at Pains to prove two Things :
 first, “ That it’s God’s Prerogative to search the Heart.”
 And who denies it ? Dare he venture to assert point-
 blank,

blank, that we either tacitly or explicitly assume to be Heart-Searchers? No. But I dare venture to assert, that he tacitly strives to cast such Blasphemy on us. He only charges us directly with a Pretence to know the Case of Persons by free Conversation; and does he not know that this is very different from a Pretence to know the Heart immediately? The next Thing he observes, is, “ That an Hypocrite may personate a
 “ Saint, and that a weak Believer, thro’ Diffidence,
 “ Weakness in Knowledge or Utterance, cannot say
 “ much that Way.” But what need has he to prove this, if he imagine we pretend to search the Heart? For if we did, then no Matter whether Hypocrites or Saints could say much or little, since their Hearts would be known without their Words. But to the Point. We never deny’d that an Hypocrite might deceive, but on the contrary we assert it: We only say, That every Hypocrite, or the Generality of false Professors, are not so capable of imposing on judicious and experienced Christians, as many imagine: For if even Ministers with all their Learning do grossly bewray their Ignorance, what will others do? And what shall we say, that Mr. *Th---n* himself should speak like one that has had but little Acquaintance with the Cases of Christians? Surely he will not say, that it is Weakness in Knowledge or Utterance, that incapacitates him to say much that Way: Yet behold his imperfect, yea false Descriptions of a Christian’s Life and Exercises, &c. and add hereto his envious Insinuations, his stated and vehement Opposition to the Work of God, and say, whether there be not too much Ground of Jealousy afforded to a Christian that lays no Claim to the Spirit of Discerning.

In Pag. 62. he tells us of some Information he has had, “ that some Ministers have condemned the States
 “ of some of their Brethren to their Faces, when they
 “ had no Ground, either from Ignorance, Error, or

“irregular Practices.” I am perswaded he will not be able to make good this Charge ; and until he prove it, I will deny it. That some have judged some Ministers to be carnal, I own ; but that this was done without just Ground, I deny. I have no Hesitation to say, that the Ministers whom they judged carnal, discover’d themselves too plainly to be so, in the Course of their Lives ; some by Ignorance of the Things of God, and Errors about them, bantering and ridiculing of them ; some by vicious Practices, some both Ways, all by a furious Opposition to the Work of God in the Land : And what need have we of further Witnesses ?

I might here, with more evident Reason, retort the Charge of Rash-Judging on Mr. *Th---n* and his Associates, had I Time to enlarge in shewing their Conduct : For, is it not Rash-Judging, in Propriety and Strictness of Speech, when they judge, not only without Evidence, but contrary to it ? Did I call it Rash-Judging ? I recall the Expression, for the Term is too soft ; ’tis rather a furious and virulent *Out-facing the Truth*. For have not he and his Brethren condemned the Work of God as the Work of the Devil, while they have not been able to disprove the Evidences brought to prove it the Work of God ? Have they not judged the Subjects, and Promoters of it, to be acted by the Devil, while themselves must confess that the Lives of many are more holy in Appearance ? And do these yet accuse of Rash-Judging ? ’Tis true they used to bid us wait until the After-fruits would discover it ; but they did not wait for such Evidence themselves, to form a Judgment that Satan was at the Helm. They say, It was carried on by disorderly Persons, in a disorderly Manner, and therefore it could not be the Work of him who is the God of Order. But how then can they account for their Opposition to the first Appearance of it, before they had any Disorder to complain of ? Did not the first remarkable Appearance of *Scul-Con-*
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cern in *Pennsylvania*, begin at *Fag's-Manor*? And was not the Rev. Mr. *Blair* an orderly settled Minister in that Place? Here was no disorderly Person, no breaking into other Mens Congregations, no irregular Candidates, no raw Novices, Missionaries, Libels, or Factions; yet I can evidence, that some of our opposing Ministers condemned the Work as Enthusiasm and Delusion, before they had seen or conversed with those Persons, who were the Subjects of it; and was not this Rash-Judging? As yet they had not those thread-bare Topicks of *Intrusion*, and *Disorder*, to argue from; but when the Work spread, and came within their Borders, they still shewed an utter Abhorrence of it; bespatter'd it, first somewhat covertly, afterwards more openly; and the more bright the Evidence of it shone, the more sensibly were they displeas'd, until at length their Anger kindled into Rage, and made them furiously scatter Fire-brands, Arrows and Death. They set themselves to oppose us doctrinally, of which the Sermon under Consideration is a Proof; and because we preached Salvation full and free, they got into a Notion that we cast Contempt on good Works, and would allow them no honourable Place in our new Religion, as they call'd it, and hence they preached in a legal *Arminian* Strain. Again, because we preached a living Religion, a Religion that must be felt, and consequently discernible in its very Nature; they seem to have mistaken us, either thro' Ignorance of this Religion, or Anger at it, and said we held, that every real Christian is always sensible of his gracious State. Hereupon they preached confusedly against Assurance, in equivocal Terms, as that one might be gracious, and know nothing of it, and so leave it for common, undistinguished. And in the mean time they ceased not from smiting and wounding and taking away the Vail (*Song 5. 7.*) from those who were seeking the Beloved, and sorrowing, or yet rejoicing in his Presence: They called their Conviction and

Sorrow Melancholy, their Devotion and Seriousness Hypocrisy or Grimace, and their Joys must be Enthusiasm and Delusion. They must be stigmatized with the Name of *The blazing Professors now-a-days*, and must hear long Harangues against Flashes of Joy, or Terror; must be twitted with *Novelties, itching Ears, glaring Shews, vain Boasts*, and such like. By these, and such like Methods, they prejudiced many against their Ministry, and others against the Work of God: Such as had a Sense of Religion forsook their Ministry, and went where they might find something to suit the Cases of their Souls. Hereupon the Cry arose about Disorder, Irregularity, and all the Train of Confusions, Schisms, Factions and Parties, so strenuously insisted upon ever since, and which take up so great a Part in most Pages of the Writings of our Opponents.

I have insensibly digressed beyond my intended Brevity, that I might shew the Reader what improper Judges our Opponents are of Rash-Judging, when they free themselves of the Crime. But I shall leave the historical Narrative of their Conduct 'til another Time, when I may have Leisure to set it in a fuller and clearer Light, in some Remarks on their other Pamphlets, if need be; and at present hasten to Mr. *Th---n's* fifth Article of Charge against us, which is,

Pag. 63. That we hold, “ that the principal Criterion, whereby to judge of ourselves, or form a Judgment of Charity concerning others, is not a godly and righteous Walk, but rather these inward Exercises that we felt, or that others can declare they felt, when they were converted.” This Charge he confirms from what he was informed a certain Brother asserted, *viz.* “ That it is a bloody, murdering, barbarous Charity, to judge well of a Person's State by his good Conversation.” Here it is mighty observable, that Mr. *Th---n* represents our Opinion as equivocally as he can, by saying, *Not a godly and right*

teous Conversation. What does he intend to accuse us of hereby? Is it, that we have no Regard to an holy Life in forming a Judgment of Charity concerning others, if they can only talk of Experiences? He seems not bold enough to say so, in direct Words; but he seems willing enough that it be understood so; as appears by his Reasoning, in Pag. 64, where, speaking of Persons that have holy Habits, he says, " Surely such have a far better Foundation to stand upon, than such who can tell long Narratives, as above, but whose Conversation bears not a suitable Correspondence thereto." He insinuates the same Thing in Pag. 66. where he supposes two Persons; " one whose Conversion is remarkable, but falls by Temptation, as *David, Solomon*; the other remembers nothing of the Time of his Conversion, but yet exercises Grace, and lives holy; on which he observes, that every one's Conscience will answer, that the latter has the surest Evidence of Conversion." By all which, I say, he insinuates, that we care not what sort of Lives Men live, if they can give a Narrative of their Conversion. But how does he support his Charge? 'Tis plain, that his Conclusion is too broad for the Premises: For tho' that certain Brother said, That a Person's good Conversation is not a sufficient Ground for a Judgment of Charity, he did not therefore exclude a good Conversation out of the Account. Or does he pretend to accuse us of holding, that a good Conversation is not the only Ground for a Judgment of Charity? It would seem at first Sight, as tho' this was his Charge; but if it be not, he is talking to the Winds. Again, when he says, *These Exercises which we felt, or which others can declare they felt, when they were converted*; does he mean hereby to accuse us of holding, what he insinuates in Pag. 64. that unless we, or others " can tell the Time, Place, and Manner of their Conversion, or the Sermon by which this Work was wrought," we cannot

cannot judge charitably of them, whatever gracious Exercises they are acquainted with? If he mean this, he has no Colour of Proof: For tho' we should say, That we cannot judge charitably of one who has no gracious Experiences to tell of, yet I see not how this restricts the Matter to the Sermon, Time, and Place of Conversion. But what a strange Opponent is he, who leaves us so much in the Dark, as to the Meaning of his Articles of Charge? If Mr. *Th-----n* wrote this Sermon with a clear Conscience, why is he so equivocal? But I pass on.

We deny holding, that every Christian can tell exactly the Time when Grace was first infused, or the Place in which, or the Sermon by which this Work was wrought: Neither do we give Credit to a Person's Narrative of his supposed Conversion, if the Course of his Life be inconsistent with it. Yet we do not think, that a moral and very formal Professor, who is unacquainted with the Exercises and Experiences of real Christians, does give sufficient Ground for a Judgment of Charity, touching his gracious State: For the Scripture will teach us to argue, that Saints can give a better Reason for the Hope that is in them (*1 Pet. 3. 15.*) than only their external Walk; as is evident from what I have spoken on the Point of Assurance: They can give such an Account of their Experiences, and I believe the greater Part of them can give such a Narrative of their Conversion, as may be satisfying to a judicious Christian, whether it be so to themselves or not.

But Mr. *Th-----n* thinks, in p. 63. that "the Erroneousness of this Tenet in a great Measure appears from what he has said concerning preparatory Convictions." Well, but if what he has said of preparatory Convictions appear to be erroneous, it will then follow, according to his own Judgment, that the present Tenet is true, seeing he links them together. Now, I have already proven his Doctrine of Convictions to be false,
and

and ours to be true, and consequently his present Doctrine falls to the Ground, until he rear his Doctrine of Convictions, by overthrowing what I have advanced against it: And I am willing that the present Point be decided by his Arguments and mine, about preparatory Convictions; for it seems he would believe the one, if he could believe the other; at least, *in a great Measure.*

But while I speak, I observe, that Mr. *Th---n* is in a great Measure got into the Doctrine of preparatory Convictions himself; for, a few Lines further he tells us of some “who in more adult Years have been drawn to Christ by the Cords of Love gradually.” He formerly owned that all the Graces were infused at once, Pag. 15. of his Book. And if so, must there not be some Work preparatory to the Infusion of Grace, to make this Drawing *gradual*? Surely it would be a Contradiction, to say, that Conversion is gradual, if there be no preparatory Work.

He further tells us, Pag. 64. that such as are thus drawn, do “feel the Exercises of Faith, Love to God; Hatred against Sin, sincere Endeavours to mortify it, &c. from whence they have Ground to conclude well of themselves, and others may charitably judge of them.” What is this? Is Mr. *Th---n* also become a Judger of Men from their inward Exercises? Does he judge charitably of them, because of their Faith, Love, Sincerity? Sure these are inward in the very Soul; and yet on account of these, he would have others judge charitably of them: Yes, by all means; for who would desire better Grounds to conclude well of their State?

I might enlarge in making Observations of this kind, were it worth while. But I proceed to the sixth Article of Charge against us, which is,

Pag. 68. That “we make a Distinction between
“the outward and inward Call of a Person to the
H “Ministry,

“ Ministry, and assert, that tho’ a Person be regularly,
 “ after due Trial and Examination, ordained to that
 “ Office, according to the divine Institution ; yet if he
 “ be not converted, or have not true Grace, or the
 “ inward Call of the Spirit [as we love, he says, to speak]
 “ that such a Person has not the Call of God, but only
 “ the Call of Man to that Office. This Doctrine,
 “ he says, is industriously propagated, and as greedily
 “ drunk in by Multitudes.” Now, I would ask Mr.
Th--n, did he hear us himself preach this Doctrine?
 or has he only been assuredly inform’d of our Distinc-
 tions and Phrases herein? I believe he will be diffi-
 culted to prove that we have been very industrious in
 this Point. The Truth is we have declared against a
 carnal, graceless, and ignorant Ministry, who know
 not how to divide each his Portion; we have shewn
 how dangerous and destructive they are; for *they have*
healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my People slightly,
Jer. 6. 14. of which Mr. *Th--n*’s Doctrine of Convictions
 is a Proof: But I know not any of our Number, who
 have insisted much upon the ministerial Call, or upon
 this Distinction of *inward and outward, divine and hu-*
man: But seeing we are called to answer our Part, and
 tell our Opinion herein, I proceed.

Now that I may clearly state the Case, I premise a few Things:

1. That we do not plead for, nor yet expect, an apostolick, immediate Call to the Work of the Ministry now-a-days, but only the ordinary, and mediate Call of God.

2. As a Consequence of this, no Person, however eminently qualified, both with supernatural sanctifying Grace, and acquired Learning, may, in ordinary Cases, execute the Office of a Minister, until he be try’d, approv’d, and commissioned, according to the Word of God, by approv’d Ministers of Christ, who are invested with Authority for so doing: And of Consequence,

we abhor to set the Call of God in Opposition to his Order for the regular Trial, and Ordination of Men for the Ministry; but assert that the one is most consistent with the other.

3. We grant, that a Person who is apparently qualified, according to the Rules of Scripture, with Grace and Learning, even tho' he be in Reality a close Hypocrite, yet when such an one is regularly set a-part for the Ministry by those who have the Power of Ordination, he is then a true Minister in the Sight of the Church, his Ministrations are valid, and he is to be received and esteemed as one called of God, until the contrary appear. Once more :

4. We grant, that any Person whatever, who is once put into this sacred Trust, in a regular Manner, as aforesaid, is called of God to fulfil his Ministry, is obliged in Duty to do as he has said; but yet we say, he was not called of God to undertake this Trust, while destitute of those Qualifications which God calls for in Ministers; tho' it be his bounden Duty to perform the ministerial Charge, after he is entred into it, yet it was not his Duty, while graceless and unqualified, to enter in. This is the Point at which Mr. *Th---n* and I do part asunder, *viz.* That the Call of God to the Office of the Ministry, is distinguished from, tho' not opposed unto, the Presbytery's Trying and Ordaining a Person to that Office. This he denies, and we affirm.

Now, in order to prove this Point, let it be considered wherein the Call of God consists. Mr. *Th----n* defines this Call, in Pag. 69. to be "an authoritative Act of God, whereby he requireth, commands and authorizes a Person, to enter upon, and execute the Office of a Minister." I shall not controvert Mr. *Th---n*'s Definition, but I chuse to express the Thing in fewer Words, thus, The Call of God is his making it a Person's Duty to enter into the Office of the Ministry. Hence the Point I maintain may be diversified,

and stand thus, *viz.* That God does not make it the Duty of a graceless and unqualified Man to enter upon the ministerial Function. This will be clear, if we consider that God requires gracious Qualifications in such as bear the Vessels of his House: A Minister must be holy, *Tit.* 1. 8. He should be sanctified, otherwise he's not meet for the Master's Use, *2 Tim.* 2. 21. He must be faithful. *2 Tim.* 2. 2. Now, is there any to whom these Characters will agree, in their real Extent, but a gracious Man? Surely no: Does God then require such Qualifications in all his Ministers? and does he also require such as have them not, to enter that Office? How contradictory is this? How absurd! Yet this is what Mr. *Th---n* expressly maintains, in Pag. 69. "When a Person, says he, is orderly set a-part to this Work, according to the Order and Institution of Christ, by the Ministry of his Servants, who are invested with Authority for that Purpose; I say, says he, that Person, whatever his personal Qualifications be as to sanctifying Grace, is truly, and according to the scriptural Way of speaking, called of God to that Work." If Mr. *Th---n* did only mean, that a Person already entered into the Ministry, was called of God to fulfil it, I would not gainsay it; but in his Definition, he not only makes the Call of God to consist in authorizing a Person entered to execute the Office of a Minister, but also, in requiring and commanding a Person to enter upon it; or, in other Words, making it his Duty to undertake that Office. If he does not mean it in this latter Sense, he must own that he has been designedly equivocal. Now, if a Presbytery's setting a Man orderly a-part for the Ministry, be all the Call of God that is to be look'd for, in order to his undertaking that Office, then it will follow, that an Heretick, yea, an Infidel, while such, may be called of God to enter into the Ministry. Mr. *Th---n* must maintain this, or if he think it too hard a Task, he

he must maintain, that no Presbytery under Heaven can possibly set a profane Person, an Heretick or Infidel, a-part for this Office, by Fasting, Prayer, and Imposition of Hands: They may examine him too, and tho' they do not approve of him, yet, may they not set him a-part? If Mr. *Th---n* say this is impossible for a Presbytery to do, to try a Man, and not approve of him, and yet set him a-part by Ordination; then I will prove, that it is possible, because Mr. *Th---n* and his Brethren of *Donnegal* Presbytery, have actually done it; and if they please, may call upon me to prove it: They know I was present, when they examined and appointed to ordain a certain Man, and also did ordain him, and how little able they were to approve of him. Well, if Mr. *Th---n* can neither prove, that an ordained Infidel, Heretick, or a Christianity-professing *Ignoramus*, can be said to be called of God to undertake and enter into the Ministry, nor yet prove that it is impossible, in the Nature of Things, for a Presbytery to try and formally invest such an one with that Office; then he must own that a Presbytery's setting a Man orderly a-part, is not sufficient to prove him called of God to that Work; and so must overthrow his own Scheme entirely.

Again, the Absurdity of Mr. *Th---n*'s Scheme may be shewn, by having Recourse to the Reformers from Popery, *viz.* *Luther*, and his contemporary Brethren in the Ministry; some of whom had a Popish Ordination, some none at all: I presume that Mr. *Th---n* will own their Ordination at best to be as good as none at all; and yet, I must suppose, that he owns them called of God, or else he condemns the Reformation as disorderly. But if his Argument be true, *viz.* That the Call of God consists in a Person's being orderly set a-part by an orderly Ministry, for that Office, then it will follow, that those Reformers were not called of God, and consequently his Argument will condemn the

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the Reformation, as a Thing not called for. But this is absurd: And therefore our Argument stands good, That there must be a Call of God previous to, and distinguished from, a Person's being regularly set a-part for the Ministry.

Agreeable hereto, in our approven Standard for Church-Government, Directory for Ordination of Ministers, Sect. 3. the Presbytery is to "enquire (of the Candidate) touching the Grace of God in him, and whether he be of such Holiness of Life, as is requisite in a Minister of the Gospel; and to examine him touching his Learning and Sufficiency, and touching the Evidences of his Calling to the holy Ministry, and in particular, his fair and direct Calling to that Place." Now, does Mr. *Th--n* pretend to hold by the Confession of Faith, and Directory? If he does, how will he explain this Passage to be consistent with his Doctrine? He makes the Call of God to the Ministry to consist in a Man's being orderly set a-part thereto; the *Westminster* Assembly give Direction, that the Man is to be examined touching his Calling to the holy Ministry, before he be ordained; how can this be done, if his regular Trial and Ordination be the Whole of the Call? How can he be examined about his Call, when the Presbytery have not given it to him? According to Mr. *Th--n's* Scheme, the Presbytery are to examine themselves touching the Evidences of the Man's Calling, and not himself: They are to try whether they have regularly set him a-part, according to Christ's Order; and if they have observed the Punctilioes, then they may conclude he is called of God, for his Ordination is the Evidence.

Likewise to enquire "touching the Grace of God in him," is very contrary to Mr. *Th--n's* Scheme; for he and his Brethren are at no Loss to compare it to the *Spanish* Inquisition, and call it "a putting Men upon the Rack to declare their inward Experiences."

No doubt it is racking enough to such as have nothing to declare that Way. These are our goodly Contenders for Order, and the Confession of Faith!

But I proceed. The Point will receive additional Evidence, by considering, that Ordination to the Ministry presupposes the Person to be called of God, at least in the Judgment of his Ordainers, otherwise they act irrationally, irregularly, and unconscienciously; for is it not evidently the Duty of a Presbytery to enquire whether it be their Duty, *that is*, Whether they be called of God to set this or that Person a-part for the Ministry? Now they cannot be clear in their being called of God to ordain him, unless they have Ground charitably to judge, that he is called of God to that Work; if it be not satisfyingly clear to them, that it is his Duty, in the Sight of God, to undertake the Charge, it cannot be clear that it is their Duty to give it to him. So then, if Ordination supposes the Call of God previous to it, it cannot in itself be this Call.

If any should ask me, What is this divine Call you speak of, if it be not the regular setting of a Person a-part for this Office, by the Presbytery? Wherein does it consist? Or what is the Evidence of it? I would answer:

I. Since no ungracious Person is called of God to that Office, in Gospel-times, as the Scriptures before-cited (with many, many others) do prove; it follows, that converting sanctifying Grace must needs be one Evidence of it: For without this, a Man cannot be holy, faithful, a Lover of good Men; nor so apt to teach the Mysteries of Godliness, as he that has experienced them: He cannot properly bear the Title of an Ambassador, who must be supposed a Friend at Court; a Friend of the Bridegroom's is not a fit Appellation for one of his Enemies: Ministers are Stars, who shine by the Light of the Sun of Righteousness; but a carnal Man, unto whom the Sun of Righteousness has never
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arose, is not worthy of this Title. If a carnal Minister get these Titles, it can only be catachrestically and ironically. I might say much more to prove it, but what has been said may suffice to shew, that only gracious Persons are called of God to undertake the Ministry; and consequently Grace must be one Evidence of this Call. Neither will it follow, as Mr. *Th---n* and our Opponents fondly imagine, that therefore every gracious Person has a Call to the Ministry. Have they not so much Logick as to distinguish between *proprium soli* and *proprium toti*? Might they not then as easily suppose us to hold, that tho' the Ministry is proper to good Men *only*, yet not to *all* of them? For,

2. When God, in the Use of proper Means, furnishes a Person with a Competency of Knowledge for this Function, it is a further Evidence of his Call to it; to whom God has given Talents, from them he expects a due Improvement of his Gifts. But lest any should yet urge, that by this Means, every one who is both gracious and learned has a Call to the Ministry; I observe,

3. That it's not enough to have these Qualifications, but also a strong Desire to serve God in this Station; for *he that desireth the Office of a Bishop, desires a good Work.* 1 Tim. 3. 1. When he is swayed to desire this Work by an ardent Love to the divine Glory, a longing Desire for the Conversion of Sinners, and the Prosperity of Saints; and not by Greed of Honour, Ease, or filthy Lucre; for if one be swayed to seek what is truly good by a carnal Motive, it is an Evidence that his Desire is not from the Holy Spirit, otherwise his Motive would be spiritual, and bear some Proportion to the good Thing desired. Now, as no carnal Man can desire the divine Glory with a single Eye, nor yet the Good of Zion, so as to set it above his chiefest Joy, therefore his Desires of the Ministry bear not the Stamp of Divinity upon them. This I mention to illustrate
this

this Point, *viz.* That such spiritual Ends and Motives do prove the aforesaid Desire to be an Evidence of the Call of God to that Work, when all other Requisites do concur, and the Man's present Station and Circumstances do not interfere with it.

God, who has the sovereign Command of the Soul, and who has undertaken to be the Guide and Instructor of his own Children, has many Ways to signify his Mind to them, in a Case of such Weight and Importance as the Ministry of the Gospel: He removes Difficulties, and clears the Way, opens a Door for their Entrance, and thrusts them forth: He speaks to their Hearts, gives them Strength and Encouragement, and leads them according to his Word; which will be strange to none who knows what sweet Intercourse and Communion the People of God have with him, or who considers the general Promise of the Spirit's Guidance to all Believers: What Absurdity is there in asserting, that they in Effect hear a Voice behind them, saying, *This is the Way, &c. Isa. 30. 21.* Or why may he not shew one, that he has need of him? *Mark 11. 3.* Surely the Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. *Psa. 25. 14.* But if any desire more full Satisfaction with respect to these inward Motions and Excitements of the Holy Spirit, in those whom he calls to the Ministry, I refer them to the judicious and holy Mr. *Durham*, in his Exposition of the *Revelations*, pag. 49, &c.

But lest our Adversaries say, that this opens a Door to endless Confusion and Enthusiasm, if every one who has such Qualifications and Desires, and a Concurrence of all desirable Things in his own Opinion, may enter upon, and execute the Office of a Minister, without more ado: For so they state the Question fallaciously; and so Mr. *Th---n* reasons in pag. 75. " Shall and must
 " we accept of a Person, says he, who pretends to this
 " inward Call, as one called of God, without a due
 " Course of Trials? " I answer, No, by no means;

For the Ministers of Christ must be the Judges of his Qualifications, before he can enter the Ministry ; he must be try'd, approv'd, and commission'd by them, before he may assume to execute that Office, in ordinary Cases, when there are true Ministers to do so. And does not this shut the Door upon these Confusions suppos'd to be the Consequence of this Doctrine ? Do we then make void the Orders, and Rules of Christ, for the regular Trial and Ordination of Men, by asserting a Call of God distinct herefrom ? God forbid : Yea, we establish the sacred Order of his House ; and assert, that these Things that are Evidences of the Call of God to the Candidate, are to be enquir'd into by the Ministers who ordain him, and are to be the Evidences of their Call to set him a-part, " upon Trial they have Clearness to proceed.

I do not mean, that Ministers must have an infallible Certainty of a Candidate's being called of God, before they can proceed to ordain him ; but when they have rational Ground, after Trial, to judge charitably of him, they may with satisfying Clearness proceed, and be accepted of the Lord in what they do, even tho' they be deceived as to the Person himself whom they ordain.

On this Occasion I can with Pleasure use the Words of the Rev. Mr. Foxcroft of Boston, in his Sermon, entitled, *The Necessity and Importance of Ministers being Men in Christ*. In Pag. 17. he says, " Ability and
 " Fidelity, Gifts and Grace, are essential Requisites ;
 " without which the human Mission is insignificant,
 " and carries no Authority with it, at least in the Sight
 " of God. If any [says one] ordain Persons incapable
 " or unfit, they only send forth Creatures of their own,
 " not Ministers of Christ. Those Qualifications are
 " necessary to make Men meet Recipients of the mi-
 " nisterial Commission, according to the Will of
 " Christ ; and it is the Will of Christ that gives every
 " Minister his Commission. Ordainers are but the
 " Instru-

“ Instruments of external Investiture, which is only
 “ a Point of Order ; and if applied to wrong Subjects,
 “ to insufficient Persons, gives them no Authority, at
 “ least before God : As neither does the Refusal of it
 “ to Persons qualified and called regularly, hinder, but
 “ that such may act as sufficiently authorized without
 “ it, where such a Point of Order can't be obtain'd.”

And in Pag. 18. he observes, that “ the Holy Ghost
 “ has given Rules by which to judge of the Meetness
 “ of Persons for this Office ; and unless the Persons
 “ appear really such as the Holy Ghost directs to, the
 “ Call and Ordination are irregular. And if Men
 “ have not the internal as well as the external Call,
 “ they are bold Intruders, and run before they are
 “ sent.”

I have only Time to make a few short Remarks on
 Mr. *Th---n's* Reasonings, and so conclude the Point.

1. He urges in Pag. 70. and 71. in his 3d and 4th
 Arguments, that Ministers ought to have an external
 Call ; and observes, that the Prophets and Apostles,
 tho' extraordinary, were externally called also. As to
 his making Ordination, when regularly performed, the
 whole Call of God, I have already made Remarks.
 I would only now ask him, for what End is he con-
 tending for an external Call ? or rather, with whom
 does he contend ? Can he with a clean Conscience say,
 that we deny it, either directly or consequentially ?
 Has he the least Proof, either from our Words or Ac-
 tions, that we disregard the Order of Christ respecting
 Ordination of Men for the Ministry ? If not, is he
 not sensible that he seeks to slander us, while he reasons
 against what he knows we do not hold, and at the
 same time pretends he is reasoning against us, thereby
 to insinuate a Falshood into the Minds of such as know
 not the Case ?

2. He thinks, we make the Call of God, and the
 Qualifications in the Persons called, one and the same

Thing. I answer, We look on gracious Qualifications and Abilities, as essential Requisites in a truly called Minister, and necessary Evidences of his Call, both to himself and his Ordainers; but we do not make them the same Thing with Ordination, nor imagine that they supersede the Necessity thereof, as Mr. *Th--n* insinuates.

3. He falsifies Mr. *Tennent's* Words, in Pag. 72. when he says, either that Mr. *Tennent* expressly maintains, "that gracious Qualifications do constitute the Call of God to the Ministry," or that he maintains, "that every gracious Person is called to the Ministry." Now Mr. *Th--n's* Words are so equivocal, as to be understood either Way. And yet either Way they are false. For Mr. *Tennent* only says, they are "a principal Part of the ordinary Call of God to the ministerial Work." But he does not say, that nothing more is necessary, in order to a Person's executing the Office. There is much Difference between that which wholly constitutes a Call, and that which is only a principal Part of it. He does not say, they constitute a Call of God, as Mr. *Th--n* asserts most falsely; but he may well look on them to be such Evidences of it, as without them it cannot be evidenced.

4. In Pag. 73. Mr. *Th--n* intreats his Readers, not to think he's pleading for a graceless Ministry: But, for my Part, am not able to believe but he is doing so. 'Tis true he says they are "an awful Plague and Scourge to any People." But how shall I believe him sincere herein, when he pleads that they are called of God to the Ministry? What is this? Called of God to be Plagues and Scourges to his People! I thought he had said they were called to be Ministers, not to be Plagues. 'Tis true, in the next Line he comes down with his Terms, and instead of [*Called*] he uses the Word [*Permit.*] If he had only said so still, he would have saved me of some Labour: But it's to be feared
he still

he still uses the Words, *Permit* and *Call*, as synonymous Terms; for by and by he asserts, that such are called of God to the Work of the Ministry. Thus, in a Word, graceless Men are sometimes called and permitted, and permitted and called, to be Ministers, and Plagues, and Scourges to any People. From such may the LORD deliver his Church at this Day.

I come now to the last Article of Charge, in p. 76. which is, That we hold, “ that an unconverted Minister, who has only the Call of Man, cannot, in an ordinary Way, be a Mean of Conversion to others by his Preaching.” He thinks this Tenet is so near of kin to the last foregoing, that he need not say a great Deal to confute it.” Truly he does well to spare this Point, lest if he say a great Deal, he should confute himself: For why? He said before, that such graceless Ministers are Plagues and Scourges; and if he say much now to prove their Usefulness, he will overthrow himself, and his Scheme will fall without Hand. But possibly the Point may be carried thus: He will speak One Word against graceless Ministers, and Ten Words for them, that so they may still have a Majority of Votes on their Side.

He observes, That the Reason given why the *Israelites* of old were not profited by the Word, is, that the Word was not mixed with Faith in them that heard it. *Heb. 4. 2.* “ Nothing of this is ascribed, says he, to the Gracelessness of the Preachers.” I will only put Mr. *Th---n* in Mind of *Jer. 23. 22.* *But if they had stood in my Counsel, and had caused my People to hear my Words, then they should have turned them from their evil Way, and from the Evil of their Doings.* This only shews us, that such as are sent of God, have a Promise of Success.

Pag. 77. Mr. *Th---n* thinks our Doctrine will lead into this Absurdity, *viz.* That every one would have

Reason to doubt of the Reality of any Good they had ever received, as often as they see Reason to doubt of the Graciousness of the Instrument, if they believe, “ that a graceless Minister cannot be a Mean of real Good to their Souls.” Here Mr. *Th---n* shifts the State of the Question intirely; for, which of us did he ever hear say, that a graceless Man *cannot* be the Mean of real Good to a Soul? Did we ever so limit the Holy One of *Israel*? No. For ’tis plain, that what he quotes from Mr. *Tennent’s* Sermon, will not bear that Force, but the contrary; he neither directly, nor consequentially, uses the Word, *Cannot*, which yet Mr. *Th---n* imposes on us, and thereby evidently slanders us. We do believe, that the Word is made effectual to Salvation, not by any Virtue in it, or in him that doth administer it, but only by the Blessing of Christ, and the Working of his Spirit in them that by Faith receive it. But the Question is, whether the Holy Spirit does work so generally, by the Ministry of graceless Men, as those whom he has qualified with Grace, and sent into the Ministry? And since Mr. *Th---n* has not proven this, he has done just nothing at all to the Purpose: For ’tis this we deny, and assert that the Lord works, for common, only by gracious Men, whom he has sent into the Ministry. What I have said about the ministerial Call, confirms this; and I might add many other Arguments, were it necessary, to shew not only that gracious Ministers have the Promise of Success, but also, that there is a greater Aptitude or Fitness in such, to promote the real Interests of *Zion*, and Good of Souls, than in others, upon many Accounts; and to shew, that graceless Ministers do not so discharge, for common, the Work of the Ministry, as that it has a Tendency to do good: But am, at present, straitned in Time. Besides, these Things are done already, in the best Manner, by the Rev. Mr. *Foxcroft*, in that Sermon of his before quoted: It is a
judicious

judicious, pious and elegant Composure, printed in the Year 1728, before the present warm Disputes arose about those Points: His Words, in Pag. 27. of said Sermon, are so much to the Purpose, that I chuse to conclude this Point with them; they are as follow:

“ The End and Import of their (the Ministers) Office
 “ require that they be Men in Christ. Surely there is
 “ the greatest Condecence and Propriety in it.
 “ Their being in Christ is but a proper Harmony and
 “ just Comportment with the Nature and Design of
 “ their spiritual Employ. How unseemly must it
 “ be for the Children of Hell, to wear a Commission
 “ under Christ, the Captain of Salvation! for Servants
 “ of the Devil, to have the Charge of Souls, and
 “ Strangers to Christ, to be employed in preaching
 “ him unto others! — What Incongruities are these!
 “ Such as must needs grate on every Ear. A Christless
 “ graceless Minister is the greatest Absurdity in the
 “ World. Whereas if Ministers be sanctified in Christ
 “ Jesus, it is a very beautiful Correspondence with the
 “ Nature and Scope of their sacred Office. It is but
 “ fitting that they who are professedly united with
 “ Christ in Design, should be mystically and spiritually
 “ united to his Person.”

Upon the Whole, I can't but conclude, That Mr. *Th---n* will suffer Loss; for his Works are but Paper-Walls, and cannot stand the Trial of the Fire: Yea, his Fabrick is built with Wood, Hay and Stubble, and will surely burn when Fire is apply'd to it. He supposed our Works were consumed; but the Reader may see, it was only a *Man of Straw*, a meer Phantom, a Shadow, which the Light chases away.