

Doctrine of Convictions *set in a clear Light,*

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An Examination and Confutation of
several Errors relating to Conversion.

Being the Substance of a

S E R M O N

Preached by the Author to his own and a Neighbouring Congregation, with some *Enlargements*.

By JOHN THOMSON *Minister of the Gospel.*

Acts 17 11. *These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these Things were so*

Isai. 8. 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.*

P H I L A D E L P H I A :

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THE
P R E F A C E.

SURELY it cannot but be very Afflicting and Grieving to every one who hath the Welfare and Prosperity of Z. m at Heart, to look about him and behold, into what a dreadful Convulsion the Interest of Religion is cast, and that, all of a sudden, by the imparalleled Industry of some Men, who, by their Station and Character, ought rather to promote her Health and Prosperity.

The very Foundation and Spring of all the unusual Stir, that hath appeared in this Country, and particularly in this Province, is, in my Apprehension, that woful, uncharitable, presumptuous Principle of rash Judging; some Ministers taking upon them to judge and condemn their Brethren, as carnal unconverted Men, who cannot nor are desirous to do good to the Souls of others. A very notable Instance of which is that singular Performance of Mr. Gilbert Tennent, viz. His Sermon concerning unconverted Ministers. Upon this Principle of rash judging is founded and built the Practice and Proceeding of our protesting Brethren

thren in their unwearied, and alas for it! too successful Endeavours to divide and alienate the Minds, and Affections of the common People from their own Ministers, being made to believe them to be as graceless as our protesting Brethren lay them out to be. In the Exercise of this Principle of rash judging, they not only condemn their Brethren in general and by the Lump, in their public Performances, but also in private, are so particular as to name such as they thus condemn. ~~Mr.~~ Mr. Gilbert Tennent did mention my self by name, to Mr. George Gillespy, as being one of the unconverted Pharisee Preachers, against whom he and the Brethren of his Party do so much declaim; and one of their new licensed Preachers in his public Discourse within the Bounds of my Congregation, as several of his Hearers told me, condemned his Hearers, and their Minister by Lump, as being in the strait Way to eternal Ruin; and in the mean Time acknowledged that he knew not their Minister. But its to be hoped that the Lord, who is now undoubtedly chastising, and correcting us for our Sins and misimprovement of the Gospel, will, in his own Way and Time, heal this evil Disease, by bringing both Ministers and People to their right Wits again, and restore a more christian charitable Spirit among us all.

The Substance of the following Discourse was preached, as I remember about six Months ago, about which Time the erroneous Doctrines therein considered, and confuted were, with a singular Industry preached and propagated by our Itinerant Protesting Brethren, and as greedily imbib'd by their
 admiring

admiring Hearers. I my self have heard Mr. Gilbert Tennent, with great Vehemency assert to a great Congregation, that every truly gracious Person or true Convert is as certainly sensible of the Grace of God in himself, or the Love of God unto him, as a Man would be of a Wound or a Stab, or the blowing of the Wind or to that Effect; and maintained the same Doctrine, alledging some Scriptures for his Support, when in private, I challenged him for it on the same Evening.

As my principal Design in preaching the Substance of the following Discourse, was partly to prevent my Hearers being drawn aside by those Errors which I therein endeavoured to confute, and partly to reclaim any of them who might have been in any Measure tainted with them; so my Design in making these Thoughts public is the same, only with a more extensive View.

As there is no Doctrine of the Christian Religion that is more Momentous and Fundamental than this of Conversion or Regeneration; so it concerns every Christian to have his Judgment rightly informed about it, and to be guarded against such Mistakes as may lead to wrong Notions about it, which I conceive the Doctrines considered and confuted in the following Performance, have a native tendency unto; and therefore I hope it may be of good Service to rid Marches between Truth and Error, in Relation unto them.

Another additional Motive to the Publication of the following Piece, was, that our itinerating protesting Brethren, have industriously represented us to their

Hearers, as if we denied that assurance of Faith is at all attainable in this Life, that we deny all discernible Workings of the Spirit, that a Person may be in a State of Grace and know nothing at all of it, & the like. Now I hope what is declared in the following Sheets will help to wipe off the Reproach, and let the Reader see that, in Relation to these Matters, we believe & preach according to the Word of God, the analogy of Faith, and our Westminster Confession and Catechisms; and may also serve to assist some to form more clear and distinct Apprehensions about the Points herein treated of, than perhaps otherwise they might have done.

What acceptance and success these poor Endeavours may have with my christian Brethren and fellow Professors, I must leave to Time and divine Providence to determine; only, as I can truly say that it is the Cause of Truth and the Good of precious Souls, I sincerely and chiefly aim at herein; so it will be Matter of no small Joy and Comfort to my self, and I am perswaded to many others, if the Lord should be graciously pleased to bless this weak Endeavour for that End.

I shall conclude this Preface when I have given my Readers a Caution, to be sure to lay aside all Prejudice and Prepossession in Favour or Opposition to any Party, or else an hundred to one but they will lose their Labour and Pains, in reading and considering the Contents of the following Sheets. Let them therefore without byass imploy their Reason to hold the Ballance of the Sanctuary in their Hand, i. e. the Scriptures, and so to weigh and ponder the
Weight

Weight of the Arguments offered, and I am not afraid of the Sentence which shall be pass'd.

May the Lord Jesus Christ dwell in his Gospel Zion, maintain the Cause of Truth, revive the Power and Practice of true Religion, enable all sincere followers of Truth to distinguish between the Chaff and the Wheat, between the Gold, Silver, and the Precious Stones, and the Chaff and Stubble of erroneous and unprofitable Doctrines, and make this weak Endeavour an effectual Mean, in its Place and Measure, for this Purpose.

THE

Doctrine of Convictions set in a clear Light.

1 Cor. 3. 12, 13.

*Now if any Man build on this Foundation,
Gold, Silver, precious Stones, Wood, Hay, Stum-
ble: Every Mans Work shall be made manifest,
For the Day shall declare it, because it shall be
revealed by Fire, and the Fire shall try every
Mans Work of what Sort it is.*

THE State and Condition of the militant Church is significantly represented by the Spirit of GOD, *Cant. 2. 2. to be like a Lilly among Thorns* i. e. environed and surrounded with such unkind Neighbours as are still ready to wound and tear her Flesh and mar her Beauty. There are three Kinds of Thorns which have been by their Turns, very exercising and afflicting to her almost in every Age, *viz.* Persecutions, Errors, and Divisions. Such is the woful Degeneracy and Corruption of human Nature, even in the Church herself, that if by the Mercy and Goodness of God, She be for a While freed from a persecuting Sword, She soon waxeth wanton, turns luxuri-
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ant, and becomes the Disturber of her own Peace, either by Error or Division, and commonly there is a Mixture of both together.

It's an unspeakable Mercy, that for above fifty Years together the Church of Christ in the Dominions of *Great Britain*, hath enjoyed a very great Degree of Peace and Freedom from this afflicting and oppressing Evil ; and we have Reason to mourn over the sorrowful Event thereof; that instead of growing in Grace, and Knowledge, as we have been encouraged by a benignant Providence, It's too evident to be disguised, that the Purity of Doctrine, and the Life and Power of Godliness in Heart and Conversation is fallen under a lamentable Decay.

Neither is this little Infant Church in any Condition to boast it self as free of the epidemical Disease, as the abounding Sin and Vice, of all Sorts, doth too evidently bear Witness. And as we who are comprehended within the Bounds of the Synod of *Philadelphia*, are awfully threatened with an unhappy Division and perhaps a Separation among our Ministers ; so I'm afraid that this sickly Symptom is not altogether free of some degrees of Errors ; which however they be justified as momentous Truths by some, and perhaps are only looked upon as disputable Points, of no great Moment by others, yet in their Nature and Tendency, if not prevented, they may be of very hurtful Consequence to the Interest of true Religion among us.

But

But that I may come to consider the Text which I have chosen as the Subject of the ensuing Discourse. In the first Chapter and foregoing Part of this, the Apostle reproves the Church of *Corinth* sharply, for the Divisions and Parties that were among them, on Account of their differing and opposite Sentiments which they had concerning the Apostles and Ministers compared with one another ; so that one was of *Paul* another of *Apollos* &c. they were puffed up for one against another, as he expresseth it *Ch. 4. 6.* A Disease, which I very much question, whether ever since the Apostles Days, it raged so much in so little Bounds, and where there was so much of an agreement in Doctrinals as hath been professed here among us within the Bounds of this Synod.

I will not take much Pains in a textual Explication of the Words, only briefly consider the Scope of the Text and Context, in order to clear my Way for the Superstructure, which I would build upon it.

In verse 9. the Apostle considers the Church under the Notion of a Building, and so continues his Discourse in an Allegory, or continued Metaphor to verse 16. he represents Himself as a Master Builder among them, because he had first preached the Gospel there, and so laid the Foundation of a Gospel Church. He also represents Jesus Christ i. e. the Doctrine of Salvation thro' him, as the Foundation of this Building ; and then proceeds to caution them, or the Ministers
among

among them, against preaching such Doctrines, as a Superstructure, upon this Foundation, as upon tryal would not be found agreeable to Truth, to the Scriptures or Analogy of Faith. Sound and profitable Doctrine he calls by the Names of Gold, Silver, precious Stones, which will endure the Fire of a strict Examination; but false or unprofitable Doctrine he sets forth under the Metaphors of Wood, Hay, Stubble, all which are combustible and cannot endure the Fire.

By the *Day*, and the *Fire*, by which every Mans Work shall be discovered, and declared of what Sort it is, whether good or bad, passing over other Interpretations, we may understand the regular rational Means and Methods which should be taken by the Church, or by every Christian for himself, to compare Doctrines true or false, good or bad, with the Word, of God and so to approve the one and reject the other.

Hence these two Doctrines do readily offer themselves to our View.

D O C T R I N E I.

That the Ministers of the Gospel have great Need to examine the Doctrines which they preach to Gods People, and see that they be agreeable unto, and founded upon the Word of God; that instead of saving and edifying Doctrine, they do not preach Stubble and Chaff, and groundless Fictions, their own private Opinions, or the Opinions and Conceits of others which they have imbib'd.

(5)
D O C T R I N E II.

That it is an Evil very incident to the Ministers of the Gospel, neither are the true and faithful Ministers altogether free from the Danger of it, even to intermingle false & erroneous Opinions in Matters of Religion, with the pure and saving Truths of the Gospel.

In handling this Doctrine I will follow this Method, First, shew the dangerous and pernicious Tendency of this Practice. Secondly, what it is that exposeth the Ministers of the Gospel to the Danger of it, and Thirdly, point out some Instances of some particular Doctrines, which are advanced with a great deal of Assurance by some of our Brethen, and as greedily imbib'd and receiv'd by their Admirers and Followers; and which I conceive to be not only Erroneous in themselves, but also of a very hurtful Tendency; which also I shall endeavour to evince when I come to speak particularly of them. I return to the

First Thing Propos'd, which is to shew the pernicious and dangerous Tendency of this Evil when it is fallen into.

First, It is a very sinful wasting of Time and Pains, to teach and learn what is not only unprofitable, but hurtful; which Time and Pains might and should be better imploy'd in teaching and learning the pure and profitable Truths of the Word; the System whereof is so copious that we can never arrive to a compleat and perfect acquaintance therewith in this Life; and therefore it must be great Folly to spend that Time learning
and

ing and teaching what is unprofitable or hurtful, while we are so far short of what is truly useful.

Secondly, It's with a Witness to teach for Doctrines the Commandments of Men; for which our Lord condemns the Scribes and Pharisees.

Thirdly, it corrupts the Minds of Men from the simplicity of the Truth, and directly weakens and destroys the Faith or Belief of the Truth, in Mens Minds: For there neither is, nor can be any Error in Religion, tho' it may appear never so circumstantial, innocent or harmless, but it stands in direct Opposition to some Truth in Religion which it contradicts, and consequently must be of a Pernicious Nature and Tendency. For all revealed Truths, are in their Nature precious and useful; precious as revealed by God, and useful as they in their Place contribute to compleat the Divine System; and so far as any of these Truths are opposed, so far the Divine System is injured, weakened and marred.

Fourthly, It's worthy our Observation, that one Error never stands or is propagated alone, but is always accompanied with others that are ally'd to it about the same general Subject; as appears in the Controversy between *Arminians* and *Calvinists*, in order to maintain the Power of the Will. Universal Grace, Universal Redemption, Conditional Decrees, and Apostacy of the Saints must be compacted together into a System, to support and strengthen each other; and so

so it is in all other instances, as might be made appear if it were needful: The very Nature of the Thing makes this unavoidable. For as, every Doctrine requires to be supported by some Means or other, and as Truth can never without being perverted, contribute to support Error, therefore other Errors that are of Kin to the First, must be brought in to support it, otherwise it can't stand alone in the Minds of Men, who by an unalienable Principle of Desire after Truth, cannot take for Truth any Point of Doctrine that doth not appear to be supported by other Truths: For it is a Maxim universally agreed to among Mankind, that any Point that carries in it an evident Opposition to any evident and certain Truth, is to be rejected as Erroneous; and upon this Maxim are built all our Arguments *ab absurdo*.

Fifthly, the dangerous and pernicious Tendency of building Wood, Hay, or Stubble, tho' on a sure Foundation of fundamental Doctrine, doth further appear, if we consider that a circumstantial Error in Religion, as it directly and immediately overthrows, the circumstantial Truth to which it stands directly and immediately opposite; so, by consequence, it overthrows and tends to raise the very Foundation it self; altho' those who maintain and propagate it often times do not discern it; as is clear in the Case of those Judaizing Christians who taught at *Antioch* that Circumcision and the Observation of the Ceremonial Law was necessary to Salvation; for altho' the Abrogation of the ceremonial Law, which

which their Error opposed immediately and directly, was but a circumstantial Truth, and not fully known to a great many Christians in these Times, yet the inspired Apostle plainly teaches in his Epistle to the *Galatians*, that that Error had a direct Tendency to overthrow, by Consequence the very fundamental Doctrine of Justification *Gal. 5. 2. behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing, and v. 4. Christ is become of none Effect unto you, whosoever, of you are justified by the Law are fallen from Grace.* Not that all who were then circumcised did actually perish, or that all who were tainted with that Error, were wholly fallen from Grace : But that that erroneous Doctrine had a native Tendency, if they had seen it, to overthrow and raise the fundamental Doctrine of justification through the Grace of God in Christ Jesus.

As it is in a Material Building, every pinning Stone in a Stone Wall, and every Pin or Brace in a Frame is useful to strengthen the whole Fabrick ; and the removal of one or a few of these, so far weakens the Building ; so, in the System of Gospel Truth the removing or destroying of circumstantial Truths, by teaching or embracing their opposite Errors, doth weaken and tends to overthrow the whole System. Again

Sixthly, every Error in Religion hath a Tendency to corrupt the Practice of those who embrace it, especially in those Matters which are of any Affinity to the received Errors ; as for Instance, the Error about the Comm^{ance}ment of the Sabbath

Sabbath in the Evening opens a Door for many Profanations of the Sabbath. The Error of Baptists opens a Door for too great Slackness in Parents in educating their Children, and to the Children to be lax in their Practice, as apprehending themselves free of sacramental Ingements; and in general every Error in Religion less or more mays mutual Charity and Esteem among those who differ in Judgment from one another.

I come now to the second Head of Doctrine which at first I proposed to handle, viz. To shew what it is that exposeth the Ministers of the Gospel to the Danger of being guilty of the Sin of advancing erroneous Doctrine in preaching the Gospel. And

First, the Imperfection of their Knowledge in understanding the Scriptures, which makes them lyable to put a wrong Sense and Construction upon them, and so to preach up that Sense for sound Doctrine. Thus the Scribes and Pharisees misunderstood the Law, and accordingly taught that Men might hate their Enemies.

Secondly, Bigottry to our own Party, to a received Opinion, or to the Principles or Doctrines in which we were educated, hath great Influence upon Ministers preaching erroneous Doctrine, being by Prepossession, hindred from thorowly weighing the Doctrines which they have thus received, in the Ballance of the Sanctuary; there being a strong Inclination in Mankind to maintain what he hath once received, so that it requires a great Degree and visibly preponderating
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Force

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Force of Argument to convince him of a received Error, more than is necessary, or would have been, to arm him against it at first.

Thirdly, the undiscerned corrupt Biass of our Nature too often influenceth Men to believe, and consequently to preach unsound & erroneous Doctrine, when in any Respect it tends to gratify our Humour or carnal Interest: As for Instance, the Enjoyment of a Benefice in an established Church may have Influence to byass a good Mans Judgment in Favour of the Doctrine upon which the Constitution of that Church is founded. We find that even an Apostle was byassed by carnal Motives, tho' not to preach, yet, to practice disingenuously in respect of the Use of antiquated Ceremonies. *Gal. 1.*

Fourthly, An implicit Faith in the Judgment of Men, whom we esteem wise and penetrating, goes a great length with many, so that they can advance an Error, under the Patronage of such Men, with more Assurance than they could do a Truth in Opposition unto them.

Fifthly, an Affectation of singularity, and an Ambition to be thought more penetrating than others, together with a confidence in their own Abilities, to maintain and defend what they espouse, encourages many to broach and invent erroneous Doctrines, being first brought to a Belief of them themselves.

Sixthly, No doubt Satan hath a deep hand in all such Matters when they are in Agitation, by deluding and tempting even the Ministers of
Christ

Christ as much as he can to twerve from the
Way of Truth.

III. H E A D.

I will now proceed in the third Place to point
out some particular Tenets or Points of Doctrine
which are now advanced partly in private Con-
versation, and partly in public preaching, by
some of our Brethren, and which the genera-
lity of their Admirers are exceedingly fond of,
which I take not only to be Erroneous, but also
of a very evil and dangerous Tendency and
which, tho' I will not assert them to be funda-
mental Errors or Heresies, so called, yet I apprehend
them to be very much opposite to the Truth
of the Gospel as it is in Jesus. And altho' these
Errors or Mistakes, while they remain apart,
may, perhaps be entertained in particular Chris-
tians Minds, some in one and some in another,
without much Hurt and Damage, either to them
selves or others; yet, when elected and gathered
together into a kind of a petty System, and industriously
propagated and greedily imbib'd, as I
apprehend they are not a little Dangerous, to the
Interest of true Religion, as tending to corrupt
the great Fundamental Doctrine of Conversion
or Regeneration, which they bear a more par-
ticular Relation unto, and so to hurt many poor
Souls, as to their Interest in, and Endeavours after
the same; while some are by these Notions about
Conversion, induced groundlessly not only to doubt
but also positively to deny all interest in it, and
so, in some Measure to ~~Disseminate~~ ^{Disseminate}, because they
cannot

cannot positively assert their Experience of the Particulars which are asserted by those Tenets, & their Votaries, to be necessary unto it, altho' the Word of God, by which we ought to regulate our Thoughts about these Things, is wholly silent concerning them.

And again, I'm afraid that many poor Souls are led by these same Tenets to be puffed up with strong presumptuous Conceits of their own Conversion, because as they apprehend, they have felt such Symptoms or Exercises in themselves, as by these Tenets, are the main Criterion or Marks of a Work of Grace.

Now concerning those Tenets, before I mention them in particular, I would further observe, as has been hinted, that as to their Main and principal Subject, they all relate to the Main and Fundamental Doctrine of Regeneration; concerning which we are agreed as to its absolute necessity in order to Salvation, as to its principle efficient Cause, viz. the Holy Ghost, and as to the ordinary Means by which it is accomplished, viz. the preaching of the Word.

First then I will give you a brief and fair Representation of these Doctrines or Tenets, as I apprehend them, and then endeavour to shew their falshood and discrepancy from the Scripture and analogy of Faith; and then take Notice of their evil and dangerous Tendency.

D O C T R I N E I.

Before there be so much as a beginning of any saving Work of Grace or of the Spirit in the
Heart

Heart of a Sinner, there must be an awakening Conviction of Sin and Misery raised in the Soul in a Way of common Operation; which Conviction hath nothing of saving Grace in it, so that a Person may have these Convictions, and yet fall short of Regeneration; those Convictions are previously necessary to prepare the Heart for saving Grace, but are void of saving Grace themselves. 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 unto 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 sensibly and assuredly date his Conversion therefrom, these Convictions are for ordinary raised, and to be raised by the awful setting forth or preaching of the Terrors of the Law, hence they are called sometimes the Terrors of the Law, sometimes a Law Work, sometimes legal Convictions and sometimes the Spirit of Bondage in Allusion to *Rom. 8. 15. Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear.* Hence

D O C T R I N E II.

That all true Converts are as sensibly assured of their converted State, of the Grace of God in them, and the Love of God unto them and of the Spirits working in them, as they are or can be of the Truth of what they perceive

by their outward Senses of seeing, feeling hearing, &c. Hence.

DOCTRINE III.

That all who are not thus assured of their own Conversion are yet in a damnable unconverted State.

DOCTRINE IV.

That one true Convert, may by a Vniles Free Conversation with another Person, know whether he be converted or no.

DOCTRINE V.

That the principal & great Mark and Criterion by which to Judge of our own spiritual State, or to form a Judgment of Charity concerning others, is not an orthodox Profession accompanied with a Godly and Righteous Walk and Conversation, but only those inward Exercises which Persons have felt in themselves, or that others declare that they have felt at the Time of their Conversion.

DOCTRINE VI.

That tho' a Person be regularly, after due Trials, called and ordained to the Ministry, yet if he be not converted, or have not an Inward call of the Spirit, to that Work, that such a Person hath not the Call of God, but only the Call of Man to the Ministry. This Doctrine is founded upon an unscriptural Distinction of an outward and an inward Call to the Ministry. The former they name the Call of Man, the latter the Call of God. And Hence

(15)
D O C T R I N E VII.

That an unconverted Minister, who according to them hath only the Call of Man, cannot in an ordinary Way, be the Mean of Conversion to others in preaching the Gospel.

This I take to be a Just and fair Representation of the Doctrines which are taught and propagated with great Industry, and received by many with great greediness.

But before I come to a particular and direct Confutation of them, I conceive it may be useful and necessary to prepare the Way thereunto, as well as assist some Christians unto a clear and distinct Apprehension of several Things relating to this great Work of Conversion or Regeneration, to lay down some Observations concerning this Work of the Spirit in the Soul.

O B S E R V A T I O N I.

I take it for granted that when the Spirit of God begins this great and supernatural Work in the Soul of a Sinner, what ever be the external Means, he doth not first work one Grace and afterwards another, and again a Third, viz. he doth not first work Faith and afterwards Repentance, and again Love, and then good Resolutions &c. but rather that the very first Beginning of true Grace consists of one intire radical Grace or good Heavenly Qualification, which is at once diffused and spread through the whole Soul and all its Faculties, and is therein the Seed and Root of all particular Graces, viz.

Of Faith, Repentance, Love, Humility &c. It is Light in the Understanding, it is Faith in the Soul, it is Love to God and hatred of Sin in the Affections even as a Principle of Natural Life, when breathed into our Nostrils becomes the Spring of all Action, Motion, Sense, and Exercise in the Person who hath it, its the Spring of Motion in the Members, its the Source of Sensation in the Organs of Sense, its the original of Desire and Appetite after Meat or Drink; and accordingly when the Spirit of God speaketh of this great Work in the Scriptures, he commonly represents it under the Notion or Idea of one radical general Principle: Hence its called the New Man, the New Creature, a quickning to Life, a Resurrection, a new Heart, and a new Spirit all which denote one general Principle of Spiritual Action, Motion or Exercise in the Convert, as Life is in a Person the common Spring of all human Exercises. Hence

OBSERVATION II.

That it is a good and sound Way of reasoning to conclude, that when any one Grace is evident, visible and conspicuous in its Exercises and Fruits, that certainly all other Graces of the Spirit are to be found in the same Person, altho' they be not so conspicuous or aparent, because that same Principle of spiritual Life which is the Spring and Root of the particular Grace which is most apparent must also be in that same Person, a Root and Spring of all other Graces, which for the present

present may be more hid and dormant. Even as when we discern a Persons Breath or Pulse to move we certainly conclude, that his Life is in him, tho' he cannot show it by other Motions or Exercises. Yea

O B S E R V A T I O N III.

Further I observe that the several Graces of the Spirit of God, in the converted and sanctified Soul, are not so intirely distinct from another as many perhaps do apprehend through inadvertency; as for Instance, Faith, Repentance, Love to God, hatred of Sin, Patience, Humility, Self denial, &c. We are ready to apprehend that because these several Graces have their different exercises about their proper and suitable Objects, or which is the same Thing, the Soul is differently imploy'd about those Objects in the Exercise of these different Graces; I say upon this Account we are ready, inadvertently, to apprehend that there is a greater distinction between, or among these Graces, than in Reality there is; as if all these Graces were so many distinct Entities or Qualifications in the Person, which might be separated from, and exist independently of one another: Whereas in Truth, tho' they differ in their Objects and Manner of Exercise, yet radically they are all but one intire and individual Grace or Principle of Spiritual Life putting it self forth in its various Actings according to the variety of Occasions and Objects which it meets with, even in respect of our natural Life, tho' it is one Thing to hear another

another Thing to see, another Thing to walk, and another to eat and drink &c. yet all these various Actings of natural Life do differ from one another only as to their different Objects, Members and Manner of Employment; but radically & originally, it is one Principle of natural Life that thus shews it self in these various Forms of Action and so diversifys it self by these different Manners of Employment, & to use another Similitude, as the same Person acts the Husband to his Wife, the Father to the Child, the Master to his Servant, and the Minister or Magistrate to his Flock or Subjects, yet its individually the same Person that acts differently according to all these Relations, and Objects. Even so the various Graces of the Spirit, in the Believer are all one individual Principle of Spiritual Life, and sanctifying Grace, diversifying it self, as Occasion requires, about its various Objects, & suitable to the occurring variety of the Believers Exigences. Again

OBSERVATION IV.

That altho' we very justly and truly, and according to the Representation of these things in Scripture, form different Apprehensions of these different Graces, because of their different Objects, and manner of Exercise about them; yet as they are all radically one individual intire Principle of Spiritual Life or Grace; so it will be found, upon the strictest Search, that no one of these Graces can be alone in its Exercises more than in its Existence, altho' as the Christian is imploy'd
about

about this or the other Object, he is commonly said to Act this or the other Grace ; as for Instance, *Abraham* is said to have acted Faith, when he offer'd up his Son, *Moses* to have exercised Meekness under great Provocations ; *David* to have exercised Repentance *Pf. 51.* *Job* to have exercised Patience under his sore and surprizing Afflictions, &c. I say, altho' the People of God are truly said to have exercised such and such Graces upon proper Occasions ; we are not so to understand it, as if, at such Times they exercised these Graces Exclusive of all others ; but only by Way of eminence, such and such Graces being called for upon these Occasions, the Believers are said in a particular Manner to exercise these, without mentioning or taking Notice of the others which are employ'd at the same Time, tho' not in so eminent or discernible a Degree. As for Instance *Abraham's* Faith which appeared eminently in leaving his native Country, and in offering his Son *Isaac* ; altho' its also evident that Patience, Humility, Resignation to the Will of God, and self denial &c. were all in exercise at the same Time, as appeared in his Conduct. So *Moses's* Meekness was accompanied with Love to God and his People, with Zeal to Gods Glory, with Faith and Self-denial, &c. And to give Instances in our daily Occurrences & spiritual Experiences, our true Christian Patience under Affliction must be still accompanied with and proceed from Love to God, Faith in his Promise to support and deliver us, a Sense of our
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own Deserts and thankfulness to God that its not worse with us, and the like : So likewise in our actings of Faith in Christ Jesus for Justification, this cannot but be accompanied with Conviction of Sin, Grief and Hatred of it, Love to God and Holiness ; together with Resolutions to forsake Sin, to mortify Corruption, and practice Holiness &c. And when under most penitential Exercises for Sin, our Repentance and Conviction must be accompanied with a Faith in the Truth of a Divine Revelation concerning the Evil and Danger of Sin, our own Sinfulness and Vileness, and the Punishment we deserve ; yea it must be accompanied with Love to God and Holiness, an earnest Desire and Resolution to Endeavour after it, besides Hopes, or at least faint Apprehensions of the Mercy of God in Christ, in order to Pardon and Reconciliation. And so I may say of all the other Graces of the Spirit, that none of them is ever alone either in Existence or Exercise ; however according to the Occasion and Object, the Christian is called to the exercise of some one Grace principally, and to exercise others in a suitable Concomitancy : When I am called to exercise Christian or Brotherly Love on some eminent Occasion, sure it must be accompanied with Love to God, Faith in his Promise, and such Degrees of Self-denyal or Humility, as the Emergency requires ; or else it wont be true christian or brotherly Love at all. From all which I infer,

1st. That no sooner doth the Spirit of God begin the saving Work of Grace in the Sinner, or implant this Principle of a new and spiritual Life, which is diffused through the whole Soul, and contains in it the Seed and Root of every particular Grace; but as soon, tho' perhaps he discerns it not, the poor Sinner is delivered from both the Guilt and Power of Sin: he is then brought from a State of Nature to a State of Grace, & from the Power of Satan unto God; then, & by so doing, the Holy Spirit makes Application of the Benefits of Redemption unto his Soul, by working Faith and all other Graces in him, and thereby unites him to Christ in his effectual Calling: Hereby the Condition of the Covenant is fulfilled in him and according to Gospel Terms he becomes actually interested in Christ and all his Benefits; for Regeneration and Justification are inseparable: *Whom he called them he also justified,* Rom. 8. 29. Again

2d. That if the Person thus converted, be adult and in the Exercise of his Reason, and so is wrought upon by the rational, ordinary, and appointed Means of the Gospel; I say no sooner is this Work begun in him, but as soon he begins to exercise this new vital Principle of spiritual Life, by acting some of these Graces which this vital Principle includes: And in as much as true Faith is in the Nature of it and by divine Appointment a cardinal leading & principal Grace; what ever other Grace may be first discernible in its Exercise yet Faith must surely be at least one of the concomitant

concomitant Graces in exercise, in as much as it is Faith that furnisheth and administretth objective Matter for all the other Graces to work and feed upon. Now that I may make this more clear by illustrating it by an Instance or two.

First, suppose that by a thundering and awakening Sermon, one or more were converted before the Sermon were near over, now allowing all proper Means to be ~~submitted~~ ^{exercis'd} according to the natural Tendency, and Influence upon our reasonable Natures; in the above supposed Case its most rational to think that, as it was with the Multitude *Acts 3. 37.* this new Principle of spiritual Life would exercise and put forth it self in Conv^{er}sions or in Soul wounding and affecting Perswasion of the Person concerning his own sinful miserable and perishing State, together with his need of a Saviour: But then, according to the Supposition viz. that this Conv^{er}sion is the first discernible Fruit or exercise of the new Principle of spiritual Life; it must then be accompanied, yea it must proceed from a Principle of true Faith whereby the new Convert is as it were constrained to believe the threatning of the Word and its Declaration of the Persons sinful perishing State by Nature, must also be accompanied with Love to God, hatred against Sin, and a longing Desire to be freed from the Bondage of it &c. yea this Conviction must also be accompanied with a true Faith of Gospel Promises, of Christs Allsufficiency and willingness to save penitent turning, Sinners with a longing Desire to be a-
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mong the Number of penitent believing Sinners, which certainly in this Case imply the sincere consent of the Heart and Soul to the Terms of the Covenant; 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 discernible, that present Exercise he is under may at last prove to be the Beginning of true Repentance and Conversion in him.

Now tho' in such a Case, Conviction and Downcastings of Soul be the Exercise which the convinced Sinner is most sensible of, yet it is not without the Concomitancy of true Faith and other Graces, tho' not in a discernible Degree, and so lets noticed, and far lets concluded to be the Actings of saving and justifying Faith, as in the supposed Case it must be. For the Persons Conviction is supposed to proceed from a true Principle of spiritual Life in the Soul, which implies and comprehends all in the Seed and Root; yea the very longing Desire of such a Soul after Christ and Salvation through him, doth certainly imply the very Life and Soul of justifying Faith. I think the Thief upon the Cross is a notable Instance of this, his Prayer to Christ did certainly proceed from a true Faith which accompanied his ~~Conversion~~ ^{Confession} which he had expressed in Words a little before to the other Malefactor, as he had done also in his Love to Christ and Esteem of him,

him, *said he, but this Man hath done nothing a-miss.* Yea his Prayer is a most direct Expression of his Consent unto the Covenant of Grace so far forth as he understood it, and consequently it imported the very vital and quintessential Act of Justifying Faith.

I will for further Illustration, suppose also some *Barnabas* or other, some Son of Consolation, is made use of by God as an Instrument to convert some by an inviting and encouraging Sermon concerning the preventing Love of God towards Sinners through Jesus Christ; such a Sermon as may be supposed to have been preached by Christ himself, *Luke 4. 16, 22.* Sure it cannot be denied but that such Sermons have a Tendency to draw Sinners to Christ with Cords of Love, as is represented *Cant. 6. 1.* Where the Daughters of Jerusalem are represented to be so much taken and enamour'd with Love to Christ by the glorious Description which the Spouse gave of him in the foregoing Chapter, that they are fully resolved to join with her in seeking him. Say they, *whither is thy Beloved gone? O thou fairest among Women, whither is thy Beloved gone? That we may seek him with thee.*

Now if we suppose a person to be converted by such 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 it self in some spiritual Exercises suitable to the Entertainment which he is entertained withal; for his Grace then in exer-

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case would oblige him to attend unto and receive the Word with Faith, Love and Delight; he would now begin to attend and with greediness to drink in what he hears, and that with Affections suitable to the Nature of his Entertainment, which is supposed not to be awful and terrible, but sweet, soft and encouraging, like a spiritual Song of Love. In such a Case, the prevailing Exercises and sensible Emanations of true Grace would be, in all probability, suitable to the Entertainment, viz. Love and Gratitude to God, and Admiration of his undeserved Grace, Resolutions to turn and cleave to him, and the like: Yet these spiritual Affections should undoubtedly be accompanied with true Faith, without which such spiritual Affections would have no Food to feed upon; they would also undoubtedly be accompanied with Conviction, Humility, and a Sense of his own Unworthyness: But in this Case Conviction would be only a concomitant Grace to the others, which agreeable to the present Entertainment would most sensibly take up & employ the new Converts Affections, so that perhaps the Persons greater Degree of Convictions, might be reserved and post-poned until he might meet with another Entertainment more adapted to excite them. Hence I infer

3dly .That its a mistaken Apprehension of this Matter , to think that a Person is still void of all saving Grace, and hath no Interest in Christ, until he come that Length as to act Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Redeemer, in such an
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explicit and direct Manner as by Reflection or self Examination he may be able to discern, as I hinted before Christians commonly do, only observe the Principal leading Grace which Acts, and are apt to overlook those which are only as Concomitants, especially if weak or languishing. So in our penitential Exercises, we are ready to reflect only on our Convictions, Sorrow, hatred of Sin, &c. to overlook the Concomitant ~~parts~~ ^{Graces} of believing Apprehensions of God's Mercy, especially if weak and feeble, as also our Love to God and Holiness, his Laws and People, our earnest Longings, and Desires that Christ may be made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption, which, as I hinted before, I take to include the very Essence of justifying Faith, being it implies the Souls hearty consent to the Covenant of Grace: Altho' the poor weak Believer doth not discern it.

I acknowledge that before the Christian be capable of pleading or claiming an Interest in God as his God, and the Lord Jesus Christ as his Redeemer, its requisite by Reflection or self-Examination to discern, in some Degree of Light, that he hath thus closed with Christ on his own Terms; and the more direct and explicit his Actings of Faith of this Kind have been; his ground of claim, upon Reflection, will be the more comfortably Evident. But certainly wherever true sanctifying Grace is once begun, which includes every particular Grace, in the Seed and
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Root, and which will immediately put forth it self into Act, that Person, tho' he may not be able to see it and take comfort in it, itill looking upon himself as in a natural graceless State; I say that Person is certainly in a justified and sanctified State, & is by Faith ~~united~~ ^{united} unto Christ Jesus, and ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ so united to all his Benefits; tho' he may be long without the Evidence thereof, not being able to plead his Claim.

Having thus prepared the Way I proceed to examine the above Points of Doctrine and shew their inconsistency with Scripture and the Analogy of Faith. And

First, as to these preparatory ungracious Convictions, as I may call them, which are held to be so necessary by Way of Preparation for Conversion, I apprehend that if their Nature and Tendency be duly considered, it will appear that all such Conviction as are void of true Grace are so far from being necessary Preparatives for Conversion, that they are rather an impediment to it. But

First, I will lay down some Concessions concerning Convictions in general. And

First that there are such common Convictions arising from a natural Conscience, or a common Work of the Spirit or both, occasioned by the Preaching of the Word, which at last may and often do fail short of Conversion, of which *Saul, Judas, Abab, Herod, Felix, Agrippa,* and the Stoners of *Steven* are notable Instances.

2dly That these common Convictions may be sometimes succeeded with true Conversion, I do not deny; but when it is so, the Conversion following cannot be justly reckoned the proper Effect of those Convictions, altho it may be occasioned by them, as it may be by the Commiſſion of some groſs ſin which deeply wounds the natural Conſcience.

3dly We would diſtinguiſh between the Convictions of Sin which are common, and which a Perſon void of Grace may have raiſed in him by the Terrors of the Law or any other Means; and thoſe Convictions which are of a ſaving Nature and which are a Fruit of ſaving Grace begun in the Heart by the Spirit of God. Theſe two Sorts of Convictions may be diſtinguiſhed by their proper Marks or Characteriſticks.

First, ſaving Convictions poſſeſs the Soul with a deep Senſe of the Baſeneſs, Vileness and hateful nature of Sin, as offensive to God, being contrary to his lovely Nature and Perfections, and particularly to his Holineſs and Juſtice; but common or ungracious Convictions only alarm the Soul with the Danger of the Wrath and Curſe of God, the Miſery which Sin hath bought him unto, but as to the intrinsic vileness or baſeneſs of Sin, they have little or no Senſe of it, and could be eaſy on that Account, if they were but free of the Danger of everlaſting Torments.

Secondly, True Convictions are always accompanied with hearty Grief for Sin, even for the

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the Sinfulness of Sin, and the Persons own baseness and vileness on account of it; yea he hates his Sin, and loaths himself on this Account and reckons himself among the Vilest, and Basest and and most Disgraceful Creatures upon Gods Earth, because of the Sins of his Life, & more especially of his Heart, his wicked Thoughts and perverse Inclinations. But in common and ungracious Convictions, the Grief and Hatred that is conceived against Sin, is only on account of its dangerous and pernicious Consequences as to future Happiness or Misery, without Regard to the Vileness and Hatefulness of its Nature.

Thirdly, Saving Convictions are always accompanied with a true and sincere Love to God, to Holiness and to all those whom they esteem to be true Saints, they love their Company and esteem them the excellent ones of the Earth, they are weary of the Service and Bondageful Drudgery of Sin, they are as it were, feelingly oppressed and grieved in their Spirits on account of the Power & prevalency of their own indwelling Corruption, and perverse Wickedness of their Hearts, and have most longing and panting Desires of Soul to be freed from this Bondage, and would reckon it a principal Part of the Heaven and Happiness they long for, to be made free from the Service of Sin, that they might become Servants to Righteousness, having all the Faculties and Affections of their Souls filled with Holy Desires, Dispositions, and Inclinations. But in common Conviction, where there is no sancti-

fyng Grace, there is no Love to Holiness for its own Sake, but only for the Reward, the Saints are esteemed, not so much for their Holiness, as their Happiness; its not the Service of Sin, for its own sake, that the Person complains most of, but on account of its dreadful Wages and were it not for this the poor Wretch could be content to continue in the Drudgery, only that he fears the Punishment.

Fourthly, saving Convictions, tho' they may take their Rise and beginning from some more notorious actual Sin, yet they rest not here, but trace up their actual Sins and follow them ~~to~~ to the Fountain Head. viz. the indwelling Wickedness of their Hearts, and Corruption of their Natures; they have a feeling, heart-wounding and grieving Persuasion of the Truth of that Description which the Spirit of God gives us of our Hearts, *Jeremiab 17. 9. The Heart is deceitful above all Things, and desperately wicked.* But common Convictions commonly are confined to actual Transgressions, without affecting the Heart for inherent Corruption, or Sins of the Thought.

Fifthly, Saving Convictions continue as an habitual Ingredient of the Believers gracious Exercise through the whole Course of his Life; they are so far from being extinguished by the comfortable Discoveries of the Favour and Reconciliation of God unto his Soul, that, tho' hereby his Terrors may abate or remove, yet his Convictions will rather increase and improve; the Believer is never more humble and self abased, than

than when he enjoys the clearest Evidences of Divine Love and free Grace; O then how vile & aggravated do his Sins appear, being against a GOD of such wonderful Love. Apposite to this Purpose is what we have *Zach. 12. 10. They shall look upon me whom they have pierced &c.* May not I appeal to the Experience of all the Saints whether ever their Convictions of Sin were so strong and melting at any Time, as when they have had nearest access to God in Duty, and clearest Views of his Love, as particularly sometimes at the Lord's Table, where we are called to take a believing View of the Love of Christ. Remarkable to this Purpose also is that which is recorded *Ezek 16. 63. That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy Mouth any more because of thy Shame; when I am pacified toward thee for all, that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* But on the other hand, common Convictions are for the most part at an end, as soon as the Person gets any hope or comfort, when once the fear or terror is removed or abated, these common Convictions abate in Proportion: And therefore it gives no small Ground of Jealousie that such Convictions as Persons are at times Exercised with, are not of the right Stamp, when upon their receiving Comfort, they all leave them and disappear and leave the Person at ease, as to his Sins, because, as he believes or supposes, they are pardoned and God is reconciled.

Sixthly, We should carefully distinguish between Convictions whether saving or common, and the Terrors or Fears which accompany or follow them. Conviction doth in the Nature of it consist in a Persons Perswasion concerning his own sinful and miserable Estate, so as to have his Heart affected therewith according to the Momentousness of the Matter. The Terrors or Fears which accompany or follow Convictions are the tormenting uneasy Impressions which are made on the Mind from the Apprehension of the Danger of Gods Wrath that is due for Sin. The Degree of Conviction depends upon the clearness of the Light and Evidence by which we are perswaded concerning our own sinful and miserable State. But the Degree of our Fear and Terror depends upon the apparent avoidableness or unavoidableness of the Danger and Misery which our Sin exposeth us unto, so that tho' our Conviction or Perswasion of our Sinfulness and Misery be ever so great, strong or affecting to the Soul, yet according to the apparent Hope, Probability, or Prospect of Deliverance which is in the Persons View, his Fears and Terrors will be prevented, restrained or abated: So that it is not the Degree of Conviction which properly speaking, drives poor Souls to Despair; but that his Terrors not being restrained by any Measure of Hope or Expectation of Deliverance from the impending Misery, I say his Terrors are heightened through Unbelief, and Satans Temptation to Desperation, or
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the highest Fear and Terror, void of all Hope. Its not the Degree of Conviction, but the Total want of all Hope and Prospect of Deliverance that drives Persons to Despair, which is Terror in the highest Degree. The three Thousand *Acts 2*, were convinced to as high a Degree of their Sin and Misery as *Judas* was, yea so was *Peter* and *David*, but their Terrors were not so great, and for what Reason? Why, it was this, *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 these others mentioned, tho' their Convictions were as great and deep as his, yet they were accompanied with a rational Probability & Prospect of Relief, which at first restrained their Fears and Terrors from a fatal Excess, and at last as their Faith and Hope grew stronger their Fears and Terrors abated and vanished, yet still their Convictions viz. Heart-wounding Perswasion of their Sin, as to its vileness and hatefulness, remained, yea rather increased, even after their guilty Consciences were eased by the Intimation of a ~~freedom~~ from the above concessions and distinctions. its Evident, that whatever Convictions may be raised in a Persons Mind, which are void of the foregoing distinguishing Marks of saving Conviction; or whatever Fear or Terrors may follow or accompany such Convictions, can have no native tendency to lead or prepare Persons for Conversion: what nearer to conversion is a Person or what better

better prepared for it, by his being convinced of Sin and Guilt, while still his Heart, Love and Affections are under the reigning Power of it, nor is he humbly affected with the Sense of its Vileness? How much was *Judas* prepared for Conversion by his Convictions and Terrors? Yea such ungracious Convictions tend rather to scare a Person from Christ than draw him unto him; as appears by the too common and ordinary Consequence: For either they drive the Person to Despair and a 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. And as for these Soul shocking and confounding 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 Satans Temptations, and consequently are in their very Nature a very great Sin. 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.

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 CHRIST JESUS, 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 Convictions which make up a Part of our Conversion, and which as hinted before, are often the first sensible Exercises of a new vital Principle of Spiritual Life in the Soul; but at the same Time, not to believe, or to doubt whether Mercy be in our offer, or that we may be saved upon Gospel Terms, is Unbelief and contrary to Gospel Revelation, which sets both Death and Life the Blessing and the Curse before us at the same Time. And for Preachers of the Gospel to insist only on avenging Justice, and Industriously as it were to hide and draw a Veil over the lovely Attribute of Divine Mercy, is certainly to beget false Notions or Ideas of a lovely God in Mens Minds, as if he were all Justice and no Mercy, and so at once to fill them with hatred of God and drive them to Despair, which can never have a native Tendency to prepare for Grace and Regeneration, unless Unbelief and wrong Notions of God can do it.

Surely the whole Tenor of the Scriptures is at once to represent the Eternal God as a just Avenger of impenitent unbelieving Sinners, and as a gracious, merciful sin-pardoning God to all humble

humble penitent believing Souls ; that both our Fear and our Hope may have fuitable Matter to work upon, to ingage us as reasonable Creatures, acted by a Principle of reasonable and justifiable self Interest, to accept of offered Mercy upon the Terms proposed. But

Further, that it may yet more evidently appear that those preparatory ungracious Convictions have no Foundation as to their Necessity in order to Conversion ; let us a little calmly and deliberately inquire whether we can find any Colour Shadow or Appearance of any such Thing among the numerous Instances of saving Conversion recorded in Scripture, and one would think that if they could be found in any of these, we might find them in the Account which we have of the Conversion of the Multitude *Acts 2.* of the Apostle *Paul Acts 9.* and of the Jaylor *Acts 16.* let us therefore take a particular View of either. of these. And

First, As to the three Thousand which were converted, *Acts 2. v, 37.* we are told that upon hearing of *Peter's* awakning Sermon, they were pricked in their Heart and said unto *Peter* and to the rest of the Apostles, *Men and Brethren what shall we do?* where we may observe that in one Breath, or short Sentence, they in a very lively and Emphatical Manner express their Conviction or Soul affecting Perswasion of their perishing State, their Hope of finding Mercy with, God their Desire to know how Mercy might be obtain'd, together with their full Purpose and Resolution to comply with the Terms proposed in

order to obtain the Mercy which they saw their Need of; all this is plainly implied in that earnest Query, *Men and Brethren what shall we do?* and it is plain to every unprejudiced Person that these Particulars were and must be the Actings of saving converting Grace, which none could possibly exercise who are intirely in an unconverted State. Where then is there any Room for these legal preparatory Convictions which have nothing of saving Grace in them? Neither did the inspired Apostle judge it needful to keep them industriously under the Terrors which they had conceived; but immediatly sets the Soul-comforting Promises of the Gospel before them, together with their Condition, which they also immediatly complying with were filled with spiritual Gladness. Again

Secondly, If we view the Instance of the Apostle *Pauls* Conversion, we will find it to run exactly parallel with the Former, and that there is not the least Shadow of these legal ungracious preparatory Convictions to be observed in the History of that Matter, as its recorded in *Acts* 9th Chapter, or hinted at elsewhere. In Verse 6. of that Chapter we are told that as soon as that Apostle was informed who spake to him, he trembling and astonished, said *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Which Words, as to their Meaning and Scope run intirely parallel with the former Instance. Not only Conviction of Sin, but also Hope of Mercy, an earnest Desire to be instructed of the Lords Will and his own Duty together with a sincere Resolution to observe

and obey the Directions and Commands which he both desired and expected to be given him; neither was he kept one Minute in suspense; but is immediately directed by the Lord what to do for the Present, and where he should receive further Instructions: yea and as we learn from Chapter 26. he is informed of the Lords gracious Design to imploy him as a Preacher of that Gospel which before, he had endeavoured to destroy: which intirely confutes the Allegation of such as say that he was kept under a Law-Work during the three succeeding Days of his fast, From all which, it is most evident that the Convictions which he underwent at his Conversion, were not a mere preparatory to his Conversion, but an essential ingredient in it.

Thirdly, The Instance of the Jaylor is so parallel to the two former that I think it intirely needless to insist at large upon it. Its also worthy our Notice, that in that second Sermon of Peters *Acts. 3d.* the Apostle is as ample and large in encouraging and inviting his hearers to accept of Gospel Grace, as he is in convincing them of Sin; and that even before any visible discovery of Conviction in them; which besides many other Instances and Precedents may teach us, that as the Gospel should not go without the Law, so neither should the Law go without the Gospel, in preaching of it.

We have many Instances of Conversion where there is no Notice taken of any down-casting Convictions at all, but rather the first sensible Effects

Effects of converting Grace, were Faith, Love, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, as in *Lydia* and the Eunuch, and the Multitude at *Cornelius's* House *Acts. 10.*

I may add, that when the *Westminster* Assembly were searching the Scriptures to gather up all necessary and useful Doctrines into a regular System they took no Notice of any such preparatory Conviction: What comes nearest to this of any Thing in their noble Performance, may be found under the Title of the practical Use of saving Knowledge, but the very Title shows, that what they there speak of Convictions, is to be understood of saving not of common Convictions. In the Description of effectual Calling and Repentance, Convictions are taken in as a Part of Conversion, and not as only preparatory to it. And

Further, that to assert the Necessity of these preparatory Convictions in order to Conversion, is to build Wood, Hay or Stubble upon the Foundation, may further appear from what we have offered before, immediately after the Recitation of the erroneous Doctrines under the Head of Observations and Inferences; from which it doth plainly appear that the Convictions which are necessary to Conversion are in Truth a Part of the Work itself. Or to speak more distinctly, nothing else but that very Principle of Grace implanted in and by Conversion, putting forth itself in the Exercise of Conviction or Persuasion of the Persons natural sinful and miserable State according

according to the Word, the Heart and Conscience bearing Witness thereunto. It further appears plain from what is above offered under these Heads, that when Persons are at any Time converted by ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{preaching} ~~preaching~~ and encouraging Sermons, there is so little Room or Occasion for these legal Terrors or preparatory Convictions that even the sanctified saving Convictions are less discernible than some other Graces which more directly suit the Doctrin or Entertainment wherewith the Person is entertained,

I'll suppose that a Sinner hath this Work of Grace begun in his Heart in the beginning and first part of a Sermon which he hears, then so far as he is enabled by this principle of spiritual Life, he will undoubtedly attend diligently to what he further hears, and will exercise such Graces as the Doctrine which he is entertained withal doth more particularly call for; as for Instance, if the Doctrine administer Matter of Conviction, then Conviction and Humiliation will be his proper Exercise; if the Love of God in Jesus Christ, or any thing relative to that glorious Subject be his Entertainment, then Love, Gratitude, Admiration, and Praise &c. will be his proper Exercise; if any particular Duty be recommended, or Truth held forth and established, then Resolution with respect to the Duty, and Prayer for Grace to perform it; or to receive and believe the Truth with Love and Esteem, will be his proper Exercise, and so I may say of all other religious Entertainment with which

which the new convert may by divine Providence be entertained immediately after a Work of Grace is begun in his Soul.

It cannot be denied but that the inviting and encouraging Doctrines of the Gospel, as well as the Terrors of the Law, are appointed to be preached to Sinners in order to their Conversion, as is evident from the express Command of Christ, his Example and the Example of the Apostles recorded in Scripture: For surely if ever there was need for the Terror of the Law to be preached without the Comforts of the Gospel, it was in the Time of our Saviour and his Apostles, who had an ignorant, carnal and secure Generation of Sinners to preach to: Yet its very observable that still Gospel Grace is one main & principal Part of their Doctrine; and the Terrors of the Law are generally brought in, in a secondary Way, in order to enforce the Doctrines and Precepts of the Gospel. We have it recorded in *Luke* 4. 16, 22. that our Lord preached from *Isa.* 61. 1. and we may with the greatest certainty be assured from Verse 21, 22. that his Sermon was most encouraging; and we have the same Reason to believe that this Sermon was as effectual for the Conversion of some of his Hearers, as any other Sermon that he preached. And so we may say of the many Sermons preached by the Apostles by which Sinners were encouraged to accept of offered Grace, and which were no doubt Effectual for the Conversion of many. Now surely these Converts would not fail to exercise

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ercise

ercise their Grace suitably to the Doctrine they were entertained withal, whether it afforded Matter of Conviction, or Hope, Joy or Sorrow. Yet still it would be remembered, as we observed before, that no particular Grace is intirely alone in its Exercise, but is always accompanied with others, tho' one may as it were lead the van, and so ~~demonstrate~~^{nominate} the Christians whole Exercise at such a Time, as *Abraham's* Faith did when he offered up his Son *Ijaae*; yet his Faith in that Instance was not alone.

And accordingly to apply this to the Matter in Hand, when a Person is converted by an awakening Sermon, altho' Conviction may be most discernible, yet Faith, Love, Resolution, Desire, Hope and Dependance, will all accompany and act their Part, as in the above Instances of *Paul* and the *Jaylor*; so again when an encouraging Gospel Sermon is made effectual for Conversion of any, altho' Faith, Love, Hope, &c. may be most sensibly in Exercise with the new Convert; yet these are never without the company of true Conviction and Humiliation for Sin, so far as to oblige the new Convert intirely to renounce all Worth and Merit in himself, to look on himself as vile and base, and to prize and earnestly Desire, the pardoning Mercy and regenerating Grace of God; altho' perhaps the Person being more intently taken up in observing the leading Grace at such a Time, may not so distinctly observe his own Convictions and Sense of Sin; as is likely to have been the Case of the *Ethiopian Eunuch*,

who believing in a crucified JESUS preached by Philip, was baptised and went on his Way rejoicing. No doubt 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. The like may be observed concerning *Lydia*, *Cornelius's* Family and Relations with many others.

Now if it be so, that Persons may be converted and turned unto God, in whom the first saving Convictions may not be so sensible, or in so high a Degree as some other Graces, then certainly this Work may be accomplished without these Soul-shocking & terrifying Convictions, which are so much pleaded for, as necessary Preparatives for converting Grace.

I know not the least Shadow of a Foundation in Scripture on which to build the Necessity of these Preparatory Convictions, excepting what we have in *Rom. 8. 15.* where it is said, *For we have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear.* But this Text, if duely considered, will afford no Argument at all for the necessity of these preparatory Convictions; for first, altho' we should grant that the Apostle in these Words refers to these Terrors and Convictions, which, many of these believing Romans might have undergone at their first Conversion; yet that will not infer that these Convictions, or that bondageful

dageful Terrors had been common to them all ; nor yet that they were only preparatory to Conversion, and made no Part of it.

Again if we consider that the Apostle in this Verse, as in the preceeding Part of the Chapter is comparing the then converted State of these *Romans* with the State they were in before Conversion in respect of privilege, it will appear that by the Spirit of Bondage, is not to be understood the Spirit of God exciting legal Convictions in order to Conversion ; but rather that servile bondageful Frame and Disposition which all unconverted Persons are under the Power of, viz. the reigning Power of Sin & Satan, which cannot but give constant just ground of Fear and Terror, if the poor Sinner could but see it, or lay it to Heart ; hence such are said to have been all their Life-time subject to Bondage through Fear of Death *Heb. 2. 15.* which is represented to have been the Case and State of the Redeemed themselves before they were delivered from it : So that this Text nothing favours this Opinion, seeing that those who never had any such Convictions are still under this Spirit of Bondage to fear, while unconverted ; that is they are possess'd with a servile Disposition of Mind, suitable to their sinful guilty State, and are still lyable to the Fears and Terrors of Gods Wrath, even from their natural Conscience, without the Spirit of God, altho' not always actually under the Impressions thereof ; And accordingly by the Spirit of Adoption we are to understand

understand that filial, free, ingenuous Disposition of Mind, which, in some Measure, is the inseparable concomitant of a regenerated and adopted State, whereby the Child of God is enabled in some Measure, to claim and plead his Relation to God as his Child, and so cry Abba Father, altho' undoubtedly the Spirit of God is the Author of this filial Spirit or Frame.

That this is no forced Interpretation of this Text may appear first, because its perfectly agreeable to the Apostles Scope, which is to shew the great privilege of Believers, that as they are the Children of God by Adoption; so they are furnished with a child-like Frame and Spirit, whereby with a filial reverent Boldness they can claim and plead their Relation to God as their Father. 2dly its frequent in Scripture, to give the Temper of Mind, good or bad, this Title or Denomination of Spirit, as in *Luke 9. 55. Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are* 1 Cor. 4. 21 *ye that are Spiritual restore such an one in the Spirit of Meekness* of 1 Pet. 3. 4. *a meek and quiet Spirit*, with many other Places to the same Purpose.

And tho' we might readily grant that this Text might be understood of these legal Convictions, if there were any other plain Scriptures of a parallel Meaning; yet to build a Doctrine or Tenet on one single Text which is obviously capable of a different meaning, better agreeing with the Scope of the context, and while such a Tenet is contrary to the current Testimony of

other Scriptures, and Analogy of Faith, is both unfair and dangerous.

I acknowledge that there are not a few Writers, both Commentators and others, who imbrace the above Interpretation of this Text which I have endeavoured to confute; nor do I apprehend the Danger to be great, when it is not carried too great a Length, *viz.* to establish the Necessity of these preparatory Convictions in order to Conversion, which the Text will never bear, even tho' we allow that they are meant and intended in the Words; because tho' there may be such preparatory Convictions in some, that will not infer that they are needful in all, and why may not the Text be understood rather of the first saving Convictions of the Spirit which are commonly accompanied with some Degrees of Fear and Terror, when the converted Soul hath but weak and faint Apprehensions of Mercy? altho' still I prefer the above Interpretation for the Reasons given.

Having said what I think is needful and sufficient to prove that these ungracious, legal preparatory Convictions have no Foundation in Scripture, as to their Necessity in order to Conversion, I will only add concerning this Doctrine that it is of an evil and dangerous Tendency on a double Account; first, in that where it is believed, it cannot but fill the Hearts of many true, tho' weak Believers, with many groundless Fears, who have been brought home to Christ in a more soft and easy Way, as these Daughters of
Jerusalem

Jerusalem, Cant. 6. 1. without these soul-shocking Terrors, either before or at the Time of their Conversion, and who have sufficient ground upon the strictest Search to conclude Affirmatively of their own gracious State from the felt present Exercises, and most undeniable Fruits of true sanctifying Grace; as undoubtedly there are many, who by the Blessing of God accompanying Faithful and painful Endeavours of their Godly Parents, were brought home to Christ in their young and tender Years, but can remember nothing of the first Beginnings of Grace in their own Hearts; besides many others who have been drawn to Christ in more advanced Years, gradually and by the Cords of Love, which gentle Methods, not being accompanied with such shocking Terrors are not so distinctly observed nor remembered.

Again, another more dangerous Consequence of this Doctrine is, that hereby poor Souls are in Danger of deceiving themselves by trusting to these legal Convictions and Terrors, especially when followed and succeeded with any kind of Hope and Comfort, tho' upon false and unscriptural Grounds, while there is nothing of a Work of true Grace in their Heart; the poor self-deceiving Soul hath been terrified with the Fears of Hell-Fire due to him for Sin; and he hears that there is Mercy for all that repent of Sin and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, he takes his Terrors and Convictions for true Repentance, and his Trust in the Mercy of God and the Mer-

rits of Christ for true Faith ; and yet all the While he hath never truly learned to hate and loath Sin nor to accept of a whole Christ on the self-denying Terms of the Gospel ; but thinks that his bare trusting in the Merits of Christ is all the Faith that's required ; while yet he hath never truly received him as his Prophet, Priest, and King, nor taken his Yoke upon him and his Burden, and so he thinks himself to be Something while he is Nothing.

Again 3dly, others may be discouraged from cherishing any good Motions in themselves, arising from the Representations of the Love and free Grace of God ; and are tempted to despise all preaching, but what is made up of terrible Threatnings, as no wise conducing to their Conversion, still waiting and thinking that the Way must be prepared by these legal Terrors ; and so are in danger of losing the Benefit of other Doctrines and Entertainments that are every Whitt as suitable for that End.

I proceed to examine the second Doctrine or Tenet, viz. that all true Converts are as sensible of their converted State, of the Grace of God in them, the Love of God unto them, and of the Spirit of God working in them, as they are or can be of the Truth of what they perceive by their outward Senses of seeing, feeling, hearing, &c. which certainly imports a very great degree of Assurance, seeing our Senses afford us the greatest Assurance that we are capable

pable of, in respect of these Things which fall under them, and of which we judge by them.

One of our Brethren preached in my hearing that the true Convert is as sensible of those Things as he would be of a Wound or a stab, or the blowing of the Wind; and in private Conversation that same Day asserted, that the true Believer or Convert is always thus assuredly sensible of these Things when ever Grace is in exercise.

Before I say any Thing in Refutation of this Point, I will first lay down a Concession or two concerning assurance of a Persons gracious State.

C O N C E S S I O N I.

First, I acknowledge that Assurance of Gods Love is attainable in this life, without immediate or extraordinary Revelation, by a divine Blessing upon the use of ordinary Means, and the ordinary assistance of the Spirit of God in the Use of them; and that therefore its every Christians Interest and Duty to look diligently after it 2 Pet. 1. 10. *Wherefore the rather Brethren, give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure.*

C O N C E S S I O N II.

Secondly, That if Christians were not in the Fault themselves, many more might attain to this than actually do.

Thirdly

Thirdly That this attainment may be clouded and lost by Sin after it is attained, as it was with *David*, *Pf. 51.* where he prays for the Restoration of the Joy of Gods Salvation, which implies that he had lost it, in a great Measure.

But that all and every true Believer is not assuredly sensible of their gracious State from the Time of their first Entrance into it, will evidently appear from these following Considerations.

First, its enjoined as a Duty upon those who had obtained the like precious Faith with the Apostles, to give Diligence to *make their Calling and Election sure* 2 *Pet. 1. 10.* which plainly and evidently implies, that such as had obtained this precious Faith might yet not be sensible or assured that they had obtained it, otherwise what need could there be to give Diligence to make it sure, if they were sure already ; the like Exhortation we have in *Heb. 6. 11.* *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same Diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.* I need not insist upon an Argument that's so exceeding plain and to the purpose. And

Secondly, In 2. *Cor. 13. 5.* *Christians are Comanded to Examine themselves whether they be in the Faith, knowing that Jesus Christ is in them, except they be Reprobates ;* which also most evidently implies, that they may be in the Faith and yet not know it, until by Examination they discover it. But if every true Christian

tian or Convert be already sensible, or which is all one, assured of their being in the Faith, what need can there be of self-Examination? this being an Exercise that's only needful in a doubtful Matter. Yea if it be so that every true Convert is thus assuredly sensible of his gracious State, this Duty will be Turned out of Doors altogether as needless, both to the Regenerate and Unregenerate; the Regenerate need not examine because he is already assured, and the Unregenerate need not, because he is or ought to be assured of his Unregenerate state; seeing he is not assured of his Conversion. And yet this Work of self-Examination is strictly enjoined in Scripture, and generally recommended and Treated of by Divines as not only a necessary Work, but also of great difficulty, and wherein Persons are in no small Danger of Mistaking and going astray on either Hand. Hence also it is that the Scriptures afford us so many Marks whereby to examine our selves: And Divines, in Preaching and Writing are at great pains to set these Marks in such a clear Light, that Christians may be helped to discern between the true, genuine Marks and Characters of true Christians, and their Counterfeits, as they may be found in formalist, Hypocrites, or presumptuous Professors.

Thirdly, *Eph.* 1. 13. The believing *Ephesians* are said to be sealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit of Promise after they believed; by which Seal is generally understood the Believers Assurance

rance of his Interest in the Love of God and eternal Happiness. Now this is expressly said to be granted them, not upon their first believing, but afterward; *and the white Stone and new Name Rev. 2. 17.* by which may be understood the Assurance of Gods Love, is promised as a Reward to the Overcomer, which presupposeth a fighting for some Time in our spiritual Warfare against the Powers of Darkness; now surely a Person must be converted and in a State of Grace before he can fight these spiritual Battles, and consequently, much more must he 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 promised as a Reward of the Victory.

Fourthly, We have two notable Instances of *Asaph Ps. 77.* and *Jeduthan Ps. 87.* who without all controversy were in a State of Grace, when they complained of the Terrors of the Lord upon their Hearts; whereby it plainly appears, that they were not fully assured of Gods Love, and *Heman Ps. 87 15.* declares this to have been his Condition from his very Youth; and what shall we say of the many Longings, and Pantings, the Hungrings and Thirstings after Faith and Repentance and other sanctifying Graces, in the poor Christian, who dare not say that he hath any of these Graces, but rather is strongly perswaded of the Contrary; and only can say that he longs for them; which yet he could never do unless he were born again:
For

For can one Hunger after Righteousness, which hath no spiritual Life? It is new Born-babes who desire or can desire this spiritual Food ; and yet such are not assuredly sensible of their spiritual Life or Grace in themselves. Nay how often is it that the poor discouraged languishing Believer, by the visible Symptoms of his longing for Christ and his Grace, of his hatred against Sin, his tenderness of Conscience, as to Sin, and Duty, through the ordinary Course of his Walk, doth give as clear Proof of sanctifying Grace as it is possible for one Person to give to another ; and yet through weakness of Faith and strength of Unbelief, the Sense of remaining Corruption, and ~~sensible~~ Wiles of Satan, is long kept in the Dark, and is afflicted with many Doubts and Fears about his spiritual State.

I dare say I may here appeal unto the whole World of true Christians, and particularly to such as have attained to more or less of the great Attainment of Assurance, whether they are not now sensible, that that very Grace, whereof now they are assured, had ~~was~~ a Being and Existence in their Hearts some considerable Time, and did exert it self in holy Affections, and in a righteous and holy Life and Walk, tho' with manifold Weakness, and Imperfection before they were sensible or assured that it was true Grace that was thus working in them ; altho' they still wished and desired that it might prove to be so.

I'm intormed that some think it a sufficient Argument to prove this Point, to alledge that every
 Person

Person is certainly conscious of all his own Thoughts and Actings of his own Soul, and therefore must be sensible of the Actings and Exercises of Grace when it works. But I think the Fallacy of this Argument is easily discovered by observing that it is one Thing for me to be conscious of such and such a Thought in my Heart, & another Thing, to be sure that such a Thought is an Act or Exercise of Grace; whereas perhaps I am in great Doubt whether it be the Acting of a natural Conscience; natural Affection roused up by some lively Objects; or whether it be a Suggestion of Satan, who often injects Thoughts into the Mind, we know not how, nor do we discern them to be his Suggestions, yet we are sure that we have such Thoughts. The two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, when they met with Christ, were conscious and sure that they saw and conversed with some Body, but knew not it was JESUS until he opened their Eyes; so the weak Believer is conscious of the weak and feeble Actings of Faith, Love, Repentance &c. in his Mind, while yet he is far from being assuredly sensible that these are the Actings of true Grace; this Assurance being, in an ordinary Way, only the Result of Reflection and Self-Examination of Grace, when it is advanced to a conspicuous Degree 1 *Joh. 2. 3.* *Hereby we know that we know him if we keep his Commandments.*

The Truth is, if I discern aright, our Sense, or sure persuasion of our being in a State of Grace, doth arise, not from the mere Being or faint Exercises of Grace that are often scarcely discerni-

ble; but when Grace, by frequent and vigorous Exercises and lively Fruits advances to a considerable Degree, & proves effectual to the sensible Mortification and subduing of the contrary Corruption, so that the Believer can by Reflection, evidently and clearly see and discern, that that which looks like Grace in him, is really the Grace which it appears to be, and is no Counterfeit; then, and not till then can he be assuredly sensible of his gracious State. Now there are several Things that hinder the Believer from arriving to this assured Sense of his gracious State while his Graces are weak, and the Fruits but small and imperfect, such as first, its not easy in that Case to discern between true Grace while weak and a Counterfeit. Secondly it is not easy to discern between reigning and captivating Sin. Nor Thirdly, between the Resistance that is made against Corruption or a Temptation, by the natural Conscience or some carnal and selfish Motive, and the Resistance that's made by weak and often unsuccessful Grace, which tho' it may, as it were, enter its Dissent, and yet be overpowered, as in the Case of *David, Peter and Paul*, so as that the Christian too often does what he would not, and does not what he would. Fourthly Weakness in Knowledge, Unacquaintedness with the Scriptures and want of Experience, may weaken the Believers Hands, in a Work of self-Examination. Fifthly, an habitual desponding and doubting Disposition may much hinder the Believers arriving to Assurance. Sixthly, Satans Industry

Industry in throwing in Suppositions of Unbelief. And finally the holy Spirit withholding that Assistance whereby he should be enabled to discern clearly the Things that are given him of God, which he may and often does for various good Ends and Reasons, as to prompt him to grow in Grace; to oblige him to be the more thankful for, and prize Assurance when he obtains it; and to make him more watchful against every Thing that might tend to rob him of it. As I have observed in another Performance.

This Doctrine is also directly contrary to what is taught in our Confession of Faith and larger Catechism. In the Confession Chap. 18. Article III. *This infallible Assurance doth not so belong to the Essence of Faith, but that a true Believer may wait long and conflict with, many Difficulties before he be Partaker of it.* And,

Larger Cat. Question, *Are all true Believers at all Times assured of their present being in a State of Grace, and that they shall be saved?*
 Ans. *Assurance of Grace and Salvation not being of the Essence of Faith, true Believers may wait long before they obtain it, and after the Enjoyment of it, may have it weakened and Interrupted thro' manifold Distempers, Sins, Temptations and Desertions.*

Yea the very Nature of the Thing under Consideration doth make the Falshood of this Doctrine evident, for Grace must not only have a being, but also be conspicuous in it self, and the Believer must be inabled to take a clear
 distinct

distinct and evident view of it by Reflection, before he be sensible or assured of it; which is not, nor can be the Case of the Believer while his Graces are weak, languishing and obscure; the Babe in Christ may act Faith, Love and Desire toward Christ, and yet not be able to reflect with assurance on his own Actings, and see them to be true Grace indeed, as the Babe in Nature may Desire and move towards the Breast, and yet not be capable by Reflection to know that he either Loves or Desires the the Breast.

As this Doctrine is false and Erroneous, as I think I have abundantly Proven, so it is of a very dangerous and pernicious Nature and Tendency; for it robs the weak Believer of all that measure of Comfort that otherwise he might Injoy, and which might and natively doth arise from the greater or smaller Measures of a rational probability of a Work of Grace being begun in him, which as yet he is uncertain of, ~~the~~ he is also greatly discouraged and his Hands weakened in the Exercise of Grace in the performance of Duty, when, according to this Tenet, he ought to Believe assuredly that he is yet void of all Grace, because, he is not assured of his present gracious State; yea it hath a tendency to drive him to Despair, and gives Unbeliet and Despondency great advantage against him: neither can he truly thank God for the Grace he is favoured with while he is fully perswaded that he hath none.

And on the other Hand, it hath a pernicious Tendency to feed and incourage presumptuous Hopes in many, who are utter strangers to true converting Grace; for what can be more natural than to expect that a Person who hath been under any degree of Conviction, and Terror of Gods Wrath, and who hath been relieved from these Terrors, by remembering or being instructed that God is ready to pardon all those that do Repent and accept of Christ, and who apprehending that there is Hope in his Case, and putting on Resolutions to forsake those Sins, as lie most heavy on his Conscience; I say, what is more natural than to expect that such a Person, in order to his own present ease will endeavour to conceive a strong Perswasion of the Love of God to him, and also considerable Degrees and Motions of some kind of Love, Gratitude and Joy towards God; all which no doubt a Person may do who continues in the Gall of Bitterness and Bond of Iniquity. Now I say if a Person ~~finds~~ ^{finds} in the Belief of this Tenet, and being conscious to himself of such Exercises, should conclude that these Exercises afford him assured Sense of his gracious State; then such a Person would in all probability supersede all after Self-Examination as being wholly needless, seeing he is already assured of his gracious State; and so become Proof against all warning of Danger, unless by some powerful Turn and Work of the Spirit, he be driven from his false Confidence. It's true
this

this is in some Measure the Case of all who build their hopes on a false Foundation. But yet its evident that the Belief of this Tenet is greatly strengthening to the presumptuous Hopes of such a Person ; in it self it must be more easy to drive a Person out of a false Hope that is but Weak, than out of a false Assurance that won't admit of an Examination; while a Person Believes that such Exercises as these, how strong and vehement soever, are no sufficient Ground to build Assurance upon, and that there is still Ground of Jealousies and Fears, untill that seeming good beginning be more fully evidenced and Confirmed by its after Fruits, the Person in that Case lyes more open to Conviction concerning the danger of his State notwithstanding of these Convictions & Flashes of Joys and Comfort which he conceived in himself ; I say he lyes more open to Conviction than if he had conceived a false Assurance agreeable to the Tenet ; for according to it he could conceive no Hope or Perswasion of his own good Estate less than Assurance.

As to the third Tenet viz. That all who are not thus assuredly sensible of their own gracious State are certainly in an unconverted State. It is so near of kin to the former that I shall say no more about it, but that it Includes the same Absurdities and Draws the same inconveniences after it.

As to the Fourth, that a true Convert by a whiles free Converse with another Person will know whether he be converted or no.

Altho' I cannot assert that this Doctrine hath been preached out of the Pulpit, yet as to the Substance of it, it is asserted by Multitudes that are fallen in Love with those Novelties that are so much in Fashion at this Time. And the rash judging and condemning both Ministers and People, as carnal unconverted Persons, and that not in general only but also particularly and by name, this being done both by some of our Ministers and also by their Admirers: I say this uncharitable Practice of rash judging, doth evidently and necessarily presuppose a Belief of the above Tenet, and Claim to this Spirit of discerning; this I take to be evidently contrary to the Laws of Charity and Scripture Truth.

Its true as to the openly wicked and profane, or whoever are known to allow themselves in any known Works of Darkness, without any breach of Charity, we may believe them to be in an unconverted State; for the Tree is known by its Fruit: And on the other Hand such as are eminently righteous and holy in their Lives, do also give Ground with a moral certainty to judge well of their State. But to judge, concerning a Work of Grace in the heart of another is more than any Mortal can do. The eleven Apostles after they had been above three Years in habitual Conversation with Judas, yet did not know his Hypocrisy or want of Grace, nor did the Apostles know Symon Magus, to be in the Gall of Bitterness, until he betray'd it by his

his mercenary Proposal to buy the Gift of God with Money, nor did either the Apostle *Peter*, or any other Believers then with him, know *Annas and Sappira's* Hypocrisy until it was revealed in a supernatural Way. Its the Prerogative of God alone to search the Heart, and its taken notice of a sa property of Christ's Omniscency, that he knew what was in Men, and therefore would not trust himself to pretending Believers *John. 2. 24, 25.* which plainly imply's that that was more than mere Man could iustly pretend to. But

Further an Hypocrite may easily personate a Saint, and feign Storics of his own Exercises, of his own Conviction and Comfort which no Mortal Man can discover the Fallacy of. And many a poor weak Believer, partly through Diffidence of his own State, and partly through weakness of Knowledge, and Utterance can say but little this Way; his Tender circumspect Walk being the chief Evidence he can give in his own Favour. It's well known that where Narratives about Persons Conversion have been made the Condition of Admission to the Lords Supper, there have been egregious Hypocrisies committed, while the Person to be admitted, being conscious to himself of his own Weakness, hath apply'd to some other more expert to draw up in Writing such Forms of Declarations or Narratives as might answer the End, viz. procure Admission to the Sacrament. Which I here take Notice of not with the least Design of Reflection, but only to shew that an Hypo-

critic may personate a Saint, in Words or Profession, so far that no Mortal can discover the Cheat, until by some unexpected Turn it happen to be exposed; which as to many never comes to pass in this Life, as appears in the Parables of the *Tares* and *Virgins*: For in all Things that we can discover in each other, the Hypocrite may outdo, and overgo many true weak Christians.

Agreeably to this Tenet, I'm told, that some are exceeding forward in judging and condemning others as to their spiritual State, when they have not the least Ground to do so from either Ignorance, Error, or Irregular Practices, yea that some Ministers have gone so far with some of their Brethren and that not only in ambiguous Generals, but by Name and to their Face, both publickly and privately; which I think is rashly judging with a Witness, contrary to *Mat. 7. 1.*
Rom. 14. 3.

This uncharitable Conceit hath an evident and visible Tendency to encourage Presumption; while Self-deceivers and Self-flatterers are apt to think well of themselves, because others, whom they esteem knowing and discerning Persons think well of them; and also to cast down and discourage others who ought to be comforted, when they find themselves sentenced and condemned as graceless, by those whom they think more penetrating than themselves, and who yet in Reality have no Foundation to build such a Sentence upon, seeing the Person whom they thus

thus boldly and presumptuously condemn, may have the Root of the Matter in them. *Job's* Friends were severely rebuk'd for this rash Judging; so may our modern rash Judges assuredly expect to be. I pray God, that they may see the Evil thereof and repent ere it be too late.

I proceed to the ~~first~~ ^{5th} Tenet or Point of Doctrine before noted viz. that the great and principal Mark and Criterion by which to judge of our selves, or to form a Judgment of Charity as to others, is not a Godly and righteous Walk and Conversation, but rather these inward Exercises which we feel in our selves or that others can declare that they felt when they were converted.

Agreeably to this Tenet, I have been assuredly informed, that a certain Brother asserted in his Sermon, that it is a bloody, murdering, barbarous Charity to judge well of a Person's State by his good Conversation, or to that Purpose.

The Erroneousness of this Tenet may in a great Measure appear from what I have already said concerning preparatory Convictions. Such as have been converted in their tender Years by the Means of a Godly Education, and such who in more adult Years, have been drawn to Christ by the Cords of Love gradually, can have but very little to say on that Head; and yet, upon strict Self-Examination, are obliged to acknowledge that they feel such gracious Exercises

cises of Faith, Love to God and his Laws and Ways, such fixed hatred against Sin in all its Branches and Forms, such sincere and habitual Endeavours to mortify Corruptions &c. as it is impossible for them to do without true sanctifying Grace, surely such have Ground to conclude well of their own State; so may others charitably judge of them, altho' they can tell no Narrative of the Time and Place or Manner of their Conversion, or of the Sermon by which this Work was wrought. 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 thereunto.

The felt sensible Exercises of true Grace, together with the congenial Fruits of Holiness and Mortification in our Lives, are certainly what the Word of God recommends to us, as the only Mark to be depended upon, and whereby to judge of our spiritual State. *Hereby we know that we know him if we keep his Commandments* 1 John 2. 3. Rom. 6 13. *If ye through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live,* And the self-denying Lesson in Mat. 5 towards the End of the Chapter, viz. *To love our Enemies, To do Good for Evil, To bless them that curse us, to forgive Injuries,* together with many more Scriptures Marks whereby we must examine and judge ourselves. Now surely, when we examine ourselves by these Marks, we need not go back, nor search our Memories as to what we have felt at the Time of our Conversion; but we are to

try whether we can truly and surely find and discern them in our selves at the present, or if ever we have felt them sooner or later, and if we are still resolved to practise and exercise them as often as in Providence there is Occasion; if so, we may be sure of our gracious State, altho' we remember little or nothing of the Time or Manner of our being brought into it.

I question not but that some, yea many have been, and many are daily brought home to to Christ, in a remarkable Manner, so as they may be able to date their Conversion from such a Time, and ascribe it to such a Mean; I own altho that such Persons may and ought to reflect on these Things, for their own Comfort and Edification, as Occasion may require; nor do I deny that the Rememberance of ones Conversion, who can thus distinctly call it to mind, may be so far an Evidence, as to feed his Hope and Perswasion that he is converted, until it be confirmed and further evidenced by congenial Fruits in his after Life; and that when the Believer is inabled to exercise Grace, and practise Holiness suitable to these first remarkable Exercises in his Conversion; I say, I do not deny that these Things being all joined together, and clearly born Witness unto in the Believers Conscience, may afford him a clear Evidence of a good or gracious State: Yet still so, as that, altho' the first be wanting, the habitual Feelings of daily Exercise of Grace in the Heart and put forth unto suitable Fruits in Conversation, will still sufficiently evidence a gracious State; otherwise, I question if

any of the Apostles, except *Paul* had a full Assurance, or clear Evidence of their Conversion; For its probable that most of them were converted before they were called to be Disciples; sure *Nathaniel* at least was; for he is pronounced *an Israelite indeed in whom there is no Guile.*

I will close what I have to say on this Head, when I have proposed a Query; suppose two Persons, one whose Conversion had been so remarkable, that he can remember and relate it, but being overtaken, by some grievous Temptation hath backslidden, as did *David* and *Solomon*; suppose another Person, who altho' he can remember nothing of the Time and Circumstances of his Conversion, yet is conscious to himself of his zealous diligent Endeavour to glorify God, by the assiduous Exercise of every Grace, and the Performance of every known Duty: Now which of these two Persons hath the surest and clearest Mark or Evidence of his Conversion? Whether the Backslidden Christian whose Conversion was remarkable; or the thriving Christian, who remembers nothing of his first Conversion? I dare say every ones Conscience will answer in favour of the latter.

I will only add, that if the Remembrance of our Conversion be our only or clearest Evidence for it, then I cannot see how a Person can lose his Assurance while his Memory can retain the Story: And if so, let him but record it in Writing, and then if his Assurance fail, its only needful to have recourse to his Journal, and all Things will be clear again; but, I trow
neither

neither the Experience of the Saints, nor the Inspired Word will countenance any such Conceits; altho' such ^{Rec} Words may be our Help ^{Records} and Means to revive the Memory and Affections too; but without inward Revivings, and reiterated Actings of Grace, in the Heart, the bare Historical Remembrance of these Things will go but short Way; our certain Possession and felt Exercise of Grace, and not our Historical Remembrance how we got it, is certainly our best Evidence: If we can say with the Blind-Man *whereas I was once Blind now I see; whereas I was once a Child of Wrath, under the reigning Power, as well as Guilt of Sin; now I am made free from Sin and become a Servant of Righteousness, and bring forth Fruit unto Holiness*: This will do more to assure the Christian of his gracious State, than all Remembrance of former Exercises, whether by way of Conviction or Comfort, without it.

I think I need not be at much Pains in shewing that this Tenet or Doctrine which we have been confuting hath the same evil Tendency with all the former, viz. to sew Pillows under the Arm-Holes of some, and encourage them to carnal Security, by presuming on their legal Convictions, together with their succeeding flashes of Comfort and Joy, without any real sanctifying change in the Heart; and on the other hand to make sad the Hearts of many, whom the Lord would not have made sad; while they do anxiously seek for that in themselves which is not at all necessary for Conversion:

sion, viz. the Remembrance of remarkable Convictions and Comforts at the Time of their Conversion; this work having been wrought in them gradually and undiscernibly.

I now proceed to examine the ~~last~~^{such} Tenet which is also industriously propagated, and as greedily drunk in by Multitudes; viz. they make a Distinction between the outward and inward Call of a Person to the Ministry, and accordingly, assert that tho' a Person be regularly, after ~~due~~^{due} Tryal and Examination, ordain'd 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 they love to speak) that such a Person hath not the call of God, but only the call of Man to that Office.

Before I lay open the absurdity of this Doctrine, I will first lay down a Concession or two relating to it.

First, I acknowledge that true Grace in the Person called is absolutely necessary to the faithful and acceptable discharge of the Work, and so it is as to all other Offices and Duties whatsoever.

Secondly, I acknowledge that there is a clear and plain Distinction between the outward Call of the Word, and the Inward Call of the Spirit, to Grace and Salvation; this Distinction is clearly founded upon the Word; many are called ~~externally~~^{externally} by the Word who are never called ~~internally~~^{internally} by the Spirit, or Converted. But

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That I may a little expose the Falseness and Error of this Doctrine, it should be considered.

First, that the Call of God to the Ministry of the Gospel, ^{must} ~~ought~~ of necessity imply in the very Notion of it, an authoritative Act of God whereby he requireth, commandeth and authoriseth the Person whome he calleth to enter upon and execute the Office of a Minister. must

Secondly, That God is truly and properly said to do, whatever is done by Virtue of any Order, Command, or Institution of his; so the Ministers of the Church of *Ephesus*, who were ordained by the Apostle *Paul* are said to be made overseers of that Church by the Holy Ghost *Acts. 20. 28.* and consequently

Thirdly, when a Person is orderly set apart 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 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; as in the above Instance of *Acts 20. 28.* Hence

Fourthly, We must distinguish between an immediate and a mediate Call of God; both the Apostle *Paul* and the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus* were, truly and properly and according to Scripture Language called of God, the one immediately, but the others mediately by the Ministry of the Apostle.

From all which its as clear as the Sun at Noon-Day, that every Person, whether he be truly gracious, or an hidden dissembling Hypocrite, who is set apart to the Work of the Ministry, according to Christs Institution in his Word, is called of God to that Office; as *Demas* and those grievous Wolves spoken of *Acts*, 20. 29, 30. and consequently this Doctrine and the unscriptural Distinction on which it is founded, falls flat to the Ground.

Again, Secondly, another Argument against this Doctrine may be drawn from the Nature of the Work to which a Person is called viz. the ^{External} Duties of this Office which are ^{External} Eternal and have the Persons and People to whom such a Person is sent for their Object, whereas the Call of God to Grace and Salvation respecteth a Persons self, and therefore there is need of an inward Call by the Spirit powerfully inclining and determining the will, yea the whole Man to a Compliance; from whence I infer, that seeing the Work and Administrations of the Office are External and wholly relate to other; the Call to the Office must be External also, and accordingly the Call of *Aaron* and his Posterity to the Office of the Priesthood was External and included *Nadab and Abihu, Hophni and Phineas* and all other wicked Priests of that Race, as well as *Aaron, Eleazer* and there Godly Posterity. Yea the extraordinary Officers such as the Prophets and Apostles were Externally Called tho' in an extraordinary Manner, their inward
gracious

gracious Qualifications, gave them no Warrant nor Authority to execute the Offices they were respectively called unto, until God did declare his will that they should be employed therein in the Manner that he in his infinite Wisdom thought fit. Again

Thirdly, The Call of God to the Ministry is and must be of such a Nature as may be evident and apparent unto such as are obliged to receive and submit to the Persons Ministry; but the inward Call or what those Brethren ~~make~~ ^{name} the Call of God, is not visible nor evident and therefore cannot Warrant any ~~that~~ submit to their Ministry; but the External Call, according to the Institution is visible and Evident & Authoriseth the Minister to officiate, and the People to receive and submit to their Ministry tho' the Persons be graceless; and accordingly our Lord commands to receive the Word at the Hands or Mouths of graceless Scribes and Pharisees.

Again, Fourthly another Argument against this Doctrine is this, that it makes the Call of God to the Office of this Ministry and the Qualifications requisite in the Persons called one and the same Thing, contrary to common Sense and the Scope and Tenor of all the Directions that are given in the Word for the choice of Men to the Ministry. In the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus* the Apostle directs these Evangelists what sort of Men they should call, ordain, and set apart to that Work, which plainly imply's that their Call to the Work; is something distinct

distinct from the Qualifications of the Persons to be called and posterior to them : That they must first examine their Qualifications and afterwards call them to the Office, having found them to be already qualified for it.

Fifthly, If these inward gracious Qualifications constitute the Call of God to the Ministry, then all who have them are called to the Ministry, which is evidently absurd. And yet this is what Mr. *Gilbert Tennent* expressly maintains in his Sermon against unconverted Ministers, Page 7. &c.

I could here multiply Arguments but I think these which I have offered are sufficient to evince the absurdity of this Doctrine.

And I think it a very great and unaccountable Presumption to say that Persons who are called and set apart to the Ministry according to Christs Institution, are only called of Men, in Opposition to something which they name the Call of God, but without all Foundation in Scripture : Altho, as I have said before, true Grace is necessary for the acceptable Discharge of the Duties called unto ; this unscriptural Way of speaking doth contain in it a blaspheming of Christs Institution, by giving it a diminutive Title, and thereby robbing it of the honour and regard that's due unto it, and so exposing it to contempt ⁱⁿ ~~and~~ the Minds of unthinking People. It implies in it also a plain homologating with Quakers who despise the Institution of the Word, and propose to depend only on the Inward Call
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of the Spirit in Opposition to a Scriptural Call or regular Ordination.

I intreat my Readers that they may not misunderstand me as if I would plead for an un-sanctified Ministry ; God forbid that such a profane impious Thought should ever be harboured in my Breast, much more that I should be so wicked as to maintain it by Arguments. Undoubtedly its the indispensable Duty of every one that would aspire to this sacred Office, to pray and labour in the greatest earnest, for true sanctifying Grace and all other necessary Qualifications, to fit him for the Work, and to propose single Ends and Views to himself in undertaking it. And it is no less the Duty of those, whose Part it is to call & ordain Men to that Work to take all possible care to inquire into the saving Grace, as well as other Qualifications in the Persons to be Ordained ; and the neglect of either is a heinous Sin, and of a dreadful Tendency, no doubt a graceless Ministry is an awful Plague and Scourge to any People. But if divine Providence think fit to permit such a Thing to come to pass, that a Person who is a cunning, covered, dissembling Hypocrite, and so deceives his Judges, and all who are concerned with him & so is in a regular Way, according to the Word admitted into the Ministry ; I say its evident from the above Arguments, and many more that might be advanced, that even such a Person is called of God to that Work, and in pursuance to that Call, its his Duty to Officiate, and his

Sin is not in obeying that Call, but in his Want and Neglect of that Grace that should fit him for it, and determine him to be faithful in it. And if at any Time, after such a Persons Entrance into the Ministry, he should be awakened to see his own wickedness; his Duty in that Case would be, not to relinquish his Ministry; (which yet he ought to do, if the above Doctrine were true;) but to apply himself to all Gospel Methods, in order to the Amendment of his own State for the Vows of God, with respect to this Office and Duty of it, are still upon him.

The Truth of the Matter in short is this; whatever gives a Person Authority & lays an Obligation upon him in the sight of God and Man to Preach the Gospel, is the Call of God to that Work; but it's only the external Call according to the Word that can do this. And if any pretend to any other Call from God, we would require a Proof of it from him, or else be obliged to reject both him and his Call, and count him a Thief and a Robber. An Hypocrite, as is said, regularly Called hath Authority from God, and is obliged in Conscience to preach the Gospel. His want of Grace renders him incapable to do it acceptably as to himself in the Sight of God; Yet having Gifts he may do it successfully as to others by a Divine Blessing which is not tyed to the Grace of the Speaker; and therefore *Paul* rejoiced that Christ was Preached, tho' out of Envy *Phil.* 1, 18.

Now the Miſchievous and evil tendency of this Way of ſpeaking is very Great; for firſt it is to reproach the divine Inſtitution with the diminutive Title of Mans Call, and ſacrilegiouſly to rob it of its true Deſignation, and give it to that which is no Call at all (yea I may ſay) this proceeds from nothing elſe but a whimſical entuſiaſtical Notion of a giddy Fancy, & borders cloſe upon Quakeriſem. To what Purpoſe did the Spirit of God in his Word give Rules to try Candidates in Order to Ordination, if we are to expect an immediate Call from God by his Spirit to this Work? or ſhall and muſt we accept of a Perſon pretending to this inward Call, as one Called of God without a due courſe of Tryals? no ſure; yea the Quakers themſelves, as I'm informed will not allow every pretender to the Spirit or inward Call to Exerciſe among them.

Secondly, Another evil that's in this whimſical conceit is, that it too often and too effectually Tempts Perſons, who have imbib'd it, to buſy themſelves in a ſinful Jealouſie and inquiry concerning the Preachers Grace or Conversion, and to form a Judgment upon very uncertain Grounds, and then to entertain what they hear, and judge of it, not ſo much as it agrees or diſagrees with the Word, as according to the Opinion which they have conceived of the Preachers gracious State, and ſo they become guilty of Raſh judging, to the Marring of their own Edification. Of this I have known

some Instances on Occasion of controversies between Ministers and their People ; for certainly we should receive every Thing that's agreeable to the Word, not as the Word of Man but as the Word of God, tho' Spoken by never so great an Hypocrite.

The Seventh and last of the above recited Doctrines, and which is Advanced and Propagated with a Great deal of Industry viz. that an unconverted Minister, who according to the foregoing Tenet, hath only the Caril of Man, cannot in an Ordinary Way be a Mean of Conversion to others by his Preaching. Mr. *Gilbert Tennent* in his Sermon about unconverted Ministers says, *that for ought he knows, as many Instances of Conversion by Satans Temptations may be given, as of Conversion by unconverted Ministers, and that it's a kind of Chance-meely.*

Such Doctrine, as it is a native Consequence, so it is a very suitable Companion of the former, & so near of kin to it that I need not say a great deal to confute it ; it's plainly to suspend the success of a divine Institution upon the Grace of the Minister, contrary to 1 Cor. 3. 7. so then *Neither is he that Planteth any Thing, nor he that watereth but God that giveth the increase.* When the Apostle in his Epistle to the Heb. Chap. 4. 2. is giving the Reason why the Word Preached did not profit the *Israelites* of old, he tells us the Reason viz. *The Word was not mixed with Faith in them that Heard it ;* nothing of this is ascribed to the gracelessness of the Preachers. And
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in 2. *Thes.* 10. 11 we are told that because People would not receive the love of the Truth, therefore God would give them up to strong Delusions; no doubt the Church had many graceless Ministers in it then as well as now; yet the great Cause of the want of Success, and what brought the threatned judgment upon them, was in themselves.

If this Doctrine were true we could not ~~have~~ *hear* any Minister in Faith, unless we were sure of his Conversion; and what poor judges are the greater part of Congregations in this Matter, when most are strangers to Conversion themselves, and many others are doubtful of their own State. Besides that its impossible to know this further than by a Judgment of ~~Discrimination~~ *etior.* and Charity, built upon a Mans good Character, Pious Profession, and Grave, Religious, outward Behaviour; all which may be under a cloke of Hypocrisy, or a formal Profession.

Further, if this Doctrine were true, we should have reason to doubt of the reality of any Good, or Edification that ever we got, or apprehended we got, by any Ministers preaching as often as we see cause to suspect his Grace or Sincerity; for how can we believe the Benefit to be real, while we suspect the Sincerity of the Instrument, and in the Mean-Time believe that a graceless Minister cannot be a Mean of real Good to our Souls? For by the by, an unconverted Minister must be as unfit to edify as to convert; which in effect *Mr. Gilbert Tennent* owns in his
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fore-cited Sermon ; but the Truth is, as the Sacraments, so the Word, is made effectual to Salvation, not by any Virtue in its self, 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.

The Ministers are only the moral Causes of Grace and Conversion, while they objectively represent to our Minds, or reasonable Faculties, those Things which concern our Duty or Interest, according to the revealed Word ; and undoubtedly a Graceless Hypocrite, of great gifts may make this objective Representation to greater Advantage to our Minds, than a gracious Minister of meaner Gifts, and so in that respect has a greater aptitude, as a moral Instrument to be a Mean of Conversion ; the reason is, the Minister is only the moral Instrument, and the efficacy depends upon the Supernatural Work of the Spirit bearing home his own Word with Power upon the Hearts of the Hearers.

We would need also to Distinguish between a Covered, or as Mr. *Tennent* is pleased to Express it, a plastered Hypocrite whose Character and Esteem is Good and Unsuspected, and a Minister who by his Doctrine or Behaviour has forfeited his Character and Esteem with his Hearers ; and if a gracious Minister, either by his own Fall, or by calumniating Tongues, be robb'd of his good Name, he's as unlikely to be an Instrument

strument of good as the other, with respect to such as have conceiv'd bad Impressions of him.

Thus, as I apprehend, I have sufficiently expos'd the falseness of these Points of Doctrine as also their pernicious Tendency. And if we add to them the Practice and Conduct of some of our Brethren, their singular Industry to excite legal ungracious Convictions in their Hearers, and that by Expressions borrowed from the profanest sorts of Mankind, rather than Scripture; their industrious Preaching without their own Bounds, or rather within the Bounds of their Neighbouring Brethren; their industrious endeavours to possess People wherever they come, that few or none, besides themselves, are converted and faithful; as if none but they were sincerely aiming at the good of Souls; and if we notice further that all their admirers almost without Exception do conceive such Sinistrions, uncharitable, yea contemptible Apprehensions of all other Ministers but them; as if we were all but a Company of Gracelers, Mercenary, Unconverted Wretches; lazy, daubing *Pharisee* Preachers, dumb Dogs, with many more reproachful Epithets which are very Liberally cast upon us by some of these Brethren, and their Admirers; See Mr. *Tenent's* Sermon about unconverted Ministers throughout; if we also consider how they Practically cast off all Presbyterial Order, and as it were say that neither Confession, Catechisms, nor Directory are any more to be regarded.

I say when we Consider these Things, what Matter of Sorrow and Lamentation may it afford to every serious considering Person, who hath the Prosperity of *Zion* at his Heart? to think that a Work of Grace should be so effectually Marred and Hindred, by possessing Peoples Minds, with prejudices against their Ministers without Cause; and that under a Pretence of advancing the very Work which they are destroying.

May the Great and Gracious God, the Great King of his Church look down in Mercy upon us, and pity these Evils; May he shew and convince us of the Sins for which he is thus contending with us, May he give us true Repentance for them, and so pardon them, heal these Divisions and Confusions, and restore unto this poor infant Church a Spirit of Light, of Love and of a sound Mind.

F I N I S.