

2015

Christian Correspondence: Being A Collection Of Letters Written By The Late Rev. John Wesley And Several Methodists Preachers, In Connection With Him. To The Late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, With Her Answers

John Wesley

Eliza Bennis

Thomas Walsh

Thomas Olivers

William Pennington

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/bennisbooks>

Recommended Citation

Wesley, John; Bennis, Eliza; Walsh, Thomas; Olivers, Thomas; Pennington, William; Taylor, Thomas; Blackwell, Richard; Bourke, Richard; Dillon, John; Saunderson, Hugh; Christian, John; Jones, Charles; Hern, Jonathan; Bristol, John; Goodwin, John; Bradburn, Samuel; Stretton, John; McGregor, John; Condy, Richard; and Griffith, Walter, "Christian Correspondence: Being A Collection Of Letters Written By The Late Rev. John Wesley And Several Methodists Preachers, In Connection With Him. To The Late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, With Her Answers" (2015). *The Bennis Collection Books*. 1.

<https://place.asburyseminary.edu/bennisbooks/1>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the The Bennis Collection at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Bennis Collection Books by an authorized administrator of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange.

Authors

John Wesley, Eliza Bennis, Thomas Walsh, Thomas Olivers, William Pennington, Thomas Taylor, Richard Blackwell, Richard Bourke, John Dillon, Hugh Saunderson, John Christian, Charles Jones, Jonathan Hern, John Bristol, John Goodwin, Samuel Bradburn, John Stretton, John McGregor, Richard Condy, and Walter Griffith

Christian Correspondence



Being A Collection Of Letters Written By The
Late Rev. John Wesley and Several Methodist
Preachers, In Connection With Him. To The
Late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, With Her Answers



First Fruits
THE ACADEMIC OPEN PRESS OF ASBURY SEMINARY

Christian Correspondence

*Being A Collection Of Letters Written By The
Late Rev. John Wesley And Several Methodist
Preachers, In Connection With Him. To The Late
Mrs. Eliza Bennis, With Her Answers*

Facsimile Reproduction

*First Fruits Press
Wilmore, Kentucky
c2015*

Christian Correspondence: Being A Collection Of Letters Written By The Late Rev. John Wesley And Several Methodists Preachers, In Connection With Him. To The Late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, With Her Answers

A Facsimile Reprint.

First Fruits Press, ©2015

Previously Published: Philadelphia: B. Graves for Thomas Bennis, 1809.

Digital version at <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/bennisbooks/1/>

ISBN: 9781621711810 (Print), 9781621711919 (Digital)

First Fruits Press is a digital imprint of the Asbury Theological Seminary, B.L. Fisher Library. Asbury Theological Seminary is the legal owner of the material previously published by the Pentecostal Publishing Co. and reserves the right to release new editions of this material as well as new material produced by Asbury Theological Seminary. Its publications are available for noncommercial and educational uses, such as research, teaching and private study. First Fruits Press has licensed the digital version of this work under the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial 3.0 United States License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/us/>.

For all other uses, contact First Fruits Press.

Wesley, John, 1703-1791.

Christian correspondence : being a collection of letters written by the late Rev. John Wesley and several Methodist preachers in connection with him, to the late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, with her answers, chiefly explaining and enforcing the doctrine of sanctification [electronic resource].

1 online resource (ix, 357 pages : port.) : digital.

Wilmore, Ky. : First Fruits Press, ©2015.

Reprint. Previously published: Philadelphia: B. Graves for Thomas Bennis, 1809.

ISBN: 9781621711919 (electronic)

1. Wesley, John, 1703-1791 -- Correspondence. 2. Bennis, Eliza, -1802 -- Correspondence. 3. Methodist Church -- United States -- Clergy -- Correspondence 4. Sanctification

BX8495.W5 C647 2015eb

234.8

Cover design by Wesley Wilcox



First Fruits Press
The Academic Open Press of Asbury Theological Seminary
204 N. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390
859-858-2236
first.fruits@asburyseminary.edu
asbury.to/firstfruits

Contents

Original Title Page.....	1
Editor's Note.....	2
Advertisement.....	3
Letter 1: August 2, 1753.....	5
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 2: August 23, 1768.....	11
<i>From John Wesley in Pembroke</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 3: March 11, 1766.....	13
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 4: March 29, 1766.....	17
<i>From John Wesley in Manchester</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 5: July 10, 1766.....	19
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 6: August 14, 1766.....	23
<i>From John Wesley in Leeds</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 7: July 15, 1767.....	25
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 8: July 25, 1767.....	27
<i>From John Wesley in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 9: May 25, 1769.....	29
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 10: May 30, 1769.....	32
<i>From John Wesley in Cork</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 11: July 13, 1769.....	33
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 12: July 24, 1769.....	36
<i>From John Wesley in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	

ii | Contents

Letter 13: September 18, 1769	37
<i>From John Wesley in Bristol</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 14: October 17, 1769	38
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 15: April 12, 1770	40
<i>From John Wesley in Whitehaven</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 16: May 20, 1770	41
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Waterford</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 17: June 13, 1770	43
<i>From John Wesley in Yarm</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 18: July 8, 1770	45
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 19: July 27, 1770	48
<i>From John Wesley in Ashby</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 20: May 7, 1771	49
<i>From Eliza Bennis Waterford</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 21: May 15, 1771	53
<i>From John Wesley in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 22: July 7, 1771	55
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Waterford</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 23: July 20, 1771	58
<i>From John Wesley in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 24: October 15, 1771	60
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 25: October 28, 1771	64
<i>From John Wesley in Rye</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 26: November 14, 1771	66
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	

Letter 27: December 3, 1771	67
<i>From John Wesley in Canterbury</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 28: March 17, 1772	67
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 29: March 31, 1772	70
<i>From John Wesley in Liverpool</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 30: May 26, 1772	71
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 31: June 16, 1772	73
<i>From John Wesley in Yarm</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 32: August 8, 1772	75
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Waterford</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 33: August 31, 1772	76
<i>From John Wesley in Bristol</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 34: October 18, 1772	77
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 35: November 3, 1772	79
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Colchester</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 36: December 1, 1772	80
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 37: December 16, 1772	82
<i>From John Wesley in Shoreham</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 38: January 23, 1773	82
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 39: February 12, 1773	85
<i>From John Wesley (location not listed)</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 40: March 16, 1773	86
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	

iv | Contents

Letter 41: April 1, 1773	87
<i>From John Wesley in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 42: August 25, 1773	88
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 43: September 10, 1773	89
<i>From John Wesley in Bristol</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 44: November 11, 1773	90
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 45: December 1, 1773	92
<i>From John Wesley in Sheerness</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 46: December 29, 1773	94
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Waterford</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 47: January 18, 1774	96
<i>From John Wesley in London</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 48: February 10, 1774	98
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Waterford</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 49: March 1, 1774	101
<i>From John Wesley in London</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 50: April 12, 1774	103
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 51: May 2, 1774	106
<i>From John Wesley in Leeds</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 52: July 21, 1774	107
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 53: December 24, 1774	109
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Wesley</i>	
Letter 54: December 21, 1776	111
<i>From John Wesley in London</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	

Letter 55: December 13, 1755	112
<i>From Thomas Walsh in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 56: January 20, 1757	113
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Thomas Walsh</i>	
Letter 57: February 5, 1757	114
<i>From Thomas Walsh in London</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 58: November 5, 1757	119
<i>From Thomas Walsh in London</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 59: April 25, 1757	121
<i>From Thomas Olivers in Clonmell</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 60: June 4, 1764	123
<i>From William Penington in Cork</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 61: June 10, 1764	124
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To William Penington</i>	
Letter 62: July 28, 1765	126
<i>From Thomas Taylor in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 63: October 23, 1766	130
<i>From Richard Blackwell in London</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 64: November 27, 1766	131
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Richard Blackwell</i>	
Letter 65: February 10, 1767	133
<i>From Richard Blackwell in London</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 66: November 29, 1768	134
<i>From Richard Bourke in Waterford</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 67: July 1764	136
<i>From John Dillon in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 68: September 15, 1764	137
<i>From John Dillon in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	

vi | Contents

Letter 69: June 1, 1765	140
<i>From John Dillon in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 70: September 25, 1766	141
<i>From John Dillon in Cork</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 71: May 1770	143
<i>From John Dillon in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 72: December 4, 1771	145
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Hugh Saunderson</i>	
Letter 73: October 20, 1771	149
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Christian</i>	
Letter 74: March 29, 1772	151
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Christian</i>	
Letter 75: October 22, 1773	156
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Christian</i>	
Letter 76: December 17, 1770	163
<i>From Lt. Charles Jones in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 77: January 3, 1771	164
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Lt. Charles Jones</i>	
Letter 78: December 22, 1771	168
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To R. T.</i>	
Letter 80: November 22, 1772	173
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To R. T.</i>	
Letter 81: November 9, 1773	177
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To R. T.</i>	
Letter 82: March 27, 1773	181
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Jonathan Hern</i>	
Letter 83: April 16, 1773	182
<i>From Jonathan Hern in Cork</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	

Letter 84: October 18, 1775	186
<i>From John Bristol in Bally Moore</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 85: March 15, 1778	189
<i>From John Goodwin in Bristol</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 86: June 14, 1777	191
<i>From Samuel Bradburn in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 87: June 22, 1777	194
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Samuel Bradburn</i>	
Letter 88: 1770	199
<i>From John Stretton in Newfound-land, Carbonear</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 89: Novber 12, 1771	201
<i>From John Stretton in Newfound-land, Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 90: November 13, 1772	202
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 91: November 14, 1773	204
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 92: November 4, 1774	206
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 93: November 14, 1775	209
<i>From John Tretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 94: November 8, 1776	214
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 95: March 22, 1777	217
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Stretton</i>	
Letter 96: June 30, 1777	222
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 97: July 24, 1777	226
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To John Stretton</i>	

viii | Contents

Letter 98: November 30, 1777	233
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 99: December 2, 1778	237
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 100: December 18, 1779	240
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 101: June 29, 1785	242
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 102: November 15, 1785	245
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 103: November 18, 1788	247
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 104: December 18, 1790	252
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 105: December 18, 1779	255
<i>From John Stretton in Harbour Grace</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 106: n.d.	256
<i>From Eliza Bennis (location not listed)</i>	
<i>To (unknown)</i>	
Letter 107: April 7, 1783	260
<i>From J. F. in Cove</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 108: December 18, 1773	261
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To J. F.</i>	
Letter 109: May 12, 1783	263
<i>From J. F. in Cove</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 110: December 18, 1779	265
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To J. F.</i>	
Letter 111: February 5, n.d.	269
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To (unknown Major)</i>	

Letter 112: December 3, n.d.	275
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To (unknown)</i>	
Letter 113: September 1, 1790	280
<i>From John McGregor in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 114: March 27, 1790	285
<i>From Richard Condry in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 115: June 11, 1790	287
<i>From Richard Condry in Limerick</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 116: February 9, 1792	289
<i>From Walter Griffith in Dublin</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 117: November 23, 1791	292
<i>From Joseph (unknown) in Carrick</i>	
<i>To Eliza Bennis</i>	
Letter 118: November 26, 1791	297
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Waterford</i>	
<i>To J. C.</i>	
Letter 119: October 18, 1765	299
<i>From Eliza Bennis in Limerick</i>	
<i>To (unknown)</i>	
About Eliza Bennis	342
Editor's Comments	343
Poem 1 - "A Wish"	344
<i>Written February 1766</i>	
<i>By Eliza Bennis</i>	
Poem 2 - "A Farewell to the World"	347
<i>Written January 1, 1772</i>	
<i>By Eliza Bennis</i>	
Original Book's Contents	351
Other Works of Eliza Bennis	355
Notes of Previous Owner	356

CHRISTIAN CORRESPONDENCE,

BEING

A COLLECTION OF LETTERS,

WRITTEN BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN WESLEY,

AND SEVERAL

METHODIST PREACHERS,

IN CONNECTION WITH HIM.

TO THE LATE

MRS. ELIZA: BENNIS,

WITH HER ANSWERS.

*Chiefly Explaining and Enforcing the Doctrine of
Sanctification.*

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE ORIGINALS.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY B. GRAVES, NO. 40, NORTH FOURTH STREET:
FOR THOMAS BENNIS, NO. 121, MULBERRY STREET.

1809.

District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

BE it remembered, that on the tenth day of May, in the thirty-third Year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1809; Thomas Bennis of the said District, hath deposited in this office, the Title of a Book, the Right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“ Christian Correspondence....being A Collection of Letters, written by the late Rev. John Wesley. And several Methodist Preachers, in connection with him. To the late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, with her answers. Chiefly explaining the and Enforcing the Doctrine of Sanctification. Now first published from the Originals.”

In Conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, intituled, “ Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the Times therein mentioned.” And also to the Act, entitled “ An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, “ An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies during the Time therein mentioned,” and extending the Benefits thereof to the Arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other Prints.”

(L. S.)

D. CALDWELL,

Clerk of the District of Pennsylvania.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Publisher declines writing any regular Preface to the following pages, lest it should be considered a panegyric on his deceased mother;...Her works now praise her in the Gate....To all who were acquainted with her; her worth was well known....and to those who did not know her, her character will shine with more lustre from these letters, than by any encomiums that might be heaped on it....

But he thinks it needful to inform the reader how he came by these letters....On his mother's death...(in Philadelphia, June 1802).... her books and papers devolved to him, among which were the Originals from whence the present work is copied, their perusal often afforded much satisfaction to him and family, and on occasionally reading a few of them to some religious friends, they advised their publication, urging as a reason, that *they* had found much

(iv)

christian strength and benefit from them; and that it was a duty incumbent on the possessor to extend their usefullness...under this idea, they are now presented to the public, in their native garb...(a few local circumstances only being suppressed) and if they should be made a means in the hands of God, of awakening, convincing or comforting One Soul, the publisher's trouble will be fully repaid.

THOMAS BENNIS.

Philadelphia, May 1809.

CHRISTIAN CORRESPONDENCE.

BEING

A COLLECTION OF LETTERS,

WRITTEN BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN WESLEY.

THE LATE

MRS. ELIZA BENNIS.

AND OTHERS

LETTER I.

From Mrs. Eliza Bennis.....To the Rev.
John Wesley.

Limerick, August 2, 1763.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

AFTER many struggles, (from a sense of my inability), I have at last ventured to lay the state of my mind before you, requesting your opinion and advice.

About four years ago, I was given to see the *absolute necessity* of holiness of heart,.... was burdened under the weight of my corruptions, and could not be satisfied, with less

(6)

than a total deliverance,....though Mr. Oliv-
ers (who was then stationed here) preached
this doctrine, yet very few would receive it;
so that I was partly reasoned and partly laugh-
ed out of my earnestness, and by degrees lost
all hope and desire after it, and sunk into a
dead formal state, 'till I became a back-slider
in heart, having only the sad remembrance
of what I lost,...this made me completely mi-
serable, because truly sensible of my state,
but as utterly unable to struggle out of it, as
to create a new world. In this state I was,
when you were last here,...the doctrine of ho-
liness which you then revived, however desi-
rable in itself, only tended to aggravate my
guilt;...the beauty of holiness stood continu-
ally before me, but I dared not reach after it,
it seemed as the childrens bread which I must
not touch; till in one of your sermons you
described my state more clearly than I could
myself, and desired "that such should not be
dismayed, but seek after both pardon, and
holiness, that God was able to give the two
blessings at once, and you did not find it said
in scripture that he would not;" these words
came with such power to my soul, and gave

(7)

me such encouragement, that I was determined never to rest 'till God had made me a witness of this truth. In a few weeks after, the Lord did heal my back-slidings, and greatly refresh my soul; but this did not suffice; I found still an evil heart of unbelief, bent to back-slide from God; a stubborn perverse will, that would not be subject to the Divine will; and an enmity in my heart against God, neither could I give up all for him....I found many idols in my heart, which I had not power to give up, though I grieved to see them there,...in this state I could not rest and was determined I would not; but here the fear of deceiving myself, made me put the blessing from me, I looked for it to come with observation, and was not content to receive it in the "*small still voice*," I had large manifestations of the love of God, and many comfortable texts of scripture occurred to me, and my soul at times emptied of all but God, yet could not receive this as the blessing I was seeking, because the measure of joy I felt, was not greater than what I had often before experienced, though my comforts were stronger; thus I continued for

(8)

some time, resisting the grace of God, and would not receive him in his own way, least I should deceive myself, 'till I fell back again into my former state; feeling the weight of my corruptions more than ever; then I could clearly see I had resisted the grace of God,... but soon determined never to rest without it, and was now content to receive him in his own way, content to be *any thing*, to die if only by death I might be delivered from my burden...thus I remained 'till the 22nd May last, (being Whit Sunday) when going to the Lord's-Table heavy laden with the burden of my corruptions, but particularly because of the enmity I found in my heart against God, I there found my burden much heavier and therefore cried the more earnestly, when these words were applied to my heart, "*believest thou that I am able to do this?*" my soul immediately answered, Lord I believe thou art able; the word came again, "*Be it unto thee according to thy faith*" here unbelief came in, and raised disturbance in my soul, and I could only cry, *Lord give me faith;*" I was now filled with large expectation and a firm persuasion that God would

(9)

bleſs me, thus I continued till the ſecond of June, when at prayer I found in a moment my idols taken away, and my will wholly ſubjected to the will of God...nothing remained in my heart to oppoſe his will or work, and ſuch a meaſure of peace and love poured into my ſoul, as left no room for doubt,...I had not at this time ſuch a meaſure of joy, as I have often had before, but ſuch a calm ſerenity of ſoul as I had never before experienced, I ſought for my corruptions but could not find them; the enmity that was before in my heart was taken away and it was filled with love both to God and his people, and ſo far as I have ſtated it ſtill continues, only with this difference, I often find heavineſs of ſoul and then am apt to ſuſpect my love to God, I know of no competitor he has in my ſoul at any time, but cannot at all times find my affections warm to him,...my thoughts are not always on God or the things of God, even when they are not neceſſarily employed they are frequently taken away on I know not what, and it is hard to ſtay them aright; I frequently find deadneſs in prayer, and abſence under the word, I do not always ſee

(10)

God ; in employment and conversation my eye is often taken off from him, and sometimes a thoughtless forgetful spirit....Indeed hitherto the lord has kept me from sin, I find no desire towards it, I love the law and purity of God, and find a jealousy over myself lest I should even in thought offend, I find no condemnation, but do always even in the most grievous temptations know that God for Christ's sake has forgiven my sins...this evidence I have had clear without intermission since the second of June, which I could never say before, for in temptations it was often clouded, but now Satan seems to level his darts against this late work that God has wrought in me, and indeed I find his temptations sharp, strong and continued, insomuch that it is sometimes hard to stand against them, and am often at a loss to know whether they be temptations or not ; and am often tempted to think I keep a presumptuous hold,...I almost continually have questionings in my mind concerning it, and often think the blessings I have received are only the effects of justifying faith, tho' I find I would not be satisfied with this, and do earnestly desire the witness of the

spirit to ascertain what God has wrought ; but find frequent reproofs for this, telling me that God has not cleansed my heart, therefore that it is not right I should look for the witness ; that when he *does* the one, he will *give* the other....Indeed I think the words *sanctification*, a *clean heart*, and *loving God with all the heart*, are great expressions, and such as I cannot appropriate to my state, because of the deficiencies I have already mentioned, therefore request your thoughts and advice. And am Rev. and dear sir,

Your Respectful and Affectionate
Friend in Christ Jesus,
ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER II.

Rev John Wesley....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Pembroke August, 23, 1768.

MY DEAR SISTER.

You did well to write, this is one of the means which God genenally uses to convey either light or comfort ; even while you are writing you will often find relief,

frequently while we propose a doubt it is removed.

There is no doubt but what you at first experienced was a real foretaste of the blessing, altho' you was not properly possessed of it, 'till the Whitsunday following; but it is very possible to cast away the gift of God, or to lose it, by little and little...tho' I trust this is not the case with you, and yet you may frequently be in heaviness, and may find your love to God not near so warm at some times, as it is at others, many wanderings likewise, and many deficiencies, are consistent with pure love; but the thing you want is, the abiding witness of the Spirit touching this very thing. And this you may boldly claim, on the warrant of *that* word "we have received the Spirit that is of God; that we may *know the things which are freely given to us of God.*"

I am, my Dear Sister,

Your Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY

(15)

LETTER III.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Revd. John Wesley.

Limerick, March. 11, 1766.

REVD. AND DEAR SIR.

WHEN you were last here, my state was a mixture of happiness and distress, I found an entire deliverance from that natural propensity to evil which for many years before had beset me, and had the clear testimony of my heart's being cleansed from sin; but finding many things in myself, which I did not expect in that state, I gave way to fearfulness and unbelief.... 'Till God withdrew this evidence from me, but did not withdraw his grace, his work in my heart was still the same, and sometimes shone by its own light; but this could not satisfy, I was often under painful uncertainty concerning my state, I was indeed happy, yet the fear of sin lurking in my heart pained my very soul, I now saw and bemoaned my loss, and could not be satisfied 'till I had again received the testimony of God's spirit that my heart was cleansed from sin yet my ignorance and carnal understanding often

B

(14)

blocked up the way;...at this time, I became acquainted with a gentleman from Holland, (who was on business in this city) he was a Godly man, and had a deep work of grace wrought on his heart...the Lord did often bless us together, and gave me much light in conversing with him...after some time, he requested I would give him my experience in writing, which I did not wish to do for two reasons,...first, lest thro' ignorance I should only darken what I attempted to explain, and secondly, if I wrote I must do it honestly, and confess that I had lost the witness of my sanctification, and this might appear to him (who was not clear concerning this work) as tho' I had only deceived myself in the matter, and lessen the work in his eyes....But he urging the request, and a christian friend with whom I advised recommending me to comply, I reluctantly began the task, leaving the event to God; yet earnestly wrestling for the witness; when one day while employed in this business, I was struck with a sentence I had just wrote, and enabled to believe, and found in that moment the testimony of God's spirit, that my heart was cleansed from sin,...since then the

(15)

Lord has enabled me more than ever, to renounce my own wisdom, and attend more simply to the teachings of his spirit, which enables me to go on with more steadiness and comfort...I now see, that I expected many things in a sanctified state, which belong to a glorified....The servant would be above his Lord...yet it is a blessed state, a glorious liberty, a happy rest, and I find the more confident I am in what my God has done for me, the more happy I am.

I do not see why the people of God should stumble at words which declare his work; is it not more pleasing to him, that we should (when called to it) declare to the full extent what he has done for us, than out of (false) prudence or discretion hide any part? surely this would not be doing him justice; I would be thankful for your opinion on this; as also, if there be not as absolute a necessity for pressing sanctification on believers, as for pressing justification on penitents....I would also request your judgment concerning other matters, which are at times made very clear to my mind, yet am afraid to trust to these sudden illuminations (if I may call them so) lest

there should be any degree of my own wisdom in them ; I desire to be taught of God and you, and indeed by any whom God shall send.

Is sin (either more or less) some degree of rebellion in the will? and where there is no degree of rebellion in the will, can there be sin ?

May there not be many imperfections, where there is no sin ? nay must it not be unavoidably so, as a consequence of the fall ; our bodies and all their faculties having suffered greatly by it, and left in a shattered imperfect state, and so defective in every part, as leaves us quite incapable of acting, thinking, or judging perfectly right in every thing....Now are these by this means become our natural infirmities, taken up and laid down with the body, and therefore not inconsistent with an heart cleansed from sin ?

So long as I find my will wholly given up to, and sweetly lost in the will of God, (notwithstanding my many defects,) do I sin ? or rather do not all these things which before appeared as inconsistencies vanish as such, and appear to be mere natural infirmities

(17)

which we must carry about with us as a mark of our fallen state, as a badge of our poverty, and the consequence of our first parents sin.

I know not whether I have stated these matters right, but requesting you to make allowance for my ignorance, and to set me right by your opinion and advice. I remain,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Respectfully and Affectionately,

Yours in our Lord Jesus.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER IV.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Manchester, March. 29, 1766.

MY DEAR SISTER.

ONE of our preachers has lately advanced a new position among us, ... That there is no direct or immediate witness of sanctification, but only a perception or consciousness, that

we are changed, filled with love, and cleansed from sin....But if I understand you right, you find a *direct* testimony, that you are a child of God.

Now certainly if God has given you this light, he did not intend that you should hide it under a bushel....It is good to conceal the secrets of a king, but it is good to tell the loving kindness of the Lord....Every one ought to declare what God has done for his soul, and that with all simplicity; only care is to be taken, to declare to several persons, *that* part of our own experience, which they are severally able to bear, and some parts of it, to such alone as are upright and simple of heart. ✦

One reason why those who are saved from sin should freely declare it to believers, is because nothing is a stronger incitement to them, to seek after the same blessing. And we ought by every possible means, to press every serious believer, to forget the things which are behind, and with all earnestness go on to perfection. Indeed if they are not thirsting after this, it is scarce possible, to keep what they have; they can hardly retain any

(19)

power of faith, if they are not panting after holiness.

X A thousand infirmities are consistent with even the highest degree of holiness; which is no other than pure love, an heart devoted to God; one design and one desire.... Then whatever is done either in word or deed, may be done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Press after all the residue of the promises.

I am My Dear Sister,
Your Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER V.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, July, 10. 1766.

DEAR SIR.

I RECEIVED yours of 29th. March, wherein you mention that "one of our preachers has lately advanced a new position; that there is no direct or immediate witness of the work of sanctification, but only a per-

ception or consciousness that we are changed.”

I believe there is no passing through such a change, without being sensible that a change is wrought; but how can any know what the grace is which they have been made partaker of, without the *direct* testimony of God's spirit;... if Satan was bound, so that he should never have power to disturb such souls, then the work wrought on the heart might always be manifest;...but are there not times when the powers of darkness shew their strenght, do they not often raise a mist in the soul which clouds almost every grace, and then throws in a multitude of doubts and questionings into the mind, and in this case is there not need of a *direct* testimony from God?...if this be not attainable what shall comfort a soul under such circumstances?...for my part a state of uncertainty was always painful to me, however happy my soul might be;...the weight of my corruptions was so greivous, and my heart so torn on account of inbred sin, that my deliverance was quite clear to me, for I had got into a new world! I found an entire change;....I had that *perception* or *conscious-*

(21)

ness that I was changed; but I also found doubts, fears, and questionings, continually cast into my mind, whether sin was really cast out of my heart or not, this doubtful state was exceedingly painful to me; my heart was broken at the thoughts of sin still subsisting, or only subsiding for a time, I could not be satisfied with less than the total extirpation of it; this made me cry mightily to God for the witness of his spirit, which he was graciously pleased to grant in such a manner as was very clear to me, and often since in time of grievous temptation I should be ready to give up my confidence were it not for this testimony, which frequently shines indisputably clear, indeed it is such a blessed privilege that I think it a pity all do not seek it, but I believe many are content with being happy without knowing their freedom, I sometimes think that these miss many distresses which I have, and do still labour under, yet they also miss the comforts proceeding from this testimony which I think more than equivalent,..indeed I have been asked some questions which appeared to me very odd concerning these things, but I believe if all the children of

(22)

God were more simple they would be more wise.

Dear Sir, I have wrote freely according to that measure of light and understanding which I have; requesting you would shew your love to my soul, by setting me right wherein I err; my ignorance is so great, and my ideas of things so confused that I dare not trust to my own judgment in matters of such importance, this sense of myself, has often occasioned me much distress,...when I have heard these things spoken against, I have been ready to admit the doubt and say, sure this person is more wise more holy than I, and therefore knows more of the mind of God and if it be so I am hitherto all wrong :...and still in such cases after all that the Lord has done for me, I am too apt to question, being in myself a poor, dark, unstable creature.... But blessed be God for his free grace, through this alone I am what I am, and find every moment the same need of the same grace, my indigence appears every day more and more, and this drives me to my Lord Jesus, and my multiplying necessities makes him still more precious to my soul, O what should

(23)

I do without such a Saviour, I find I have need of all his merit, and would not be saved without it, O it is sweet to be a beggar at his feet, subsisting wholly on his bounty !... my Dear Sir, I request your prayers, I have much need of them,....mine weak and imperfect as they are, are daily offered up for you. By

Rev. and Dear Sir,

Yours in the bonds of Christian affection,

ELIZA BENNIS

LETTER VI.

Rev. John Wesley, to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Leeds, August, 14, 1766.

MY DEAR SISTER.

ALTHOUGH I am at present exceedingly hurried with various business, yet love constrains me to write a few lines, your letters are always welcome to me, as the picture of an honest and affectionate heart,

What you say concerning the witness of the spirit, is agreeable to all sound experi-

(24)

ence. We may in some measure be satisfied without it, in the time of broad sunshine ; but it is absolutely necessary in the time of clouds, and heaviness and temptation ; otherwise it would be hardly possible to hold fast your confidence.

Beware of voluntary humility, even this may create a snare ;...in the “ thoughts on christian perfection”, and in the “ farther thoughts ” you have the genuine experience of the adultchildren of God ; oppose that authority, to the authority of any that contradict, (if reason and scripture are disregarded) and look daily for a deeper and fuller communion with God ; O what is it to walk in the light, a he is in the light !

Do not cease to pray for

Your truly affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER VII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis, to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, July, 15, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

I have made many attempts to write you, since you left this ; but my state has appeared so confused, that when I have taken up the pen, I knew not where or how to begin ; nor indeed do I now know what to say, though love and gratitude constrains me to write.

Your late visit to this city, proved a great blessing to my soul ; your word was accompanied with power, and enabled me more clearly to see the work of God on my heart, yet I cannot say I am satisfied.

The Lord does give me at times the testimony of his spirit, that sin is cast out of my heart, but I feel so much slackness, thoughtlessness, unstayedness of mind, forgetfulness, wanderings, and listlessness of soul, that I am ready to question this evidence, even whilst I have it ; and from this view of myself, am ready to cry out, how can these things be ! indeed it appears sometimes as a perfect inconsistency, so that I know not what to conclude ; I do not find that measure of life or love which

(26)

I once enjoyed, nor that clearness of sight, or strength of faith, though at all times I feel my heart wholly given up to God; yet find also a continual questioning in my mind about it. Indeed I think my experience such a jumble, and feel myself such a poor, dark, blind, ignorant creature, that I am at times as one bewildered, and can only cast myself as I am on the Lord Jesus, taking him alone as my all in all, and beseeching him to point out my way, and not suffer my ignorance to err; blessed be my God, I do not find any propensity to sin, but do not find that constant breathing after him which I think should belong to the state, and which I have felt in times past; I am often fearful and distressed on this account, weary of my unprofitableness, and filled with grief and dejection of spirit; and though I find no condemnation from God, yet feel a continual dissatisfaction at myself.... Indeed I find the Lord Jesus precious, *very* precious to my soul, and am distressed, because I *do not, cannot* render him that obedience which I should, and which he knows I desire to do.

Dear Sir, I have endeavoured to lay my heart uncovered before you, as the Lord

(27)

knows I would not appear any thing to you, but such as I am in *his* sight who knows all things, and shall hope for an answer as soon as your business will permit.

I am Dear Sir, your unworthy,

But truly affectionate,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER VIII.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin, July, 25, 1767.

DEAR SISTER BENNIS.

When you write to me, you have only to *think aloud*, just to open the window in your breast; when we love one another, there is no need of either disguise or reserve, I love *you*, and I verily believe you love *me*: so you have only to write just what you feel.

The essential part of christian holiness is giving the heart wholly to God, and certainly we need not lose any degree of that light; and love which at first attend this; it is our own infirmity if we do; it is not the will of the

(28)

Lord concerning us. Your present business is, not to reason whether you should *call* your experience thus or thus ; but to go straight to *him* that loves you, with all your wants, how great or how many soever they are. Then all things are ready ; help while yet you ask is given ! you have only to receive it by simple faith ; nevertheless you will still be encompassed with numberless infirmities ; for you live in an house of clay, and therefore this corruptible body will more or less press down the soul. yet not so as to prevent your rejoicing evermore, and having a witness that your heart is all *his* ; you may claim this, it is yours for Christ is yours. Believe and feel him near.

My Dear Sister Adieu,

Yours Affectionately,

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER IX.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis, to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, May, 25, 1769.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE the Lord first called me by his grace to partake of his mercy, he has given me to esteem and love you as a dear parent ; but my own littleness and your great worth created such an awe in me, as caused me to keep a painful distance, notwithstanding your kind and loving solicitations to the contrary ; (I hope this will not appear as flattery, it is indeed the truth of my heart) but have now resolved by divine assistance, this shall not be the case in future.

Blessed be my God, I have found my soul much quickened by your late visit ; but am not satisfied 'till I feel restored *all* that I have lost, I find many hindrances in pursuing this, and many plausible reasons why I should not expect it, but my necessities drive me forward and the mercies of God encourage me at times to hope and expect an entire deliverance, but the thought of my own unfaithfulness still comes between and causes my heart to fail, indeed it is just, should I never be restored.

(30)

and should I wait all the days of my life, and be saved at the last, surely it would be wonderful mercy ; yet my heart is pained at the thought, I want a *present* salvation, a heaven within, I want that I should sin no more.

That every moment I should feel
His love, and know I do his will,
Should find no slackness on my part,
But praise flow constant from my heart.

I cannot describe my present state, otherwise than by calling it a mixture of happiness and misery, and must continue to be so, 'till the Lord condescends again to visit with a fresh supply of his grace, this unfaithful back-sliding heart. Indeed whilst I am desiring, longing, and asking for this, I am ready to cry out, "will the Lord *indeea* condescend so far;" O I want more faith and more poverty of spirit.

27th. I feared when you left this for Cork, I should again lose all my earnestness, and sink down where I was before, I have many fears of that kind still, but blessed be my God, it is not the case as yet, my soul is at times all desire and expectation, but my release is not yet come, this morning I found my heart all earnestness in prayer, being desirous not to come away 'till the Lord had

(31)

blessed me, but not finding my expectations answered, I came away much cast down, and opened the bible on Ezekiel 20th chap. 15th verse...this threatening I thought applicable to my state, and suitable to my deserts.

But I will yet hope, even against hope, perhaps the Lord may be intreated.... My Dear Sir, I think if you would pray for me, the Lord would answer.

29th. Blessed be my God, my soul has been all yesterday and this morning in some degree happy, and still continues so, but not satisfied; I want a fuller manifestation of his love, I want to be all as he would have me be, I would make no conditions with him, only that he would give me himself... Amen Lord let me be wholly and only thine.

The people here seem much stirred up, and happy in the expectation of your returning to us for a few days, I hope you have determined it shall be so; O come, and I fully think you will bring a blessing to your unworthy, but truly Affectionate,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER X.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs Eliza Bennis.

Cork May, 30, 1769.

DEAR SISTER,

Some years since, I was inclined to think, that none who had once enjoyed and then lost the pure love of God, must ever look to enjoy it again, 'till they were just stepping into eternity....But experience has taught us better things, we have at present numerous instances of those who had cast away that unspeakable blessing, and now enjoy it in a larger measure than ever; and why should not this be *your* case? because you are unworthy? so were they; because you have been an unfaithful steward? so had they been also; yet God healed them freely, and so he will *you*... only do not *reason* against him....Look for nothing in *yourself* but sin and unworthiness.... Forget *yourself*.... Worthy is the lamb, and *he* has prevailed for *you*! you shall not die, but live! live all the life of heaven on earth, you need nothing in order to this but faith...And who gives this? he that standeth at the door!

(33)

I hope to see you at Limerick on Monday next, and I pray, let there never more be any reserve between you, and

Your truly Affectionate &c.

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick July, 13, 1769

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE often thought since you left Limerick, if you did not know me before, you now know me perfectly; all my weakness, ignorance and errors lie open before you; the Lord knows I desire to appear in your sight what I am in *his* who knows and sees my heart; yet have been grievously exercised since I put my papers into your hands; when you asked them I found a satisfaction in gratifying you, but have since been much tempted both to pride and shame; the exercise has often proved a blessing to my soul, and the looking over former experience has

(34)

frequently borne me up and strengthened my hands when ready to faint, which makes me still willing to keep them ; but indeed they were never intended to be even seen by any but myself, and from their many defects do not see how they can be useful to any other,... as I suppose you have by this time looked them over, I shall thank you to return them by the preacher who you may send here from conference.

In the midst of many temptations, I do find the Lord my refuge and support, and at times am given to see, that my heart is wholly dedicated to him....Yet am almost continually distressed that I do not live more suitable to such a profession ; not only outwardly but inwardly, I see myself every moment full of flaws, wants and deficiencies ; an inconstancy of mind that causes much grief ; I know this should not be....I see it is my privilege to enjoy constant union and communion with God, to live by faith, and rest in his will....I see the happiness of this state, and have had some sweet experience of it, and think I cannot be satisfied 'till I re-attain it ; yet while I thus see it, my privilege and desire, and long

(35)

so after it, I do not grow toward it, I do not enter into it, there is a something in the way, which hinders, and which God only is able to remove, O that he would take it out of the way, that he would totaliy destroy every thing that opposes his will in my soul.

Mr. Bourk's visit here, has proved a blessing to my soul, and to his also, I hope the Lord will enable him to keep his hold, and stand by faith against every opposition ; he has had some seals to his ministry since he came here; if you could spare him to us this year, I think it would be productive of good.

Dear Sir, at present I am exercised inwardly by my enemy, and outwardly by the sickness of two of my children, so that I have much need of your prayers; through all the Lord does support me, and am confident that what is best he will do ; may *he* continue to be your strength and support, and give you counsel in all your consultations, is the earnest prayer, of your ever Affectionate,

ELIZA BENNIS.

(36)

LETTER XII.

Rev John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin. July 24, 1769.

DEAR SISTER.

IF the reading over your papers has no other effect, this it certainly has, it makes me love you abundantly better than I did before ; I have now a more intimate knowlege of you.... I enter more into your spirit, your tempers, and Hopes, and fears, and desires, all which tends to endear you to me...It is plain, one of your constant enemies and the most dangerous of all, is evil reasoning....Accordingly the thing which you chiefly want is christian simplicity....Brother Bourke and you should carefully watch over each other in that respect, and let each deal faithfully with the other, let there be no reserve between you encourage one another also, to pray for, and expect the continual and direct witness of the spirit....They are by no means the *best* part of our preachers in any sense, who doubt of this : I know but of one who had experienced the work, that doubted concerning the witness namely James Oddie: and I am affraid that

(37)

for some time he has experienced neither the one nor the other.... Two of your written books I send back by that lovely woman Jenny Moore, the third I must borrow a little longer.... My Dear Friend, Remember

Yours Affectionately, &c.

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XIII.

Rev. John Wesley....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Bristol, September 18, 1769.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I WROTE a longer letter to you than I usually do, before I set out from Dublin, where or how it stopped I cannot imagine. I think of you every day, indeed I do not know that I ever loved you so well as since I was at Limerick last, the more we are acquainted with each other, the more we ought to love one another.

I hope brother Bourke and you, faithfully endeavour to help each other on. Is your own soul all alive? All devoted to

D

(38)

God? Do you find again what you found once? And are you active for God? Remember you have work to do in your Lord's vineyard, and the more you help others the more your soul will prosper. I am my Dear Sister,

Yours Affectionately, &c.

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XIV.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, October 17, 1769.

DEAR SIR,

AFTER some delays occasioned by unforeseen circumstances, I have received the two books, and your kind letters from Dublin and Bristol, I want words to express the gratitude I feel for your love and tender care over me, may God still continue this mercy to a poor unworthy creature; weak and imperfect as my petitions to the throne of grace are, I cannot cease offering them up for you, whilst I am able to pray for myself.

As to the state of my soul at present, it

(39)

still continues (as mentioned in a former letter) to be a mixture of happiness and distress, I feel my heart given to the Lord, and he knows that it is the desire of my soul that his will should be done in me, by me, and upon me, yet I find such deficiencies in every respect as bows me down and hinders my constantly rejoicing in him, and am often afraid that I shall perish after all. Can this be consistent with perfect love? I do not feel that measure of happiness and resting in God, which I once did, my soul mourns after it, and cannot be satisfied without it, yet cannot come by faith so as that I may receive it; when I would, I find my way so closed up, that I cannot get through, and such a feebleness of soul that I cannot persist, but sink down again into an inactive sorrow and distress; the Lord does give me to feel the consolations of his spirit, and *does* draw my heart after himself; but do not find that total oblivion of self, that entire sequestration from every earthly thing, that delightful fellowship with, and constant enjoyment of God which I once possessed, but lost by my unfaithfulness,

O how can I feed those sheep, committed to my care, the charge lies very heavy on me; Dear Sir cease not to pray for your unworthy, child in Christ.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XV.

Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Whitehaven, April 12, 1770.

DEAR SISTER,

If two or three letters have miscarried all will not, so I am determined to write again. How does the work of God go on at Limerick? Does the select society meet constantly? And do you speak freely to each other? What preachers are with you *now*? do *you* converse frankly and openly with them, without any shyness or Reserve? Do you find your own soul prosper? Do you hold fast what God had given you? Do you give him *all* your heart? And do you find the witness of this abiding with you? One who is now in the house with me, has not lost that witness one moment for these ten years. Why should *you* lose it any more? Are not the gifts

(41)

of God *without repentance*? Is he not willing to give always, what he gives once? Lay-hold, lay-hold on all the promises. I am,

Your affectionate Brother.

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XVI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Rev. John Wesley.

Waterford, May 20, 1770.

DEAR SIR,

Having come to this city on a visit to my daughter, your kind favor of 12th April was forwarded to me from Limerick. Indeed my heart is thankful for your care over, and advice to me; your kind enquiry concerning my state, fills me with shame and distress when I consider what a dwarf I am amongst the people of God. The Lord does make it the desire of my soul to do his will, and knows I *would* be wholly and entirely his, but feel many hindrances, which nothing but his all powerful grace can remove, these bear me down, and keep me continually loaded with

distress. O when shall my complainings end. I know assuredly that it is the privilege of God's people to have and retain the testimony of his spirit, and think it cannot be otherwise in the nature of things; that I find it clouded is owing to my own disobedience and unbelief, and is indeed a cause of sorrow to me, at times I have strong hopes that the Lord will revive his work in my soul, at other times have grievous fears and dejections, and am ready to give up all hope; I have been particularly exercised in this manner since I came to this city; my own unfaithfulness so placed in view, and such severe reproaches for my baseness, as has caused sore and bitter repentance; oh that it would last, that I could "weep my life away, for having grieved his love."

But I am such a poor unstable creature, that even this does not last, but like the natural man beholding his face in a glass. I quickly forget until the Lord again reminds me of my state.

Brother Saunderson is now in Limerick, the select band meet regular, and a few have been lately added to it, they speak open and

free but mostly in a complaining state. I have conversed freely with brother S. and do now correspond with him (he seems athirst for sanctification) but I think I discern self in all I do and say, and this discourages my forwardness in speaking to others, and generally fills me with after distress, brother Bourke is on this circuit, the people here go on at a poor rate, nor do I think it likely to be otherwise until they have a stationed preacher, they desired me to mention this, and would thank you to think of them, as I shall return home in a few days, you will please direct your next to Limerick.

I am dear Sir, &c.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XVII.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Yarm, June 13, 1770.

MY DEAR SISTER,

JUST Now we have many persons all over England, that are exactly in the state you describe; they were some time since renewed in love, and did then rejoice evermore; but after a few years, months or weeks, they were

moved from their stedfastness, yet several of these, have within a few months recovered all they had lost, and some with increase, being far more established than ever they were before, and why may it not be so with *you*? The rather, because you do not deny, or doubt of the work which God did work in you; and that by simple faith. Surely you should be every day expecting the same free gift. And he will not deceive your hope.

But how is this with respect to Waterford? They would, and they would not, I sent two preachers to that circuit, why did not they keep them? W. L. wrote word that there was neither employment nor maintenance for two, and therefore wished leave to return to England. Let me hear more from *you* on this matter.

If you can guard brother S. against pride, and the applause of *well meaning* people, he will be a happy man, and an useful labourer. I hope brother M. has not grown cold. Stir up the gift of God which is in you! I am,
My dear sister.

Your Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

(45)

LETTER XVIII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Rev. John Wesley

Limerick, July 8, 1770.

MY DEAR SIR

YOUR Letters always bring encouragement, I rejoice to hear that many have again recovered their strength; and at times am enabled to hope it may be my case; but am often cast down and ready to doubt, from the great unfitness I find in myself. I feel it the desire of my soul to be wholly given up to the Lord, yet do not find my mind so clear concerning the work of sanctification as it has been. Neither does the necessity of it appear in the manner it used to do. And yet my soul is reaching after a something, without coming to any particular point, only this, that I want more of God; I feel happy, yet feel a void which nothing but God can fill. The intercourse is open, but have not that full clear vision, that immediate, intimate, open access which I have had in time past, there is a mist between, which my sight cannot penetrate. I cannot help sighing after former experience, but have not *that* earnestness of soul, that might bring the blessing near.

(46)

But why should I not also acknowledge the goodness of my God.

He does make himself the desire of my soul, and I find his love to be better than life; I am nothing, I have nothing, I desire to be nothing; but He is my all in all; and for him I give up every other good; taking him alone for my portion and my inheritance in time and in all eternity. He knows I fear nothing so much, as a separation from him, and desire nothing so much as an establishment in his grace, so as never more to offend him. O that he would bind my heart to himself forever. Sisters P. and B. have lately been taken home; they both died triumphantly rejoicing in God their Saviour, and have left a clear testimony that the religion of Jesus is not a cunningly devised fable.

I believe brother L: met with trials in Waterford, the people are poor and think the expence of a preachers Horse (and family) more than they can well bear, but if it were possible to let them have a single preacher resident in the city, or even to exchange monthly with the circuit preacher (without throwing any of the Horse expence on them) I think it might

(47)

answer a good end, as yet the circuit is best able to bear expence, indeed I feel much for the city society, a handful of poor simple souls that need every support, and encouragement.

Dear Sir, I hope you will not think me too presumptuous, in dictating, but I find my soul knit to these poor sheep.

Sister Ann S : is lately married to brother L : of Clonmell, brother Bourke and I made up this match, and think it is the Lord's doing; she is as usual all alive to God, and I trust will be a means of saving his soul: brother Bourke at my request has taken Clonmell into the circuit, and doubt not but there will be good done there, but as this has caused an entire alteration in the circuit from the former plan, I have to request your forgiveness for my officiousness, if you disapprove it can be re-altered. I am dear Sir,

Your sincerely affectionate,

ELIZA BENNIS.

(48)

LETTER XIX

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis,

Ashby, July 27, 1770.

DEAR SISTER,

WILL You ever find in yourself any thing but *unfitness*? Otherwise your salvation would be of works, not of grace. But you are frequently sick of a bad disease, *evil reasoning*; which hinders both your holiness and happiness, you want the true christian simplicity, which is indeed the highest wisdom. Nothing is more clear according to the plain bible account, than sanctification; pure love reigning in the heart and life. And nothing is more plain, than the necessity of this, in order to feel happiness here and hereafter. Check all reasoning concerning these first principles, else you will exceedingly darken your soul, and go on denying yourself, and taking up your cross, until you

“ Sink into Perfections Height.
“ The depth of humble Love.”

If the preachers on Waterford circuit had punctually adhered to the plan which I fixed, the horse would have been no burden, but

the misfortune is...every dunce is wiser than me, however at your desire I will send a second preacher into the circuit after conference, but the preachers *must* change regularly, it would never do, to let one man sit down for six months with a small society, he would soon preach himself and them as lifeless as stones. Your alteration of the circuit so as to take in poor dead Clonmell I much approve, and hope sister L: will be made a blessing to the few there. I rejoice at sisters P. and B's happy release....Is not this worth living for!

Still draw near to the fountain by simple faith, and take all you want, but be not slothful in your Lords vineyard.

My Dear Sister, yours affectionately

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XX.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Rev. John Wesley.

Waterford, May, 7. 1771.

DEAR SIR,

I THINK all my expectations are only from the Lord; nor do I desire any blessing

E

(50)

which does not come immediately from his hand ; I purposed to myself much happiness in seeing you here, and think my expectations were not from man. Then how shall I account for the deadness and heaviness of soul which I laboured under whilst you were here ; but since then have found the Lord particularly gracious. This has caused some jealousy over myself. I fear I do not know myself aright, and am often fearful lest I should judge too favourably of myself, that is, lest I should imagine I had received that grace which I have not received ; the Lord knows I would not deceive myself ; and blessed be his name he does give me to see continually that I am nothing, that I am beholden to his free grace for all things ; that I cannot keep myself one moment without his special mercy. Nor indeed do I desire to be kept without him ; I find it my sweetest, my most delightful experience to be poor and destitute in myself, subsisting wholly on his bounty, and at times do feel myself, even as water spilled before him, and yet how many thousand things do I find in me continually, which seem contradictory to this, and which

(51)

cause difficulties and perplexities in my mind that none but God can clear. Yesterday I corrected my little child in a hasty manner, my spirit being agitated and angry at the child; my heart smote me immediately, I was grieved and distressed, and thought "surely in vain do I profess to be cleansed from sin, for thus am I overcome continually," showers of accusations came in upon me, and I had no defence to make, in this state I went to prayer, and acknowledged my transgression in much deadness and heaviness, which as a cloud fell instantly upon me, when the Lord was pleased to visit my soul, and gave me the testimony of his spirit, that I had not sinned. I was struck with surprise and cried "how can this be"! I looked for condemnation, but found none, my heaviness of soul was gone, and the Lord did pour into my heart the sweet refreshings of his love. Indeed it is still surprising to me, for I think I was angry at the child, but would be glad of your judgment and advice, for there is a constant fear over me, lest I should deceive myself.

I do find the Lord very gracious, and wonder at his love, O surely it is all free grace.

8th, I just now received a satisfactory letter from brother S: he says he wrote to you, the Lord has begun a great revival in Dublin, and trust he will carry it on. O that he would do so here also. Since you left this, brother C: has preached regularly, his heart seems earnest for the work and people of God. The day you left town, I met the womens bands, the Lord did wonderfully bless us together, and I find my heart closely united to them; last Monday I went to the room, but none of them came; I do find it a heavy cross, yet by the grace of God shall take it up. I know he can, and often does, work with the weakest instrument; though at times it seems next to impossible that the Lord should ever do any thing by me.

9th, My dear sir I have simply wrote you the workings of my mind, I know you will bear with me, I have had so many proofs of your love that I cannot doubt it, may the Lord prosper your labours, and make your visit to Limerick a blessing to his little flock,

(53)

indeed my heart aches when I think of your being there, and I at such a distance; for though I am sensible of your kindness and thankful to you, for affording me so much of your company when here; yet I think I had not that satisfaction with you, which I would have in Limerick. But I am enabled to look upon every hinderance as well as every help, as coming immediately from the Lord, and equally serviceable to me, O shall I say pray for me, I hope the Lord, does sometimes bring even *me* to your remembrance, my love to the select band, I hope they remember me when they meet. I am my dear Sir.

Your Sincerely Affectionate,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XXI.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Limerick, May, 15. 1771.

MY DEAR SISTER.

WHENEVER There is a dependence, though frequently secret and unobserved, on any outward thing, it is the mercy of God

(54)

which disappoints us of our hope, that we may be more sensibly convinced “ *Neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.*”

From time to time you must find many difficulties and perplexities, that none but God can clear. But can he clear them? That is enough. Then he surely will. This is the very use of that *anointing* which we have from God. It is *to teach us of all things*, to clear up a thousand doubts, and perplexities which no human wisdom could do, this was given you in the case of your child, and when that came, temptation spake not again. This is never more needful than with regard to anger; because there is an anger which is not sinful, a disgust at sin, which is often attended with much commotion of the animal spirits; and I doubt whether we can well distinguish this from sinful anger, but by *that light from Heaven.* †

I really hope J. C. will do well, within these two years he is improved exceedingly.

If our sisters miss you any more, there is but one way; *you must go or send after them.* Be not idle, neither give way to voluntary humi-

(55)

lity. You was not sent to Waterford for nothing; but to “strengthen the things that remain”

It would be a strange thing, if I should pass a day without praying for *you*; by this means at least we may reach each other, and there may be a still increasing union between you and

Your Affectionate Brother,
JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XXII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Revd. John Wesley.

Waterford, July 7, 1771.

DEAR SIR,

THERE Has been no material alteration here since my last. Mr. Newel paid one visit to this city, and Mr Breden three, in the interims brother C. acts as usual, and I think whilst they have him, they can feel no lack, I have had some opportunities of conversing with him, for which I have reason to be thankful, the cause and people of God are very dear to him, and he loves you as his father. I have heard some object to his opinions, but I think his manner of managing them is such,

that they do no hurt to him or the people. I spoke freely to him on this head, and find he entirely agrees with you, as to the essential doctrines of justification and sanctification. He holds election but not reprobation, he believes that God is willing to save all, and that those whom he saves cannot finally fall. This doctrine he says brings great comfort to his soul, but as it might not have the same effect on others, he does not advance it, lest any should rest in it.

Mr. T. comes on Sundays to hear, and is at times so affected, as to run out of the house, not being able to contain his voice; but his convictions do not last the week out, he keeps such close acquaintance with his former antinomian intimates, that his stings of conscience are quickly gone, until the next Sunday; then again torn under the word, and again careless; yet so rivited to *those* Antinomian professors that I fear it will all come to nothing. I meet the womens bands regular, and we generally have an happy hour.

I thank my God, I have found him very gracious since I came to this city, he has afforded me such helps, as I did not expect, and

(57)

has been himself to me instead of every help, O what cause have I to praise his name and record his dealings with me, it is now two and twenty years since he first made known his pardoning mercy to my soul; and O what have my eyes seen and my soul experienced in that time! I am astonished at the sight, and ashamed at my own baseness. O surely there is not such an other worthless creature existing; so backward, so unsteady, such a dwarf amongst his people! I am not at all satisfied with myself. But at times am supported with sweet expectations that my God will rectify all, will remove every hindrance, supply every want, and stay my mind continually on himself. Indeed I am weary of the constant wanderings of my heart, and deadness of my affections. The Lord only, knows what I suffer on this account, and the question is continually on my mind "Can this be consistent with an heart cleansed from sin" the Lord knows it is the most anxious desire off my soul, to be *all* as he would have me be; O that he would work his own will, and make me such. I am just returned from a general class meeting, and Mr. T. was there, for the first.

(58)

time these six months, he seems in earnest, the Lord grant him steadiness and resolution. O may the Good Lord whom you serve prosper your labours, and give you the desire of your soul, is the earnest prayer of,

Dear Sir, Yours &c.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XXIII.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin, July, 20, 1771.

MY DEAR SISTER.

I AM much pleased to hear so good an account of J. C. If I was resolved to *understand* all Gods dispensations, I should embrace his opinion; because it in a manner accounts for some things which otherwise are unaccountable. But this I do not expect: I am content to understand *exceeding* little, while I am in the body.... What He does, I know not now; it is enough, that I shall know hereafter. Our business *now* is to love and obey, knowledge is reserved for eternity.

(59)

My chief objection to Miltons doctrine of election is, that I cannot reconcile it to the words of St. Peter which manifestly refer to the eternal state of men “*God is no respecter of persons.*” Now how can we allow this, if we believe he places one man, as it were suspended between heaven and hell, while he fixes another e’er ever he is born, under an absolute impossibility of missing heaven?

I am well pleased you see some reason to hope well of Mr. T. speak close to him. He has a strong cultivated understanding, and would make a shining christian. If he continues serious, he will not long be pleased with his former company, they will grow tasteless, nay irksome.

It is not material whether this or that infirmity or defect, be consistant with this or that gift of God. Without reasoning about this, it is your part simply to spread all your wants before *him* who loves you, and he will richly supply them all!

Your ever Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XXIV.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Rev. John Wesley

Limerick October 15. 1771.

DEAR SIR.

WHEN I consider the many privileges I enjoy, and this not the least, that I can freely unbosom myself to you; I am lost in wonder and gratitude before the Lord. O surely I have cause to say, Lord what am I, that thou dost deal thus mercifully and bountifully with such a worthless worm." Indeed at present every thing around me contributes to increase my thankfulness and astonishment; the world is running mad after amusement, filling their bellies with the east wind. At present horse racing is here the business of the day, (and the multitude wonders after the beasts) and balls, plays, and taverns, the drudger y of the night. My heart is pained to see the poor mistaken croud weary and fatigued to to death with restless days and sleepless nights, search of happiness where it cannot be found. But when I ask, "why am I not amongst them?" why am I particularized,

(61)

made one of that little flock to whom it is our Fathers good pleasure to give the kingdom? my Dear Sir, who can answer this question? I never could one moment believe that God had confined his mercy to a certain number; or unconditionally elected some, and left the rest to shift for themselves. Yet when I consider the particular dealings of God with my soul, there is something in it (to me) as incomprehensible as the Deity itself, and which I suppose I shall never understand at this side eternity. Indeed I am often obliged to withdraw my mind from the contemplation of it, and at a distance to admire and adore what I cannot comprehend!

Since my last, I have been closely exercised by trials from without and temptations from within, and at times found them as much as I could bear, being so suited to my natural disposition as to make them come with the greater force. So that I have sometimes been ready to say "why does the Lord deal thus with me," I could at times see it was the work of the enemy, but not at all times. Indeed my greatest sufferings were my fears lest I had, or should, offend my God, and frequently these

were attended even with terror and dismay, which sunk my spirits very much, and caused continual questionings concerning my state, that text; "*Perfect love casteth out fear*" was often brought against me; at times a ray of hope supported my soul when ready to sink, and kept me from giving up my profession of sanctification; for this is what the enemy aimed *particularly* to wrest from me; one day at prayer, being grievously distressed at the sight of myself, and not able to conclude concerning my state I simply told my distress to the Lord, beseeching him to answer for himself; indeed he did put words into my mouth to plead with him, and gave me so clear a testimony of his work on my heart, as answered all doubts, and enabled me to pursue my way with more courage; this was a trying time, and continued long, but I found it was good, and know it was permitted in love. The Lord has now granted me a cessation, and my soul enjoys a calm settled peace. I see my nothingness, my extreme poverty, my numberless deficiencies; and find the Lord Jesus my great, full, rich supply; and enabled to see clearly his work on my

(63)

heart, notwithstanding many seeming contradictions. The inconstancy of my mind is a continual cause of grief to me, O that he would enable me to walk more evenly before him. Brother Herne and family leave town tomorrow, he was much blessed here, and has left an increase of sixteen to the society, he is indeed a good upright faithful labourer; his wife finding the affairs of the society much embarrassed, refused the usual subsistence, and supported herself and children by working at her trade while here, tho' she had a young child at the breast. Mr. C. has arrived, we do not doubt his abilities and good qualities, but we are rather cast down by having an other married preacher with a young family sent to us before we could recruit our finances; we a now owe a heavy debt, and the weekly collections are not equal to the weekly expences, the bulk of the society are poor, so that the weight lies on a few, who are wiling, and do contribute to answer the present expences. But the debt still lies. Could we not have a single preacher at least every other year 'till we are out of debt. Your sincerely affectionate,

ELIZA BENNIS.

(64)

LETTER XXV.

Rev. John Wesley....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Rye, October 28, 1771.

MY DEAR SISTER,

IT Is no wonder that finite cannot measure Infinite. That man cannot comprehend the ways of God. There always will be something incomprehensible. Something like himself in all his dispensations, we must therefore be content to be ignorant, until eternity opens our understanding, particularly with regard to the reasons of his acting *thus* or *thus*. These we shall be acquainted with when in Abrahams bosom.

As thinking is the act of an embodied spirit, playing upon a set of material keys, it is not strange, that the soul can make but ill music, when her instrument is out of tune. This is frequently the case with *you*.

And the trouble and anxiety you then feel, are a natural effect of the disordered machine; which proportionably disorders the mind. But this is not all, as long as you have to wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, *wise* as well as *powerful*, will they not serve themselves of every bodily weakness, to increase the distress of

(65)

the soul? But let them do as they may: let our frail bodies concur with subtle and malicious spirits! yet see that you cast not away your confidence which hath great recompense of reward, “*be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*” whereunto you have attained, hold fast! and when you feel the roughest and strongest assault, when the enemy comes in like a flood, do not reason, do not (in one sense) *fight* with him, but sink down in the presence of your Lord, and simply look up! telling him; “Lord, I cannot help myself, I have neither wisdom nor strength for this war, but I am thine, I am *all* thine! undertake for me. Let none pluck me out of thine hands! keep that safe which is committed to thee, and preserve it unto that day.”

I am in great hopes, if we live until an other conference. I. C. will be useful as a travelling preacher, so would J. M. if he had courage to break through. However I am pleased he exercises himself a litte, encourage him. I wish you would lend Mrs. Dawson the appeals; take them from the book room, and present them to her in my name, go yourself, for I wish you to be acquainted with her. I believe they will satisfy her about

(66)

the church; she halts just as I did many years ago. Be not shy towards brother Collins, he is an upright man. Sister L. is already doing good in Clonmell, do you correspond with her? Your Affectionate,

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER. XXVI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick November 14, 1771.

DEAR SIR,

I am truly thankful for your last favour, it has proved indeed a blessing to my soul, O may I be grateful for every help my merciful God affords. I do in some degree find my soul prosper, I know the Lord has taken the bent of back-sliding out of my heart, and do find it my settled purpose to cleave to him, and follow him wheresoever he shall lead me, but O I want to live more close to him, more entirely devoted to his will. I have often admired that expression, of the apostles. “*Not I live*” this is what I want to experience. That death of self, that may enable me also to say “*Not I live*” indeed the trials I meet with from this *I*, makes me long for that happy period. I am Dear Sir &c.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XXVII.

Rev John Wesley....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Canterbury December 3, 1771.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I Did believe brother Collins would be of use to you, and you may be of use to him, speak to each other without reserve, and then you will seldom meet in vain. Thrust him out to visit the *whole* society, (not only those that can give him meat and drink) from house to house, according to the plan laid down in the minutes of conference; *then* he will soon see the fruit of his labour, I hope he is not ashamed to preach *Full salvation* receivable *now* by faith. This is the word which God will always bless, and which the devil peculiarly hates. Therefore he is constantly stiring up both his own children and the weak children of God against it.

All that God has already given you, hold fast. But expect to see greater things than these. Your affectionate J. Wesley.

 LETTER XXVIII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis, to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, March, 17, 1772.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE My last to you, I have had some opportunities of conversing with Mrs. D. in

her I see what I have often thought; that God has his hidden ones unknown to the world, even among the rich and great, and surely she is one of them, she has living faith, and a tender feeling of her corruptions, but cannot yet comprehend a total deliverance from them, But O my ignorance! what shall I do with her.

The select band in particular, and the society in general are much stirred up since brother C. came here; he appointed several days of fasting and prayer for the revival of the work of God, and these were happy, blessed, seasons indeed, the class meetings are lively, the prayer meetings through the city are revived, the public congregation is in general much larger, and a deeper seriousness and spirit of enquiry observable on outward hearers. I think brother G. will also be made a blessing, you sent him just in time, he preaches a full and present salvation, and is liked by all.

Mr. T. of Waterford, seems now in earnest, I have had two letters from him, he has bought a horse for brother C. and sent him out on the circuit, he has joined the society, and prays at the prayer meetings. God does graciously throw in a rich person here

(69)

and there, to bear the needful expences of his poor followers.

As to my own state, every day brings new trials, and satan does dispute every inch of ground with me, but through the infinite mercy of my God, I am preserved; so far as I know of my own heart it is wholly devoted to his will, yet many things arise which appear contradictory to this, and causes much pain, at times I do find a testimony from God that my heart is cleansed from sin; but I want the abiding witness. Indeed I want a steady faith; the constant sight I have of myself, keeps me continually disputing; perhaps the Lord sees it needfull to keep me down, that I may seek my *all* in him. O may he perfect his work in my soul, by whatever means he sees fit. Dear Sir cease not to pray for....your affectionate child in Christ Jesus,

ELIZA BENNIS.

(70)

LETTER XXIX.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Liverpool, March 31, 1772.

DEAR SISTER.

YOU did well to break through and converse with Mrs. D. there is no doubt but she has living faith, but not having opportunity to converse with believers, she cannot express herself with that clearness that our friends do; cultivate the acquaintance. *Now*, lay before her by way of promise the whole christian salvation, she will quickly see the desirableness of it, you may then lend her. The "plain account of christian perfection" she will not be frightened, but rather encouraged, at hearing it is possible to attain what her heart longs for. While you are thus feeding God's lambs, he will lead *you* into rich pastures.

I do not wonder you should meet with trials; it is by these your faith is made perfect. You will find many things both in your heart and in your life contrary to the perfection of the Adamic law, but it does not follow that they are contrary to the law of love, let this fill your heart, and it is enough, still continue active for God, remember a talent is intrusted

(71)

to you, see that you improve it, he does not like a slothful steward.

Your Affectionate Brother
JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XXX.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, May 26, 1772.

DEAR SIR,

SHORTLY After my last, Mrs. D. her husband and the children, were visited with sickness, this affliction has been made a blessing to her, she is now preparing to go to the salt water, and I go immediately to Waterford (where I shall expect your next). Our society is in a happy prosperous situation, the Lord sent a blessing by Mr. C. and has seconded it by Mr. G. there are several aded, some converted, and some made perfect in love, the conversions are deep and solid, and chiefly amongst the young men, three of whom are aded to the select band, Mr. G's. deportment has gained him the hearts of all, and his manner of enforcing holiness makes it desirable even to its opposers. Indeed we now feed on the sincere milk of the word....

(72)

that sower of discord J. D. is expected here! may God frustrate his coming, or the evil which I dread from his visit, his conduct to brothers G. and H. was so inconsistent, and I saw such mischief likely to proceed from it, that at my instance they lay the whole before you, (which I now inclose) in cases which so materially affect the church of Christ, and the evils resulting from which, you may prevent, the wounding your feelings must be made a secondary matter; God knows I would not wound them by this or any other disagreeable information, did I not think it much more a breach of duty to screen these circumstances from you.

As to myself. I thank God my soul is happy, the Lord is pleased to make himself the desire of my heart, and it does as by a natural propensity cleave to him. I certainly do find many things both in my heart and life contrary to the perfection of the Adamic law: but are they not also contrary to the law of love? and I have been told that every breach of that law is sin. How shall we reconcile that with St. John? if *every* wandering thought, *every* for-

(73)

getful interval is a breach of that law, and every breach is sin! how is it that they who are born of God sineth not? There has been so much said to me lately on this head, that I would be thankful for your thoughts on it, and *positively* what sin is. I request this, not so much for my own sake, as for the sake of others. I am Dear Sir &c.

ELIZA BENNIS.

 LETTER XXXI.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Yarm, June 16, 1772.

MY DEAR SISTER,

AS Often as you can, I request you will converse personally or by letter with Mrs. D. her heart is much united to you, and I believe you are *particularly* called to be useful to those whom the riches or the grandeur of this world, keep at a distance from the pure word of God.... When you are at Waterford, see that you be not idle *there*. You should gather up, and meet a band immediately. If you would also meet a class or two it would be so much the better, you know, the more labour, the more blessing. You did well to send me the last inclosure, it is

G

(74)

absolutely needful I should be acquainted with all such matters....the contrary would be false delicacy. I have written to Limerick if J. D. should go there in the same spirit wherein he has been for some time, to take care that he do no mischief. If he should proceed in that impetuous manner, we shall be obliged to take harsher measures. This I should be sorry for; one would not cut off a limb, while there is any hope of recovering it.

Nothing is sin strictly speaking, but a voluntary transgression of a known law of God. Therefore every voluntary breach of the law of love is sin: and nothing else, if we speak properly. To strain the matter farther, is only to make way for Calvinism. There may be ten thousand wandering thoughts, and forgetful intervals without any breach of love though not without transgressing the Adamic law. But Calvinist's would fain confound these together. Let love fill your heart, and it is enough!

Your Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

(75)

LETTER XXXII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Revd. John Wesley.

Waterford, August 8, 1772.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR Last favour reached me here, it came timely to quiet many fears, blessed be God who has in mercy restored you again to his people, I request to know particularly how your health is at present. This society is increased in number and grace since I was last here; I do meet a Band and a class, we all speak with freedom. I love the people, and I believe they love me, there are three preachers on the circuit and all have work enough. J. D. is now in Limerick, but as yet quiet, why did you not write to himself also? Your answer to my last question has given me much satisfaction, as I would always chose to have your authority for any thing I should advance. I think I am ever learning, and still a novice, I am even astonished at my own blindness; yet my greatest defect does not lie here, I find I do not want the light of truth, so much as the fire of love. Here indeed I am miserably deficient, my cold, dead, stupid heart is seldom lively or active after God.

(76)

How is this, if it be wholly given to him? (which indeed I think it is) in short I think I am the most inconsistent of all creatures, and amongst all I converse with, can meet none like myself, my mind is prone to wander, or rather it is seldom stayed, and though I feel almost continual distress for this, yet still it continues the same; this makes me less useful than I might be, and is often a reproach to me, when I speak or act for God. Amongst the number that do request, and are in some degree worthy of your prayers, may the Lord sometimes bring to your mind, your weak unworthy Sister.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XXXIII.

Rev. John Wesley....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Bristol, August 31 1772.

MY DEAR SISTER.

MY Health is not worse, but rather better; your account of the society in Waterford is pleasing, continue to exercise your talent amongst them, and you will be a gainer by it. You need not dispute or reason about the *name* which belongs to the state you are in,

(77)

you know what you have: be thankful for it. You know what you want, zeal, liveliness, Stability, deliverance from wandering imaginations. Well then, ask and it shall be given. The way into the holiest is open through the blood of Jesus. You have free access through him.

“ To him your every want
In instant prayer display
Pray always, pray and never faint
Pray, without ceasing Pray !”

See help while yet you ask is given? I am
Dear Sister, Your Affectionate Brother,
JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XXXIV.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Rev. John Wesley
Limerick, October 18, 1772.

MY DEAR SIR.

A multiplicity of hindrances prevented my acknowledging the receipt of your last favour till now. I left the Waterford Society in a prosperous situation: but have found *this* in a decline, and in confusion; the sower of tares has got amongst them! O how is it that the followers of Christ cannot speak and think, and act in love? since my last I have been wading through deep waters; many tri-

(78)

als pressing hard on me, and all together, and so suited as to make them the more distressing; so that I have been at times ready to sink under their weight, And yet I think these very trials would not be so trying to another, and therefore that this is a mark of the want of grace in me; my ignorance and blindness is so great, that I frequently know not whether I am right or wrong. But the Lord my God knows that the desire of my soul is to do his will; he knows why he suffers me to be so closely exercised. I do not, I cannot, find fault, with what he either does with, or suffers upon me; but I would that he would give me more strength, and that his presence might be with me, for I feel it more than nature is able to support under, to bear the weight of inward and outward afflictions, and the absence of God altogether. His love is better than life, and under the cheering light of his countenance, I could suffer any thing, but for some time past this has been eclipsed, except at short and seldom intervals, my desire is, that he himself would search out the cause; and think my heart lies open and honest before him; he knows I would not be deceived, and that all in Heaven

(79)

or Earth cannot satisfy without himself. I feel a consolation in thus spreading my state before you, and am thankful to God for this privilege. Had I such an opportunity as I long for, I could say much, which I cannot commit to paper. But as the Lord in mercy to us has spared your useful life, and restored to you a measure of health, shall we not see you next summer? may we expect it?...I have had some late opportunities of Mrs. D. I think her in a happy state; but the distress of my mind, has made these opportunities fewer than otherwise they would be....I know Satan desires to sift me as wheat, and I am content to undergo the winnowing, so I lose only the chaff. My soul with all the feeble power it has, hangs upon the Lord, and hope he will again restore to me the joy of his salvation. O pray for your weak unworthy Sister

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XXXV.

Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Colchester, November 3, 1772.

DEAR SISTER,

YOUR time was well bestowed at waterford; many I doubt not will remember it with thankfulness. But why this want of discipline

(80)

in Limerick! whenever this is droped all is confusion, see that it be immediately restored. Captain Webb is now in Dublin, invite him to visit Limerick, he is a man of fire, and the power of God constantly accompanies his word, speak a little to as many as you can, go among them, to their houses, speak in love and discord will vanish. It is hardly possible for you to comfort or strenghten others, without some comfort returning into your own bosom.

It is probable I shall visit Ireland in spring, though I am almost a disabled soldier. I am forbid to ride, and am obliged to travel mostly in a carriage.

Whom do you think proper to succeed the present preachers at Limerick and Waterford? You have need to stir up the gift of God that is in you. Light will spring up. Why not now? is not the Lord at hand? I am, my Dear Sister Your Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XXXVI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, December, 1st 1772

DEAR SIR,

Blessed be my God, through many and grievous trials, he does still support and up-

(81)

hold a feeble worm; he does perfect strength in my weakness, and enables me to pursue my way, determined by his grace to follow him, whithersoever he shall lead me. But I think in this, I do not enjoy that measure of sweetness and delight, which others do.

However distressing it may be to consider you as a disabled soldier, the expectation of seeing you here again, gives me much satisfaction, may the Lord prosper your way, and make your coming a blessing to all.

Our society is once more re-adjusted, we all seem to be in love, and in earnest; Captain Webb's visit has proved a blessing; our house was not large enough for the congregations, many outward hearers seem under awakenings. If we could now have a succession of strange preachers from the neighbouring circuits, perhaps poor Limerick might once more raise its head. I am my Dear Sir, Your Affectionate Sister,

ELIZA BENNIS.

(82)

LETTER XXXVII.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Shoreham, December 16, 1772.

DEAR SISTER BENNIS.

THE plan which you mention, I prefer to any other, and have wrote to put it in practice immediately.

I think you make most of your trials, by unbelief and giving too much way to reasoning; do not stoop to reason with the adversary, but fly to the strong for more strength, which by asking you will receive. Be *diligent* in helping others. I hope you visit Mrs. D. frequently; let not your talent rust, but see to gain double interest, you work for a generous master. Fight on and conquer all! Joy you shall have, if joy is best....My dear Sister adieu. Your affectionate Brother.

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XXXVIII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, January 23, 1773.

DEAR SIR.

THE first day of this month was kept by this society, and by all the societies in the three neighbouring circuits, as a day of fasting and

(83)

prayer, to intercede with God for a revival of his work here; it was indeed a solemn day, and at the renewal of the covenant at night, God did hear prayer, and wonderfully manifested himself in the midst of us; I think many will remember it long; since then our congregations are encreased, seventeen added to the society, nine of which are justified, and seven of our old members profess to be renewed in love. The prayer meetings are re-established, and our preachers are liked; and beloved as holy zealous men. Why are not fast days more frequent among the Methodists in general? I have observed that God always particularly blesses such times here, and why not elsewhere?

I find that the Lord is indeed my portion, and he does enable me to press after him through many hinderances; I see there is no standing still, and am ashamed I have loitered so long, may he help me to double my diligence; this by his grace is my determination. Yet I am so well acquainted with my own extreme weakness, that I cannot promise for myself one hour. Hitherto my God hath helped me, and in him is all my depen-

(84)

dance; past mercies encourage me to trust him for future support, and his faithfulness strengthens my confidence. I see myself a poor weak helpless creature; poor beyond description! and this view drives me to the Lord Jesus, whose fullness alone, I find sufficient for all my wants; and my whole soul acquiesces and is thankful for this gracious glorious method of Salvation, O that the obedience of my life might testify my gratitude, and my heart return love for love. But here I fail; in both I am miserably deficient, and cannot say I am at all satisfied with myself; yet when the power of faith is strong, this brings me again to the same place, so that I am not the poorer for my poverty. Christ is my refuge, and my soul hides under his merit, and leaves the whole to him, thus I am supported with strength not my own, and live wholly on the bounty of an other; and while I expect nothing from myself, I am not disappointed; could I always be able thus to exercise my faith, I should always be happy. But O my blindness, what labyrinths am I too often led into by my own ignorance. Dear Sir, continue to instruct one of the weakest

(85)

that applies to our common Father, and to you
as his special messenger for counsel.

Your truly Affectionate Sister,
ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XXXIX.

Rev. John Wesley.....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

February, 12, 1773

MY DEAR SISTER.

WHEN we draw near to God in his appointed ways, he will surely draw near to us; pray remind Mr. G. of using the same means, then he and you will find the same blessing; write to Waterford to brother S. and encourage him to do there as he did at Limerick.

I can observe by Mrs. D's. manner of writing, a very considerable change in her spirit more acquaintance with God; more humility and more artless simple love; I am much pleased ye visit so frequently continue to lead the simple, and God will give you more wisdom.

As long as you trust, not in yourself, but in him that has all power in Heaven and in Earth; you will find his grace sufficient for you and his strength made perfect in our weakness. Look to him continually, and trust in him, that you may increase with all the in

(86)

crease of God, I am, my Dear Sister, Your
ever Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XL.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis, to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, March 16, 1773.

DEAR SIR,

BY a letter from Mrs. D. now in Cork, I am informed that we may expect you in the kingdom next month, may the Lord prosper your way, and give you to see much fruit of your labour. I never longed more to see you, yet am afraid to solace myself in the expectation, lest the Lord should see fit to disappoint me. I am still the same poor tottering feeble creature; bowed down under a sense of my numberless deficiencies, yet wonderfully and graciously supported by strength not my own. I think others go on much more comfortably than I do, but perhaps the Lord sees this best for me, and could I always see his will in it, I should be satisfied; for he knows I desire to suffer his will. Indeed I think in the whole world there cannot be a more feeble or unprofitable creature. When I consider the helps which are afforded me, and my non-im-

provement of all, my spirit is even sunk within me ; and though I am enabled to come to the Lord Jesus as my only refuge, yet I feel a want of that strength and vigour of soul which would bring glory to God, or comfort sufficient to my own soul....I propose much satisfaction to myself in laying open my state before you, when I have the happiness of seeing you, if the Lord shall think fit to afford me an opportunity : 'till then I hope for the assistance of your prayers, and am, &c.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XLI.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin, April, 1, 1773.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I FEAR you are too idle, this will certainly bring condemnation. Up and be doing ! do not loiter, see that your talent rust not, rather let it gain ten more, and it *will*, if you use it.

You are permitted to be in heaviness, to humble and prove you yet more. Then you shall come forth as Gold. If you love me you will both write and speak freely, to my Dear Sister, Your Affectionate ;

JOHN WESLEY.

(88)

LETTER XLII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis, to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, August, 25, 1773.

DEAR SIR,

THE want of any thing particular this some time past, has prevented my troubling you, or intruding on your more precious time. But the desire of receiving a line from you, has obliged me to break through. Blessed be God he does carry on his work amongst us; there has been several days of fasting and prayer kept by the select band, and two by the whole society, and I believe most, found them solemn seasons; nor has the Lord suffered us to seek his face in vain, some are added, some converted, and some renewed in love. The young men are again stirred up, and I hope more in earnest than they have been for several months; the select band meet well, and our meetings are comfortable because preachers and people are all of one mind, and whilst this is the case, the band will thrive. As for myself, I have taken the Lord for my portion, instead of every other good. I have solemnly (and I think without reserve) surrendered myself and all my concerns into his hands with an entire submission

(89)

to his will; then how is it, that I find disappointments in temporals (with which I am now surrounded) bear so heavy on me? And be capable of giving me so much distress? The effect that outward trials have on my mind, causes many questionings, and uneasy fears; and often puts me to a stand concerning my experience. At times the Lord does give me to see that I am all his; but are not trials the surest proof of our grace? Indeed I see what a poor novice I am! How little I know, and how little I can suffer or bear for my great and gracious Master's sake, surely, I want an increase of faith! O help me by your prayers....I am Dear Sir, Your affectionate,
 ELIZA BENNIS.

 LETTER XLIII

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Bristol, September 10, 1773.

MY DEAR SISTER,

WHEN two or three agree to seek God by fasting and prayer, it cannot be that their labours should be in vain. Especially if they add their endeavours to their prayer for the increase of the work of God. I hope you will encourage every preacher to visit the

(90)

whole society *in order*, from house to house; dinner or drinking tea, does not answer the same intention. This may *and ought* to be done over and above.

I thought you had been in more danger of being hurt by worldly abundance than worldly care. But we cannot stand under either one or the other, unless we be endued with power from on high. And that continually, from hour to hour, or rather from moment to moment. Yet distress is not sin; we may be grieved and still resigned. And this is acceptable with God. In all these cases, you should remember that observation, never to be let slip,

“ With even mind, thy course of duty run :
 “ God nothing does, or suffers to be done,
 “ But thou would’st do thyself; if thou could’st see
 “ The end of all events, as well as He !”

My dear Sister, Adieu....Your Affection-
 ate Brother. JOHN WESLEY.

LETTER XLIV.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis, to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, November 11, 1773.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH the Lord has blessed my husband’s industry, far above our expectation, and has given me both the necessaries and

conveniencies of life; yet with these I feel such a measure of trouble and care, and such a mixture of uneasiness, as makes me often sick of the enjoyment.

I see the hand of God in this, and have reason to praise his name, that he does not suffer me to rest in any thing below himself, but does so embitter earthly enjoyments to me as continually to remind me that happiness is not in them, thus trials, disappointments and difficulties in life are at times made profitable by keeping my heart weaned from earthly comforts, and pointing me constantly to the Lord Jesus where only solid happiness is to be found. But in my passing through these, I find much cause of dissatisfaction with myself; I see I do not suffer or bear as I should; in every respect I come short, and thereby continually make additional cause of sorrow and distress for myself.

There is one particular evil that cleaves to me, and causes me much bitterness of soul; that is a hastiness of spirit with my children, a fire within, that likelighting suddenly flashes, and is ready to burn up all before it; this is worse to me than all outward tryals, these I look upon as under the direction of that pro-

vidence who guides all things for his own glory and my good, But this appears as a fiend within; as an enemy of God, still harboured in the heart, and rises continually as an evidence against me. that I am all wrong. I strive and pray against it, but am not delivered: is this consistent with an heart perfected in love? There are some of my intimate friends, whose complaints are the same with mine; and for whose sake as well as my own I would be thankful for your judgment and advice. And as your letters are always made a blessing to me, I request you will favour me with your opinion, directed to Waterford, where I am now preparing to go, I am Dear Sir. Your truly Affectionate Sister,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XLV.

Rev. John Wesley....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Sheerness December 1, 1773.

MY DEAR SISTER,

SOME Time since, when I heard brother Bennis had got *very* rich, I was in fear for you, lest the world should again find a way into your heart, and damp your noblest affections; I am not sorry that you have not that

temptation; It is most desirable, to have neither poverty, nor riches; but still, you cannot be without temptation, unless you would go out of the world. How far that sudden emotion which you speak of, is a preternatural dart from Satan, and how far it springs from your own heart, it is exceeding hard to judge. It is possible it may be neither one nor the other, but a meer effect of the natural mechanism of the body, which has no more of either good or evil, than the blushing or burning pole. But whether it be natural or preternatural it is grievous to one whose conscience is tender. We may therefore undoubtedly pray against it. And surely *he* can and will deliver us. Come therefore boldly to the throne of grace, and find grace to help in time of need.

You will find full enjoyment in Waterford; I believe that society wants your exertions; see therefore that you be not weary of well doing. I am my Dear sister,

Your Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

(94)

LETTER XLVI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Rev. John Wesley.

Waterford, December 29, 1773.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR Last gave me much satisfaction, as indeed all your letters do ; O what cause have I to be thankful for such helps ; when I find any thing in my experience which appears doubtful, I am rather apt to conclude against myself, and though this may proceed from an honesty of heart ; yet it has often been cause of much distress to me, by opening a way for the disputations of the enemy, and indeed of my own mind, for I am of myself led to look for that uniformity in all my experience which appears to me consistent with a state of perfection, but which I certainly do not find ; and so great is my ignorance that I know not where to lay the blame ; I cannot charge it on God, therefore I willingly lay it on myself ; and from this cause have been times without number ready to give up my hold as to the work of sanctification, but am prevented, I know not how ? Indeed in every particular case your judgment determines the matter, and gives full satisfaction, nor can I be satisfied

(95)

however clear the case may appear to my mind, until I receive your approbation of it, and even then I am often apt to think you pass too favourable a judgment on me.

Indeed in general I find such a deadness of affection, such a want of warmth and fervor of spirit towards God, and such an unaccountable unsteadiness of mind, and proneness to wander, as I think none else who make the same profession does experience; what shall I say to this? If the evil propensity be taken out of my heart, why should I find any difficulty in keeping it stayed upon God? This was the case once, but it is not so now, nor can I at any time doubt but that the work was wrought, but finding it not with me *now* as it was then, I often, suffer painful fears, least all should not now be right. My Dear Sir, I know your love, will bear with all my folly, and as I would act without disguise before you, so I hope you will lay my weakness before the Lord; indeed it is often my request that he would lay me upon your heart in prayer, blessed be his name, through the whole, I do find it the desire of my soul to do his will.He has in much mercy brought me safe to

(96)

this place, but cannot see wherein I can be useful here, I think I never was less fit to act for God, yet find a willingness to act even without life, but the people are very dead and do not meet. I am Dear Sir, Yours &c.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XLVII.

Rev John Wesley....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

London January 18, 1774.

MY DEAR SISTER,

A WILL steadily and uniformly devoted to God is essential to a state of sanctification; but not an uniformity of joy, or peace, or happy communion with God. These may rise and fall in various degrees; nay and may be affected either by the body or by diabolical agency, in a manner which all our wisdom can neither understand nor prevent. As to wanderings, you would do right well to consider the sermon on wandering thoughts, you might likewise profit by Elizabeth Harper's journal, whose experience much resembled yours, only she was more simple: and you may learn from her, to go straight to God, as a little child, and tell him all your troubles, and hindrances and doubts; and desire him to

(97)

turn them all to good. You are not sent to Waterford to be useless. Stir up the gift of God which is in you; gather together those that have been scattered abroad, and make up a band; if not a class or two. Your best way would be to visit from house to house, by this means you can judge of their conduct and disposition in domestic life, and may have opportunity to speak to the young of the family. Besides, this will stir up the preachers to do the same, which will be a great point gained; as it is very hard to get them to attend to this most essential part of their duty.... By motion you will contract warmth. By imparting life you will increase it in yourself.

As to the circumstance mentioned in the post-script of your last. I should really think you would do well to exert yourself in that matter as much as possible. It will be a cross, take up that cross, bear your cross, and it will bear you; and if you do it with a single eye, it will be no loss to your soul.

I am my Dear Sister,

Your Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY

I

(98)

LETTER XLVIII.

From Mrs. Bennis....to the Rev. John Wesley.

Waterford, February 10, 1774.

DEAR SIR.

AS usual your letter brought a blessing with it, from the time I received it my mind has been more at rest, and my soul more happy; I have Elizabeth Harpers journal, and sincerely wish I had her simplicity, I know I suffer for want of it. When I can come simply to the Lord I always find it does best with me, But there are certain exercises of mind which I am often under, when the power of this is taken from me; I endeavour at such times to come to the Lord Jesus as at other times, but all before me is confused and clouded, so that I cannot get through. I then think none whose hearts are given to God are in this state; and from the view I then have of myself am ready to fear that all is wrong; and am obliged to stand still without concluding on either side, until the Lord determine for me. Indeed I may say my whole experience is one continued conflict with the powers of darkness; I do not say this by way of complaint, but I think there is still such a mixture of self in me, that it has need of this fire

(99)

to purge it; and I am satisfied it should be so. I love the Lord, he is my God, and his will is sweet to me, and am desirous he should perfect it in me, by whatever means he shall see fit; I have only one condition to make that he would keep me ever his: But it is very grievous to me when my state is not clear; I think if I had the constant approbation of his spirit, I should never complain; I have been asking for this, but it is always objected; how can God approve of such an unholy creature? how can he be always well pleased with me, when by reason of my folly I must be displeased with myself. Yet I know it is an easy thing with him to remove every hindrance, and give the abiding witness; O that he would increase my faith, to ask so that I might receive.

I am not likely to leave this soon; but can do no good here, by the frequent neglect of preaching, and the almost total neglect of discipline, the people are scattered, and of the few that remain, some are grieved, and some offended with this new method of preaching salvation by works; they have for many years been taught to depend on the Lord Jesus

alone; and through his merit and death alone to seek for justification here, and a final acquittance at the great day. But now after *all*, are we to be made perfect in the flesh, and to be accepted only for our works; and even at the great day is our faith, nay and the righteousness of Christ to profit us nothing? but our works only; if this was the case, might I not say,...*“Who then can be saved.”*

Mr. Hawksworth a calvinist preacher under Lady Huntington has come here, and preaches regularly at Methodist hours, (in a large room) and to large congregations; he is to stay for some time, and when he goes another is to be sent in his room; our people though forbid by the preachers, go almost constantly to hear him...I have spoken to several, but with little effect, and have heard his discourses so praised that I did wish to hear him.... but would not shew the example...but I yesterday paid him a visit at his lodging, and had an hours conversation with him...I charged him with unfriendly and unchristian-like conduct in taking advantage of the disordered state of your Society, and trying at such a particular time to widen the breach and glean

(101)

all to himself, which he indirectly acknowledged was his motive for coming.

Dear Sir, the situation of these poor scattered sheep distresses me much; O that God may interpose in behalf of poor Waterford, and may enable you to point out some way for their reunion, inclosed I send you a particular request from a few sincere souls. Indeed my heart is pained for them pray let me hear from you soon. I am Dear Sir,

Your Affectionate Sister,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XLIX.

Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

London, March 1, 1774.

MY DEAR SISTER.

ELIZABETH Harper was frequently in clouds too: and in that case, it is the best way to stand still, you can do nothing but simply tell all your wants to him that is both able and willing to supply them.

I inclose James Perfect's letter to you, on purpose that you may talk with him. He has both an honest heart, and a good understanding; but you entirely mistake his doctrine. He preaches salvation by faith in the

(102)

same manner, that my brother and I have done: and as Mr. Fletcher (one of the finest writers of the age) has beautifully explained it. None of us talk of being accepted *for our works*: that is the calvinist slander. But we all maintain, we are not saved *without works*; that works are a *condition* (though not the meritorious cause) of final salvation, it is by faith in the righteousness and blood of Christ, that we are enabled to do all good works. And it is for the sake of these, that all who fear God and work righteousness are accepted of him.

It is far better for our people not to hear Mr. Hawksworth, calvinism will do them no good, as to the rest I refer to my inclosure to Mr. M'c Donnel with whom I wish you to have some conversation. Be not discouraged, I really believe God will visit poor Waterford in love; do you go on. Bear up the hands that hang down, by faith and prayer support the tottering knee: reprove, encourage; have you appointed any days of fasting and prayer, storm the throne of grace, and persevere therein and mercy will come down, I am yours &c.

JOHN WESLEY.

(103)

LETTER L.

Mrs. Eliza Hennis...to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, April 12, 1774.

DEAR SIR,

I think I do not at all mistake your doctrine, and so far as I am able to comprehend it, do find my whole soul acquiesce in every point. Nor would I, if I could be saved in any other way; you have seen enough to be able to discover all my mistakes, but you have not reprov'd my errors; and surely I should take this as the greatest instance of your love; I do not meet with many who are faithful in this respect; and as you have seen the workings of my heart for many years, (nor indeed is there a thought in it, I would wish to conceal from you) my errors both in principle and practice must be more conspicuous to you than to any other.

I believe Mr. Perfect is a good man, and in whose conversation, I should have much satisfaction, I think the people are happy in him, and his fellow labourer, and their labours have been particularly blessed in the county Wexford. But as I may be free to write you my thoughts without your taking it amiss. In time past, when all contended

(104)

for salvation by faith, I often thought. that through zeal for this, the necessity of good works was not enough enforced up n the people, but since Mr. Fletchers writings on this subject have appeared; I think, with some, the error seems to be now on the other side. Nor do I wonder that the incautious, full of zeal against any thing, should take a step too far, but then we must also expect that such a step will not pass unnoticed. Nor is every person able to make allowance for such a mistake; especially when it is often repeated. But as to that particular point, I would willingly have your judgment on it for my own satisfaction, whether we are to expect final justification or acquittance at the day of judgment meerly for our works, and whether the merit and righteousness of Christ shall then avail us any thing.

I received your last letter in Waterford, Mr. Perfect being then on the circuit I did not see him to deliver yours but left it for him, and have received one from him since I came home; since I wrote last to you, my soul has been in general more happy, the Lord has been pleased to keep the enemy at a greater distance, and to allow me a clearer and more

(105)

constant sense of his work on my heart ; so that whilst I remained at Waterford, I found my soul more established in his grace. I have reason to thank the Lord that he did thus strenghten me ; for I found when I came home, I had need of it. I have since then been much weighed down, discouraged, and distressed. I found the preacher and people by the ears, divided into parties, and some turned out of the way, for the most trifling matter that can be conceived. It is very unusual with me, to trouble you with such disputes, but as there has a letter gone to you already concerning it, I thought in common justice you ought to be acquainted with the whole, *****

matters here wear a gloomy aspect, both as to spirituals and temporals, and in the present situation much depends on the person who may succeed Mr. W...had your plan been followed, there would be none of all this, nor do I ever see good proceed from the opposing your commands, may the Lord restore peace and unity among us ; and may he

(106)

long preserve you over his church is the ardent prayer of Dear Sir, yours &c.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LI.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Leeds, May 2, 1774.

MY DEAR SISTER,

UNTIL Mr. Hill and his Associates puzzled the cause, it was as plain, as plain could be; the Methodists always held, and have declared a thousand times; the death of Christ is the meritorious *cause* of our Salvation, (that is pardon, holiness, glory) loving obedient faith is the *condition* of Glory. This Mr Fletcher has so illustrated and confirmed, as I think scarce any one has done before or since the Apostles.

When Mr. W. wrote me a vehement letter concerning the abuse he had received from the young men in Limerick, and his determination to put them all out of the society, if they did not acknowledge their fault. I much wondered what could be the matter, and only wrote him word "I never put any out of our society for any thing they say of *me*"... You are come in good time to make peace. Go on, and prosper. Your ever Affectionate
JOHN WESLEY.

(107)

LETTER LII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Rev. John Wesley
Limerick, July 21, 1774.

DEAR SIR,

SINCE I wrote you last, I have been exercised with sickness in my family; and at the same time my oldest son (apprentice in Waterford) had a fever and by all accounts was in great danger; I found this to be a heavy trial, but the Lord was with me in it, and did enable me in the most grievous part of it to say with my whole heart "Thy will be done"...this trial, and the Lords dealing in it, has proved a great blessing to my soul, as indeed every trial does. I do find in general that afflictive dispensations are of all others the most profitable to me. Such is the stubbornness of my heart, that it has need of being softened with stripes; yet surely the Lord does deal very graciously, by affording me only such a measure of these as he sees absolutely necessary; and by the many deliverances he works out for me, gives me to see his tenderness and love towards me; so that I may truly say my whole life is one continued scene of mercies. And in some degree the Lord does

make me sensible of, and thankful for his goodness....For some time past, my soul has been kept more than ordinarily happy in God ; frequent opportunities of Christian conversation always has this effect, and Mr. Snowden has afforded me many happy seasons of this kind, which have been much blessed to both, he still retains his happiness and confidence, and I trust will continue to do so ; I, with many others have reason to thank the Lord for sending him to Limerick.

He came at a very critical time, and his entire deportment since, has been such as to gain the love and esteem of all the people. Peace and harmony subsists now amongst us, and the generality seem to have but one end in view. Yet we want a greater revival, the Select Band set apart some days to wrestle with God for this,...which has not been altogether in vain ; but we wait for a fuller answer : by a letter from Mr. M'donnel, the work of God is prospering in the county Wexford...but in Waterford they are still lifeless. we have proposed to them, and all the country societies on this and that round, to set apart the first of next month as a day of

(109)

fasting and prayer, solely on their behalf... perhaps the Lord would be intreated, and cause the dry bones to live. I am Dear Sir, &c.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LIII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis, to the Rev. John Wesley.

Limerick, December 24, 1774.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE delayed to acknowledge the receipt of your last, 'till I could inform you of my son's arrival at Kingswood school, in this I have given him up to the Lord, without making any choice, desiring that he may dispose of him as seemeth him best; and in this surrender I find my mind entirely eased of every burden concerning this child; Indeed not only in this, but in every affair of life I see the Lord is willing to bear my burden, when I simply and confidently cast it upon him. Nor do I find any other way of deliverance, and had not the Lord in many cases pointed me to himself, and enabled me to cast all my care upon him I should have sunk under the weight; but glory be to him, though outward things are still the same, yet they have not the same

K

effect on me, they do not distress me in the manner they used to do; my heart and treasure is laid up above, and as to temporal affairs, I desire to leave them entirely to the disposal of my heavenly father; who knows best how to distribute them, being fully confident of his care and protection over me and mine; and knowing assuredly that his will is best however humbling it may appear. This is the present state of my mind, and has been so for some time, and surely I may say "this hath the Lord done", for no power but his, could ever have subdued the world in my heart.

But a doubt arises whether I shall always enjoy the same deliverance; I trust I shall, and am enabled to depend upon my God for this also.

The work of God goes on blessedly here under Mr. Snowden and Mr. M'donnel, we have indeed happy meetings both in public and in private; the Lord is also at work in Waterford, and in most of our country societies; but as you have got an account of these I need not recapitulate.

We rejoice at the expectation of seeing you here once more, may the Lord prosper your

(111)

way, and send his blessing with you;...and grant you many happy returns of this solemn season...prays your truly Affectionate

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LIV.

Rev. John Wesley...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

London, December 21, 1776.

YOU are a great deal less happy than you would be, if you did not *reason* too much. This frequently gives that subtle adversary, an advantage against you. You have need to be continually as a little child, simply looking up for whatever you want.

It is devoutly to be wished for, that we may rejoice evermore: and it is certain, the inward kingdom of God, implies not only Righteousness, and peace, but joy in the Holy Ghost. You have therefore reason to ask for, and expect the whole gospel blessing. Yet it cannot be denied, that many times joy is withheld, even from them that walk uprightly. The great point of all is, an heart and a life entirely devoted to God. Keep only this, and let all the rest go: give him your heart and it sufficeth. I am my Dear Sister
Your ever Affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

(112)

LETTER LV.

Mr. Thomas Walsh...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin, December 13, 1755.

MY DEAR SISTER.

FROM your letter, I do believe God has revealed his son in your heart, and that you have tasted of his good word: yet still you feel a want of many things; there is an emptiness in your soul. The perfect love of God is what you want to ~~make you truly holy and completely happy.~~ Hereunto are we called, ~~to inherit the blessing of perfect love;~~ to be made pure in heart, to have the glorious image of God stamped on our immortal spirits.

I dare not say, that I have already attained this, yet I firmly believe there is a possibility of living to God every moment; and of doing his will on earth as it is done in Heaven.

Keep up a divine acquaintance with Jesus Christ. Be often on your knees before him; tell him what you fear and feel. I praise his name I feel his love to my soul, while I am writing of it.....I am my Dear sister, your Affectionate Brother

THOMAS WALSH.

(113)

LETTER LVI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis,....to Mr. Thomas Walsh.

Limerick, January 20, 1757.

SINCE I had last the pleasure of seeing my Dear Brother Walsh, I have been exercised with many and heavy trials; and have sometimes found it hard to stand and bear the stroke, and yet to look up and say "Thy will be done"....But hitherto the Lord hath brought me; however weak, yet hanging upon him, believing in him, and desiring to do his will; my heart is often enlarged, and my desires great after perfect holiness; yet finding how infinitely short I come, and how often my purposes are broken, I am brought to doubt whether it be lawful for me to ask it or not; in your next letter I beg you will say a great deal on this head, both as information and instruction....I do desire that the whole will of God may be done in me, and I believe it is his will that I should be clean; but the promise seems to me, afar off; my heart is evil, *very evil*; my will perverse, my affections cold and dead, and my faith so weak that I often doubt whether I have any or not..I believe that there is not a soul that hangs upon Christ, more

(114)

weak and helpless, and more unclean than I am....Now in this state may I expect or look for an entire *instantaneous* change of heart without first experiencing a growth in grace, which I cannot say I do?...I shall anxiously expect your Answer...and am Your Affectionate Sister

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LVII.

Mr. Thomas Walsh...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

London, February 5, 1757

MY DEAR SISTER,

BLESSED be the author of every good and perfect gift, that he has inspired your soul with fervent desire to be made holy and without blame before him in love; may the Holy Ghost through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect and entire lacking nothing. You ask weighty questions in your letter, as far as I have learned by *scripture Conversation* and *Experience* the general method is this.

First...The soul by the *spirit of God*, applying the commandment, is deeply convinced of its darkness, guilt, misery and helplessness, then a man is poor in spirit, and has noth-

(115)

ing to pay, but being weary and heavy laden, seeks and groans to be delivered.

Secondly....The same *spirit* works faith in the broken heart; giving divine light, whereby the soul sees God, gracious in Christ; and divine power whereby the soul can trust God; then is given the spirit of Adoption, and the heaven born soul rejoices in God through Christ; loves and delights in the Lord Jesus, has free access to the throne of grace; the man thus translated out of darkness into marvelous light, thinks, all is right *within him* and that he shall learn war no more. But in some weeks or months, by some external object, of temptation, or by the direct light and power of the blessed spirit, the roots of bitterness in the heart are made manifest; anger, pride, foolish and hurtful desires, unbelief, and spiritual indolence rise in the affections; a man is amazed and ready to conclude he has deceived himself; and satan takes all the advantage he can to bring him into doubt and condemnation....Yet if the man cries to God, he soon answers and bears witness, that nevertheless all this *vileness*, he has redemption in the blood of Jesus...then.

Thirdly. Arises a cry in the soul for the perfect image of God, and the mind of Christ; and there follows great tenderness of conscience, deeper hatred to sin, and a vehement love to holiness; likewise the soul examines and proves itself, to see if it loves, or desires, or does any thing that the Lord hates or forbids; or whether it neglects any known duty it may and ought to perform; then begins more resolutely and constantly than ever, the true *self denial*, and taking up the *cross*. Right hands are cut off; right eyes are plucked out; all forsaken in heart and affection. In this state there is a growth in grace, and the destruction of the old man; oftentimes joy, hope and liberty in prayer, yet quickly follow fears, sorrows, temptation and impatience. After these strong desires, and strenuous endeavours. At length the soul comprehends the nature of the thing more perfectly, and believes the promise of God, that he will do it. Now the *tempter* rages more than ever? but he has not his former power, to enter or grieve the soul by his fiery darts. The mind labours with greater freedom; finds a sensible increase of faith, hope, and love,

(117)

with all the *fruits* that naturally grow on them. Yet sin is in the heart; unbelief, pride or some evil affection may yet stir. But the man being set upon the work, never gives over, until the spirit of burning totally extirpates sin; until the blood of the lamb has cleansed from all sin. This final stroke is as instantaneous as justification; and then the soul is made *Innocent*, has no evil *temper*, is strictly united to God in Christ, and finds all its affections centre in God. The spirit of God, shortly reveals to the mind what is wrought in it, upon which it triumphs and is filled with gratitude to God, good will to mankind and a perfect desire to do and suffer all the good acceptable and perfect will of God. Again.

Fourthly....after all this is accomplished, the soul sees and feels in an inexpressible manner, how little it knows, loves or enjoys of God; and although no fear, (that hath torment) no darkness does now arise; there is great humiliation before God. The soul dilates and expands itself, and daily receives more light, love, power, meekness, rest, life and liberty; this is growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

(118)

Finally, when the corn is fully ripe, the sickle is thrust in, and the spirit, returns to God who gave it.

You will observe, that I say, this is the *general* method of Gods working on the souls he brings to glory. But particular incidents may happen to different persons; and there are many things in the work of God (even in our own souls) that we cannot account for, much less, speak clearly concerning. Souls may be differently awakened, as to the means and measure, so also they may have *clear* or *faint* manifestations as to the time of justification. Again, some may abide *months* or *years* in a state of peace and rejoicing, others only *days* or *hours*. Moreover, some may be more deeply awakened after justification than others, their sense of sin may be more *deep* and *piercing*; and this likewise may continue longer or shorter according to various circumstances: Solomon "could not tell the *way of the spirit*". Christ inculcates the same truth.... John 3-8. Our duty and interest then is; to search our heart, and commune with our spirits; and see if we are willing to give up all and be saved in Gods own way. Let

(119)

us never rest until every evil temper is destroyed, and our souls truly united to Jesus Christ. Let us seek to know for ourselves, that the Lord has created a clean heart in us, and also renewed a right spirit within us ; and then will follow, that divine affiance, that God will keep us from every evil work, and preserve us blameless to and for his heavenly kingdom.

My love to the church of Christ at Limerick, the Lord Jesus knows I love you all, and earnestly pray that ye may be filled, yea and *abound* with every good gift; that ye may be a church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; at present my body is weak. But my mind is stayed on God ; and I think, I feel renewed strength of both body and mind when I am presenting ye at the throne of grace, which is my daily duty, and delight. farewell
My Dear Sister, I am Your Affectionate
Brother, THOMAS WALSH.

 LETTER LVIII.

Mr. Thomas Walsh....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

London, November 5, 1757

MY DEAR SISTER, BENNIS

YOU Must fight on still, Jesus will help you, and faith will make all things possible.

We do not want the light of truth, so much as the fire of love, practice will make a man truly wise. John 7-17. If we want to know our duty, let us do what we know, Christ's word must remain forever true, and no other will do as well. Now, saith he "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily". This is the way to become and remain a disciple of Christ's. To deny our senses is an arduous work, but to deny our affections is more difficult still. From the moment we intend to be *perfect*, we ought to examine ourselves in all things that impede the spiritual life. O self-will and pride, what a devil in human nature *these!* O beware of the *first motions*.

I find less and less inclination to dictate to others. Jesus Christ is the great teacher in his church, O let us all learn of him. My body is growing much weaker daily, but my soul is *happy, happy, happy* in my God.

May the Holy Ghost teach and assist you to pray for me, and all the church of God; and may his fellowship be with you forever more Amen.

THOMAS WALSH.

(121)

LETTER LIX.

Mr. Thomas Olivers...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Clonmell, April 25, 1757.

MY VERY DEAR SISTER.

DO you continue as earnest with God for your immortal soul's eternal happiness, as you were when I last saw you? O never rest without that "perfect love which casteth out fear", which are your desires after this, getting stronger or weaker, examine yourself; one or other must be the case; for there is no standing still in the ways of God. O that you may so run as to obtain the prize that is set before you; which is no less than glory; make sure of the mark which is perfect holiness, and then the prize is certain. Pray much for an earnestness of spirit, and for a constant sight of your wants. Seek the *image* of God, as you did the *favour* of God, and it will come as surely, and perhaps as instantaneously. "It shall be unto you, according to your faith". Pray then, *constantly* pray, for power to believe. Remember, there are given to all who believe, many exceeding great and precious promises; that you may thereby be made partaker of the Divine Nature. see

L

(122)

2d. Peter 1, 4. In this sense, I may say, the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who believe. Come, Come my Dear sister! these bunches of spiritual grapes which you often taste, plainly shew that the land of promise whereunto you are going is a good land;

“ O that you might at *once* go up,

“ No more on this side Jordan stop,

“ But now the land possess.

“ This moment end your legal years,

“ Sorrow and sin, and doubts and fears,

“ A howling wilderness”.

be patient, be diligent, the tops of the towers will soon appear, O look to your *Joshua*, and follow him, and he will surely bring you in. Fear not the tall sons of Anack; gigantic foes, such as Pride, Unbelief, Anger, Self-will &c. these are nothing to the omnipotent *Jehovah* with whom you have to do as your captain. Then fight and conquer through the strength of the lamb, and victory is certain. Then comes the great prize! the *treble* crown! Glory! Glory! Glory!

O my Dear sister, does not this transport you.
Yours Affectionately

THOMAS OLIVERS

(123)

LETETR LX.

Mr. William Penington....to Mrs Eliza Bennis.

Cork, June 4, 1764.

I HOPE my Dear Sister Bennis is still simply following on to know the Lord ; being determined to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified. To know what he did, suffered, and taught, that you may be fully conform'd both in heart and in life, yea in *all* things to Christ your exalted head ; so shall you be qualified to hold communion with him here, and to be happy eternally with him hereafter. I see no other way to live the life divine ; but by simple, yet active faith in Christ Jesus ; to go to him by faith every moment, for every thing you want, whatsoever it is ; is the only way to retain or increase life, and so far as this is neglected, so far a soul will assuredly suffer loss. Let not the Devil by any means prevent your thus living from God, to God, and for God, according to that precept, Romans 12 chapter 1 and 2 verses....Do you find it thus at all times ? Is your heart wholly taken up with, and possessed by God ? Can you *now* rejoice ever more, Pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks ? If not, what

(124)

hinders? O lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset you, and look steadfastly and constantly to Jesus the Author, and he will be the support and the finisher of your faith, and make you now, and ever more happy, which is the sincere and fervent prayer of your Affectionate Brother

WILLIAM PENINGTON

LETTER LXI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. William Penington

Limerick, June 10, 1764.

I AM truly thankful to my Dear Brother Penington, for your close and affectionate enquiries....Blessed be my God, I hope I am simply following on to know the Lord; and think I am determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified; I long to be fully conformed in heart, life, and all things to my exalted head. I *know* that my Redeemer liveth, and find him *indeed* precious to my soul. My way is often strewed with thorns, but blessed be my God, I am enabled to look to the end, and see my treasure laid up above. Since I have lost you and brother Dillon, I have learned to live wholly upon God, and

(125)

do find him a supply for all my wants. You ask, can I rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks? Indeed hitherto I have been enabled in every thing to give thanks; but am not able to pray without ceasing; I often find a heaviness of spirit, a listless, stupid, inactive state, which also damps my joy in the Lord, and brings on sorrow and distress of soul; my comforts ebb and flow as the tide, and my joy increases and diminishes accordingly. I find much cause of thankfulness, and *much much* to be ashamed of, but blessed be my God, hitherto he hath helped me; and I find a degree of confidence in him, that he will keep me to the end. I think the sum of my desires is, to be more closely united to him, and in comparison with this, all other things are as nothing. and vanish from my view in a moment.... I am weary of my wanderings, thoughtlessness, and stupidity, and would die to be delivered from them. O when shall the time come, when I shall love and enjoy my God without intermission or alloy !... My Dear Brother, pray for me, and may the Lord establish your

(126)

heart with grace, and make you useful to his people...Your Affectionate Sister

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LXII.

Mr. Thomas Taylor...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin July 28, 1765.

MAY grace mercy and peace be multiplied unto my dear Sister Bennis from God the father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I trust you are in a better state of bodily health, than when I left you....Indeed “ *all things work together for Good to them that love God* ”...Therefore as nothing comes by chance, be assured of this; that “ *these light afflictions which are but for a moment, shall work out for you an exceeding and eternal weight of glory* ”...Glory my dear sister, glory! does not the very sound of that word transport you? how much more the realizing prospect. Then let this encourage you, to bear these fiery trials, which are not sent to consume, but to purify the soul.. .God does not send them as judgments on his children; no, they are only like the rod of an indulgent father, which necessity constrains him to take...And

(127)

when we set our joyful feet, once on Canaan's happy shore, we shall with a pleasing aspect turn our eyes and look back upon this tempestuous sea, and ascribe our glorious deliverance to our exalted Redeemer... We shall then see that every trial has been sent by a kind and tender hearted father who pitieth his own children... So that we have reason to bless the Lord for afflictions... Undoubtedly sin is the occasion of every disorder; but although it be, our divine master, can and does bring good out of evil; but we see the grace of God does not work a physical change upon the body; on the contrary that grace, taking place in the heart, and bringing trouble upon the mind, is very often the occasion of many disorders; and hence many I believe stifle their convictions, by applying to the physicians of the body, when the cause of complaint is supernatural; and the advice is frequently to get into light, trifling company, or join in those amusements, which only tend to quench the spirit of God.... But blessed be God, you have not so learned Christ, no, you know into whose hands you have committed

the keeping of your soul, and who has promised none shall pluck you out of his hands. O live near to the captain of your salvation, that you may be enabled to say.

“ My cheerful soul, now all the day,
Sits waiting here, and sings ;
Looks through the ruins of her clay,
And practices her wings.

“ Faith almost changes into sight,
When from afar she spies ;
Her fair inheritance in light.
Above created skies.

“ The smiles of heav'n rush sweetly in,
At all the gaping flaws ;
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws.”

Thus may you sing your precious moments away, while here below, until you shall be called to Empyrean mansions ; where “ *the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest*”.

Tried and tempted you must expect to be, while in this vale of tears, but “ *yet a little while*” and *he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*”. O may he complete the work of faith with power, enabling you to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and

in every thing to give thanks ; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

I am now ready to take my farewell of Ireland, perhaps for ever ! O my God grant I may be ready to take my farewell of this world when it shall please *thee* to call me home.

Indeed I find the necessity of keeping close to the captain of my salvation, least after *pretending* to preach to others, I *myself* should become a cast-away. Here the soul is like the thirsty earth, longing for the drops of rain. We have not long to be in this miserable world ; O may we continually be fighting our passage through. And while others are working to get more and more into the world ; let us labour to get out of it. There are many temptations to draw us from God. The Devil was obliged to hide himself in the serpent in paradise, to execute his helish designs, but he has a variety of more pleasing objects now ; so that we have need continually to be upon our guard ; my love to the church of Christ at Limerick ; live near to God, love one another ; live in peace, and “the God of peace be with you all, evermore” Amen.

THOMAS TAYLOR.

(130)

LETTER LXIII.

Mr. Richard Blackwell...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

London, October 23, 1766,

PEACE be unto my Dear Sister Bennis, and to the whole Israel of God at Limerick ; absence of body does not, cannot, erase any of you from my mind, while united by Divine Love.

I trust you still live in the spirit of your glorified head, Christ the Lord, growing up in *him* ; in order to this, it is always needful to have a clear witness to the work already wrought, both for stability and encouragement, else in time of trial we should give way to unbelief, and under the pressure of infirmities, surrounded by the powers of hell, we should utterly be discouraged. To Keep this witness, (which is the seal or earnest of our inheritance) how necessary to take up our cross daily ; to be deaf to the voice of nature, and to attend constantly to the teaching of the Divine spirit. O let us go on, this is the way to glory. Walk close with God, exercise your faith for more grace, be zealous for the glory of God. Attend to these things, and you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.

(131)

Let the select band meet regularly and constantly; you know such meetings are precious times, for Jesus loves the simple in heart, and they that are so, shall, with the beloved disciple, know the secrets of the Lord. O may Jehovah encrease your faith, and protect you all in the arms of love, Prays &c.

RICHARD BLACKWELL.

LETTER LXIV.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. Richard Blackwell.

Limerick, November 27, 1766.

I AM thankful to my dear Brother Blackwell for his welcome letter, and truly thankful to the Lord for bringing me to your Remembrance : The society here is in a prosperous situation, the select band does meet regularly, and we generally have blessed times together....As to my own state, blessed be my God, I am enabled through a variety of incidents to stay my soul on him....I see myself a poor helpless needy creature, full of wants, full of necessities which increase every moment, and whilst I stand bemoaning myself they thicken all around me ; so that I am obliged to fly to my Jesus for refuge, bringing

all my wants with me, and here alone do I find solid footing, substantial happiness; my soul rejoices in his salvation, and would have nothing, would be destitute, imperfect, deficient, that his own free grace may have *all* the glory.

In this sense my necessities and deficiencies makes my blessed Saviour still more precious to my soul; O what should I do without such a Saviour! Indeed I find something in this exercise of soul, which I cannot find words to explain, and which is above all others unspeakably sweet to me; but this is not always the case, my thoughts are often drawn aside, and my attention taken up with trifles and this not either seldom or short. I often find slackness of Spirit, and heaviness of soul, which causes grief and sorrow of heart, and ushers in many doubts; and was it not that the Lord gives the testimony of his spirit to the work he has wrought in my heart, I should be ready to give up *all*, but hitherto the Lord my God hath kept me, and does enable me to trust in him for future grace.

I again request an interest in your prayers,
and am Your Affectionate

ELIZA BENNIS.

(133)

LETTER LXV.

Mr. Richard Blackwell...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

London, February 10, 1767.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I AM glad to find the work of God prospers in Limerick, and the select band continue to meet, I doubt not but God is with you, fear not, go on; it is a great blessing to have such opportunities; O let us improve them.

I rejoice in your felicity in our Blessed Lord, surely he takes pleasure in the prosperity of his children...Does your faith increase? by this you may judge, is your obedience enlarged? Faith cleaves to Christ, and embraces the promises; enabling the soul through every trial to surmount all difficulties, crying out "*through Christ I can do all things*" Hold fast the precious gift, being assured the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart; have you not this testimony in your heart? if so glory in the bleeding lamb. It is an unspeakable blessing to obtain this witness; to retain it requires close walking with God....But suppose any should lose it, let them humble themselves before the Lord, and

M

(134)

he will restore it again....Speak freely to each other of these things, pertaining to the kingdom of God....~~Keep your zeal and simplicity,~~ and our Lord will fulfill in you all the good pleasure of his will....Though your mind be employed about many things, yet if your heart cleaves to God, that is the point....Go on to perfection. Yours Affectionately

RICHARD BLACKWELL.

LETTER LXVI.

Mr. Richard Bourke....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Waterford, November 29, 1768.

MY VERY DEAR SISTER,

I TRUST you are growing up into Christ in all things, as your living head. I have often admired what the Apostle says of himself, 2 Corinthians 12 chapter 9 and 10 verses: and indeed my soul longs for power so to glory. But is not his request for the Ephesians 3 chapter 16 to 19 verses far more extraordinary, here is a most beautiful description of Christian perfection. My Dear Friend let us press anxiously after it, if it were not attainable, it would not be set before us; do not waver, say not "you have no

(135)

power," your whole strength is in God, and that is received every moment by simple faith; the good Lord strengthen you in this good work.

I have just so much union with God, as sets me longing for more.

"O who that loves can love enough!"

I am not without my trials; I look for them as my portion while in this tenement of clay; but they are all sweetened by the closer embraces of my gracious redeemer. I read his love as clearly in them, as in his manuscript of sun, moon, and stars. I feel that God would have us live *here* the life of heaven; that therefore we should as little as possible live the life of earth. To live with him abstracted from the world, delighting in all he causes us to feel, and suffer; under this happy influence acting according to our calling, and incumbering ourselves with no more; is to walk with God; this is to be dead, and to have our lives hid with Christ in God. Let us pray that we may inherit this, and I have not the least doubt but we shall.... To sum up all, being absorbed in God, satisfied with his will. Blessed with his nature, governed by his spirit,... this is christian perfec-

(136)

tion, and this is fully attainable. Come Dear Sister let us join hand and heart; prayer and supplication; never to rest 'till we attain, "perfections height, The depth of humble love."...Yours Affectionately

RICHARD BOURKE.

LETTER LXVII.

Mr. John Dillon....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin, July 1764.

MY DEAR SISTER,

YOU reason too much for your own happiness, O what powerful effects proceed from *simples*; can there be any thing stronger than *simple love*; can there be any thing more powerful than *simple faith*, try these medicines, prove them, you will find them the most efficacious for your disorder.

"Believe and all your sins forgiven,

"Only believe and yours is heaven".

"Be it (saith our Lord) unto you even as thou wilt." O my dear sister, who would not love the Lord Jesus? come join with me and let us say; "O Lord here are our hearts, do thou work in them to will and to do all thy good pleasure." "We sink by dying love compelled. And own thee conqueror"

My dear friend *all* is yours only believe.

Your Affectionate,

JOHN DILLON.

(137)

LETTER LXVIII.

Mr. John Dillon...to Mrs Eliza Bennis

Dublin, September 15, 1764.

I REJOICE that my dear sister's late severe affliction of body, has been sanctified to your souls benefit, this is the end God has in view in afflicting, blessed be his name that you have been made sensible of it, and that you feel you now walk more comfortable, and your mind more stayed on that gracious God who heard prayer on your behalf... Consider your self as restored from the dead and therefore once more placed in a probationary state, and O let your future days be spent to the glory of God; your duty is made your benefit, your performance a delight, and the recompence of reward is placed before you, as a mark for perseverance....O let us go on to perfection, 'till it is crowned with glory; Let me ask my dear friend; is not the comfort you *now* enjoy, received by *simple faith* in and from a God of love? this is the medicine I so often recommended, and as you have now proved its efficacy, have constant recourse to it...But you still complain of

your short-comings, unwatchfulness, forgetfulness, coldness and stupidity; it is a great mercy you are sensible of these, and the sight of them ought to create thankfulness to him who sheweth them to you....But are you not the cause of an increase of these upon yourself.

First...You see your short-comings! are they not increased by looking on them so long, instead of looking to Christ, who is the propitiation.

Second...Your unwatchful spirit; is it not increased, by turning your eye upon, and reasoning with it, instead of instantly looking to, and calling on the Lord for wisdom to discern Satans devices.

Third...Is not your forgetfulness increased, by reasoning with, and saying "how can these things be consistent" &c. Do you not plainly see while you do this, you are in a greater degree adding to that forgetfulness, by forgetting to look to the Lord Jesus and his promises.

Fourth...Your coldness will never be removed by looking at it, but by looking on the Lord, whose bowels of mercy, are open

(139)

to all his tempted followers, and has promised to make away for their escape, and

Fifth...Your stupidity will be encreased if you look to any thing but Christ alone: then it is the highest pitch of it to reason; ponder and look at these, when relief can be found in none but the friend of sinners.

My dear Sister....It is not the expecting to have these done away, and so coming to Christ (is the way) but to look to him by *simple faith*, and the beholding him as he is precious to the believing soul, dispels all those and ten thousand more at once...Does not your heart bear me witness in this? when you behold Christ Jesus, do not all fly before his face, and your soul remain in perfect peace and love....Then instead of looking on these again, as in time past: look simply to the Lord Jesus and you will draw water sufficient out of the well of salvation; only hold fast the rope of the bucket...(*simple faith*)

Yours most Affectionately

JOHN DILLON.

(140)

LETTER LXIX.

Mr. John Dillon...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin, June 1, 1765.

I AM thankful to God that my dear Sister Bennis finds herself enabled to call him her Lord and her God, then all the promises of God are yours; yea when Christ is yours, *all* is yours, if you can *only* believe; the more grace and light we receive, the more we see of our own weakness and nothingness, this lays us low at the feet of Christ...yet take care that you do not look at your weakness so as to take your eye off of Christ, who is our advocate, who ever liveth to make intercession for us; but rather let it fill us with thankfulness, for that heavenly light which shews us what we are, and in whom is our strength; also take heed that you do not trust to, and strive to live by, comforts, and so not be satisfied without you feel that degree of them which you may measure to yourself; this often hurts simple minds.. Our life is to be a life of *faith* tried in the fire; we are called to be good soldiers of Christ enduring *hardship*, resisting the Devil, quenching all his fiery darts...Now this is not to be done by comfort,

(141)

but by *faith* the christians shield; though your heart, be entirely given up to God, yet you will find yourself tried to the very quick, and you may be kept in a ferment, for want of wisdom to discover the hellish plots of Satan who if he cannot destroy, will strive to torment you; but you are not called to Reason, but simply to look and cast your burden upon the Lord, who will make all your enemies as chaff. Your Affectionate

JOHN DILLON.

 LETTER LXX.

Mr. John Dillon....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Cork, September 25, 1766.

My Dear Sister Bennis's letters are always a blessing to me, your experience in so many instances tallies with my own; your case "in coming to God though a cloud between, yet without condemnation;" has often been my state; and there is no other way at such times, but to lay ourselves at the feet of our Lord, and like King Hezekiah spread our letter of complaint before *Him*, who will be a present help in all times of need, and we have so often proved him such, that we have no right

to doubt for the future....If poor Sister B. has been drawn aside, cast her not off, nor use harsh words, take St. Paul's advice, Galatians 6 chapter, and 1 verse, for Gentleness Meekness and Love, with a *powerful* quantity of the prayer of *Faith*. are the only efficacious medicine in this Disorder.

O what a happiness, to be enabled at *all times* to say, that God is yours and you are his! a privilege, few of the Kings or princes of the Earth do, or ever did enjoy, and which you never can be sufficiently thankful for...Now, the Glorious light from on high, attended by heavenly wisdom, will discover to you the snares and wiles of the crooked serpent, and the rough places (occasioned by unbelief) shall be made smooth. Let not my Dear Friend *now* begin to *reason* but stand fast in the liberty wherein God hath called you; Infirmities you will feel, inconsistencies you will meet with, while in this clay tenement, but pass them by and go straight to God, he can reconcile all inconsistencies, he can solve all doubts: do thou only *Believe, watch, Pray,*
Yours, most Sincerely,

JOHN DILLON.

(143)

LETTER LXXI.

Mr. John Dillon..to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin, May, 1770.

I HAVE got my self bolstered up in bed to write a last farewell to my *dear dear* Sister Bennis, (if strength will permit ;) I am worn to a skeleton, and generally in great pain, but blessed be God, he is my all in all: my soul is happy in him, and I testify with my latest breath that "*I have not followed a cunningly devised fable;*" but that there is reality, nay *solid happiness* in the *religion of Jesus*. O my dear friend how could I now support without him; *he is precious! he is precious!* he is *all-together lovely!* my soul longs to be set free, that I may enjoy him in full glory...well; a few hours will complete my happiness.

"Hark they whisper, Angels say,

"Sister Spirit come away!"

"Lend, lend your wings I mount I fly!

"O Grave where is thy victory!

"O Death where is thy sting".

My Dear Sister, I am *transported*, I now see the goodly land in view, and it delights me so, that I am ready to *rush* into the narrow sea between. My *last love*, my *last admonition*, to the society in Limerick; they

(144)

have been *dear* to me, they have my last feeble prayers, that God may keep them in the hollow of his hand, and make them “*all glorious within,*” tell them, I am now going to give an account of my mission to them, to him who sent me; and O how grievous if I must appear as a witness against any of them in the great day! *Lord Jesus forbid it.*

I cannot go on, my strength fails: *My Dear, Dear, Dear Sister Bennis farewell,* may that Lord and God which is now my all in all, by his grace protect you; may his power preserve you, may his wisdom guide you, and his everlasting arms be forever underneath you, and hold you up to the end, then our next meeting will beat the right hand of Jesus. O that blessed Jesus whom we have so often conversed about, and whose love is now drawing the chief of Sinners to himself! I dont know where or how to end, I could die writing of his love, but they drag the pen from me, a last and again farewell.

JOHN DILLON.

N. B. He died four hours after concluding this letter.

(145)

LETTER LXXII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. Hugh Saunderson

Limerick December 4, 1771.

IT gives me sincere pleasure to hear that my dear Brother Saunderson's soul prospers; my heart's desire for you is, that you may stand fast as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; you have need of watchfulness on every side, because the enemy will turn himself into many shapes, if by any means he may (by force or fraud) turn you out of the way.... Your last letter gave me much satisfaction; I am thankful to God on your behalf, that you do find him a present help, and are enabled to give yourself up to his will... I do not forget you at the throne of grace; it is matter of encouragement that you are punctual to the days and hours we appointed for this purpose, continue so, and be assured that you shall meet me there; the Lord loves to see his children importunate with him for each other.

" I'll bow my knee to God in pray'r,
 " For you, and hope to meet you there,
 " On the same errand for your friend,
 " That both our prayers may one ascend.

N

(146)

“ While thus we seek the things above,
“ And faithful to each other prove,
“ In friendship’s sacred power we taste,
“ Delights which shall forever last.”

Blessed be God, my soul does prosper. I think I do love the Lord my God, with all my heart; and am by his grace enabled to chose him as my only portion and inheritance, and to give myself unreservedly to his will. I constantly meet with obstructions of various kinds, but a merciful God sustains my feeble soul, wonderfully clears my way, and graciously condescends to be my guide: indeed it is by his all powerful grace alone that I am upheld; *he* constantly proportioning his strength to my great need; for he knows I cannot, nor do not desire, to stand one moment without him. My soul hangs on him, and desires no other support, and am determined by his grace to follow him wheresoever he shall lead me....I hope this is also your determination; O give yourself up without reserve to him, he knows best how to dispose of you...You are often on my mind, and I then wish for past opportunities, to speak plain and without reserve; but can only pray that the Lord himself would be to you instead

(147)

of a friend; that he would shew you all that is wrong, and keep you in the right way. I am at times jealous over you, lest your heart should be drawn aside after the creature, or taken up too much with yourself... This idol *self* is the worst of all enemies to the soul, O guard against it; watch not only every motion of your heart, but of your mind, thoughts, desires, and even of your body; there is a certain gesture, or air in walking, sitting, or conversing; or in coming in and going out; which is not becoming a preacher of the gospel, whose *whole* department should *always* be free from every thing that looked like self confidence, self esteem, pride or foppery. I had some objections to you in respect of these, when you were here; but having said so much to you then about other things... I was afraid were I to add these, you would think me too severe; but finding since, that others took notice of the same, I have been troubled that I did not speak; as I know you will receive it from *me* in love... The Lord knows I have no motive but your welfare, and should be thankful to you to deal in the same manner by me; do receive it as from your friend.

(148)

~~and be thankful~~ for a friend... You will meet with many who will turn aside and laugh at your little foibles; but few, *very few*, will be faithful enough to point them out, and warn you of them.... This, and this only, is the friendship my heart approves; nor can I call that person my friend, who could withhold reproof where he saw I needed it... My Dear Friend, watch over *your own* spirit, and observe *your own* conduct, and let nothing pass unheeded by you; your youth, your natural propensity to gaiety and sprightliness, your unmarried state, and the pride of your own heart; will insensibly incline you to little fopperies in gesture and dress, and little niceties about yourself; which will hurt your own soul, lessen your usefulness, and make you ridiculous to others, if not guarded against.... Now don't let the enemy represent this my freedom in a wrong light, but pray that the Lord would shew you *yourself*, and save you from *yourself*, I could say much more, were you present, but I forbear; may the Lord instruct you, and lead you into all truth. prays your

Sincere friend

ELIZA BENNIS.

(149)

LETTER LXXIII

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to Mr. John Christian.

Limerick, October 20, 1771.

MY Dear Brother Christian's letter brought welcome news ; the Waterford society is dear to me, and am happy at their prosperity ; may the Lord increase the welfare of Zion...I am thankful to my God, for enabling me to either speak or write any thing, that has in any wise been helpful to you ; by this we may see the great benefit of christian communion, and how agreeable to the will of God. We are not only called to confess our sins to each other, but also to tell our temptations ; else how can we pray for each other ? Satan will present a thousand prudential reasons, why we should keep these things to ourselves, but I never knew any good proceed from it ; on the contrary we may remark that often whilst we are speaking or writing to our friend, the doubt is resolved, or the temptation removed, which should be an encouragement never to keep the Devils secrets.

I think you have great reason to praise the Lord, that he does not suffer you to speak

(150)

for him in vain; O be thankful, be humble, and be satisfied with all his dispensations. be assured they are all in love, however afflictive or distressing;...the stubbornness of our nature often requires these bitter medicines, and how kind is it to force them on us, even against our will, rather than let us die of the disease. An attentive mind will feel the health which these impart, though unpleasant in the using. Indeed I have often considered the Lord, as a wise physician over his own family of children; who attentively examines into their several constitutions; and at proper times administers Physic, or Cordials, or Bitter draughts, according as each have need; the ignorant child perhaps frets and cries, and refuses the ill tasted draught; and thinking the parent unkind to offer it, often persists in a stubborn refusal, until his parent is obliged to use the Rod, whilst his own heart yearns over the child, but it is to save his life; therefore the child must not be spared 'till he submits. Cordials are pleasant, and children would be always living on what is sweet and pleasant to the taste but we know nothing is more

(151)

unwholesome. Will not the comparison hold? Then surely it is our wisdom to leave ourselves and all our affairs in *his* hands, who alone is able to help us, and knows what is best for us; but let us in *all things* say, "Lord I will not choose, because thou cannot err;" I know this is a hard lesson, but we have a divine teacher, and with him *all things* are possible. O that we may never grow weary, let us pray for this....Your truly Affectionate Friend,

ELIZA BENNIS.

 LETTER LXXIV.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis,...to Mr. John Christian.

Limerick, March 29, 1772,

DEAR BROTHER CHRISTIAN

I FEAR you have mistaken some of our late conversation; since our first acquaintance I have had no reason to think you of a contentious spirit, quite the contrary; what I then said was merely by way of caution, as I know it is quite natural for us to speak as we think; and as your thoughts in some respects differ from Mr. Wesley's, you may be apt to promulge your own opinions rather than his;

which would certainly lessen you in the esteem of all the sensible part of youe hearers, and be a cause of much disputation to the ignorant, tho' sincere. Indeed I do not see how you can find your mind clear to require or accept a travelling station among the Methodists while you hold any opinion contrary to our professed doctrines, neither can I see how Mr. Wesley will be justifiable in sending you forth under such circumstances; and as I must act according to my conscience, I have told him so. Whatever opinions a private member, or even a local preacher may hold. I think it is *essential* a traveling preacher should be *clear, sound, and orthodox*; yet these my thoughts do by no means lessen my esteem for you, nor my belief that you may be useful where you are. I am rather persuaded in opinion that whilst you retain the same fervor with which you set out, the Lord will bless and own you. But be humble, be simple, be satisfied to be taught by God, and by his experienced servants: be open to conviction, and the Lord will teach you what you know not. As to your gifts, I shall only say, I have always observed, that it was not the gifts of

(153)

the preacher that converted the multitude ; but rather the heart of the preacher. This expression I know would not go down with some, but through a long course of experience, I have always seen that gifts and grace are two things ; when both meet they appear very amiable, but the gracious soul who has nothing of his own, but what he by faith draws down from the heart of Christ every moment ; shall prosper both in his soul and in his labours ; how hard is it to have great gifts without being sensible of them ? but the soul who feels its littleness, and knows its need, will be constrained to do as the old papist, woman, who lost her beads, saying, “ now I have nothing to depend on but the Lord Jesus ;” *these* are the *rams horns* which the Lord still uses and *honours* in his work.

As to your temptations, I think you give too much way to the enemy ; if you are willing to leave father and mother, wife and children for Christ’s sake ; what greater proof can you give that you love him better than they ? and if he calls you to a greater or farther proof, are you not ready ? do you find them as idols in your heart ? do they usurp

(154)

the place that Christ should have? if not why do you dispute with the enemy; if they do why do you cease crying to him that is able to deliver. Is the matter doubtful? so that you cannot conclude on either side; then cry mightily and unceasingly to the Lord, that he would answer for himself, and bear his own testimony to his own work; let none baffle you out of this; it is certainly your privilege to *know* the things that are freely given to you of God; and how shall we know them, but by the light of his own spirit, shining on his work in our hearts? that same light which first discovered our own darkness, and pointed us to the attoning blood, and then clearly shewed us our interest in Christ; the same light I say, discovers our inbred sin, and also our deliverance from it; and not only so, but lights us all our way 'till we are brought to glory. This is the glorious privilege of the children of God, it is your privilege and mine; why should we stop short, the way is plain, it is only attained by simple faith; and should the enemy object, "you have not this faith;" will you stand and dispute it with him?...No, but look up, and say I cannot dispute, but I will

(155)

now believe, and take Christ as my *complete* Saviour; my all in time, and Eternity. O believe and surely you shall be established, *now* believe and you shall be made whole. The natural affection you feel for your wife and children, and the yearnings of your heart at times towards them is no proof against you, the highest degree of grace does not destroy natural affection, nor even the tenderest feelings; no it rather tenders the heart, and makes it more susceptible of these, so that the masculine spirit who before felt no affection for a wife or children, when it receives the grace of God is changed into love and tenderness; then may we not suppose, as a person advances in grace and increase in love to God, that his love to these will also increase; it certainly does, and I think according to the nature of things, it cannot be otherwise. This often brings painful sensations to the mind of one under your circumstances, and makes absence very trying; then the accuser comes in, to avail himself of our weakness; and brings showers of accusations, when the Lord does not accuse; but let us not be ignorant of his devices; he is still the

(156)

accuser of the brethren, and all his fiery darts are quenched by simple faith.

I am obliged to conclude abruptly.... Your sincere friend.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LXXV.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. John Christian.

Limerick, October 22, 1773.

I AM truly sorry, that any thing should damp my dear Brother Christians earnest desires, after the full and perfect enjoyment of God. Truly they that will follow Christ, must take up his cross, must bear his reproach; and suffer the scandle of the cross, and the nearer they would come to him, the deeper they must drink of his cup....But all cannot receive this; many are willing to follow him while he is well spoken of, and had in repute; but do not choose to own him when he is evil treated....Many followed him with loud hosannahs when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem; but where were these, when he stood buffeted and spit upon, in a most contemptable figure before Pilate? perhaps among the multitude which cried...“away with him, crucify him!” yet in that posture

(157)

as a condemned malefactor, scorned by his enemies, and forsaken by his friends; besmeared with dirt, spit upon and beaten; a spectacle to men and devils! he was *indeed* the very Jesus who was transfigured on the mount; and who ascended gloriously into Heaven in the sight of his disciples; who is now at the right hand of God, and "who ever liveth to make Intercession for us." His sufferings made no alteration in his person, office or dignity, he was still the same, "God over all, Blessed for-evermore."...And will not the comparison hold? let my friend make the application....It is much to be lamented, that Jesus still meets with the deepest wounds, in the house of his friends; and at such times who will venture to stand by him? I say who? Blessed be God there are some who dare profess his truths in the face of every opposition;...and can set to their seal, that He is true...Indeed I cannot help wondering how the Devil blinds the eyes of even the most sensible part of mankind; and what is worse, even of the dear children of God, and is it not a reproach on their wisdom and understanding, to be so easily drawn aside by the

subtle reasonings of the enemy, which you yourself have heard confuted a thousand times; may I not say, which you yourself have often confuted; and which the spirit of God has repeatedly made as clear to you, as the noonday... If we were to judge of the doctrine by the lives of some professors, we should explode justification as well as sanctification; and if it hold good in the one, it should also in the other... Otherwise Judas being a traitor, would prove Christ an impostor... But suppose nine out of ten who profess sanctification, turned apostates, it could not make the word of God of none effect; if this be really the privilege of God's children, and purchased for them by the blood of Christ... Some having made shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience, is no proof that the rest are deceived; If any who do profess it, do not evidence it by their lives, it proves that such are deceived; but it proves no more. If some who profess it, did for some time walk in the light of God's countenance, but are now turned aside, "like the dog to his vomit;" this does not prove that there is no such state. But it proves that this blessing as well as justification is on-

(159)

ly retained by constant watchfulness and prayer... And it proves that without this, a person in that state, may as certainly fall, as Adam did in paradise, or the angels in Heaven. But it does not prove, that there is no such state to be attained; no more than Adam's fall proves that there was no such place as paradise, or the Angel's fall that there was no such place as Heaven. In all the persecutions which the Christians underwent for the sake of Christ, many sealed the truth with their blood; but there was also many apostates who brought a scandal on the cause; and shall we look and point at these, and bring them as a proof that the rest were deceived, and died in a bad cause; or shall we bring the multitude of Antinomians, who at present hold the truth in unrighteousness to prove that Faith in Christ, is the most dangerous of all errors.

My Dear Friend bear with me, and suffer genuine, naked, simple Truth, to find its way to your heart; consider your calling, it is a great thing to be employed for God; however the hearers may plead ignorance, I cannot think the preacher should. I acknowledge

myself insufficient in every respect to defend so great a truth, should I not rather apply to you as a teacher in Israel? for the explanation of the many texts in scripture which point at, and promise such a state...In the Old Testament there are many, and in all the prophecies of *this glorious gospel day*, this *entire* rectitude of heart is particularly spoken of....But if we would pay a greater attention to the New Testament; if this is given to us as the rule of our faith and practice, and (may I not add) as the great Charter of our profession, by which we shall be either cleared or condemned in the great Day; does it not concern us, to search and try every page, and see if these things be really so or not...It is very remarkable that the strongest expression in all the Scripture is used by our Lord himself...Indeed I do not think that any other would even dare to use it, Matthew, 5 & 48. *Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*" and Verse 8 "*Blessed are the pure in heart,*" and John 17 & 17 he prays, "*Sanctify them through thy truth.*"

The Apostle Paul in the 2nd. Corinth-

(161)

ians 7 & 1. advises, "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"...and Hebrews 10 & 14. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" and 1st Peter 1 & 15. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy." also 1st John 1 & 7 "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin." and verse 9th "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"....Many more texts might be quoted to prove the same thing; namely that it is both our duty and privilege to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; which is only what is implied in the terms Holiness, perfection, or sanctification....But if this be not the blessing pointed at in the above texts, I would ask what other blessing is meant? would you answer a justified state; then I would ask, does every justified person feel that he is pure

in heart? I say *every* justified person, for if these are the blessings consequent on justification, then they are common to every believer, and should be the marks by which they should try their faith; and if this was the case, how few, how very few believers should we have left....Most of the believers I have ever met with, have been deeply convinced of the impurity of their hearts, the unholiness of their tempers, and natural bias that is in them to evil; until the Lord by the great word of his power creates all anew.... And why is it that the Lord does discover this root of bitterness to every believer, and puts a cry in their hearts for a total deliverance; with a promise that he will save to the uttermost even as far as their faith can reach? If my Friend never felt this plague of his own heart since his justification, I heartily congratulate him, and wish he never may; but if he feels his malady, why does he lose time looking to those who are strayed into by paths; Jesus the good physician calls aloud; "*Look unto me, and be saved*" O let him not call in vain. Prays your most sincere Friend,

ELIZA BENNIS.

(163)

LETTER LXXVI.

Lieutenant Charles Jones..to Mrs. Eliza Bennis

Dublin, December, 17, 1770.

Dear Madam,

YOUR former letters have often afforded solid comfort, and served as so many kind monitors to awaken my drowsy powers, and to confirm me in that great truth, that there is no true happiness out of Christ; and that virtue never fails of an ample reward....I am at present as a ship tossed on the Ocean, the port of rest often presents itself to view, but sudden gusts of inbred evils drive it from my sight; and like a heedless pilot I am ready to be hurried on the rocks of inevitable ruin; O were it on the Rock Christ, I should then be broken indeed! but into a pleasing contrition of spirit, which God will not dispise. Although I feel not, that ardent desire of close communion I formerly did with the children of God, witness my heart, I still love and respect them, above any people on Earth; and never fail to offer up my earnest petitions for the prosperity of Zion.

It appears as if providence intended I should not quit the Army yet, every prospect out of

(164)

it seems dismal and dreary with respect to my family ; I have therefore thought best to continue as I am, 'till I can see my way more clear for a change.

I am Dear Madam, your assured Friend,
And unworthy Brother

CHARLES JONES.

LETTER LXXVII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Lieutenant Charles Jones.

Limerick, Jaunary 3, 1771.

Let it not displease my Dear Brother Jones, if I should acknowlege, that I often think of you with some degree of distress. My fears for you are many...when we give way to slackness, what have we not to fear? You did run well : what has hindered? The bewitching allurements of a transitory world! Alas, with what a drudgery are these purchased, and how foolish a barter for Christ and Heaven : But these I trust are not already, or alltogether forfeited. You do certainly intend some time or other to stir yourself up... to seek the Lord...to recover all you have lost ; and to continue faithful to his grace. But ○

(165)

remember the fate of the foolish virgins, just in your state ; their lamps not quite, but almost extinguished ; whilst they slept in this state, the cry was made ! their oil spent, and their doom irrevocably sealed. May the Lord forbid that this should be my friends case ! But is there not cause to fear ? We may plan and contrive to bring about *our own* purposes in life, but whilst we are thus busily employed, the Lord may suddenly bring *his* to pass, and say, “ *Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee.*” This indeed is an alarming thought ! O, what shall it profit then, to have gained all we desired, if our own desires are made our *Curse*. But have I said too much ? I hope not. I trust you can yet bear plain, honest dealing, from one who *indeed* loves your soul, and earnestly desires your *true* happiness. No, my Dear Brother Jones, be not offended...the Lord knows what I feel for you, even now whilst I am writing. Indeed I am thankful on your behalf that the Lord has hitherto kept you from outward sin ; but surely I need not say to *you*, that this will not do. The servant in the gospel was condemned as wicked, only for his slothfulness,

(166)

he had not squandered his Lords money, he kept it safe, and had it to produce. Is this our case? Have we even kept his grace...has my friend kept it? Has not his heart departed from the Lord in search of other things.... (Riches, Honour, Titles) to the neglect of those very means which your own conscience approves, and which have been so often blessed to your soul. But let the time past suffice; the Lord who has borne long with you, calls upon you *now* to arise and shake yourself from the dust; he has been wounded in the house of his friend; but is now ready to pardon *all*. O let him not call and intreat in vain, least he should at last be provoked to say, "*My spirit shall no longer strive with him....* My dear friend, it is time that you set out again... You know not how short your date may be... Then give this little shred to the Lord, who has given all to you, and trust *him* with all your affairs, who alone knows what is best for you; and trust that promise made to those who first seek the kingdom of Heaven and its Righteousness, that "all other things shall be added to them." Then take him at his word, cast all your care upon him,

(167)

give yourself up simply into his hands ; and be determined to seek his favour, which alone can make you happy in life and in death, be not displeas'd at my freedom... for I dare not use reserve in spiritual matters ; if I write at all I must not wound my conscience, but write what is in my heart ; and the most welcome return I can receive, is the same plain dealing from my friend ;... I know I have need of it, and such has always prov'd a blessing to my soul.... I thank my God, I do find him gracious, he is indeed the "*desire of my soul, and the joy of my heart,*" and I do feel his love better than life, and it is by his grace my determin'd resolution to follow him whithersoever he shall lead me, and am content to be despis'd derid'd and count'd a fool for his blessed names sake, who has made me wise to salvation ;... I met with Lieutenant Gibbons in Waterford, a few days since, and trust we have been a blessing to each other ; he has recover'd his strength, and is now very happy in his soul,... my Affectionate love to Sister Jones ; stir each other up, the day is far spent, the night is at hand, and little work

(168)

done for Eternity ! May the Lord bless you both, and save you from resting in a *negative* holiness, and make you partakers of all his great and precious promises, is the earnest prayer of Your *real* friend,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LXXVIII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. R. T.

Limerick, December 22, 1771.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE just received your unexpected favour, and am much obliged by the favourable opinion you seem to entertain of me, and the confidence you would repose in me, by so open and free an acknowledgment of your faults; the later is certainly a circumstance in your favour, for the promise of mercy is to him who *confesseth* and *forsaketh* his sins....But as you have opened your mind so freely, will you be offended at my plainness of speech? I hope not; may the Lord shew you *all* your heart....I think *Pride* was your first ruin; a certain upliftedness of heart, and confidence in your own wisdom and abilities, which gave you some consequence in your own esteem...(I observ-

(169)

ved something of this when I was the second time in Waterford, but had not courage to warn you.) This seems to escape your notice at present, but on a strict scrutiny into your heart, I think the Lord will discover it to you....When I was last there, my soul was grieved at your fall, and at the reproach which it brought on the little flock ; and made me often ashamed to shew my face in company. This hindered me from speaking to you though my heart ached for you ; nor did I forget you in my weak petitions to the throne of grace. When brother C. told me of your convictions, I think I felt some small degree of what the blessed above feel, at the return of a sinner ; but this was damped by many fears, which still hindered me from speaking to you ; I feared what you were most grieved at, was the loss of your reputation, and that your repentance was not so much for your sin against God, as for your loss of esteem amongst men. (I hope you will not impute this to a censorious spirit, the Lord knows it is not, I am rather apt to err on the other side ; but would have persons all of

(170)

a piece ; I would have believers bring forth the fruits of faith ;...and I would have penitents bring forth fruits meet for repentance.) I enquired closely concerning you, and found you were then engaged in a matrimonial affair ; I thought if your heart was broken for sin, you would have but little appetite for courting. Again I understood your chief companions were those who had themselves departed from God, and were then bitter enemies to his people ; such could not possibly be helpful to your soul, while their own hearts were full of rancour and bitterness. I hope such are not now your associates ? If your repentance be sincere you will seek for other company, who will be able to help you up again : do not think I write thus plain to reproach you, my heart is witness I do not want to grieve you ; I feel some part of your burden, and am at times enabled to lay it before the Lord ; but I would have you search your heart to the bottom, and *tear* it open before him ; mark the rock on which your Bark has already split, and lop off every thing in your affections or practice, which might be a hindrance to your restoration, the Lord

(171)

our God is a jealous God, and will not bear a competitor, he must be served in spirit and in truth. You see what you have lost by looking two ways; your business now is straight forward; may the Lord direct your steps, and give that earnestness of soul which will take no denial, you will get no good by lying still, bemoaning yourself; your remedy is in view; the Brazen serpent is lifted up, look to him *Now, Now, Now* believe and you shall be made whole this moment; the Lord is willing to give power, only ask in faith. I am Your sincere friend

ELIZA BENNIS.

 LETTER LXXIX.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. R. T.

Limerick, January 29, 1772.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I know not how to use reserve in spiritual matters; yet I could never approve of that wildness which would take as given by the Spirit of God, every impression that may be made on the mind; this I think would lead into great extravagance; it is certain the event often proves that our fears

were just; but who can tell this until it happens? or who would venture to act from a slight impression, as though there was a certainty...Indeed my liableness to mistake, and the sense of my inability to judge or speak, makes me at times very backward...At other times I think I am more forward than becomes me, and am ready to hide my face with shame, and resolve never to do so again.. But the past is over; see that you now profit by your loss; the Lord is willing to pardon all that is past; to meet the prodigal half way, and welcome him with a kiss of peace, not upbraiding for past disobedience, but rejoicing that his Son which was lost is again found....O let the sense of such love break your heart, and resolve by his grace to cleave to him while you live...But where do I stray! surely I can say nothing to you (who was a teacher in Isreal) but what you know already, and what you have often said to others...My heart's desire for you is, to see you again happy in the love of God; and is not this also our Lords desire? then what should hinder, if my friend be willing...Now this moment the Lord is as willing to pardon

(173)

as ever he will be....May his power make
way to your heart...is the fervent prayer of
your Sincere Friend,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LXXX.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. R. T.

Limerick, November 22, 1772.

I MUST tell my dear friend that I am
not satisfied concerning you...I am jealous
over you, and fearful that you do not act
sincerely with God....You know how prone
your heart is to wander from God...How
ready your natural disposition to lead you
astray, and how prevalent your beseting evil.
Do you watch against these? do you guard
the avenues of your heart? do you deny your-
self *that* which your heart most desires?
that which the spirit of God has at times
given you to see is most dangerous to
you? and *that* by which the Devil had almost
got you into his snare? I mean trifling un-
profitable company...I know, notwithstand-
ing the hurry of business, you have intervals
of leisure, do you buy up these opportunities?
do you sequester yourself to pour out your
soul in secret before the Lord, and are you

(174)

thankful for such precious opportunities? does your soul hunger after them? and do you prize them as a treasure? do you seek the company of those who are precious in the sight of God? is it with these you spend the moments you have for conversation; and is the company of others empty and tiresome to you? O bear with me; I *fear* this is not the case...I *fear* you neglect prayer, (I do not mean totally) I *fear* you spend your leisure hours, for the most part, in company that will at last lead you to destruction! I *fear* you are not watchful over your own heart, and that you do not attend to the admonitions of God's spirit...You seem to know and feel your malady, blessed be God for this! it is a gracious indication of his willingness to save; his mercy is held out to you, he calls and invites you to accept it, and will not remember against you, your former backslidings...But surely though his mercy is free, yet it must be sought, in the way of his own appointing: If we would attain the end, we must use the means; though we cannot by any preparation render ourselves worthy of the grace of God! yet there is a preparation which he requires;

(175)

and without which he never will accept us : All the promises of the Gospel are conditional. They that *ask* shall receive... That *seek* shall find... That *knock* shall have the door of mercy opened to them, And our Lord *exhorts* to “*cut off the right hand*” to “*pluck out the right eye*” to remove *every* obstruction, however dear or profitable to us ; that we may be the better prepared to receive his grace ; Indeed I think our desiring the grace of God implies so much...If our repentance be sincere we will bring forth fruit meet for it...If we sincerely desire to be brought into the favour of God, this desire will lead us to deny ourselves of every thing that is displeasing to him ; surely if we would take the kingdom of Heaven it must be by the violence of prayer, and self-denial ; for the promise is sure, that at what time soever we seek the Lord with our *whole heart*, we shall find him...Suffer me to speak thus freely ; God *will not* be trifled with, what a man soweth, that he shall certainly reap...Examine your heart, and suffer the spirit of God to reprove you, your soul is at stake, and what will all your little foolish gratifications profit in that hour when you

(176)

shall be called to give an account of the deeds done in the body... May I ask, what profit or satisfaction have you *now* of all that is past? is not the remembrance of them grievous? do they not produce very painful reflections,? and so it will be, while you seek happiness in the creature.

God only can make an immortal soul happy, this you are a witness of; and your own conscience must testify against you, that you never found happiness but in God.... Come back then my Brother to the same fountain which stands still open; his blood is still sufficient, and his merit still prevalent; neither will he upbraid for all that is past... O do not be content to remain in your present state; press hard after God, cry mightily to him, and resolve that nothing shall hinder your return: you are not in the morning of life,.. You know not how soon your soul may be required of you, and will you sell your birthright for a mess of pottage? God forbid, put forth all your strength, and the Lord will help you.. Be serious, be much in prayer, and O fly trifling foolish company... If you would save your soul you must be content to be the scoff

(177)

of fools..May the Lord speak with power to
your heart...Is the earnest prayer, of Your
Sincere Friend,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LXXXI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. R. T.

Limerick November 9, 1773.

DEAR SIR,

IT certainly is an indication of an honest heart, to bear plain dealing ; but will this do, while you still continue in sin ? you say my letter “ produced half a resolution to “ amend,” would to God it was a whole one. such if earnestly pursued might have produced some good effects. But how long, are you to go on at this rate ? half resolving, and by your delay making sure your eternal damnation. You acknowlege your fault, plead guilty, and still go on ! as though you bid God defiance. Remember “ *that servant who knows his master’s will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*” ; I have already laid all this before you, nor can I *now* say any thing new, what course shall I then take ? shall I give you up ! seeing you will not be reclaimed, indeed I am often tempted to this, but at such

(178)

times think I will try one letter more ; nor would I now desist, if I could see any hope of amendment ; if intreaties could prevail, I would *beseech* you to have mercy on your own soul...*That* which Christ has purchased with his blood; *That* which must live for ever, and which is capable of such celestial enjoyment ; O let it not fall a victim to the brutal gratification of a filthy carcase ; O for God's sake consider this, and consider what Christ has done and suffered for you ; I would beseech you for his sake to turn, repent, and live.... what could he have done more for you than he has done ? he suffered a long and painful life, and died a grievous and ignominious death ! and still interceeds, and pleads his merit and death, in your behalf. And will you still continue to grieve his spirit ? to pain his loving heart ! to send him away mourning and complaining that " you will not come to him, that you may have life" ; if his tears and entreaties will not prevail ; should I urge the cause of God scandalized through your means, will not all this force you to relent ? Should not the people of God whose souls you have grieved, cause you to mourn your

(179)

revolt. They love you, they are pained for you, they pray and weep for you, and still you suffer them to bear your reproach, and blush for you in vain; whilst the enemies of God point the finger, and shake the head, and cry, "so would we have it". These are, I think, weighty considerations, and should have some place in a heart not entirely lost to all the feelings of generosity and friendship. Shall I extend it any farther? Shall I as an individual lay claim to a share of that friendship which you have so often professed for *me*, if this be real, why will you grieve *me*; why pain *my* heart by refusing your own mercies; why cannot my tears, prayers and entreaties have any influence, or at all persuade you to turn to God and live. And why has not the weighty consideration of a youth in the dawn of life, just now susceptible of either good or ill impressions, committed to your care,* swayed by your example, and guided by your advice; some weight with you; if by you he is led to slight the means of grace, or by looking at your life and conversation is led to think lightly of God and his ways; and from a contempt of your profes-

* Her eldest son, then Apprentice to Mr. T.

sion gives way to carelessness and sin, are you not answerable for his soul; and though he should perish in his sins, will not his soul be required at your hands, and will not his destruction enhance your own damnation.

O will not *all* the admonitions and friendly warnings you have got appear as swift witnesses against you! And those who you now cherish as dearest friends, to whom you have given your heart and affections, and for whose sake you are at times even willing to be damned; will you not then in the horror of irretrievable darkness and despair, look upon, as your most inveterate enemies, and mutually curse the day that brought ye first together. do you not stand on the brink of the most slippery precipice! O what a miracle of mercy, that your own incautious behaviour has not long since tumbled you in! How long it may be the case God only knows; His mercy is indeed long suffering; but "he that has been often reprov'd, and still hardeneth his neck, shall be *suddenly* destroyed, and *that without remedy*".

I have just received a letter from Mr. Christian, who informs me, that of late you are more

(181)

frequent at the public meetings ; I am glad to hear this ; God grant it may continue, but without a uniformity of behaviour in heart and life, it will do no good ; a partial reformation is only a new piece on an old garment. You must be all of a piece, and watch every motion of your heart, that it lead you not astray. If you are in earnest, you will be much in prayer, and will find a more useful manner of spending your leisure hours ; until this is the case, I shall have but little hopes of you.

I am, your real friend,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LXXXII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis,....to Mr. Jonathan Hern,

Limerick, March 27, 1773,

SOME time since, I received a letter from my Dear Brother Hern, which some little jealousies prevented my answering. But as I hope the cause of all these is now removed from your heart, so is the very remembrance of them from mine. Sister M. has made my heart glad on your account, but would think it a particular favour, your acquainting me in what manner you were convinced of your in-

Q

(182)

dwelling sin, and how delivered from it... Blessed be God who has made you a witness of that truth which you have so often, and so vehemently contradicted, and fought against. Surely you are now called to testify against *all* the works of the Devil, and to hunt him out of every strong hold... May the Lord make you faithful in this; if you are, your own soul shall prosper... But if to please men, you keep back any part of the childrens portion, be assured the Lord will deal by you, as you do by his little ones. I am my dear Brother Hern's Sincere friend.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER LXXXIII.

Mr. Jonathan Hern...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Cork, April 16, 1773.

I SHALL gladly comply with my Dear Sister Bennis's request... God was first pleased to make known his loving kindness to me, by pardoning my sins in the year 1763. The year after, I was married; and fell from grace. lost the life of God, and continued careless and in a state of sin for four months... The Lord in pity visited me again, healed my

backslidings, and gave me a sense of his favour...From the year 1764 to the year 1773. I have often backslided in heart from God. I often felt pride, passion, self-will, and every evil within; and was content; nay seemed in league with these enemies of my peace; and concluded that they must necessarily remain so long as I carried a body. I was an enemy in my heart, to the doctrine of holiness; where ever, or by whomsoever I heard it preached, my old man rose up against it; Nay though a travelling preacher I watched over those for evil who professed it! Thus you see how I fought against one of the most fundamental doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and like Saul of Tarsus thought I was doing God service.

Last new years day, I found an earnest desire to live more closely to God; insomuch that I entered into covenant with him, in my chamber to that purpose. The next day he laid his afflicting hand upon me, my body was racked with pain. Under this affliction the Lord gave me such a sight of my heart as I never had before; so that I was constrained to cry aloud; but still unbelief prevailed and

urged "these things cannot be done away, at least until a little before death". however I continued to have such a sight of my inbred corruptions from the second to the ninth of January, as I never had before. (I cried Lord this is Hell) on the ninth of January a book was put into my hands written by Mr. Gilbert on "Christian Perfection"; I was convinced by the arguments there made use of, that it was attainable by simple faith, and *that now* (I now saw my own wisdom kept me at a distance) Seeing it to be my privilege, and being weary of the hell in my own breast, I cried mightily to the Lord, and on Friday the twenty second of January, that *memorable* day God while I was at prayer removed the Hell in my breast, and I was filled with love, with Heaven, and with God! on the Monday following while meeting the select band, the Lord so shined into my heart, and gave me such a strong testimony of his Spirit; as removed every doubt that he had cleansed it from all sin; so that *now* I *know* experimentally, that his blood cleanseth from *all sin*. I *now* walk with God, and converse with him, as a man with his friend. He is pleased to

(185)

open my understanding in his word; and blessed be his name I am not afraid or ashamed to preach Jesus Christ as a Saviour to the uttermost, as one that is able and willing *now* to save his people from all their inbred sins; and from all Earthly, Sensual and Devilish tempers, into all the mind which was in Christ. Thus you see what the Lord Jesus has done in a short time; for such an unworthy wretch. O praise him with me. "Eternity's too short to sing his praise. I love my dear Sister Bennis *now* better than ever... Those are particularly dear to me who love God with *all* their heart. I often think of you and the select band in Limerick, and cannot forget to pray for ye, my love to them all, read this letter for them, nay publish it upon the house top. God since he has blessed me has made mine enemies to be at peace with me. May the Gracious Lord bless you and may your soul prosper as Carmel, Sharon and Lebanon. prays your truly

Affectionate Friend and Brother
 JONATHAN HERN.

Q 2

(183)

LETTER LXXXIV.

Mr. John Bristol...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Bally Moore, October 18, 1775.

My Dear Friend

Though I simpathize in your trials, yet you have not one too many, for God does *all things well*, and you may greatly comfort yourself by firmly believing that *all things shall* work together for good to them that love God; can you say you are not one of these? No, you cannot, you dare not say so; then take the comfort to yourself. You may be certain that deep waters are not more needful to carry the rich laden vessel to her appointed haven, than those deep conflicting sorrows are to bear your precious immortal soul over the tempestuous ocean of this dangerous world, to that blessed and peaceful shore where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary enjoy everlasting rest. Darkness I do not plead for, God forbid! but through great tribulation *we must* enter the kingdom of God. No trial I know for the present is joyous, but they tend to create in us an indifference to sublunary things. High winds and loud thunders are terrifying, yet

(187)

they have their intended use, they purge and cleanse the air, the application is easy, and I may add that winters nipping frost, carries as useful a property in it, as May-day's morning sun, though not so agreeable to u. We have often experienced what is most displeasing is not always most hurtful. No, for, "Crosses from his sovereign hand, are blessings in disguise". The great Apostle, besought the Lord thrice, to remove the thorn, but his answer was "My grace is sufficient" what can *you* desire more? Jesus is never so precious as when trouble is near; then in *him*, we experimentally prove dwells all the fulness of the God-head bodily; and out of his fulness we receive grace to help in every time of need. I trust you will soon have abundant cause to say with boldness, "God is my refuge and strength, and a very present help in every time of trouble". I am confident he will give you patience under all your sufferings, and an happy deliverance out of every trial. I had much rather labour under your present state of mind for a season, disagreeable as it may be; than be in the state of them who glide indifferently through religion

(188)

and the word, without finding either pleasure or pain in the former. Too many of this sort have I met with.

I never saw more need to make a stand against the rapid progress of formality than at present, for it breaks in upon the Church of God like a great inundation, and has already deluged a great part of the believing world; happy are they who maintain the real power of Godliness, though they follow the redeemer through tribulations darkest night. I trust and believe this is your case, and would be glad to hear you enjoy more sensible satisfaction in the good ways of our blessed Master. Reflect on his past goodness; follow him to the garden, behold him on Calvary mangled and torn! Contemplate on futurity, and consider, "*all* that height of glorious bliss, our everlasting portion is;" and then I think you will joyfully "praise him for all that is past, and trust him for what is to come,"...and be enabled to welcome toil or grief or pain, saying "all is well for Christ is mine," farewell my Dear Sister, may the

(189)

Lord be your support...prays your truly Affectionate Brother,

JOHN BRISTOL.

LETTER LXXXV.

Mr. John Goodwin...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Bristol, March 15, 1778.

MY VERY DEAR SISTER.

THOUGH exceedingly hurried in this large city, yet I cannot suffer our Dear father and friend (Mr. Wesley) to pay you a visit, without sending by him a short pledge of my continued affection; wherever this veteran Apostle goes he carries and leaves a blessing; may his visit to Ireland and particularly to Dear Limerick be as profitable, as it has been at this time to Bristol. Our bands both public and select had got into a covered way of speaking; instead of openly and explicitly declaring what God had done for their souls, in cleansing them from all sin and enabling them to love the Lord their God with all their heart, they would only say that "God had given them a great blessing," or such like general expression, which was in fact saying nothing to the point, and often stopped

(190)

timed preachers from sinking deeper into their experience. This ambiguous manner of speaking (which I fear has not been confined to Bristol only) springs either from Worldly prudence, or voluntary humility; both of which are hurtful to the people of God. But Mr. Wesley's reproof advice and encouragement, has had the good effect of removing this improper shyness, and many have declared in plain words, that "God hath cleansed them from all unrighteousness, and filled them with perfect love," some that I know nothing of in that respect 'till now, and by this means, the work of God seems to have got a fresh spur in this city.

As for my own state, I wish every one that has found a clean heart, would beware of the reasonings of good men, and also of their own heart on this point; devices from which I have greatly suffered. May God restore to me that simplicity which once I did enjoy; I clearly see nothing else will make me happy. I am more than ever convinced that it is the most simple thing in the world, to give the whole heart unto God; and hence it is, that it is so hard a thing! Pride utterly oppo-

(191)

ses this simplicity, pride will permit us to reason but not to believe, O that I was as a little child before the Lord! let my Dear Friend's petitions be added to mine for this....

Your Sincerely Affectionate

JOHN GOODWIN.

LETTER LXXXVI.

Mr. Samuel Bradburn...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis

Dublin, June 14, 1777.

MY DEAR MRS. BENNIS.

I HOPE your soul rejoices in the possession of the mind that was in Christ! what that mind was is plain from Mathew 11 & 29 and Philip 2 & 5. This humble mind implies every other blessing; *Love*, the very soul of all religion, can never be obtained or kept without this. *Faith*, that is armour upon armour, cannot possibly subsist without this blessed grace. *Hope*, that anchor of the soul, would be lost in hypocrisy, or banished by despair but for this disposition of the heart, in short *Patience, Resignation, Contentment, Peace, Joy, &c.* would all be empty names without the mind of Christ...*Genuine Humility* (that is) a "proper estimation of all things" or in other

(192)

words to "Think right," hence the Apostle
"In patience possess your souls," or (as we
may render it) *Thoughts*, of God, Angels,
Saints, Devils, the World, Religion, the
Scriptures, Heaven, Hell, Ourselves &c.&c.
I was going to proceed, but really mentioning
such a rich variety of subjects has quite
swallowed up my soul in shame and astonish-
ment, under a sense of my own Ignorance!
Surely "I am more brutish than any man,
and have not the understanding of a man" yet
blessed be my God, I know he is good, I feel
my heart warm with his divine love, while
I write about his amazing, incomprehensible
glorious Majesty! I think I begin to have
wisdom enough to know I am a fool. Glory
to God I am not lost in folly, beyond recov-
ery! Sometimes I am tempted to think I
know more than those about me, but all this
vanisheth away, when I consider things ac-
cording to their proper nature. I think upon
the whole, I find more faith, love, resig-
nation, patience and peace of mind every day,
because I find more of the blessed mind of
Christ. O that I may ever be kept at the

(193)

foot of the cross ; and always standing in awe, that I sin not ! I plainly see the worth of religion is not known to most of its professors, or they would quickly renounce not only all the errors in judgment about a God of love, but they would renounce the world more, and love to be more alone. O Sweet retirement ! there is no possibility of prospering without being often in private with our Heavenly Father, and as much as in us lies in sweet communion with his real Children....I am Dear Mrs. Bennis, Your Affectionate,

SAMUEL BRADBURN.

P. S. Without shewing this to any one whatsoever ; I particularly request your honest deliberate thoughts on the following queries.

First. Is it possible for God to be *Omniscient*, absolutely to know all things in time and eternity, past, present, and future ; for the doctrine of *absolute reprobation* (or *Calvinism*) not to be true, and for the torments of Hell to be Eternal ?

Second. If it is impossible for all these to be true together, which is the least dangerous to deny ?

R

(194)

Third. Would denying one of them, in any measure invalidate the Scriptures, make the God of love less loving, and the comforts of religion fewer in number, or smaller in nature; which is it?

I would go on, but I spare you, it will not do to say "you should not be thinking of these things," It is no new subject, nor do I ask for asking sake....Think closely upon each of these, and send me soon the result of your thoughts.

LETTER LXXXVII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr. Samuel Bradburn.

Limerick, June 22, 1777.

MY Dear Brother Bradburn must certainly be sensible how unequal I am to the task he imposes, yet nothing will do but the exposing my ignorance to a friend from whom I desire not to hide it.

The questions you propose are such as I think have never yet been fully answered. My own mind has been often puzzled about these very points, and I have always found it the safest way to withdraw my mind from these sort of speculations; finding them too deep for

(195)

me, indeed I think they are too deep for the wisest man that ever lived. Secret things belong to God, let us be content with what he has revealed, and not exalt our little narrow measure of understanding even to infinity, here we only discover our pride and ignorance, when to bring down the ways of God to our little comprehension, we form in our minds a certain system of laws, which we link together according to our own conceptions, and then proclaim these with as much confidence as if we had received them engraven on tables of stone by the finger of God! allowing that all the world may err, but *we* are *infallibly* right; what sad work has this sort of conceited infallibility made in the world, and how much of it has been blended in all controvercies, and it is to be lamented that too much of this; subsists even amongst the dear children of God. May the Lord deliver my friend and me from it.

On giving your letter another reading, I find you are determined not to take what I have already said for an answer, but I must send you my honest deliberate thoughts on your Queries.

First. (then,) In all my conceptions of God, his ways and works, I have concluded that I am very ignorant, that his ways are very mysterious, and that the depths of his eternal mind is not known even to the Angels that attend his throne; beyond these limits I never suffer my thoughts to wander. I certainly believe God perfect in every attribute, therefore he must be omniscient, must know all things past, present and future; yet we must not by this destroy his mercy; He has fixed certain laws whereby he governs the world, and the greatest reprobate must acknowledge them Holy, Just, and Good; then if so, they must be unalterable, else his Justice would not be perfect, for if his laws were dispensed with from a respect of persons, it would be *Caprice* not *Justice*. I also think he has made his terms so easy that all may be saved; I believe he has given a sufficient measure of grace to every soul, that by improving it, they may be saved; that they are not is entirely their own fault; though he certainly sees they will not, yet this foreknowledge of his cannot be imputed as the cause, no more than the foreknowledge of the prophets can be the

(197)

cause of the evils which they foresaw. I certainly think he wills that all should be saved, and when all by one transgression was ruined, he of his abundant mercy provided a most expensive ransom ! what more could he have done ? And farther, to clear his justice he has provided every help to draw, to allure, to invite us to accept the offers of his grace. But some may say “ he knew all would not accept his offered grace, and as he knew it, why did he not use some more forcible methods with them ” ? I think this would be unjust ; he holds out to them the same offers, the same warnings, the same invitations, and equally wills their salvation ; but as our Lord complains, “ They will not come unto him that they may have life ”. From all these considerations, I believe the doctrine of reprobation unscriptural, false and very pernicious. Yet there are many particular circumstances in God’s manner of working, which indeed I cannot fathom, and which looks like predestination, these are often very mysterious to me ; and I think should be let alone by the wisest until finite can be able to grasp infinity. And among these, are the eternity of the tor-

ments of Hell, and many other matters which I never expect to know in this life, and perhaps some of them I shall not know to all eternity. You ask, "which is less dangerous to believe?" I think it is less dangerous to believe him a God of universal love and benevolence, as he has declared himself in his word; who desires not the death of a sinner, but is willing that *all* should repent and live.... These are my "honest deliberate thoughts" but should I suffer my mind to run into nice reasoning on these matters, I would expect to be entangled in labyrinths of my own making; for I have ever observed in the ways and works of God, something as incomprehensible to me, as the Deity himself; and indeed if it was not so, he would not be God! for, what sort of a God must he be that could be comprehended by such little beings, such groveling insects, who cannot comprehend the smallest insect around us.

I hope my Dear Friend's mind is not puzzled about these matters; this would trouble me very much, though I should be apt to think it was but justice for your severity towards those who hold these opinions, which I often

(199)

thought you carried too far; I am certain there are many souls in glory, who whilst here held these opinions; and I really believe there are many now on earth who hold them and are beloved of God; then if he bears not only patiently, but lovingly with them, why should not we; perhaps their opinions are less hurtful than our zeal against them. May his unerring Spirit set us all right. prays
your truly Affectionate friend

ELIZA BENNIS.

 LETTER LXXXVIII.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Newfound-land, Carbonear, October 29, 1770.

Dear Madam,

A GRATEFUL sense of your kindness to me in Waterford, and a thankful remembrance of the Christian Admonitions you then pressed on me, I trust shall never be eradicated from my heart; emboldened by these, I take the liberty of acquainting you, with my safe landing here, my present situation and prospects &c.*****

Religion is scarce to be found in this country, a few professors scattered through the different Bays, that were awakened by the

labours of Mr. Coughlan, who keeps up meetings among them in the winter season, for that is the only time they have to spare.

As to myself, I see more and more of the wickedness of my own heart, and it is now my constant cry to have the polluted fountain cleansed; let me entreat you to remember me at the throne of grace, for I fear evil getting the ascendancy over my best resolutions. It has pleased God to shake me over the very brink of the grave several times, since I left Ireland; and then I could see how unfit I was to appear before his dread tribunal. Once I narrowly escaped death by a fall from a loft, several times I was near perishing in the great deep, having been tossed about in an open boat for some hours in a heavy gale of wind, when my hope failed me and I could only cry for mercy. Oft have I been delivered, and yet I am unthankful! However my resolution is fixed to turn and seek *him* who can speak peace to my soul, and though I often find Sin stealing on me unawares, yet hope I shall be delivered from it, by that Almighty arm which restrained me from drinking down iniquity like water.

(201)

Requesting a letter from you next spring,
and wishing you every happiness in time
and eternity, I am Dear Madam, Yours
most Respectfully

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER LXXXIX.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Newfound-land, Harbour Grace, November 12, 1771.

Dear Madam,

I AM truly thankful for your welcome
letter, and shall keep it as a precious relic :
your plainness I esteem, as a mark of your
regard for my soul ; but must observe you
have mistaken an expression in mine ; I can
assure you I never wrote it with design to
cover myself with the filthy rags of my own
righteousness: I know my wickedness too
well to impose such a covering upon myself,
and I have a natural something within, that
scorns to act the hypocrite, for I am sure I
never professed myself to be what I really
was not. I shall now act sincerely, and tell you
that I am a very wicked creature ; that I have
made resolutions both in Ireland and here,
and yet have broke them all ; I would wil-

(202)

lingly hope that I am not abandoned, though I find it hard to tear that Delila, that darling sin from me. I hate sin, and yet I fall into it, is that consistent? I am a lump of inconsistency! and see that nothing less than an Almighty Arm can save me from my sins. May the blessed Jesus prove that he is Almighty to save, and strong to deliver; may he pluck me as a brand out of the burning.

If I am not too bad to merit one thought of yours, let me request you sometimes to think of the *poor fugitive*, particularly when you address the throne of grace; and favour me with a letter next Spring.

I am Dear Madam &c.

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER XC.

Mr. John Stretton, to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Harbour Grace, November 13, 1772.

Dear Madam,

I DO indeed sincerely thank you for your very kind letter of last spring, it has proved a cordial to my drooping spirits. Last winter I met constantly in the mens' class, which Mr. Coughlan formed in this place,

(203)

and I believe was earnest in my search after happiness : oft have I been affected with true contrition, and was constant in my attendance at the throne of Grace ; yet still, I was, I am, but an “ almost christian ! ” You will ask the cause ! It is surely in *me* ; I am in a world of hurry, confusion and noise ; and it requires more Grace than I have yet attained, to stand even and steady upon these tumultuous wheels : as business encreased, my devotion began to languish ; the restless busy world, would fain engross the whole heart. Even *now* I am uneasy ; this foolish fluctuating world, takes up too much of my thoughts and desires, and either flatters with delusive shades, or affrights with gloomy apprehensions. At this *very instant*, I feel the powerful influence of *melancholy*, and can hardly collect my scattered thoughts to write. I hope God will bring good out of this evil, and turn my reflections to a proper point, O may it end in my sound conversion. In whatever part of the world, providence may see fit to cast my lot, I shall ever bear a grateful remembrance

(204)

of your friendship, and entreat a continuance
of your prayers for a poor wanderer.

I am Dear Madam &c.

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER XCI.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Harbour Grace, November 14, 1773.

Dear Madam,

A SENSE of my own insignificance, makes me at a loss to answer your last very kind and friendly letter; I ask myself, “how can this servant of Christ trouble herself with such a worthless cumber-ground?” Again, I reason thus with myself; “Art thou not ashamed to write the sincere sentiments of thy heart? Mrs. Bennis expects that thou canst now witness a good confession, and art now rejoicing in the love of God, and wilt thou undeceive her? if thou dost, she will look upon thee as a profligate wretch unworthy her regard”....I start at the supposition! I would not be despised, though I deserve it. At this instant my respect for you is so great, and the contempt I feel for myself so predominant, that I am apprehensive you will not

(205)

trouble yourself to write me another letter ; the thought is painful, for I have found your letters so useful, that I dread the loss of them: however I hope, I shall now and at all times, act consistent with truth and honest plainness, let what will be the consequence....I have to say of myself that I often feel the want of a Saviour ; and am clearly convinced that I cannot be happy, until Jesus the Lord, saves me from the guilt and the power of sin. I am often ready to lay hold on the promise, to take it as my own ; but I want a power to believe. Blessed Jesus, thou canst give the power, thou only canst open the eyes of the *blind*, thou canst remove this Egyptian darkness, canst break this cursed barr of unbelief and turn my Hell to Heaven.

My Dear friend do not cease to pray for me, pray even *now*, that I might receive my sight.

I return you my sincere thanks for your delicate manner in disclosing the death of my Dear Mother ; and for your wholesome advice, and all your kind admonitions, may the Lord bless you....I have now to inform you, that I have married a native of this land

S

(206)

since I wrote last, she is blessed with many accomplishments, that would even grace an European ; but the chief is, that she fears God, and walks in his ways.

After all, I find that no creature or created thing can make me happy : nor can I rest short of an interest, in *that Blood* which cleanseth from all sin....I hope this will find you in perfect peace, and all around you happy ; may a long continuance of spiritual and temporal blessings united, be your lot, is the unaffected wish, of Dear Madam Your real friend,

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER XCII.

Mr. John Stretton. to Mrs. Eliza Bennis
Harborgrace, November 4, 1774.

MY DEAR MRS. BENNIS,

THIS moment I feel my heart glow with affection to you ; I have just now read your welcome letter, and do sincerely thank you for it : your directions, with respect to married people, is exactly consistent with my sentiments, and I hope God will enable me to follow them....You observe that

(207)

I am naturally aspiring, and you shew the consequences of applying or misapplying this disposition : I have indeed thirsted after fame, fortune, pleasure ; owned they were empty shadows ; and yet could not refrain from pursuing them : but blessed be God, the rapid stream is in a measure turned ; now, I think that I thirst only for the “ *fountain of living Water.*” I believe I was never in earnest about the salvation of my soul, until the last winter ; then it pleased God to lay a slight sickness on me, and at the same time to open my eyes to the danger I was in : the terrors of Death got hold upon me ! I apprehended I was near my end, my fears were alarmed ! I dare not look death in the face ! my conscience accused me of all the evils I had committed, against light, against myself, my neighbour and my God ; O what would I then give for an interest in Jesus ; but tho’ I prayed earnestly, I found my heart as adamant ; I feared, I trembled, but could not weep, believe, or love. Then, Then, I saw that faith was the gift of God ; and that he might justly withdraw it from me, who had so often sinned with my eyes open ; and

(208)

grieved his Holy Spirit :...at last my spirit became somewhat composed, and my health returned. When I got up, my heart was bowed down, and oppressed with a guilty load; I took the bible, and the first place I opened was, the 53d. chapter of Isaiah; I read, and immediately felt my heart softened, I continued to read until I came to that glorious invitation, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, *without money, and without price.*" Then I broke out involuntarily, into a refreshing flood of tears; I read, and wept, and prayed by turns, and thought I had faith to lay hold on the promise; I felt that I loved Jesus, I saw that he was willing to be reconciled to me, and yet some strange doubt interposed, and I did not believe that I was yet savingly converted;...I dared not presume to say, that "God had forgiven all my sins," this is staggering at the promise through unbelief...I have been struggling with this unbelief all the summer, sometimes I find my heart enlarged, and I can love God, and the very name of Jesus; can love his chil-

(209)

dren unfeignedly, can even love my enemies :
 again I find a hard heart, unworthy thoughts
 of my Redeemer &c. : then again these are
 dispersed, and I feel a kind affection for *him*
 return, This is as nearly as I can describe
 the state of my soul. I hope, and believe
 that God will soon disperse the mists. Shine
 upon my soul, and clear up my evidence for
 Heaven : Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus,
 come quickly !... Though I meet with many
 trials in life, feel a great deal of perplexity
 in and from my business, and find it hard
 to get forward with my worldly concerns ;
 yet blessed be God, I sit in a measure loose
 to the world, and am resolved it shall not
 have all my heart : O cease not to pray for
 your affectionate friend :

JOHN STRETTON.

 LETTER XCIII.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs Eliza Bennis.

Harbourgrace. November 14, 1775.

MY VERY DEAR MRS. BENNIS.

YOU desire to know, who preaches
 here, since Mr. Coughlan's departure : I shall
 give you a short account, of the state of the

Church....After Mr. Coughlan's sailing for Europe, the Justices (his avowed enemies) took upon them to read prayers in the Church, and laboured with all their might, to introduce the dullest formality in the room of the pure gospel, which he had preached; and partly succeeded therein; those that had received the truth under him used to meet as a class, in the Church on Sabbath evenings; but now *their Worship*s would not suffer it. Mr. Arthur Thomey, (a respectable merchant, who was converted under Mr. C.) and I, being disgusted with this mode of action in the Justices; resolved to oppose the torrent of iniquity; we gathered a few together, who we believe loved the Lord Jesus; and found amongst them, a poor illiterate fisherman, that was not ashamed of his Heavenly master; who boldly stood up, and spoke in his name; him we constantly attend to hear:....Mr. Thomey also exhorts, and is endowed with both gifts and grace; this is done from house to house. We have joined ourselves into a society, and have drawn up rules as like Mr. Wesley as we could, consistent with local circumstances; our num-

(211)

ber about thirty, who I believe are sincere in heart.

At Carbonear about three miles from this, the people attend to hear a Mr. Pottle, who also received the truth under Mr. Coughlan: he reads prayers and expounds to them: but these have not yet formed themselves into a society: though some of them meet as a class, and are sincere followers of the Lamb.

Last October, a minister came to reside in Harbour Grace, in the room of Mr. Coughlan; he was sent by the "Society for propagating Christian knowlege," to Trinity bay, about fourteen years since; and in all that time, there has not one soul, been awakened under him: I much fear the consequence of his coming here: He is a man of letters but oh! he is blind: though our society now attend his preaching, and received the Sacrament at his hands last Sunday; yet we continue to meet as before, following Mr. Wesley, in all things as near as we can. This is the state of the Church, in this wilderness; (and this is the only part of New-foundland where the truth has yet been received.) I shall now say something of myself; and to

be circumstantial, must inform you, that our Society celebrated last Christmas day as the methodists do in Europe; (it was the first time of our drawing up rules.) In the morning before day, we sung the Nativity Hymns &c. and at night had a love feast: I gave out and raised the hymns: all the day my mind was agitated, and my body disordered; in the evening I grew very sick, and the distress upon my mind increased: I was tempted to go to bed; however, I resolved if possible, to go through with the love feast; just before we began I went to prayer alone, darkness overwhelmed my soul; yet in the midst I said, if I die, or if I perish, better perish thus crying for mercy. I went, and began with the first of Mr. Wesley's love feast hymns; no sooner had I given out the first lines, viz.

“ Come, and let us sweetly join,

“ Christ to praise in hymns divine.”

and mentioned the sacred name of Christ; but my heart glowed with affection: I burst out into tears, and continued with flowing eyes, to give out and sing the rest of the hymn, until I came to these lines;

(213)

“ Christ hath burst the bands of Death !
 “ We his quick’ning spirit breath :”

then, O then I was so overpowered, that I could neither give out nor sing any more : I felt *all* the force of the expression ; I then *that moment* felt, that he had burst the bands of Death in my soul ; and that I did then breath his quick’ning spirit : all present were greatly affected ; and a backslider that night professed to have found with me, the quickening influence of the spirit of our Lord : this was a night much to be remembered ; Jesus sprinkled my soul, with his precious blood ; and the destroying Angel had no power to hurt : I went to bed very much disordered in body, but my mind calm : but immediately I began to doubt ; I could not believe that this was true faith ; now I was left in darkness again ; I knew not what to do, at last I concluded that as I could not believe, I was one of the fearful, that are mentioned in the Revelations, to be without the New-Jerusalem: I told my fears to my friend Thomey, he said my thoughts were false and vain ; and asserted that the fearful above mentioned, were those who were afraid of Man, and asham-

ed of Jesus; yet I could not believe, until he proved his assertion, by the Notes of Mr. Wesley, and others on the text: now my doubts vanished, light broke in again upon my soul, his words were like dew; blessed be God, I yet find Jesus precious to my soul; when I find I love *him*, it is an evidence to me of my acceptance. As to temporals, I have gone through the furnace this summer; but I believe God will bring me out of all my troubles: I greatly approve of the Journal you recommend me to keep, and think *now* to begin it: Lord help me, I am a poor unfaithful creature, and have a poor stock of experience to begin with. I note every part of your letter, and particularly request you to write me a long and plain one, next spring your letters are always useful and welcome to your truly Affectionate Friend,

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER XCIV.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Mliza Bennis.

Harbour Grace, November 8, 1776.

MY DEAR SISTER BENNIS.

DO you think me worthy of being call-

(215)

ed a Brother, in the best of bonds? I cannot think myself worthy of such an honourable appellation even at present; for O how little of the mind that was in Christ is found in me; and when God is pleased to give me a sense of my heart, I find it still a cage of unclean birds: I know and feel, that my work is not done now, that I am enabled to believe: I have a whole carnal mind, that is enmity itself to subdue; and there are spiritual wickedness in high places to be overcome; who is sufficient for these things? none but Christ; he conquered *for me*, and I trust he will conquer *in me* too; until all his enemies and mine are destroyed: The enemy of souls has often assaulted me, since I have tasted that the Lord is gracious, but blessed be God for free grace; my Jesus saved me when I could not save myself; I know sometimes that I love him, and I desire to do his will; but when I do not feel this flame in my heart, and clouds and darkness rest upon my soul; yet still my desire is towards *him*; for without *his presence*, I cannot take delight in any created good. This in short is the general course of my experience, the last year; last Christmas I began to exhort amongst our

(216)

little society, very unwillingly; for it was reduced to this alternative, either for me to undertake the superintendance, or see the Society decay; then I thought myself called in the order of providence to do what I could; but still I am not persuaded, that I am called of God to preach his word; and should be glad if some person more worthy, and fitter for the work, was here to keep these few sheep together, and do them good; the reason I have to think so is this; there has not one soul been awakened by my speaking, that I know of, now near a year; I ventured to speak in public to a number of people almost savage, in the upper part of this bay, where business called me this summer; but I know not that any good was done; now I greatly fear being one of those that run, when they are not sent; yet if I know myself I think that in this I seek not my own glory and I fear to decline acting thus, lest I should offend God and bring guilt upon my own soul. My Dear Sister pray earnestly for me, that I may persevere unto the end.

I assure you this is a trying country, and I believe as perplexing a business as any in

(217)

the world ; yet, there was one month this year, when I was engaged in the most complicated parts of it ; and (O amazing mercy and unbounded grace !) I never enjoyed a more calm serenity in my life ; therefore I conclude that no outward thing can effect the soul, if it keeps close to Christ: I wish I did so always. Lord help me I am a strange inconsistent creature ! Would you think well, to consult Mr. Wesley about my doubts of being called to speak in public ; and let me have his opinion thro' you. May the Lord Jesus, the good Shepherd of the Sheep, keep you safe to the Day of Eternity ; prays your affectionate Brother,

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER XCV.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr John Stretton.

Limerick, March 22, 1777.

Dear Brother Stretton,

MAY he who has called you by his grace, to the great work wherein you are engaged, still keep you and make you faithful in your calling ; your unfitness is no barr in *his* way who can send by whom he will ; and generally chooses foolish and base instruments, that

T

his power and grace may be manifest to all : Blessed be God that he does give you to feel your poverty, you have need of it, how oft would you have fallen through the pride of your own heart, if you had not this view of yourself ; how gracious is it then, to keep us within sight of ourselves, that we may be equally ballanced ; and by feeling our necessities be led to look for help where only it is to be found ; by our own experience, and that of others, we may notice, whatever blessing God is willing to bestow, he first gives us to feel the want of ; he deals tenderly ; does not break our spirits by discovering to us all at once the whole hateful picture of our heart ; but by little and little as we are able to bear and with this view points out to us the remedy also ; like the discovery of a rich mine, which though stored with inestimable treasure, yet requires labour to put us into the possession of it, we must dig before we reach the pearl ; and if we would carry on the illusion, suppose to yourself a poor Beggar, having a discovery made to him of hid treasure ; who instead of immediately exerting himself to dig and be rich, sits down on the spot to

(219)

weep for his poverty; what would you say to such? would you not upbraid him for his folly? and bid him arise and seize the opportunity put into his hands....but suppose this man instead of doing so, still pleads his poverty as an excuse for his indolence; sits still and contents himself, with discovering the treasure to every passenger who goes by: Need I make the application? does not your own heart prevent me? what hinders your deliverance? the Lord has given you to feel your need, to feel the bitterness of sin; and has also discovered to you the remedy, then what hinders? will you plead your poverty? why this is the very thing should drive you forward; the good physician came not to heal the whole, but to cure the sick of every malady; O come taste, and see, how good he is! do not be content with recommending the blessing to others, this is holding the door open to all to pass through but yourself; the Lord bids you come, he asks "*Wilt thou be made whole*" O let all excuses be laid aside, and venture your *whole* soul on his atoning blood; trust him, prove him and you shall find him all that he has promised to be.

(220)

I forget that I am writing to a *Preacher*, from whom I should *receive* instruction; the earnestness of my soul for you, carries me beyond my limits; I shall make no other apology than that I love your soul, and would have you as happy as God can make you: O may he remove every hindrance, and that his hand may not be stayed, see that you be a fellow worker together with him, lop off every thing that might be a hindrance to his work on your heart; let nothing be too little or too great to part with; often very small things hinder, because we are apt to hug these to our bosom, thinking that God will not dispute with us for such a trifle; and though his spirit reproveth for it, yet we pass it by; still thinking that it is too small to be sin:....But my Dear friend, be honest and ingenuous with God: search your own heart, and be willing that God should see it all, and point out every lurking evil; and see that you on every such discovery, cut off the right hand: remember that "Flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." If we will follow Christ, we must deny ourselves, and take up our Cross, and follow him manfully; else he

(221)

will not receive us; the indulging the flesh in Meat, Drink, Sleep, Indolence or pleasure, will as effectually damn the soul, as open sin. God has given us a clear light to walk by; and he expects from us in proportion to what we have received; May the Lord help us to consider our calling, and to walk wisely and surely before him: and to this end what great need have we of watchfulness!

Might not the Devil himself be our example in this? he watches continually, and often finds us sleeping, and never fails to avail himself of our indolence: O then be watchful, be humble; consider you have nothing that you have not received; and what talents you have, were given you for the good of others; use them as his property who bestowed them, not your own; being assured that you must render a strict account to *your* master, and *theirs* for whose use they were given. Beware how you desist from your labour; the Lord has called you to work in his vineyard, wait then until he is pleased to dismiss you; but if you are self-willed, and will go before you make out your days work, you are not entitled to your penny; but may fall under

(222)

the condemnation of the slothful servant, who hid his Lords money ; rather give cheerfully, what the Lord has given graciously to you ; if it be much, it is not yours ; if it be little, he is able to encrease it ; leave that matter to him. Cast your mite into his treasury, and let him dispose of it as he sees fit. I am my Dear Friend's sincerely Affectionate,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER XCVI.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Harbourgrace, June, 30, 1777.

I THANK my very Dear Sister Bennis, for your sweet letter of last March ; I gladly embrace the present uncommon opportunity to write, and do most earnestly beg a letter from you *immediately*, as the ship returns without making much delay in Ireland.

It is the desire of my heart, to attain to that perfect love, you have so well described in your letter, but yet how far short of it do I come ! surely you must have experienced what you wrote, else your arguments could not be so conclusive ; if you think me worthy, let me know ; I humbly hope it would

(223)

not be "*casting pearls before swine*"; I agree with you in sentiment, and do believe this perfection attainable; for our God is Almighty to save, and strong to deliver; and I doubt not his willingness to save to the *uttermost*, them that come to him: your letter has cleared up some doubts, and cast a light upon this subject; much more than many hours reading. Blessed be God for the least measure of his light, and I desire to bless his holy name, for bringing me acquainted with you.

You say you know I need not instruction from you; Indeed, my Dear Sister, you would not speak thus, if you knew me as well as I know myself; for after all my reading (which I am very fond of,) I find myself amazingly ignorant of spiritual things; and greatly feel the want of Christian converse; for the professors here, (except a few which are dispersed) are very ignorant, and unfit to keep up a conversation of any kind; therefore let me have in your next, and *always* as much of that sweet *earnestness of heart*, for my spiritual welfare, as you can possibly express; for I feel every line. With respect to

(224)

my experience, I have to say, that I often find Jesus Christ *precious* to my soul, and when it is not so I am unhappy ; when I feel *His Love* every thing pleases ; when he is gone, the whole world is a wilderness ; and Oh my Dear Sister ! you can hardly think what barrenness, doubts, fears, sins, perplexities, and evil tempers I have to grapple with ; so that I sometimes think, nobody is so violently assaulted as I am. Sometimes, with all these upon me, I am obliged to stand up in public to speak for God ; and often find that my adorable master drives them away, cease not pray that my faith fail not, and that my labour be not in vain. In the Winter season, we have public preaching three times a week, from house to house in the evenings ; (not having yet any meeting house) and in this, I often have the cross to take up ; being so situated, that I must cross an arm of the sea for this purpose after night ; which in this country, at that season is very dangerous and disagreeable ; however I have found that my God is all-sufficient...In Summer our meetings can be only on Sundays ; as the fishing business in which all here are employed pre-

(225)

vents meeting during the week ; not giving sufficient time for necessary sleep and food : however through many difficulties and discouragements, all that first joined in Society keep up together ; and one only has been added : I cannot omit mentioning here, a sweet youth, of eighteen years old, (who made no profession) in a sudden violent distemper went to Heaven last March ; leaving a clear testimony, of his dying in the Lord : last Winter I travelled over land, in this desolate country, about twenty-four miles : to a harbour that never heard the joyful sound ; but my labour seemed in vain ; the people there, but a remove from savage ; yet I have since felt, as if God would bless the seed then sown.

Last spring Brother Thomey and I, went to St. Johns, which lies about fourteen leagues from us ; and there found Brethren ; one of whom preaches ; the society only eight persons, very poor ; and yet they have built a neat little meeting house ! to the admiration of even the reprobate world ; we tarried with them a few days ; they are Calvinists, but have the genuine mark of love ; and where-

(226)

ever that is met with, we should joyfully give the right hand of fellowship,

“ Let names and sects and parties fall,
“ And Jesus Christ be all in all.”

Farewell my Dear Mrs. Bennis, may the Lord be your God in time and Eternity: prays your weak, and unworthy Brother in Christ.

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER XCVII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr John Stretton.

Limerick, July 24, 1777.

I YESTERDAY received my dear Brother Stretton's welcome favour, of last month; and from a desire of giving you all the satisfaction in my power, take the earliest opportunity of answering it:...If my last has been in any wise blessed to your soul, my end is answered; let the praise be given where only it is due, not to the instrument, but to the hand which conducts it:...I thank our gracious Lord on your behalf, I do find you bound on my heart before the throne of grace:...Blessed be God that you do feel it the desire of your heart, to attain to that perfect love, which is the privilege of the chil-

(227)

dren of God: without this desire, and an earnest pressing after it, you would be scarce able to retain what you have already received: and indeed I have observed, that every soul after having received a sense of pardon, is led by a natural, or rather supernatural propensity, to seek after a farther and deeper work of grace; this I think may discover to us, that it is not only our privilege; but if I may use the expression, our "right of inheritance;" our purchased possession, our land of Canaan; to inherit which we were called out of Egypt, led through the wilderness, fought many battles, and encountered many dangers: you may ask, then why do not all experience it? the Apostle tells us because of unbelief; as it was with the Israelites; they were brought out of Egypt, crossed the Red-sea, fed on the manna, drank of the rock, tasted of the grapes; yet by reason of unbelief never attained to the Inheritance: ... Now apply the allegory in your own mind, and see if the comparison will not hold? if so what hinders? are you brought to Jordans banks? can you look and see the goodly prospect? and are the taste of the

(228)

grapes delicious? then away with your cowardice; think not of the tall sons of Anack, nor the high walls of Jerico, nor the broad river of Jordon! let none of these affright or retard my friend; but look up, and see who leads the way! what are all your hindrances before the *all powerful Jesus*, the captain of your Salvation: then do not delay, reasoning about it; but bravely determine to venture on the word, and promise of him who cannot lie; and trusting in him, say with old courageous Caleb, “We are *well able* to go up, and take the good land;” be encouraged, believe, and enter in; may the Lord help you to try him *now*; to put his goodness to the proof *this moment*: whilst you are reading this letter; believe that he has purchased this great freedom, this inestimable privilege, this unspeakable deliverance for you; that he is *now this moment* willing to bestow it; that it is even reached out to you, with entreaties to accept it: then no longer refuse your own mercies, now dare to believe in spite of the Devil: venture your soul upon him, and see if he will not be faithful to his grace: O do not unbelievably draw back,

(229)

rather presumptuously believe, and the Lord will confirm it to your soul; remember the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the Lord of Heaven loveth and yieldeth to the violence of faith and prayer.

In the earnestness of my heart I can almost believe for you; may the Lord help you to believe for yourself; indeed until you do, you can never be happy: but when you do, take care you do not look for, or expect more in that state, than God has promised; remember it is not a deliverance from temptations, trials, or natural infirmities; but a deliverance from Sin. If you keep this in view, it will much clear your way, and answer many doubts and perplexities which Satan may cast into your mind; it will also help you to bear the reproach, and answer the either real or scoffing questions which may be asked of you concerning this state; for when once you declare the glad tidings of Sanctification, you set yourself up, as a mark for the seeking Soul to follow after; and for the scoffer to jeer at: and you will be likely to meet with far more of the latter than of the former, therefore remember, you are to be always ready to give an an-

U

(230)

swer for the "hope that is in you"; and this will be more frequently sought for, in your general outward conduct and conversation; than by answers to particular questions; then what manner of persons should we be, (who profess the Lord Jesus to be a *complete Saviour*) in all holy living and conversation.

You ask, if I have experienced this perfection, indeed my Dear friend, your question has put my very heart to the blush; I do not choose to bring in my experience as a standard for any; I have cause of shame and self-reproach because of my unfaithfulness: yet for your satisfaction I must do my good and gracious God justice; to the praise of his holy and ever blessed name, I acknowledge, that I, unworthy as I am, have been made partaker of this great grace: a witness of his power, to save to *the uttermost all* that come to him; and had I been *faithful* to his grace, since the year 1763. I might be now a pattern to others :...but make no man your standard, look to your Lord Jesus, who says, "*be ye holy for I am holy,*" and when you meet with blots and flaws in the greatest professors; remember our Lord's words, "*what*

(231)

is that to thee, follow thou me," be determined to be as holy and as happy as God is willing to make you; and indeed you never can be completely happy, until the Lord has full possession of your heart; until the root of bitterness, the evil propensity is taken out of your heart; then you shall find it your meat and drink to do his will; because you love him with all your heart, and love makes all things easy...this love is the fulfilling of the law: for whilst we love, we cannot break any of his commandments: because we love him, we love all his laws; and love leads us willingly into all obedience: all constraint is taken away, love leads us as by a natural propensity to do his will; and it is not grievous because we do only what we love....My explanation is very imperfect, may the Lord write it clearly on your heart; and surely he will, his word is not yea and nay, but *yea and Amen*; sure as the pillars of Heaven: open your mouth *wide* and he will fill it; if you open it but a little, you will get but a little morsel; but *wide* and *extensive* as your desires can *stretch*, the power of God extends; and his willingness will bestow: our faith

(232)

only can limit his bounty ; he puts a blank into our hands, to fill up for ourselves ; and says “ be it unto you, according to your faith.” O my Dear Friend, here is a door thrown wide open ; will you not now haste to enter, to believe, see and experience the wonders of redeeming love : I long for your complete deliverance, and feel my own soul happy, in the prospect of your happiness ; O that I could say any thing, that could contribute to it ; may the Lord speak to your heart, take away the hindrance and *force* you to believe....Be zealous, be diligent, active and laborious for God ; and be content with your station ; you know not for what end the Lord has sent or placed you where you are : but be assured it is for good, then take up your cross, willingly abandoning yourself to his care, and welcoming his will, whatever it be : seek wisdom, and christian experience from him ; and you shall not feel the want of society ; he will be more to you than many helps....I wish you to pursue the Diary, that I formerly recommended ; you will find it a great help ; I have often experienced much comfort in reading

(233)

over past experience, and have often felt happiness and support in comparing past with present....I earnestly recommend you not to neglect it, but buy up opportunities for that purpose; only, do not write much at a time, that it be not burthensome; except when your heart is *particularly* enlarged; then it may not be well to cramp yourself, but let your heart and pen flow together, to the glory of God....May the Lord bless you with all your hearts desire, and give you success in your labours....Prays your sincere Friend.

ELIZA BENNIS.

 LETTER XCVIII.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs Eliza Bennis.

Harbourgrace, November 30, 1777.

MY DEAR SISTER BENNIS.

I THANK you, for your very affectionate letter of last July; and for your condescension, in answering that question I proposed; be assured it was not idle curiosity that induced me to ask it: but a desire to have some secret doubts resolved, and your answer has satisfied them: I am now fully persuaded,

(234)

that perfect love is attainable in this life ; and in consequence of this persuasion, I proclaim the joyful news to others : but I do not experience it myself ; I find in me, mountains of unbelief, of pride, the whole body of sin to grapple with : I feel sin in my prayers, and in all my performances ; and do frequently experience, what Mr. Whitfield observed of himself ; “ that he never preached or prayed well, but he found the enemy near, saying *well done George* ” — These things make me often groan in secret ; and sometimes I am ready to conclude, that on these accounts, I had better cease speaking in public ; but when I see the absolute necessity there is for it, and consider that it might prove the disjoining of our Society ; I again change my mind, and abandon myself, flying for protection to my Lord and master, and when I do this he comforts me : I have taken your advice as to the diary ; and hope it may be profitable : but being often from home on my blessed masters business, and sometimes on my own, occasions disorder in it ; but I still intend to continue it, as well as circumstances will admit. Our little society neither increases nor decreases ; the

(235)

generality of the people in this place are very wicked, and the dead ministry makes them quite regardless of hearing the truth: few here but had some serious impressions, while Mr. Coughlan was here; and these having drawn back, cannot now bear to hear the truth; therefore keep from our meetings: a few days past, I was called to speak to a very great audience: a mixed multitude, at the funeral of one of our friends who died in the Lord; the minister was present, a learned scribe, filled with the lumber of the schools: before I began, I felt some perturbation; but looking to the Lord, he enabled me to declare his truth with boldness; and to preach repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; proving this to be the doctrine of the Church of England from the articles, Homilies and Liturgy of that Church. The learned and Reverend Doctor, when I had done gave an extempore oration, of about five minutes; did not gainsay, nor enforce what I had advanced; his language seemed as heathen greek to the audience in general; he spoke much of the plastic power of Nature

(236)

of the dignity, and mortality of Man, but not one word of the New Birth : I afterwards understood that some were affected with the truths they had heard ; but O our enemies are not idle, we are scoffed and jeered at by almost all ; we have many trials to go through, many crosses to take up ; O pray for us, and get the select society to join you, in supplicating God for a revival *in this* wilderness.

I shall anxiously expect a long letter next spring, and therein speak plain, rebuke and exhort freely, for indeed all from you shall be most thankfully received ; I have much reason to thank God for your letters, and that ever he laid me on your heart ; surely I am a brand plucked from the burning : the Lord grant I may appear as a star in your crown of glory. May he bless you, and make you instrumental in his hand of doing much more good ; is the sincere prayer of your truly Affectionate, &c.

JOHN STRETTON.

(237)

LETTER XCIX.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Harbour-grace, December 2, 1778.

IT was late this fall, when I received my Dear Mrs. Bennis's letter: and it proved as all the former, very profitable to me; though I have not attained the end it had in view. I hope your united prayers were heard in our behalf, for last Winter the Gospel trump was sounded through this desert land with some success, the people in the place where we live, being almost weary of the word my fellow labourer (Mr. Thomey) and I made an excursion of about sixty miles along the wild shores of this dreary country at Christmas, preaching in every place inhabited. The people flocked to hear, and were greatly pleased with the welcome sound. We again and again repeated our visits, in one place where was but four dry professors, a society was soon established of thirty-seven, near all believers, in one evening at a love feast, five were set at liberty; open profligates convicted and converted, also two aged sinners called in, one of one hundred years old, the other

of eighty, who are yet alive. Surely nothing is too hard for our God. It would delight your heart, to see old and young flocking to the ordinances, in the most inclement weather, from one to five miles distant: at Pelican (near fifty miles from this) we met with an aged disciple called Haskins, who has gathered a little society; he was a member of Mr. Wesley's society in England near thirty years since: and enjoys the perfect love of God; he and we were much comforted and strengthened by this visit. In St. Johns a few soldiers and servants joined themselves in society, and though few and very poor, have built themselves a neat meeting house; we visited these also, their society prospers; they are Calvinists, but live the life of faith, and love is even manifest in their faces. The little society where I live, is at present in a very disordered state; the thorns and thistles are ready to destroy the good seed, the people are mostly very poor, the place in general growing more and more wicked, and a carnal minister makes them worse, so that those who are not of our society, will not even come to hear.

(239)

I continue to labour without intermission, though I meet with violent opposition both from within and from without, this last summer I have endured the most grievous trials I ever met with, through my dealings with evil men. The customs, manners and trade of this land is in my apprehension contrary to pure and undefiled religion : and it is remarkable that religion on these accounts flourish most in the winter season, when business is at a total stand. Blessed be God I am not yet quite overcome by mine enemies, though it sometimes seems as if all the powers of Hell were combined against me ; I hope tribulation is working patience in me : my soul suffers on account of others ; I feel their woes, I grieve for their faults, and I lament for their ignorance, carnality and spleen. May the Lord Jesus pity the few scattered sheep in this place, that the wolfe is ready to devour : O pray for us, call on all those with you, who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, to join you in storming the throne of Grace on our behalf, that we be not swallowed up by our enemies....I must entreat you to continue a correspondence so beneficial to me,

(240)

let me have a letter in the spring, and O cheer my drooping spirits, for I am a poor creature, Lord help me :...may he forever dwell with you, and may you be useful to many others, as you have hitherto been to your unworthy Brother, but most grateful Friend.

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER C.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Harbourgrace, December 18, 1779.

MY very Dear Sister Bennis's letter of last spring proved a comfort in time of need ; blessed be my good God, I have this year experienced much of his goodness to me, and found his providential care over me in all my undertakings. The summer before last, all my property had like to be swallowed up by the subtilty of wicked and designing men ; who set themselves against me, because I openly reprov'd sin : they did me much hurt, but God has turned it to my good....Last January I was very near death with a quinsey, the effects of a severe journey taken that winter along this desert shore,

(241)

doing I trust my Master's business. Last August I entered on a new business, having for the present given up the fishery, and commenced Shopkeeping; here I found that the hearts of all, even of the wicked, are in the hands of God, for instantly I had many of the gentlemen here ready to assist me: most of these a few months past were as ready to abuse me because I publickly condemned their doings; yet now they gave me encouragement without my seeking their good will; and what is better than all, God has blessed and is blessing my endeavours.

I am now jealous of my heart, business engages much of my thoughts, yet still I think that I would not give up my God for ten thousand worlds: O that I may never be guilty of the base idolatry, of worshiping the gift, and forgetting the giver.

With difficulty the professors here are kept together, and I think my business has not prevented my constantly attending on them every appointed time. Another remarkable Mercy I have to mention; the man that most grievously injured me last year, both in name and property, was last September taken Sick; on

(242)

a Monday he was in a high fever, and wicked beyond description, blaspheming &c. on the brink of black despair: Tuesday night he sent for me, I forgave him all he had said and done to me, talked and prayed with him: that night and Wednesday he laboured under strong convictions; Wednesday night I sat by him expecting his death he was then calm and resigned; Thursday he was better, and rejoicing in God his Saviour. On Monday an Infernal, on Thursday a Saint: Behold! Admire the power of changing Grace. Since this he has joined our Society, and I hope will continue faithful; my *Dear Sister* my *Spiritual Mother*, my *Best Friend*; continue to pray for me, and cease not to comfort me by your affectionate advice. May the Lord bless you with every blessing of the Upper and Nether Spring, is the unceasing prayer of

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER CI.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Harbour-grace, June 29, 1785.

AFTER a silence of five years, I was exceeding glad to find, that my very Dear

(243)

Sister Bennis, my mother, my friend was still alive ; for I had heard you was removed to your eternal rest, but blessed be God you are yet spared to do more good in the earth :...I suppose you have lately seen Mr. Wesley, and possibly have had some conversation with him about me ; I wrote to him last Fall, to send a preacher to this place, as the work of God seems to be at a stand here, and superstition and profaneness greatly increasing ; he answered my letter, told me of Dr. Coke being in America, and said he would write to him to call here before he returned to England :...but he is not yet arrived :..surely if he comes, he will find this a desolate wilderness, and that it requires the spirit of martyrdom to carry on the work here : my Dear Friend and fellow labourer Arthur Thomey, who was instrumental in the conversion of many souls, and laboured incessantly many years in his Lords vineyard, is called hence to receive his eternal reward ; he went to Portugal last November on business : just landed there, was in good health going to bed, and was found dead in the morning : you can hardly conceive what I have

(244)

felt on this melancholy occasion; yet surely God is love, though I cannot see through this dark cloud!...O write to Mr. Wesley, not to forget us in this benighted corner; I know by experience that sweet persuasion dwells upon your tongue, and can you exercise it for a more beneficial purpose? let not these souls perish for lack of knowledge:..I still exercise my poor talents, but the society is broken up, and few come to hear me, and my present business prevents the excursions I used formerly to take:...yet blessed be God he keeps my own soul in peace, sweetly stayed upon him, and expectantly looking to him for a revival of his work even in this place; indeed were it not for this expectation, I should be tempted to return to Ireland; if it was the Lord's will, I would be glad to see you before you die; but may he direct....My Dear Sister, cease not pray for me while you breath: I really believe your prayers for me have been remarkably answered: O I cannot describe what a comfort it brings to my mind in the midst of afflictions, when I recollect, nay when I am sure, I have one faithful praying friend yet alive, may

(245)

the Lord Jesus bless you, bless you in time, bless you in eternity, is the earnest prayer of your sincere friend and brother.

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER CII.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Harbour-grace, November 15, 1785.

I AM much obliged to my Dear Sister Bennis for yours of last August: the Lord has indeed supplied the place of Dear Thomey; for last month a preacher arrived here from London, sent by Mr. Wesley; his name John Magery; a good man, and a good preacher; I hope he will prove a blessing to this place.

We wanted one given wholly to the work; I see that a preacher should not be entangled with the affairs of this life. My heart is ready to accept your kind invitation, for be assured it is not the desire of getting rich that has kept me here; but I have been waiting to see the motion of the incumbent cloud. If I had left this, the very appearance of religion had vanished, and I dare not desert my post until lawfully discharged: yet if the Lord

(246)

permits me to see Ireland, I would think little of travelling one hundred miles to see you: you who I may with propriety call my Mother in the Gospel: may the Lord encompass you with his favour as with a shield. You may well say you know the comfort of religious society, but I know very little of it, you can hardly conceive my situation in this respect, I may say that singly and alone, the Lord has enabled me to withstand the whole place where I dwell, but I am yet preserved by the power of God, through your prayers: blessed be God. Business prevents my enlarging at present. O let me partake of your thoughts, when you draw near to God.

December 12th, Every thing here appears so disagreeable to Mr. Magery, that I fear he will not abide long,—indeed whcever seeks ease or comfort is not likely to meet much of it in this Island.—Blessed be God who has so wonderfully kept and supported me for many years in much weakness, in many trials and sundry disagreeables, preaching a free Gospel in this dreary Region: but when I have been weak, then I was strong. An awful providence happened here this Summer,

(247)

to a youth, whose family perhaps you know, the son of Mr. A .P. of Waterford : he had a violent fever in July, my soul was pained for him ; he just recovered, was saved with the skin of his teeth ; went on a party of pleasure (so called) on a Sunday, to an Island a little distance from this ; rolled over the Cliff, and was taken up Dead, wounded, broken, bruised ! I felt much on this occasion for I had a great regard for the youth, and had spoken much to him just before of the one thing needful : O when will the young take heed to their ways ! farewell my dear Mother, forget not your Affectionate Son in Christ,

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER CIII.

Mr John Stretton....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis

Harbour-grace, November 18, 1788.

MY Dear, old, faithful, afflicted friend : I did, I do sympathize with you in the furnace ; but what can I say to mitigate the severity of the fire ? May the Lord, the only good, the just, the wise be with you, while walking through the fire, and it shall not kin-

die upon you; by and by, Heaven will level all these distinctions in life, that men call fortunate and unfortunate; and then we shall with wonder see that nothing was snatched away from us but what would have hurted us, if left in our possession. But blessed be God, in the midst of affliction you abound in consolation also. O happy troubles, fortunate trials, blessed disappointments, that have turned all your family to seek the Lord, here is the answer of your many years prayers, the fruit of your many supplications; surely the Lord is with you, *and the fire doth not, shall not kindle upon thee*, he will uphold you with the right hand of his power, and you have seen, and shall see his great salvation.

I have nothing agreeable to write from this wilderness, Religion seems on the decline; for my part I am absolutely left alone, I have not ceased acting as a preacher, but the people have lost the form and power of Godliness, and though superstition and profanity abound yet still I continue to preach, and some few come to hear. Mr. Magery seems buried alive in Carbonear, he married a planters daughter, without her fathers consent, gave

(249)

much offence, and his usefulness seems to be at an end. Temporal things have been unprosperous with me this year; but I hope my trust is not in the uncertain things that make to themselves wings, and fly away, let you and I stand still, and we shall see the salvation of our God! O blessed expression,—yes, *Our God!*

December 7th, I have just read over your last letter; I find it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of Heaven, you are drinking the bitter cup, but the Lord is holding your trembling hand and encouraging you to follow him through sufferings to glory: He has said (and can we doubt his word) *all things* shall work together for good to those that Love God: if so, the present dispensation is for good, for *your* good; for surely you can say with truth, “Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that *I love thee*”. I sometimes vainly wish that I was near you, to share your troubles, and mingle mine with yours, but were I to tell all the exercises of a public and private nature, that have agitated my spirits these two or three years past, it would require long time indeed, and I have

not time to write it: Mr. John M'Geary came here as a preacher appointed by Mr. Wesley he came seemingly in the spirit of the Gospel full of love: He had natural talents for the work, and I gave him every help and encouragement in my power.

But Oh he laboured in vain, and left this place for England last month; nor do I know one professor or profane that wished his stay:...he brought upon himself multiplied vexations, and a flood of reproach upon the cause; I was constrained for the cause sake, and for my own credit sake, to keep at a distance from him for near a year past....In these troublesome times, with every possible discouragement, no friend or brother to assist, and reproach pouring down on the methodist name; I say with all this to discourage me, I began to build a meeting house in Harbour-grace, and opened it the last day of August this year: I built it at my own expense; for we have no society; and this is the only thing at present that keeps up the protestant name in this place: the protestant minister is worse than none, and few go to church, while Po-

(251)

perly like a deluge sweeps away the rest. ... In the midst of this I have to labour for the bread that perisheth, to suffer all the vexations, disappointments and fatigue, of a business the most precarious and perplexing perhaps in the world. But through all, my only comfort and support is this :...“ I am not my own,” I have already devoted myself, and *all* I have to God; to that God who openeth his hand and supplies the wants of an Universe :...this is the outlines, rather the preface to all I could tell you, were you siting where I now write, but you are not here ! All we can do is to meet at the throne of grace in this world ; by and by we shall meet in a better, to tell the labours of our feet, and various toils through all this vale of tears.

I have just wrote to the son of J. W. of Waterford to come out and preach the gospel here for one summer freely,...meeting such discouragement makes me fear, while I write on the subject....Is the young man fit for the work ? Has he gifts and grace ? do not let him come to do hurt ; but O encourage him if he is likely to do good :

(252)

may the next that comes be one that *Christ the Lord* shall send.

The Lord be with you, write me in the spring, and pray for your Son and Brother in the best of bonds.

JOHN STRETTON

LETTER CIV.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Harbour-grace, December 18, 1790.

SHALL I again say, that I have sympathized with my very Dear Friend, in all these complicated troubles that have lately come upon you; but you know the mountains are high, and the vallies deep, the nearer the pilgrim is to mount Zion the city of our God. But as troubles abound, consolation also abounds; and what great consolation, to see *all* your children with their faces Zion-ward; is not this a greater comfort, than to see them rolling in gilded chariots to Hell? know this that *all things* shall work together for good to them that love God: have you not esteemed *Him* as your Chief Joy? cannot you still say, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou

(253)

knowest that I love thee” and then conclude that those exquisitely painful dispensations of his providence, are the very best things that could happen to you and yours : for “ Crosses from his sovereign hand, are blessings in disguise”.—I have felt your afflictions at many hundred miles distance, and have wept, and prayed for you : O what a mercy to have Jesus, a Saviour, a Friend, that was made for adversity, that sticketh closer than a brother ; to fly to, in the hour of our distress : O leave all to him, trust him solely : he has, he does he will, turn all these seeming evils to you and your childrens’ everlasting good ; then shall you look back “ and wonder at his grace, to all Eternity”. I go on in a public way as usual ; since I opened the meeting house, many attend on Sabbath evenings, but I cannot observe much good done ; two or three were wrought upon last Winter, who seem still in earnest ; but the general hurt done by the last preacher from Europe will not be easily recovered.

January 2, 1791. And is my Dear Sister Bennis, now a resident in Waterford, where I left her on a visit twenty years ago ! few and

Y

(254)

full of evil have these days been with me in this dreary Region; and yet here I have been fed, and cloathed by miracle, and here also the pillar of a cloud, was my guide, in this wilderness. Has not the same blessed and glorious guide, led you like old Jacob to see and bless all your children? and to rejoice in seeing Christ formed in the hearts of your offspring, and grace given to your children's children? surely your comforts are great, O rejoice in them, rejoice in him who is the Husband of the Widow, and who will never leave or forsake you: I thought before this time to be able to leave this land, but find myself year after year in the same place; I toil and toil for nothing; then I think I am placed here, if not for the defence of the gospel, at least to be a witness against, and reprover of the workers of iniquity: for O my friend, this place is like Sodom in every thing, but fulness of bread, and I am here alone, not one family heartily religious that I can associate with, or hold any profitable converse with all the dreary Winter.

Write to me next spring, and let me know all about you and yours, and O believe, you

(255)

have a large share in the affection and prayers,
of your truly sympathetic Son, Brother, and
Friend.

JOHN STRETTON.

LETTER CV.

Mr. John Stretton...to Mrs Eliza Bennis.

Harbourgrace, November 29, 1791.

Will it not rejoice my Dear Friend, to hear that the Lord has been pleased to revive his work in this place last August, in a most remarkable manner, through the instrumentality of a Mr. William Black from Halifax in Nova-Scotia: He is a ruling Elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church, came here on a visit, spent about six weeks amongst us, and then returned: while here many were converted, chiefly young people, and since his departure, I have gathered near sixty young persons, and many little children that have serious impressions on their minds.... This work was the most extraordinary I have ever seen, and as remarkable if particularized as in parts of the continent of America, that I have read of: O this is the day my soul has longed for, blessed be God for it, I could al-

(256)

most take up Simeons exclamation! surely he who has begun this great, this glorious work in the dreary wilderness, will carry it on, until this dark region is illuminated with Gospel light, knowledge and love: Amen.

Yours Affectionately

JOHN STRETON.

LETTER CVI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to---

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CANNOT express my thanks to you for first beginning, and so kindly continuing a correspondence from which I have derived so much satisfaction, and expect yet more.... Your last has proved a great blessing to me; how shall I sufficiently praise my God for laying me so close on your heart, may the Lord reward you an hundred fold; surely I cannot cease to pray for you even as for my own soul, and find it good to remember you before the Lord.

Through the whole of your experience, I see a very near resemblance to my own; only I think there is something in my

(257)

very composition, that is harder for the grace of God to work upon, than in any I meet with, and (if I may use the expression) I think he has had more trouble with me, than with thousands; but, blessed be his name, with him all things are possible, he has begun the work, and he will carry it on, and bring forth the topstone with shouting and praise to his own free grace: Let us trust in him, and we shall not be disappointed; I am convinced we lose much for want of this. The Lord gives us according to our faith; and because our faith is weak, our conceptions are narrow, and our hopes confined: so that we cannot take in the measure of love and life which the Lord is willing to give; as to myself I know this is the case, yet so inconsistent am I that I act contrary to my knowledge; but thus far I can testify for God, when I did act faith upon him to the full, and kept my faith in continual exercise I was kept constantly happy: and enjoyed a constant sense of his presence, and the constant testimony of his spirit, that he had cleansed my heart from sin. I also knew it was his will I should keep this, and that

(258)

I need not have lost it, or have it at any time withdrawn. But self ignorance, and self wisdom, have caused me much sorrow, and yet I have not learned wisdom by my folly; I am still as apt to hearken to the voice of my enemy, and to dispute the matter on his side as ever; I want that childlike simplicity which I see so amiable in others, and which I think more desirable than wisdom and great attainments: but how shall I attain this? my Dear friend, will you tell me how? there appears so many reasonable objections against myself, and these so inconsistent with my profession, that I am ready to think it is only presumption in me to keep my hold? The constant sight I have of myself keeps me almost continually in this state of suspense, and sinks my spirit down to the earth; so that I have only a melancholy remembrance of what I once was, and look back with sorrow and shame on the happy years that are past, when the candle of the Lord did shine bright upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness: O shall I ever see such times again? surely it would be just if the

(259)

Lord would never afford me such, because like Eve I hearkened to the voice of the tempter :... Yet while I endeavour to discover to you my own unfaithfulness, I should also acknowledge the goodness and loving kindness of God. At times he does give me to see that my heart is wholly his, and that sin is cast out; and though I am surrounded with many things which bring distress on my mind, yet I can say he makes all work for good, to my soul: In all my trials and distresses he is my refuge, and at the worst of times, am enabled to come to him as my father and my friend; and so far as I can see his will, do find my whole soul acquiesce in it; if I could certainly think that even the abatement of my happiness was his will, I think I should rejoice to suffer it. You will be apt to ask, why then do I complain? I answer because I have not that fervency of love to God which I have had, nor that degree of sweet enjoyment, that constant immediate access to him, that near union, and intimate communion, that stayedness of mind, and solidity of spirit, that freedom of conversation with him, and

(260)

emptiness of self before him;...I say I do not enjoy any of these in that measure or degree which I have done, and for this I grieve: my complaints are all against myself, but how easy for my God to remove; a word, a touch, a look can do; this would be pleasant, but if my present state be more medicinal why should I complain, my good physician sees what medicines the disorders of my soul has need of, and his skill cannot err: through grace I find myself passive in his hands, and desire that his whole will may be done in me, and by me...I am my Dear friend, your sincerely Affectionate Sister,

ELIZA BENNIS.

 LETTER CVII.

The Revd. J. F.....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Cove, April 7, 1783.

DEAR MADAM.

YOU will be pleased to hear, we are happy and content, and I trust (with divine assistance) we shall never have reason to repine at our situation....When we consider the different pursuits of the world in search of

(261)

what is generally called happiness, and see with what zeal and assiduity that phantom is sought after, while the more substantial bliss is passed by unregarded, and at the same time reflect how easy it is in the power of almost every one to obtain it, what name shall we give Ambition?—"Fine reasoning (you will say) you are but a Curate, get but possession of a good living, taste the sweets of riches, let tythes increase and all these fine sentiments will be done away." I cannot answer for myself 'tis true, if providence is pleased to protect us, as he has hitherto, I trust happiness will never be a stranger to our dwelling. In any station believe me to be Dear Madam :

Your Affectionate &c.

J. F.

LETTER CVIII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to the Revd. J. F.

Limerick, April 19, 1783.

DEAR SIR,

I AM not versed in compliments, but do assure you, we all share in your happiness and sincerely wish and hope it may continue and increase for ever....That there is such a thing as happiness, we all allow, but what it

(262)

is, and where to be found, is the question: the pursuits after it are as various, as the tempers and dispositions of the world, each having some different end in view which they call happiness, and which when attained gratifies for a time, and is often the foundation or source of much unhappiness: the mind disappointed in its search, roves after other objects, which it calls by the same name; and like Solomon, pursues it in every gratification, seeks it in the world, in the creature, in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life: and happy for these if in all they are disappointed, for then and only then, they may be drove to seek it where only it may be found, for in this I fully agree with the Poet:

“ Search the whole Creation round,

“ Can it out of God be found ?”

This is my opinion concerning happiness. God as the fountain, the source of it, has reserved it all in himself; nor can there be any complete happiness in any other, but whoever seeks it in him, shall most certainly find sure, solid, substantial happiness, such as the careless world knows nothing of, and such as the

(263)

world, or the creature, a curacy, or a good living cannot bestow : such as a beggar may enjoy, but a Monarch cannot purchase. Does my Dear friend agree with me in this ? then the question naturally follows, how is this happiness to be attained ? the answering this is *your* province.... My mind has ever been inquisitive on this *important subject*, and hope at a leisure hour, for your kind assistance : may the Lord illuminate you with his grace, and whilst our searches are agreeable to his will, this exercise may be profitable to us both....

I am your sincere friend

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER CIX.

The Rev. J. F....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Cove, May 12, 1783.

THANKS to my Dear Mrs. Bennis, for your friendly and improving letter, the assurance she gives of our friends partial regards, will ever afford me sincere pleasure.... How exactly have you drawn the progress of that imaginary happiness which men generally pursue so earnestly, and which your friend (though not a long time in the

(264)

world) has often found remorse to attend the acquisition of.... You ask me how real happiness is to be attained? though I imagine you have already formed a just opinion upon this subject, since you desire it, I will offer mine. We both agree that the world or any of its highest enjoyments can never purchase this desirable blessing, we must therefore apply to an other source :...where the pleasures that are offered to our acceptance, natural reason alone informs us are capable of satisfying the most unbounded desires; with this delightful addition, that they never can leave behind the least uneasy sensation.

How to acquire this happiness is the point: external objects, and present gratification, continually surround us, and solicit our acceptance; to oppose these, let us in the first place remember the end, that (with Almighty assistance) we may not do amiss; when we keep this rule steadily in view, it will in time weaken those attacks, which the enemy to our peace is continually making upon us, to prevent our improving in virtue: and upon our proper application we may reason-

(265)

ably expect that assistance from above which will carry us through our Christian warfare; and open to our view those delightful prospects, of which if on an impartial reflection upon our conduct; our consciences do not condemn us; we may with confidence (through the mercies of the Almighty) expect a happy enjoyment. I am, my Dear Madam, your truly Affectionate

J. F.

 LETTER CX.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to the Rev. J. F.

Limerick, May 26, 1783,

THE subject which my Dear Mr. F. has taken in hand, and engaged me in, is very copious; one which has already filled volumes, and employed the pens of the most learned and the most holy for many ages past; how unequal am I then to such a task! but as it is only for the inspection of my Friend, I am content to expose my ignorance; requesting that as a friend you would set me right where you think I may be wrong.

We both agree, that solid substantial hap-

Z

(266)

happiness cannot be found in the enjoyment of any, or every temporal good: God as the fountain and centre has reserved it all in himself; therefore I suppose that *true happiness* consists wholly in *union* and *communion* with *him* Is a hidden life, a spiritual blessing, such as the world cannot see (except by the fruits) but is wholly transacted between God and the soul; and is that kingdom of heaven which the Lord says is within; or as the Church service expresses it, "A peace which passeth all understanding;" or as St. Paul expresses it, "A kingdom which cannot be moved," consisting of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, proceeding from a sense of the favour and approbation of God: this alone, I suppose to be true, real Happiness; sufficient to sweeten every bitter in life, and make the possessor happy in the midst of trials and afflictions; but as this is wholly spiritual, and we by nature wholly carnal; I do not think that natural reason alone can either direct our choice, or enable us to gain this great end: man by nature is dark and blind, as to spiritual things, and not capable of understanding

(267)

them, until enlightened by the spirit of God; indeed St. Paul tells us, the natural man *cannot* know these things (but why may he not) the answer is plain; "because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2 & 14. If this be the case, how shall our blindness find out the right path? how shall we be able to attain this desirable state? is it by endeavours of our own, by mortifying ourselves, by calling our reason to our aid? Alas my friend, this philosophical experiment will never do; our blessed Lord says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" let us then in secret humble prayer, bow down before him and say, "Lord what I know not, do thou teach me;"...our blessed saviour knowing the ignorance of the human heart, promised his Disciples to send them the Holy Ghost, the comforter; to teach them all these things, and to remain with them, as his gift to his church, to the end of the world; not to the Apostles only, for St. Peter informs us, that "the promise was to them, and to their children, and to *all that are afar off*, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2 & 39. Bless-

(268)

ed be God for the extent of this blessed promise; then it is free for me, for my friend, for all; surely then it is the will of our God that we should be happy; let us not refuse our own mercies, or delay our happiness, by trying to overcome our corruptions by little and little; be assured my Dear friend there is a shorter way, a more speedy remedy; the Lord is able and willing to destroy them all at a stroke; a *word*, a *touch*, a *look*, will do, when the soul is *willing* to be made whole in God's own way: O may we be made willing in this day of his power, to receive, all his goodness waits to give: ... My thoughts and pen have run greater lengths than I at first intended, but hope your friendly hand will set me right, where you may differ from me; I have given my thoughts freely, and expect and wish you to do the same, it is an interesting subject to us both, let all shyness be done away: I love the opinion, the advice, the reproofs of a friend. May the Lord grant us that wisdom which cometh from above, that we may act, and speak, and think in all things agreeable to his Holy and Blessed will. I am &c.

ELIZA BENNIS

(269)

LETTER CXI.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Major—

Limerick, February 5, —

MY DEAR FRIEND

LOVE to your soul obliges me to undertake a task which even you perhaps, may be tempted to think officious and needless; but I know too well the devices of Satan, and the many dangers a soul is surrounded with, when desirous to flee from the wrath to come, not to have a thousand fears for you; consider you are yet in the Devil's territories, who our Lord tells us is the God of this world: that you have not only flesh and blood to wrestle with, but as the Apostle tells us. Principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places: If you have proposed to yourself an easy and quiet way of going to Heaven, you are much mistaken: *remember*, the way to the *Crown*, is by the way of the *Cross*; our Lord trod it before us, and marked it out for us to follow him; and though we are not called to die as he did, yet we are

certainly called to take up our cross whatever it be: to deny ourselves, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to keep a strict watch over every motion of our hearts, and to see that these do tend God-ward continually. The Lord has done great things for you in a short time, be thankful, and never forget such mercy. Let your soul lie humble at the feet of Christ continually, renouncing your own wisdom, and submit yourself to the teachings of his spirit; do not imagine that you are now able to stand alone, that you are strong enough and happy enough, and that now you will keep the matter wholly between God and yourself, having no need of any outward help; I say at your peril beware of this grand delusion, which has been the destruction of many souls, the strongest christians find they cannot stand alone, and do still learn from, and are helped by the very weakest; so that the Head cannot say to the Foot, "I have no need of thee"...Remember the helps that God provided for you, when your soul was in distress; remember how these were blessed to you, and think what would be your case if

(271)

you had not happened into such hands, you might perhaps be still wadeing in the debths of distress: but the Lord had mercy on you; and still he has provided these helps for you almost every where; I charge you therefore at the peril of your soul that you associate with these wheresoever they can be met with in your travels, and that you be diligent in *bearing* the word of God wherever you can: remember these are means of improvement which God has put into your hands, and has promised that where two or three are met in his name there he will be in the midst: then let not my friend be absent; where the Lord and his people are, there be: as you value your souls happiness, and remember that every omission of duty is a commission of sin: where these helps are not to be had, the Lord will support you without them; but let it be *impressed* on your recollection, that I now tell you before hand, when you can have them, He *will not* support you without them... The Lord has given you a talent to *improve*, *not to bury* in the earth; beware of the fate of the slothful servant: be determined to be as holy and happy as God would have you be, and never be ashamed of your Religion.

Be zealous for God, and he will support you, but do not think to blend the esteem of men with the favour of God...Give yourself up without reserve to the Lord, and be content to be accounted any thing for Christ's sake; you must be first tried before you are approved, but remember, "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"..and the sincere soul who gives itself up wholly to be the Lord's without making any conditions with God, is best provided for....Be much in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and self-examination: ask yourself often that question which our Lord asked his disciples, ("do ye now believe".) Ask your own heart "do I *now* believe". Endeavour to keep this jewel of assurance always bright, and if at any time it happens to be clouded, pray it clear again; and open your heart always to some Christian friend, who may give you counsel, and pray with you and for you....Be punctual to the hour of eleven o'clock (in the fore-noon) count it your privilege to meet then in secret, with your friends before the throne of grace; and let our joint petitions go up as incense before the

(273)

Lord: at this hour we retire to pray earnestly for each other, for our families, for the children of God every where, and for the world in general, and be thankful to God even for these little few :...among them you may experience the communion of Saints, and be assured they will bear you upon their hearts continually : I say, *be punctual to this hour, and be thankful for it* : I would also propose another thing to you, which is this; you are much indebted to the Lord for his gracious dealings towards you, I would then advise you to set apart a day of fasting and prayer, wherein you should humble yourself before God, as a lost undone sinner, saved by meer unmerited grace and favour;...I think next Friday would be a proper day for this, as you will by then be settled in your new quarters, and *I also* am determined to fast and pray with you on that day, and will engage a few more to bear us company on your behalf: and if you will not bear us company, we will fast and pray for you, but I hope you will make one among us, and in so doing make a solemn surrender of yourself to be the Lord's :.. remember that text, "the just shall live by

(274)

faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him, saith the Lord”.

I hope by this time my friend does not think I have said too much, if so let my first apology plead for me, indeed it is love for your soul which obliges me to it, as having myself found mercy of the Lord, and knowing the human heart, and the subtilty of the enemy of souls :...you have promised to write to me, which promise I *insist* on, but remember I do not want a complimentary epistle, but a minute account of your state, and the dealings of God with you, and after you have perused this letter often, I request you may frankly and freely write your thoughts on what I have said, and your objections (if any you have) without the least reserve: and if you chose to receive another from me, let me know how to direct;....It is my souls desire that you may stand fast in 'the liberty wherein Christ hath made you free, that you may never again be entangled by the bondage of sin :...and I tell you, you need never be less happy than you now are....But you may be much more so, if you will but follow the di-

(275)

rections already given : if you will not, be it at your peril :...I have delivered my own soul be assured that I shall pray for you, and hope if you love my soul, that you also will pray for me ; and now may the Lord Jesus who hath purchased you with his blood, and is also able to keep you by his Almighty and powerful grace keep, sustain, uphold and preserve you, and bring you at last to his everlasting kingdom and glory ; is the earnest prayer of your...Affectionate,

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER CXII.

Mrs Eliza Bennis...to Mr. ———

Limerick, December 3.——

Sir.

IT may appear strange to you, to receive a letter from a person with whom you have had but a few hours acquaintance, but be assured it comes from a friendly hand, with (shall I say) my last efforts for the salvation of your soul ;...when I consider every little circumstance attending our seemingly accidental meeting, I am rather led

(276)

to think it entirely providential; the Lord who can, and frequently does, use base and foolish instruments, after having tried many great and powerful ones with you at last threw you into my hands;...the knowledge I then received of your state, and the openness and freedom with which you declared it, has made me some way interested in your souls welfare: and have often since found my heart much affected, and enabled to plead with God for you, and still (though painfully disappointed in your breach of promise) I cannot give you up; the thoughts of your being eternally damned pierces my very soul. O why, why will you resolve to perish? Alas, how miserably are you deceived you have left the childrens' bread to feed with swine on husks! and are you satisfied? I know you are not, nor never shall, until you return to the Lord: you are one of those he complains of, for committing two evils; you have left the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to yourself broken cisterns, that can hold no water:... And yet your disappointments have not brought you back; you persist in your re-

(277)

bellion as though you were resolved to see it out with God. You are not happy (I know you are not,) your most social pleasures are embittered with keen remorse, your sweetest enjoyments are disturbed with painful reflections and your conscience tells you, the curse of God is in your basket and in your store, and pursues you as a rebel wherever you turn, and shall certainly continue to do so, until you return to God: What is it you have bartered your soul for? have you got what you expected? has not the Devil deceived you with false appearances? and yet you have not returned! O what proficiency might you have made in the ways of God had you continued to be faithful to his grace; how would his love sweeten every enjoyment, lighten every burden, and make even difficulties easy. But look up, it is not yet too late, the Lord is *now* willing to receive you; take the prodigals resolution, *now* arise and go to your Father, venture on his mercy, O for the Lord's sake delay not: come *now* resolve *this moment*, he waits to receive you with arms of love and will not upbraid you for all that is past!

A a

O let there be joy in heaven over you, let the Lord himself rejoice over the lost sheep, over the purchase of his own blood: does your heart answer "Amen?" Are you now determined to venture your *all* on Christ without looking back, or desiring to feed again on the dregs of your sins? then be encouraged, the Lord will help you, only be determined: cut off the right hand, pluck out the right eye, give yourself without reserve to be the Lord's, and be determined if you perish, it shall be at his feet; but what shall I say if you are yet undetermined, halting between two opinions; sensible of your misery, yet unwilling to part it: feeling your chains, yet loving and embracing them; if this be the case be assured God will enter into judgment with you for so many slights of his offered mercy: and how will you be able to appear? how answer him to one of a thousand: how will you answer the solemn promise you made me, the thirteenth of last September! when the Lord touched your heart, gave you a feeling sense of your state, and some earnest desires to return: I say *remember*

(279)

the promise you then made me in the *presence of God*, that you would leave your sins, would give yourself to prayer, and as soon as you should go back to Cork would unite again with the children of God to seek the salvation of your soul: I *demand* the performance; the Lord was present, and heard, and *demand*s it; and will in the day of Judgment before Angels, men and devils *require it at your hands*: and shall I be obliged to witness against you? indeed the thought pains my heart, I would rather rejoice over you....I cannot give you up and shall not cease to offer up my poor weak petitions for you whilst there appears any hopes of you: but if you are proof against all that God has done, and is still willing to do, your damnation be upon your own head: I call Heaven and Earth to record against you this day, that I have delivered my own soul, and am clear of your blood. Do not think that I have said too much, your own conscience shall witness for me to the truth of all; therefore receive it in love, and let it have its desired effect;...perhaps it may be the last admonition the Lord

(280)

may see fit to grant you, pray over it, weep over it, and be thankful to God for it. And if your heart be not so far hardened as to take offence at what I have said, I entreat a few lines from you by post, as soon as convenient...I am with sincere desires for your souls welfare

Your Assured Friend.

ELIZA BENNIS.

LETTER CXIII.

Mr. John M'Gregor.....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Limerick, September 1, 1790.

FRIEND OF MY HEART,

I AM in possession of a detail of your sufferings, since you left this City...Your way for many years has been strewed with thorns; this is a part of your father's legacy to his dearest children: if we be without affliction, then are we bastards and not sons...David was scourged in his Absalom, Eli in his two sons, and my Dear Sister Bennis in her E :...But my Dear Friend, there is much more for, than against you, the mercies of God to you are far more abundant than your trials, a troop

(281)

has prevailed against Dan ; but the promise is, that Dan shall prevail at last, this is comfortable to the believing soul ; when your heart is overwhelmed with trouble, put your trust in the Lord, and stay yourself on your God.

You have a gracious God to comfort you his ear is open to your prayers, and he will give you the desire of your heart....You have had the comfort, the *great* comfort of seeing your Husband die in the Lord, that tender and affectionate partner of forty-three years ; for whose eternal happiness you sent up many prayers, you have lived to see these prayers fully answered : O may my latter end be like his, you are now blessed with dutiful and affectionate children, and grand children with their faces Zion-ward, determined with Joshua to serve the Lord....and anxious to administer to your comfort ; take lawful pleasure in them, and be co-workers together in love, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. You love plain dealing, you know me, and I know you ; let not two brands in mercy plucked out of the burning, leap into the fire again, whose fatal effects we feel to this

day, say resolutely from your heart, "return to thy rest O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee, in all thy troubles", then mercy and peace shall follow thee all thy days, and thou shalt dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Now let me say something concerning my own experience; and O may the spirit of truth guide my heart and pen.... The day you left Limerick, (to reside in Waterford) I may say as Elisha said to Gehazi, "went not mine heart with thee", yes my selfish heart, I cried out, whose parlour can I now turn into a study? what woman will throw away her work, to meditate and converse with me on the things of God, and consult together to make our calling and election sure? who will now counsel, instruct, or admonish me? and spur me on to run steadily my course to the end; who will thrust me into the jail, among the malefactors? to the barracks, amongst the soldiers? to sick beds, and distressed souls? this have you often done, when I was able, but not always willing.. Have I not rightly stilled you my golden spur, that often brought (as it were) blood, but never left a festered

(283)

wound behind....I see the instability of human comforts, I may say with the Prophet, " he has removed my lovers into a corner, that he himself might be my lover, counsellor, comforter and friend," my all in all....Blessed be his holy name, I find him precious to my soul his holy word is precious, my select friends are precious, my class and band are precious, the preachers being primitive are precious and the soul of my dear friend is *very* precious; and God is witness the spiritual and temporal welfare of your offspring is near my heart....Now consider, you have been taking care of other peoples vine-yards above forty-years, (and so have I in a measure), is it not full time now, that we should seriously look to our own; to beseech the heavenly dresser to give us grace and power to pluck up the thorns and thistles from the root, to gather the stones; and earnestly pray the divine comforter thoroughly to purge our hearts, and sow the seeds of holiness to the Lord in them; without which no man can see his face with joy: my sincere love to the Waterford preachers and people, remind them that this is a year of release and thanksgiving for

(284)

their passage out of trouble let us meet each other in spirit for the prosperity of the Gospel.

My affectionate love to all your children, while I live I shall not forget you or them at the throne of grace :...I am old and feeble, last week measured my seventy-sixth year ; O Lord be merciful to me a sinner ; the society here prospers, the select band meets regular, but I can seldom be with them ; I generally meet my class in my bed-chamber, often in my bed ; blessed be God for the love that subsists among us, they will not let me give them up until I am removed by my Heavenly Father, which I expect will not be long, O may I then be ready to give up my charge with joy,...to cease at once to work and live :...and as I never expect to see you in this dying world, O let us meet in the house not made with hands, to part no more forever....“ There shall we sit and sing and tell, the wonders of Immanual”.

Farewell my Dear old fellow traveller, my friend, my Sister, farewell :

JOHN M'GREGOR.

(285)

LETTER CXIV.

Mr. Richard Condry....to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Limerick March 27, 1790.

THE distress of my Dear Friend is such that the bare account of it wrung my poor soul, how much more poignant must the anguish of my friend be? you have acted with christian fortitude, patience is invincible, and triumphs against all attacks...The rains descended whilst you were yet in Limerick; when you were leaving it, the floods came, but now in Waterford the winds blow and beat against that house, and it falls not, for it is founded on a rock! when the enemy sees that you can suffer, then he will cease to harass you....When he despairs of exciting murmuring, or impatience, then he will lay aside his weapons....The sight of God, that you are still favoured with in your greatest afflictions, will powerfully help you to bear, and especially whilst you see that this bitter potion is sent to procure eternal health, that suffering is the only way to glory, and that light and momentary pains shall be succeeded by infinite pleasure and eternal happiness.

(286)

If we truly love, and are really pleased and satisfied with the will of God, we cannot be offended with the instruments God makes use of to execute his will.... That which happens to us from moment to moment, is the will of God concerning us.... This is so universally true that excepting our own sins, that which comes upon us from the sins of others, is the manifest will of God concerning us.... It was in view of this truth, that our blessed Lord called his sacred passion, which was procured by the wickedest of men, "a cup which his Father had given him to drink".... And that David ventured to say that, the Lord had bid Shimei to curse him.

I am *commanded* from Heaven to say to the righteous, "*it shall be well with them.*" I have been tossed with you on a boisterous ocean, and with you, I look to rest in due time, in a quiet Haven, there to lie at anchor in the bosom of God.... There remaineth a rest to the people of God, rest! O how sweet is rest to the solicitous mariner, and how welcome is the harbour to him, especially after having been long beaten with storms and tempests! and how sweet will

(287)

rest be to the poor tempted, troubled, labouring, travelling christian; whose whole life has been little else but trouble, labour and sore travail; who could scarce find all his days a resting place for the sole of his foot the world as to him being covered with a deluge....Death whenever it comes will turn our conflicts into victory; this Aceldama (this field of blood) into a mount of triumph, and a throne of glory....We have now to conflict with corruptions and temptations, with afflictions and Devils; but yet a little while, and the palm shall be put into our hand: we shall triumphantly cry, Victory, Victory, forever! O how sweet is victory to a soldier that has been long and hard put to it in battle...Let us hold out, and the victory will assuredly be ours: believe me your Affectionate &c.

RICHARD CONDY.

LETTER CXV.

Mr. Richard Condy...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.
Limerick, June 11, 1790.

My very Dear Friend.

YOU have borne the pelting of many a pitiless storm: let not your wonted resig-

nation and patience slip from you. By how much the more reiterated our afflictions are, so much the more difficult is it to retain and exercise the weapons of our warfare....The continual drop will fret marble:...but still be it remembered, that as the gospel hath allotted us many tribulations, so it hath furnished us with many supports....A mighty God! who is the rock of ages. A merciful High-Priest! who having been tempted himself knows how to succour those that are tempted. Gracious experiences; this last support *Experience*, hath all the rest in it. A patient experienced Christian hath proved all things; what they are, and the worst they can do. He hath proved the world, and sees the fashion of it passing away; he sees all passing, he sees the blackest clouds. as flying clouds: He looks at the *clear* beyond the clouds. Open the eye of thy faith thou Soldier of Jesus and say, "Babylon is fallen! is fallen!" not only it shall fall, but *it is already fallen*. When the enemy hath gotten the greatest advantage of you, of the sun, of the wind, of the ground; when he presseth with most violence, with most fury

(289)

upon you, let your believing soul take sanctuary here...“ When my flesh and my heart faileth, *God* is the *strength* of my *heart*, and my *portion forever*.” I love you the more, by how much the more your sufferings increase and how much more *Him* whose marks these are. “ The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed,” let this comfort you :...farewell my Dear Sister, you have a large share in the prayers and affection, of your sincere friend and Brother.

RICHARD CONDY.

LETTER CXVI.

Mr. Walter Griffith...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

Dublin, February 9, 1792.

MY DEAR SISTER BENNIS.

YOUR Father and God seems to have chosen you and yours in the furnace of affliction. You have been, you are still honoured by being called to suffer; “ To you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe but to suffer for his sake.” But be not discouraged you now drink a mixed

B b

(290)

cup, you shall hereafter drink it unmixed; and the greater quantity of bitter in your cup now, the larger will the cup of unmixed bliss, which God will put into your hand, hereafter be. “ Our present *light* affliction, which is but for a *moment*, worketh out for us a *far more exceeding* and *eternal weight* of glory!” what an amazing disproportion between the sufferings and the glory? the sufferings “light” the glory “a far more exceeding *weight*.” The sufferings momentary, the exceeding weight of glory “*Eternal*.” May you and yours have such views of that glory, as to be enabled to say...

“ Thankful I take the cup from thee,

“ Prepared and mingled by thy skill.”

I have sometimes thought, that we are in danger of building our opinion of our present state, and our hope of future glory on the measure of religious joy we feel, rather than on our conformity to the image of God, or our earnestness in pursuing it. I grant that where conformity to the image is, there is joy also; but we may have that conformity, and not the degree of joy we wish for. When you tell me “ I think my heart is sincere and

(291)

honest before him” and “he enabled me to renew my covenant in the sincerity of my heart without one negative in my whole soul” and “upon the strictest scrutiny into myself I do not find my heart cleave to any thing here below, or desirous to indulge any sin, I feel my will wholly given up to my God, and desirous that his will may be done in me” I cannot entertain the smallest doubt of your title to, and meetness for glory.... You ask then “why have I not the comforts or sweet consolations which I have had in times past”? I answer, you are not entirely without joy, though perhaps you have not that measure of it you once had. Besides, you were once without those deep distresses and heavy afflictions, with which you have been exercised for some time back; and having outward and inward peace, it is not to be wondered at, that your joy has been greater than when wading thro’ deep waters: Upon the whole, I think you have much cause of thankfulness to God, for bearing you so long above the water floods; you have endured many storms, nor are you beyond their reach yet; you have a body “dead because of sin”, subject to death, fil-

(292)

led with the seeds of it, and rapidly tending to it....Be thankful to God for having kept you so long from sinking beneath the weight of various afflictions; and fear not but he will still deliver you.

That God may ever satisfy you and yours with the fullness of his divine presence, is the earnest wish and ardent prayer of your truly Affectionate Brother:

WALTER GRIFFITH.

LETTER CXVII.

Mr. Joseph Cr...to Mrs. Eliza Bennis.

The following letter from a well meaning Papist, is inserted merely to introduce the answer.

Carrick, November 23, 1791.

DEAR MADAM,

I Make no doubt you will be a good deal surprised (perhaps offended) at the liberty I I now take. But when I assure you my motive proceeds solely from the sincere good wishes I entertain for you, and your worthy family; whose present and future happiness, it would give me the greatest pleasure to promote, (even in a small degree,) this being admitted, you

(293)

will I hope the more readily excuse my freedom in laying before you the opinion I entertain of the religion I am through the mercy of God fortunate enough to be a member of, and which from my soul I wish it may please the Lord one day to call you to....It is clear from scripture *beyond the possibility of doubt*, that Christ established a church that did from his time exist, does exist, and will exist until the consummation of ages; and that *that* church is *one holy catholic, and apostolic*. That there is one God, one faith, and one baptism; and that without faith it is impossible to please God. There surely then cannot be two or more faiths, whereby we may please him? No, there is but *one*. Surely then it is the most important interest of every christian, to see that he belongs to the true church of Christ. In St. Mathew, Chapter 16 verse 15 “ Jesus saith to them.” But whom do you say that I am” 16. “ And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art Christ, the son of the living God” 17 “ And Jesus answering said unto him, blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven”. 18.

(294)

And I say also unto thee ; that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it". 19 " And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven," Which sacred texts prove as clearly as noon day light, the establishment of a church, by whom founded, and on whom built....If it be objected that after this Peter denied Christ, and was rebuked by him, let it be remembered that the same power and mercy which changed a persecuting Saul into a great preacher and apostle could very well make an Apostle who had never lost his faith, the head and the foundation of his church, which surely Christ did to Peter ; at same time giving to him, and his successors, the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, saying, " go preach, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the holy Ghost," " Whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven...which clearly proves the power

(295)

given by Christ to his Apostles and their successors, lawfully ordained in the holy catholic church, of absolving from sin, when the penitent sueing for absolution has a sincere and hearty sorrow for past sins, with a firm purpose and resolution to avoid sin and its occasions in future....for without those previous dispositions on the part of the penitent, no power on earth whether Pope Priest or Bishop can validly give absolution to any person whatever; and this is an article of the catholic faith....Now that the church has been visible in all ages since its establishment, is evident by the regular succession of Popes, Priests, and Bishops: from St. Peter down to the present day; joined to the united testimony of the holy fathers in every age....which several testimonies have been confirmed by the blood of innumerable martyrs, who sealed their faith with their Blood in every age of the church of Christ, since its establishment....That church has been guided by the spirit of God, which as promised will lead her into all truth, even unto the end of the world.

In St. Mathew, are we not directed to apply to the church? and is it not added that

(296)

“ he that will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican.”....If the church was invisible how could she be applied to? how could she be heard? It is then evident that the church since its establishment was always visible, and will continue so; and *that* church consists of the great body of catholics spread over the believing world; and reunited under one visible head the Pope....Compared to which, all other sects added together, are but few in number; and whose single point of unity, seems to be their unjust and uncharitable aspersions against their mother church; from whom every one of them may be said to have separated....But finding myself passing the bounds of a letter, I will come to a conclusion by earnestly recommending to you; If you should not for the present be disposed to think as I do, not to refuse at least recommending yourself to God morning and evening in this, or some such manner....O God who seest the secrets of all hearts, and knowest the sincerity of mine, be graciously pleased to compassionate thy servant; and if I am not in the right faith, be graciously and mercifully pleased to lead me

(297)

into it: assuring thee, that so soon as thy holy will shall be manifested unto me I shall humbly and chearfully embrace and follow it.”.... Some such prayer humbly and perseveringly addressed to God, cannot possibly fail of success or be by any considered improper, for tho’ man may deceive; surely God never will. In finishing this letter I once more beg of you not to be offended, nor to forget that counsel should not be despised, though proceeding from the mouth of a fool. That every blessing and happiness may attend you and your worthy family, is the sincere wish of yours &c. J: C:

P: S. If at any time you would wish to see a full account of our faith....Gother’s catholic christian instructed “ Doctor Hay’s sincere christian.”....or “ Maning’s short way to end disputes”....will fully satisfy you.

LETTER CXVIII.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis....to Mr. J. C.

Waterford, November 26, 1791.

DEAR SIR.

I AM much obliged, by your kind solicitude concerning my Eternal welfare, and re-

ceive your letter, as the effusion of a friendly heart....But as I was ever averse to controversy, I shall not answer yours as a disputant, (there is too much of that already in the world) not from the weakness of my cause, but from a sense of my own inability to defend it....My faith is not founded on St. Peter, or St. Paul; on pope or bishop of any sect; but on the Lord Jesus Christ alone who died for my sins, and rose again for my justification, and now intercedes for me at the right hand of God....To him *alone* my soul looks for pardon, and acceptance, and am not disappointed....I find access to him by faith, and every trial is sweetened by a sense of his favour.... I find many deficiencies in myself daily; I come to him by faith, under a deep sense of my necessities, and he does not send me empty away; but enables me to rejoice humbly before him....My heart is open in prayer to him, for *all* mankind....I believe through his merit and death, *all* might be saved; that *all* are not saved, is owing to their own wilful rebellion against God, and not to their not being members of any particular community....I would not dare to confine the

(299)

mercy of God to any particular body of people; nor would I strain any text in the book of God to exclude any from his mercy....I believe the whole Christian church of every denomination is the visible church of Christ; But that those only who worship him in spirit and in truth, who love him, and keep his commandments, are members of his invisible church, and are accepted of him....This is, and has been for many years, my faith; In which I find myself happy in life, and willing to die; and by the grace of my God resolved not to change....Wishing you all happiness in time and Eternity....I am Dear Sir....Your Friend and humble Servant.

ELIZA BENNIS.

 LETTER CXIX.

Mrs. Eliza Bennis...to Mr.

The Editor believes the following concise account of Mrs. Bennis's experience, is the one alluded to, in Letter 3d. and hopes it will not be found *uninteresting*.

Limerick, October 18, 1765.

I WAS very young when the spirit of God began to strive with me....In my child-

(300)

hood I had many drawings, which then passed unheeded by me...When I was about ten or eleven years old, I threw aside the forms of prayer which I had learned, and prayed extempore when alone; I found no form of words could affect my heart, or express my wants, like those which proceeded from a feeling sense of my wants. I was often given to see myself a sinner, and to tremble under the wrath of God; but these convictions were not lasting. Religion did indeed appear to me in a most amiable and desirable light, at the same time that I found it a drudgery to myself....I was fond of reading, and would sometimes read books of Divinity for want of others, and would then observe the effect that these had upon my mind different from the others, in calming my passions, collecting my ideas, governing my will, and bringing such a sweet serenity into my soul, as enabled me to go through my little domestic duties with composure and cheerfulness;....Yet could not confine myself to such books....I was, I believe about thirteen or fourteen years old, when Mr. Allen's alarm came to my hands, this was the

(301)

first alarm my conscience got. When I had read but a part, I began to fear exceedingly, and got into such a tremor that my teeth chattered together, and every limb trembled, as in a strong ague-fit. I then resolved to read no more, least (according to the authors observation) I should be accountable for reading and rejecting the means of information and instruction, laid down in this book at the day of Judgment....But I was immediately given to see, that I must be accountable for every means of instruction and information which *I might* have, as well as for those which I really had, I saw that wilful ignorance, was nothing less than wilful damnation; and that it was my duty to enquire and make all possible and diligent search after truth; as I should be (in the sight of God) clear only of those things, which after diligent searching I could not find out. These thoughts made me take up the book again, which I then read with much prayer, beseeching the Lord to enlighten my understanding, and to teach me his will. But though I prayed for it, I was not attentive as I should to the teachings of his spirit;

(302)

neither had I any other teacher to direct me what to do....I was for some years thus tossed too and fro, during which time I had many discoveries made to the eye of my mind; such as the purity of God, who I saw could not connive at sin. The justice of God in punishing the wicked, I saw that the soul that sinneth must die.

These considerations made me often tremble before God, and envy the brute Creation, whose miseries were to end with their lives, and who I often thought were highly-favoured of God in this respect....I was given to see (in a great measure) what a christian ought to be, both as to his outward deportment, and purity of his intentions, I was led in some degree into the spirituality of the law, I saw that in the sight of God, every angry person was a murderer: every covetous person an Idolater; every lewd look or desire was in his sight an act of adultery; that mentioning the name of God irreverently, would be noticed by him as a breach of his absolute command...I read the scriptures constantly, often with tears, sometimes on my knees; and was led to consider them

(303)

attentively. Yet my understanding being shallow, I still remained ignorant of the terms of my salvation, I saw indeed in the scriptures, that without faith it is impossible to please God; and that whoever is saved, it must be through faith; but what this faith was, I could not make out. I saw clearly that it must be more than a bare outward profession; the *nominal* christians all around me convinced me of this; not seeing any among the whole, whose lives I thought agreeable to the scriptures, which I was given to see must be the touchstone. The definition of faith, which I had learned in my catechism, I could not clearly understand, and some sermons which I had heard on faith were not at all satisfactory....I could give my assent and consent to every thing mentioned in the scriptures; yet found, and felt, that I was not saved from my sins, I wanted to find out that faith which purifies the heart, for I saw that a bare belief could not. But who to enquire of, I knew not, therefore was constrained to keep all these things to myself. Neither do I think it was visible in my

outward deportment, for both my heart and my life remained unchanged...I saw myself a sinner. Yet I continued in sin, still doing the things for which I still condemned myself; my religion was by fits, the spirit of God would sometimes awaken me to such a deep sense of my sinfulness as to make me fear and tremble; then I would resolve to be more frequent in prayer, and reading the Bible, to watch more narrowly over my words and actions, and to be more circumspect in all my behaviour...But this would not last long, I would soon grow weary again until another loud call from God would again rouse me out of my lethargy; then I would again determine, and again grow careless. I found the truth of the Apostles words "when I would do good, evil is present with me," so that sometimes my life was very bitter to me, in this distress I would often open the Bible, to try what text would come first to me. and if it was a comfortable one, I would put it away, as thinking it not intended for me; but if it was a condemning one, I readily took it as spoken to, and intended for me; and would

(305)

weep and lament over it, because of my wretched sinfulness.

Once after much trouble of soul, the Lord did sweetly attract my heart, and incline it to follow him, and in receiving the Sacrament, did enable me to take Christ as it were in my arms, and offer him up to the Father, as my propiciation. Here my burden fell off, and my heart was filled with such love, joy, and comfort, as I never before experienced...I looked for my sins, but they were all gone, and I could only rejoice in the Lord, with joy inexpressible... I found at the same time a clear sense of pardon; a testimony within that my sins were forgiven. But this made me start, thinking it a presumption, and therefore I continually put it away, and would not receive this blessing...(this was the second time that I attended the Lord's table; and I was then in my fifteenth year) for some time I was very happy, and meeting with a covenant, in Mr. Allen's writings, to which my whole soul acquiesced, I wrote it out, and entered into the same solemn covenant with my God, to which I subscribed my

(306)

name, on my knees, and with much prayer; being determined to live wholly devoted to him....O what a sweet time I then had! the Lord did indeed kiss me with the kisses of his love; and though I have often since experienced large manifestations of his grace and presence, I think none ever exceeded this. I have often looked back on it with a pleasing regret....But in a little time I again grew careless, though I had still many comfortable visits from God, yet continually condemned for my unfaithfulness. I had many sweet retired hours in the garden, and in the fields quite alone, where I found it sweet indeed to read, and pray, and meditate. Yet all this passed unknown to, and unheeded by any....I then often thought, how comfortable a thing a christian friend would be, to whom I might declare all that passed in my heart and would have prized such an one as my greatest treasure below, but did not then ever expect to meet with such.

In my eighteenth year, my father died, and in two years after, I married....I had still by intervals happy moments, and stings of conscience, I saw I was not right, yet thought

(307)

that I was not as bad as many ; and would often with the proud pharisee, thank God that I was not like such or such a person, though indeed I was as bad as any....In a little time I fell into some distress again about my spiritual state ; I wanted to know assuredly, if I was one of the people of God, but could not find any satisfactory information : I looked for the church of Christ amongst the visible congregations, but could not find any body of people whom I thought deserved the name ; the body of people to which I belonged, (the Presbyterians,) were now as I thought, the most circumspect of all, yet could not see that even these could be called by this name, seeing many things in their common way of living, which I thought, must not be acceptable to God. Thus distressed and bewildered, I would often cast myself before the Lord, and beseech him if there was any other more perfect or acceptable way of serving him, that he would make it known to me.

This was my state, when the Lord first sent Mr. Wesley's preachers to Limerick ; I saw Mr. Robert Swindels (who was the first of them that came here to preach) pass by

(308)

my door with a great mob after him, who hollowed and made a great noise, and sometimes personally insulted him, upon my enquiring who he was, they told me he was one of the people called Swadlers, (a name then given in derision to the Methodists) of whom I had heard some random accounts, but had no desire or intent to hear him preach; being tenacious of my own church, and her principles, though indeed I knew not what they were: yet thought it a great pity that a portly well looking man, and by every outward appearance a gentleman, should be so shamefully used, and felt a particular concern for him.... This was the 17th of March 1749 and the first time that any of these preachers had come here; nor was he come to make any stay, only made it his way to Cork, and was now going to stand up in a convenient part of the street to preach: this was in the morning about ten o'clock: I did not go to hear him, nor would my pride suffer me to mix with such a rabble; but afterwards hearing a great account of the sermon, from a person who was there, I resolved to go in the evening, when I heard he was to preach again; which

(309)

I did, and was much affected ; I was asked to spend the evening in company with him, my heart was much softened and affected by his preaching and conversation, and was determined I would not miss another sermon while he staid in town, which was about three days : Thus did the Lord soften and draw my heart after himself. In about a month after, Mr. Swindels returned to town, and finding many here willing to receive the word, he soon established a society, of which I was determined to be one : many things were thrown in my way by Satan, to frustrate my design, but the Lord my God whose mercy still hovered over me would not suffer it : I was one of the first that joined, I believe the first that stood up, and gave him my name ; indeed I did it in much fear and trembling, being exceedingly perplexed by various reports which were brought to my ears concerning the wickedness and cunning of these men, who my friends had stiled “ mountebank preachers.” But I had set a resolution, that I would not believe any report, but would hear and see for myself. And for this I praise my God who would not suffer me to be influenced by any, until he

should fully establish my heart in his truths, and bring me to the knowledge of himself....I now felt my sins, but did not see clearly where my remedy lay, until one day the preacher was explaining these words....“ By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” I now set myself to hearken diligently, and try if I could find out, what I so long had been in search of namely....What *true saving faith* was. And as he explained it, the spirit of God did apply the word to my heart, and gave me both to see into the true nature of faith, and that I was wholly destitute of it.

I was particularly convinced of this sin of unbelief, I saw that if I had no other sin to answer for, this single one would barr Heavens gate against me. Indeed I felt the weight of *all* my sins, I had no rest in my bones by reason of them, the remembrance of them was grievous to me, and the burden intolerable: I read my condemnation in the righteous law of God, and could pronounce it just. I saw that by my original stain, I had forfeited the divine favour, that my nature was corrupt throughout, in every part, power, and

(311)

faculty ; and could produce only corrupt fruit. I saw also that my very best actions were a proof of this, I found that all my boasted righteousness for which I had formerly valued myself, were but as filthy rags in the sight of God ; I even abhor'd them myself, they were my greatest burden, because I had trusted in them : And I now found myself miserable, and poor, and blind and naked, without faith, and without God in the world ; and I saw that without faith it was impossible to please God, and that I was a condemned unbeliever.

In this manner I was bearing my burden and groaning for redemption until the 21st of June following ; that morning, at five o'clock meeting, while the preacher offered Christ freely to all, I found my burden in a moment taken off, and my soul set at liberty ; but was still afraid to lay hold of Christ as mine, by reason of my unworthiness ; I could not believe that my sins were pardoned, neither could I disbelieve : In this manner I was until the 23d. when conversing with the preacher about the state of my soul, the light broke in upon me in a moment, and banish-

(312)

ed all the shades of darkness ; All doubts were done away, and I could now believe in, and lay hold of Christ as mine, and appropriate his merit to my own soul ; the spirit of God did bear witness with my spirit that I was his child, and I could say, “ he hath loved ~~me~~, and given himself for ~~me~~”... My soul did cleave to him, and I was happy in his love : Adoring and admiring this loving Redeemer, and in an holy extacy crying continually. “ My Lord and my God.” A large scene was now opened to my view, the light which had broke in upon my soul, discovered to me many things which until then lay hid from my view....I saw the dreadfulnes of that state from which I had but just escaped more clearly now than I did before, and the extent of that mercy which deigned to die for a lost undone world ! a world of rebels, still up in *arms* against him. And even whilst they persisted in their rebellion, he in an astonishing manner goes out of his ordinary way to save them from Hell ! by sending his messengers into the streets and lanes of the city, and into the high-ways and hedges to invite, yea to *compel* them to come in :

(313)

And that I should be one of them, whom his messengers should call, and his spirit compel was to me the greatest mercy of all, and matter of astonishment indeed! and often caused me to cry out O Lord why this mercy to me? O my God, why hast thou called me and passed by thousands, why O why hast thou particularised me from the guilty throng! The sense of this overpowered me at times. Indeed I wondered how God could have borne with my impieties and provocations so long; I saw that it was impossible for human nature to stand before him, or any covering but the righteousness of Christ; which made my heart bleed for the rebellious world, whom I had but just left behind, and saw still weltering in sin, and drinking down swift destruction....I praised God for my wonderful escape, and for the glorious method of his salvation. I saw by faith my blessed redeemer suffering in my stead, that I might go free. Reaching out his bleeding hands to me, saying, "I have paid thy ransom." "Thy sins which were many, are all forgiven thee." "Go in peace." And my soul accepted of this, and approved of it, and

D d

desired no other way of salvation.... The scriptures also were opened to me, and appeared as though I had never read them before; the seal was unloosed, and discovered a large and glorious scene.

The change that God had wrought in my heart had changed all around me, so that I could now see God in all; and with the poet.

“ My tongue broke out in unknown strains,

“ And sung surprising grace !”

The partition wall of unbelief was thrown down, and I was given to see into the holiest of all, whither Jesus my Lord had entered before for me, to sprinkle the mercy seat with his blood on my behalf, that I also might enter in by the same blood.... And the more I viewed the goodness of God to me, the lower did I sink in humility before him. Thus did the Lord create peace in my soul, bringing order out of confusion, and thus happily did I go on for about three months, before my inbred corruption began to appear. I then saw my heart a sink of sin, a cage of unclean birds, a den of thieves; full of pride, anger, evil desire, love of the world, and every other corrupt affection. And saw that I had all

(315)

these united with the powers of darkness to encounter ; and not only so, but also the world up in arms against me....Satan had raised many storms, and thrown many hindrances in my way, to try if by any means he could turn me back. But I had stedfastly resolved in the strength of God, to persevere at all eventsI was as a sparrow upon the house top, not one of all my family or relations seeing the necessity of being born again: therefore was obliged to suffer much on this account ; I found the truth of our Lords words, “ All that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” and “ a mans foes shall be those of his own household.”....I found I was now called to suffer....I thought whilst I was seeking the Lord that if I could once get an interest in Christ, I should have nothing to do afterward but sing and rejoice....But I now found that my faith was given me as a sword, wherewith I must fight my way against the world, the flesh and the Devil....Indeed the strength of these my adversaries did often make me fear exceedingly : and quake and tremble : but at every time the Lord did sustain me, and did wonderfully uphold me in

(316)

the midst of a thousand trials, and difficulties, by the sweet visits of his love, and a clear sense of his favour.... But this evidence was not always clear, I was a poor unbelieving creature, the continual risings of my corruptions would often cloud my evidence, and grievously distress my soul, so that I often went heavily, mourning over my continual revoltings, sometimes up, and sometimes down, according to them words of the hymn;

“ Strong in faith, I seem this hour,

“ Strip’t the next of all my power.”

The Lord did often give me unquestionable evidences of his love, such as would silence all my unbelief of heart, and make me cry out, “ Lord it is enough.” But at other times my soul went heavily groping in the dark, distressed and crying out for God, often cast down by the risings of pride, Anger, anxious desires, and fears and cares about temporal things, these continually brought condemnation and distress on my soul, and often caused me to cry out in bitterness of spirit, “ O wretched one that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death”; the weight of these my corruptions pressed me to

the earth, and grew every day still more heavy ; I began now to see the necessity of that holiness, without which none shall see the Lord ; for I saw I was unholy throughout, a miracle of grace and sin ! pardoned, yet still alas unclean. I saw that the justification of my person would not do, without the sanctification of my nature ; but how this should be accomplished I was quite ignorant, and had no hopes of being delivered until I came to die, which made me earnestly long to lay down my body, that I might also lay down my sin. I was weary of my life, because of my propensity to sin, and would be content that God should even deny me the consolations of his spirit, if he would but keep me from sining against him. Thus I continued sometimes mourning and sometimes rejoicing, but continually bearing my burden until the year 1757. Indeed *so* sometime before, I saw a possibility of being delivered from sin even in this life, and was sometimes filled with sweet expectations of it, yet it seemed still at a great distance. But about this time the promise was brought nigh : I saw that God was as willing to sanctify the unholy as he was to justify the ungodly, and the

tidings of this was sweet to my soul....I was weary of my burden and longed to lay it down.

‘ Weary of this war within,
 ‘ Weary of this endless strife,
 “ Weary of myself and sin ;
 “ Weary of a wretched life.”

I wanted to love my God with *all* my heart, but found I could not, so long as the carnal mind remained ; which made me groan for deliverance, and rejoice at the prospect of its being near.

I was now particularly stired up to seek a total deliverance from all my inbred corruptions, and encouraged to hope, as I found that God was just at this time blessing his people in a wonderful manner ; purifying their hearts by faith. And that several in England and Ireland (some of them in the country societies near Limerick) had just now made profession that God had cleansed their hearts from all sin : and many earnestly pressing after it. *My* soul also was filled with earnest hungering and thirsting after it : Mr. Olivers who was then our stationed preacher was also much stired up to preach it, and press it home upon the society, but there were but few,

(319)

very few who could receive his testimony: I think only two more and I; and we three used to meet often to confer together, and were all on full stretch after this blessing.... But were as yet equally ignorant of the nature of that grace which we so earnestly desired; but the sight we had of our inbred corruptions made us miserable without it, and in the bare prospect of our deliverance, we enjoyed unspeakable comfort: but as in this we were singular from all the society (which I believe consisted of near three hundred persons;) my friends in the Society began to fear for me, least I should go too far, and as they did not see either the probability, or necessity of having their hearts cleansed from sin, they began to take some pains with me, until they had partly reasoned and partly laughed me out of my earnestness. Thus was the fervour of my desires abated, and some of my friends rejoiced at my deliverance.... Now was I more miserable than before, my corruptions stood still before me, and pressed my soul to the dust, and Satan brought continual condemnations against me for the sinfulness of my heart; and so

(320)

great was my ignorance that I continually accused myself for what I felt, but could not help :...the Lord did often bear his testimony with my Spirit that I was his Child.

But the reasonings of my enemy, the strength of my corruptions, and the unbelief of my heart, was ever questioning the work of God on my soul, and grieving his spirit, and caused me in the midst of blessings to be unhappy ; the fears of deceiving myself robbed me of the blessings which I had in possession, and my unbelief brought on me unthankfulness, and then hardness of heart, until a kind of stupification had overspread my whole soul ; and I became less watchful, less tender, less circumspect, until I first lost the witness and then the consolations of God's spirit :...Indeed the Lord did not leave me all at once, but the visits of his love grew shorter and seldomer, until at length I was left wholly destitute of any ; yet even then the Lord did not suffer me to fall into outward sin, or to quit his people, or the means of grace. But having lost the presence of God, and being truly sensible of my loss. I became completely miserable ; the wretchedness of this my state, as a

(321)

ghost haunted me continually, Yet how to be delivered from it, I knew not ; my greatest struggles were fruitless efforts, I could do nothing but sin and grieve....In this state I bore the weight of a class, and band ; the burden of which had almost sunk me into the earth. I made several applications to the preachers to take them from me, but all refused, and I dare not obstinately give them up, least in so doing I should sin against God....It is indeed remarkable that I seldom had either power or comfort in prayer during this state of deadness, except in my band and class, and seldom without it there:.... Blessed be my good and gracious Lord, who did not leave me to myself in this my most grievous state....Thus I continued more miserable than words can express for near two years, 'till in the year 1762 Mr. Wesley came to this town, and again revived the doctrine of holiness of heart ; this was as a dagger to my very soul, because of my own fallen state the beauty of holiness stood continually before me, and served as a clear mirror to shew me more truly my own darkness, I saw the desirableness of that happy state, but

(322)

alas it was far out of my reach, it appeared to me, as the childrens bread, which dogs like me must not touch, until Mr. Wesley in one of his sermons described my state much clearer than I could myself, and then encouraged such to seek the Lord both for justification and sanctification, saying that God was able, and could give the two blessings at once, and that he did not find it said any where, in scripture that he would not; these words came with power to my heart, and I was determined to seek the Lord with all my might, and never to rest until I had received some blessing from him...From this time I found power to wrestle and strive with God in prayer, and in a few weeks after, whilst I was at prayer the Lord did heal my backslidings, giving me power to believe in him, and a steadfast assurance of my acceptance through Christ; and filled my heart with abundance of peace and love....Yet I could not rest here, I soon felt the corruptions of my heart, and could not be content with less than a total deliverance....The Lord had greatly revived his work amongst us at this time, and was deepening it in the hearts of his children, he had enabled

(223)

some to testify that the blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin, and others were earnestly seeking after it. This made me cry the more mightily to God, lest the shower should pass away and my soul remain unwatered.

Yet here again the fears of deceiving myself made me prescribe rules to God; I was not content to receive this gift in his own way: Indeed I was very ignorant of God's manner of working this grace in the heart, and therefore looked for it to come with observation, and could not be content to receive it in the small still voice, lest I should deceive myself. The Lord did at this time abundantly bless my soul, by pouring in large manifestations of his love; I searched for my corruptions but could not find them; my soul rejoiced continually, and could find nothing in my heart but love to my God, and a continual breathing after him.... The rapture of my soul would sometimes awake me out of sleep, and keep me awake most part of the night; and found it often spoke into my heart, that God had fully wrought my deliverance: But here I would

(324)

start again from it, with fear lest I should deceive myself.

The time that I first found this change wrought in my heart, was at prayer whilst I was earnestly wrestling for Holiness of heart, when by a sudden act of faith I was enabled to lay hold on the promise, and to rejoice in my deliverance; being very happy in my soul: but coming from prayer, was immediately pursued by the enemy with showers of doubts and fears, which put me to a stand, not knowing whether to yield, or keep my hold, I took the Bible beseeching the Lord to give me a text on which I might take hold in this time of my exigence, and opened on Mark 11 & 24 "therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."...This brought much comfort to my soul, and I was enabled for some time to believe but soon shuffled aside by giving way to doubts and fears, though my soul remained abundantly happy, loving my God and rejoicing in him...Some time after, being distressed about my state not knowing whether to lay hold on the tes-

(325)

timony I found in my breast, of my heart being made clean, or to yield to the doubts and fears which continually haunted me; in this state I cast myself before the Lord in prayer, beseeching him to answer for himself, and received then a strong assurance, that the work was done; but my enemy still pursued me with fears lest I should deceive myself, and as all this was wrought on my soul in much stillness, I fear'd least it should not be genuine, and calling to mind others who had received this blessing with much rapture and extacy of soul; I said if the work on my soul was right, I also should receive it in the same manner. Thus distressed, and not knowing what to conclude, I took the bible, beging an answer in this matter, and opened into 1 corinthians 126 & "and there are diversities of operations, but it is the *same God* which worketh *all in all.*"

Surely this should have silenced all my unbelief, but my cunning adversary would not suffer me to rest, but kept me still doubting telling me these texts came only by chance, and not as an answer of prayer. Some short time after this, I was writing to a chris-

E e

Christian friend, who desired to know my state, and being thus tossed about by doubts and fears, I knew not what to say. My soul was continually very happy, yet kept constantly questioning about my state; so that I fear'd concluding at the one side or the other: this day whilst I was writing to my friend, I was much agitated whether I should relate to him *all* my experience or not, when all on a sudden the Lord did pour such a measure of his love into my heart, as I was scarcely able to contain; and was constrained to quit my Writing, and go to prayer: and had then a strong testimony in my breast that the Lord had taken the bent of backsliding out of my heart; but this was followed by such strong reasonings to the contrary, and fears of deceiving myself, that put me again to a stand, so that I knew not what to say to my friend concerning my state. Being thus exceedingly perplexed, I cried out as in an agony. "Lord shew me what thou wouldst have me do". It was immediately cast into my mind, since I would not believe God in any other way, to go *now* to the bible, and see what he should say to me on this head; but was afraid to do

(327)

this, lest I should offend God by putting him so often to the proof; thus agitated I sat down to finish my letter but could have no rest until I would open the Bible, and see what God would have me do.

Then taking the Bible, and requesting the Lord to guide me right, I opened it, on Romans x. & 10th. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" Here surely my request was fully answered, and my mouth should have been stopped; but my adversary would not let me rest, but kept me still reasoning, doubting, and fearing; and putting away the blessings of God from me, and was at last determined not to receive this blessing whilst it was accompanied with doubts or fears; thus my ignorance block'd up my way still, until by degrees I lost my fervor of spirit, and the sweet communion I enjoyed with God; and again found the strength of my corruptions even as before. Now I could look back, and see what I had lost by suffering unbelief to prevail and not accepting God on his own terms. The Lord did not withdraw his pardoning mercy from

(328)

me, I retained a sense of my acceptance through Christ, and was happy in his love ; but could not rest there, and was determined *I would not*. The weight of my inbred sin was grievous to be borne ; my soul was even pressed under the load....Indeed the Lord did afford me gracious visits of his love, but this could not satisfy, so long as his enemies remained in my heart ; so long as I found it bent to backslide from him. I saw that I did not love God with all my heart ; my husband, and children were idols set up in, and kept the place that God should have ; neither could I by any means tear them thence, though I laboured hard to do it. My distress was indeed very great, and often wrought impatience in my heart even against God : When the earnestness of my soul would not let me see why God should delay the blessing I so anxiously sought after, one moment longer....I was now willing to receive God in his own way, and on his own terms ; willing to be any thing, even to die, if only by death I might be delivered ; and was determined I would not rest without it :....I was resolved by the grace of God that nothing should hin-

(329)

der on my part, and therefore lopped off every thing in my practice that appeared even doubtful to me. Thus I continued earnestly striving, and my soul unspeakably happy, until the 22d. of May 1765, being Whitsunday. My heart had been much drawn out, in earnest and sweet expectation for some days before, that God would on *that* day visit my soul, and make it a pentecost *indeed* to me. Under these expectations, I attended the Lords table, and being on my knees before I went to the altar, I laid my case before the Lord, deploring my wretchedness by reason of the continual revoltings of my heart from him: Beseeching him, that he would do *any* thing with me, only to save me from sinning against him. My soul was indeed in deep distress, and my state appeared to me like that of the Lepper at the Pool side; both as to my disorder, and my utter helplessness and inability to arise; and from a feeling sense of this my state, my soul cried the more earnestly after Christ, having nothing to plead but my wretchedness, and seeing Him pass by who only could help me; when these words of our Lord were spoke to my heart, "Believest thou, that I

(330)

am able to do this", my soul eagerly answered, "Lord I *do* believe thou art able", the word came again. "Be it unto thee according to thy faith"....Here I was enabled to lay hold for a moment; but unbelief came in, and raised disturbance in my breast, and I could only cry. "Lord make me believe. Lord give me stronger faith, I believe thou art able, Lord I believe thou art able; and I will hold thee here until thou givest me more." Thus I went to the table of the Lord, my soul breathing out in earnest desires and expectations, still crying "Lord I believe thou art able", and in receiving the memorials, my soul was enabled to lay hold on Christ for my complete salvation from *all* sin. But my busy enemy still pursued me, and would feign have plucked it from me, so that my soul kept grappling as it were, to keep her hold: and awhile prevailed, and then almost lost hold, and then up again. In this manner I came from the communion with my soul exceeding happy, but closely exercised.... Then arose a question in my mind, "But what particular grace is it that I have been so eagerly wrestling for?" I answered, "That

(331)

I should have power to live without sinning against God." The question came again, "But where is the Scripture for this; there has none been given to me." Then immediately came that Scripture to my mind, "*Sin shall not have dominion over you.*" This brought much comfort to my soul, and I strove to stay me on the promise; thus I continued grappling hard, sometimes up, and sometimes down until the 2d. of June, when being at private prayer, I besought the Lord to deliver my soul from the power of my adversary, and that he would give me to feel *that entire salvation in him*, which my soul thirsted after....Whilst I thus prayed, the Lord did remove all my burden, and enlarged my heart, and admitted me to a closer communion with him than ever I had before; then I said, I will now ask to have my idols taken out of my heart;....But whilst I sought them, they were gone! taken away in a moment! and their place so filled with God, that there was no room for any thing beside. O how shall I describe what I then felt! Indeed it is past the power of tongue to utter, or thought to conceive; and can only be known

(352)

to those who have experienced the like...I sought for my husband and children in my heart, (that is I examined whether my heart was in any degree so bound up in them, as to separate any part of it from God) But they were given up to God, and my soul so filled with his love, that I was constrained to cry out: " Lord Jesus, thou art the only object
" of my soul, thou hast taken possession of my
" heart, and there is no room for any beside
" thyself, thou art my portion, my only treasure, and as such my soul with all her
" strength lays hold on thee, instead of every
" other good; giving up every other comfort,
" for thee my God, my Jesus, my all." Thus did my soul breath after God, being wrapped up in his love, and brought to such a sweet nearness and union with him as I never before experienced...I was now again brought as it were into a new world; my desires, my affections, and every faculty of my soul, was as it were new moulded. The scriptures were again opened to me, and I was given to see more clearly into their spiritual meaning, and every promise therein contained was, as I read them, sealed upon my heart, yea and

(333)

amen:....The people of God were now more than ordinary dear to me, the name of Jesus I found indeed as Ointment poured into my soul, so that my heart did even dance, and felt an uncommon emotion of joy; at barely hearing the name of Jesus pronounced: The law and purity of God, was precious, very precious to me; my soul cried out with the Royal Psalmist....“ O how I love thy law”. I now found an entire deliverance from those evil tempers, affections and desires, which before were so grievous to me: and could now see clearly that I did love the Lord my God with *all* my heart, without one negative in my whole soul; and could see my will wholly brought under subjection to his divine will, so that my heart cried continually, “ thy will be done”.

My love to God, was now quite of another kind, from that I had ever before experienced; more pure, entire and disinterested, without any mixture of self, indeed the change cannot be described. I was very happy before it, under a sense of the pardoning love of God, of my acceptance through Christ: and had often sweet access to him by faith,

(334)

But what I now experienced, under the full influence of sanctification, did as far exceed what I felt in a justified state, as what I then experienced did what I felt when I was first seeking redemption; the things which I found before grievous to me, and which occasioned me in the midst of comforts to be unhappy (I mean the corruptions of my nature) were now taken away, the bent of backsliding was taken out of my heart, so that it did naturally and continually cleave to Christ, breathing after him, and longing to be wholly united to him: and my soul was allowed sweet, near, and free access to him. Thus did the Lord bring *me*, worthless and unworthy, to the glorious liberty of his children :....But though I was thus abundantly happy, yet I found that I had not got out of the reach of my adversary; he was continually bringing in a train of doubts, and fears, upon me, which I was obliged to carry to Christ to answer: and often to stand as it were sword in hand, that I might not be overcome....It was often objected in my mind, may I not feel a total deliverance from all sin, or inclination to evil, and my heart filled with love to God and man, and yet my heart not be

(335)

cleansed from sin? May there not be a suspension without a total deliverance? These and many other questions which arose in my mind, made me earnestly desire that God would give the testimony of his spirit, to the work he had wrought; this I thought I might claim on the warrant of that word....“ We have received the spirit that is of God, that we may *know the things that are freely given to us of God*”.

The experience of others who could rejoice in this testimony encouraged me to ask for myself, believing that God would give it, and therefore was encouraged to wrestle the more earnestly; and on the 29th of June as I was at private prayer, and determined not to give up until I had obtained my request: my soul was brought near to God, and importunate for this blessing, when these words were spoken to my heart....“ *What wouldst thou that I should do for thee*”. I answered “ Lord that I might be made clean” the word came again, “ *I will, be thou clean*”...this came with power and assurance, so that I was enabled to praise God for cleansing my heart from sin, this was accompanied with a ray of divine light by which I could discover my heart, and see no sin in

it; the same light by which I before could see my heart all sin, now discovered it wholly cleansed and given up to God; indeed I know not how to describe this testimony, it was as a light brought suddenly into a dark room, by means of which one might discover every thing in the place: this was also accompanied with much sweetness, confidence and delight of soul, and made me go on my way rejoicing for some time: but Satan still thrust sore at me, and seemed determined to make my path as thorny as he could, he raised grievous trials against me, from without; such as I never had before to struggle with, and such as I think I could not have borne in my former state:....but in all I found my God ever near: but most grievous of all was his inward temptations, continually questioning the work of God on my soul. In this case the subtilty of my enemy, and my own ignorance often brought me into great distress.

Indeed the testimony of God's spirit did still continue, and shone on my heart, some times with a clearer, and sometimes with a fainter light :...but finding many things in the

(337)

course of my experience, which I did not expect to find in that state, together with the fears of deceiving myself (which still haunted me) made me ready to hearken to the voice of the enemy, when I should be simply believing in Jesus..... Thus I continued inexpressibly happy, yet foolishly giving way to doubts, and fears, and questioning the work of God on my heart, notwithstanding so many clear evidences ; until I again lost this witness ; after having retained it for above fifteen months. I did not indeed lose my grace, blessed forever be my God, he did not suffer me to fall, though he punished me for my folly, by withdrawing this comfortable testimony of his Spirit. Now I could look back and see what I had lost by hearkening to the reasonings of my enemy : the want of this blessing proved the value of it ; I could not now see the work of God on my heart, any other way, than by its own light, which was not always clear, and therefore could not satisfy. This caused much sorrow, and stired me up to ask of God, that he would again restore this comfortable witness of his spirit, that " I might know the things

that were freely given to me of God." Thus did I continue for about a year, I was indeed happy in God, but often under a painful uncertainty concerning my state (that is concerning my sanctification, for indeed the witness of my justification was continually clear since the 22nd. of May 1763. without one doubt concerning it) at times I say, the work shone by its own light, but at other times I feared least sin should still lurk in my heart, and this thought pained my very soul.

This was my state when you my friend, requested that I would give you in writing an account of my experience. Your request made me cry the more earnestly to God for the witness of his spirit, that I might see clearly the present state of my soul: when four days since, while I was writing part of this, I was struck with a sentence I had just wrote; in an instant the light broke in upon my heart, and I was enabled to believe: this was accompanied with Peace, Comfort, and Joy: and afterward it was (at prayer) made indisputably clear to me, that God had taken possession of my heart, and that it was

(339)

now wholly given up to him, and still I am enabled to see it, and believe;...though Satan does endeavour to distress my mind by bringing in many doubts upon me; but I trust my God will enable me to keep my hold, and stand by faith; the enemy of my soul does strew my way with thorns, but my Blessed Jesus does enable me to believe in him, and by faith to conquer every difficulty, and answer every objection which Satan suggests; *I do not, nor have not* found since the Whitsunday before mentioned, any thing in my heart contrary to pure love; no love of the ~~World~~- no evil ~~Desire~~, Pride, Anger, or unbelief: Indeed I do find sorrow, and trouble, and grief, for many things, as the occasions occur; and in those things where I used to find anger beset me, I now find grief and sorrow, without any condemnation. I am always more or less happy, but at no time unhappy, having a continual abiding sense of God's favour; I have no fear, but that of a sweet comfortable fear of offending God.

But alas! I see I come short, in *every* thing, of what I should be; in faith, in meekness, in patience, in long suffering, in resig-

(340)

nation, in humility, in love, Indeed in *every* grace. I see that every thing I say and do, might be better said, and better done:....I see my continual need of the application of the blood of Christ to my soul; indeed I never did see so great a need of it as now, and am enabled through grace to fly to it continually, and do feel it applied to my heart, and atoning for all my short comings, and this lays my soul low at the feet of my gracious redeemer; abhorring myself, and leaving all I have, and am behind, that I may lose myself in the extent of *his* mercy; who deigned to look on so poor, so worthless, so insignificant a being as I am: And not only so, but still to pursue, follow, entice and entreat, and may I not say even to *force* me back, after a thousand revolts. Indeed I am astonished at this, and can only say. "He has loved me, because he is love"....O may I walk meekly before *him*; all my days, who hath enabled me here to set up my Ebenezer and say,...." Thus far hath my God helped me".

Thus my dear friend I have given you a minute, but imperfect account of the dealings of God with my soul. It is indeed

(341)

throughout, a history of my rebellion, and an instance of the long suffering and patience of God....Indeed I have often thought that the Lord has had more trouble with me, than with any other soul that ever lived....What I am, I am by his meer *unmerited* grace and mercy, and to *him* my soul desires to give the glory, and never to lift my head but as a lost undone sinner, saved by his free grace alone.

In what I have here written, I have endeavoured to speak as clearly as I could, so that though you do not understand English well, I hope you will be enabled to read, and understand *this* without an interpreter....Upon reading it over, I find many things in it which need mending, but shall now leave it as it is: I know it would not bear the eye, of the curious or critic; but am not careful about this, if in any degree it may be made a blessing to your soul, as the writing it has been to mine: I am dissatisfied at the length of it, yet did not know which part I could leave out, I have indeed for this reason omitted many things which otherwise I would have mentioned, and might be profitable....But be it as it is, let it be a demand on you for your prayers:

(342)

I have much need of them, and hope when you are in a distant kingdom, the Lord will bring me to your mind, and I trust I also shall remember you.

I am my dear friend yours in our common
Lord,

ELIZA BENNIS.

MRS. ELIZA BENNIS died in Philadelphia, June 1802....Aged 77 years, after struggling with severe and unexpected trials, nearly the last twenty years, through which her confidence in God continued unshaken, her natural cheerfulness, and evenness of temper unabated, and her end was PEACE.

(343)

THE Publisher truly grateful for the very liberal encouragement this work has received; regrets not being able to form a correct list of the Subscribers, Several friends who had received subscriptions having forwarded the numbers but not the names....also several subscription papers in country towns not being yet returned....and believing that no list is better than an imperfect one, has (by the particular desire of a few friends) instead thereof, given two Poems, written by the late Mrs. E. Bennis, (and copied from her Journal)....Which he hopes will be found more pleasing and profitable than an useless list of names.

(344)

A WISH

Should GOD, indulgent now but grant
 My WISH, and fill up ev'ry want ;
 Speak as to Solomon from Heaven,
 " Ask what thou wilt, it shall be given."

Say, O my soul, what would'st thou have ?
 Look round, upon the rich and brave,
 Examine well, look round again,
 Nor throw thy Wish away in vain.

Behold what beauteous scenes arise
 Of Rich and Fair, of Great and Wise,
 Sure here's enough, would Reason say,
 Thy Wish need not be thrown away.

Or, if thou would's't be more than great,
 In annals fame'd for Wisdom's seat,
 For Riches, Power, and for all
 The product of this earthly ball.

See Solomon amidst his train,
 Favour'd of GOD, admired by men ;
 Earth at his feet her treasure pours,
 Nor War disturb his peaceful hours.

Around him waiting pleasures press,
 Prevent his call, and croud to please ;
 A pattern HE of Happiness,
 Say would'st thou now all this possess ?

Ah no, vexatious all and vain,
 Deceitful pleasure ! gilded pain ;
 He who had all these at his call
 Wrote VANITY upon them all !

(345)

Nor gilded roofs, nor Regal state,
 Nor all that can be fancied great,
 Or Wise, or Fam'd my soul desires,
 Far higher still my wish aspires.

Too mean are all earth-born delights,
 Pure heav'nly joys my soul invites ;
 And Asks while prisoned in this clod,
 A nearer union with my GOD.

That ev'ry moment I might feel
 His Love, and know I do his will ;
 Might find no slackness on my part,
 But praise flow constant from my Heart.

I ask no portion here below,
 Content with what my GOD bestow,
 But should I ask, I sav'd would be
 From Riches, Sin and Poverty.

A middle state I'd choose, where free
 From Want, or Popularity,
 In frugal neatness I would live
 Possessing more than Earth can give.

No Airy visitants intrude
 My happy, blissful solitude,
 Whose trif'ling chat might pain my heart,
 And leave me wounded when they part,

Few and select my Friends should be,
 Dear to my JESUS, and to me ;
 Whose holy converse still would prove
 A furtherance to my Faith and Love.

(346)

But joined in holy Friendship ONE,
 I, like my Lord would have my John,*
 My chosen, Friend, my other part,
 And next to Jesus in my heart.

Whose Vigilant and Impartial love,
 Should mark my faults, and then reprove ;
 Should all my griefs and comforts share
 One Heart, one mind, and one in pray'er

His Love unchangeable and free,
 Faithful and true to God and me ;
 A *Friend* in ev'ry state the same,
 And worthy of that *Sacred* name.

Thus happy in my God and friend,
 I'd wait 'till life's short journey end ;
 Then with my friends above appear,
 To have my *WISH* compleated there.

E. B.

February, 1766.

• Some select Christian Friend.

(347)

A FAREWELL TO THE WORLD.

Farewell gay World, fond scene of false delight,
 No longer now thy flat'ring charms invite ;
 Too long amus'd, beguil'd, ensnar'd by thee,
 With Siren art in willing slavery.

But rous'd at length by sounds of danger near,
 Great Sinai roar'd, and wakened all my fear !
 Fierce Thunders roll ! and Horrors ghastly throng
 I wak'd, and wonder'd how I slep't so long !

My silken cords now grievous chains appear'd,
 No voice of mirth, but dismal sounds were heard ;
 Realities break in (the change how great !)
 And shew the former vision all a cheat :

Asham'd, confus'd bewilder'd at the sight,
 I fain would fly ! but chains prevent my flight ;
 I fain would hide, but chain'd I cannot move,
 And struggling make my chains more galling prove.

'Til spent with fruitless unavailing strife
 My woes increase, and end my wretched life,
 Expiring, hopeless, friendless loud I cried,
 " Have mercy Lord, I yield, I yield," and Died.

Then Mercy found when yielded up my breath,
 My GOD step'd in, and rescued me from Death ;
 Knock'd off my chains, rais'd up my drooping head,
 Gave me a Kiss of peace, and smil'd and said ;

" O slow of heart, why did'st thou doubt my Love ?
 " Who ne'er to any Soul ungracious prove,
 " In vain thy struggling 'til my aid I give,
 " Who yields shall conquer, and who dies shall live.

(348)

Come follow ME, be faithful and receive
 The Crown which I to faithful victors give ;
 My Love shall guard thee in the trying hour,
 Have Faith in CHRIST, nor fear the tempters power.

Then led me forth into the open light,
 Where scenes of wonder strike my ravish'd sight :
 A new Creation all around appears,
 Myself new Create, new hopes, new joys new fears.

So late emerg'd from Darkness, Chains and Death,
 I view myself, and scarce believe I breathe !
 Fall prostrate, and with grateful heart adore,
 Disstress'd, and pained that I can do no more.

Ah LORD ! I cried, thy Mercies great and wide
 Surround, and close me in on ev'ry side,
 Beneath the weight of Gratitude I mourn,
 But nothing have to render in return.

How shall I all thy loving-kindness shew ?
 What would'st thou have a worthless nothing do ?
 Thou know'st for thee, I would with all things part ;
 My LORD replied, " I only ask thy heart."

Alas, I said, where will thy Mercies end ?
 How truly art thou stil'd the Sinners Friend !
 Ten thousand hearts like mine could not repay
 The smallest favour of the darkest day !

My heart which longs to be entirely thine,
 Into thy hands I willingly resign ;
 That Love which rescued from the depths of Hell,
 Hath bound it now, forever to thy will.

(349)

Resolved by thy Grace no more to stray,
 O let that Grace support me in my way ;
 Freely I ev'ry other good resign
 And take my GOD, instead of all for mine.

O happy choice ! my soul exulting views
 The Blissful prospect which my faith pursues,
 Boundless beyond what human can conceive !
 Nor terminates in less than GOD can give.

Again adieu, vain world of Noise and Shew,
 Where nought but sorrows in succession grow ;
 Delusive scene of unsubstantial bliss !
 Which Judas-like, betrayeth with a kiss.

Henceforth Farewell, thy once alluring smile,
 No longer my unwearied Heart beguile ;
 No other pleasures now, my soul would prove
 But those pure Joys, which flow from JESUS' love.

For him alone I ev'ry good forego,
 Of pleasure, profit or ought else below,
 My lot with my despised master take,
 Bear his reproach, and suffer for his sake.

In him alone substantial bliss I find,
 Earth with its Gilded toys I cast behind ;
 Through Grace divine enabled to repel,
 And bid this World, Eternally FAREWELL.

E. B.

January 1, 1772.

THE END.

G g

Page is blank in original book.

CONTENTS.

LETTER.	PAGE.
1. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	5
2. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	11
3. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	13
4. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	17
5. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	19
6. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	23
7. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	25
8. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	27
9. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	29
10. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	32
11. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	33
12. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	36
13. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	37
14. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	38
15. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	40
16. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	41
17. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	43
18. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	45
19. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	48
20. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	49
21. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	53
22. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	55
23. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	58
24. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	60
25. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	64
26. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	66
27. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	67
28. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	67
29. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis . . .	70
30. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley . . .	71

31. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	75
32. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley			75
33. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis			76
34. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley			77
35. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis			79
36. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley			80
37. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	82
38. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-		82
39. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	85
40. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-		86
41. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	87
42. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-		88
43. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	89
44. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-		90
45. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	92
46. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-		94
47. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	96
48. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-		98
49. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	101
50. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-		103
51. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	106
52. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-		107
53. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. John Wesley	-	-	109
54. Rev. John Wesley to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-		111
55. Mr. Thomas Walsh to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	112
56. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. Thomas Walsh	-		113
57. Mr. Thomas Walsh to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	114
58. Mr. Thomas Walsh to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-		119
59. Mr. Thomas Olivers to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	121
60. Mr. William Penington to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-		123
61. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. William Penington	-		124
62. Mr. Thomas Taylor to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	126
63. Mr. Richard Blackwell to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-		130
64. Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. Richard Blackwell	-	-	131
65. Mr. Richard Blackwell to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-		133

66.	Mr. Richard Bourke to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	✓	-	134
67.	Mr. John Dillon to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	136
68.	Mr. John Dillon to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	137
69.	Mr. John Dillon to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	140
70.	Mr. John Dillon to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	141
71.	Mr. John Dillon to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	143
72.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. Hugh Saunderson	-	-	145
73.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. John Christian	-	-	149
74.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. John Christian	-	-	151
75.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. John Christian	-	-	156
76.	Lieut. Charlse Jones to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	163
77.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Lieu. Charles Jones	-	-	164
78.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. R. T.	-	-	168
79.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. R. T.	-	-	171
80.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. R. T.	-	-	173
81.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. R. T.	-	-	177
82.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. Jonathan Hern	✓	-	181
83.	Mr. Jonathan Hern to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	182
84.	Mr. John Bristol to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	186
85.	Mr. John Goodwin to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	189
86.	Mr. Samuel Bradburn to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	191
87.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. Samuel Bradburn	-	-	194
88.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	199
89.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	201
90.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	202
91.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	204
92.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	206
93.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	209
94.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	214
95.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. John Stretton	-	-	217
96.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	222
97.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. John Stretton	-	-	226
98.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	233
99.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	237
100.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	-	-	240

101.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	242
102.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	245
103.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	247
104.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	252
105.	Mr. John Stretton to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	255
106.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to _____	- -	256
107.	Rev. J. F. to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	260
108.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. J. F.	- -	261
109.	Rev. J. F. to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	263
110.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to the Rev. J. F.	- -	265
111.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Major _____	- -	269
112.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to _____	- -	275
113.	Mr. John M'Gregor to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	280
114.	Mr. Richard Condy to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	285
115.	Mr. Richard Condy to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	287
116.	Mr. Walter Griffith to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	289
117.	Mr. Joseph Cr. to Mrs. Eliza Bennis	- -	292
118.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. J. Cr.	- -	297
119.	Mrs. Eliza Bennis to Mr. _____	- -	299
	A Wish	- -	344
	A Farewell to the World	- -	347

NOW preparing for the press, an extract from the journal of the late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, from March 1749 to March 1780....giving a concise account of the dealings of God with her, her trials, exercises, and deliverances, including some remarkable circumstances of Providence, to which will be added a short account of her last sickness and Death....Intended to be published in One Volume, Duodecimo, about 350 pages.... Price, One Dollar, Bound.

Mrs Susan B. Park
Seawater of the
late Mrs B. Clark &
Guate Grand Seawater
of Mrs Eliza Bennet
& Correspondent
in Christian letters
to & from the late
Rev John Wesley

This Book my
Daughter
Mrs. Lippel of
Ridgefield Washington
is going to have
this Book reprinted
S B Park



The B. L. Fisher Library at Asbury Theological Seminary recently acquired the Bennis Collection, an Irish Methodist archive of original letters to and from Eliza Bennis. She was actively involved in the growth and maintenance of Methodism in Ireland, keeping John Wesley informed of developments there and encouraging many dispirited missionaries by her sound and independent advice. One of the “mothers” of Methodism, Bennis was among the first Methodist converts in Limerick and was a regular correspondent of John Wesley, John Stretton (apostle of Methodism in Newfoundland) and other important figures in the early Methodist movement.

“This is a significant acquisition. It is indicative of Asbury Theological Seminary’s increasing leadership among Wesleyan-Evangelical institutions and demonstrates our commitment to serious scholarship in the field of Wesleyan studies.”

Kenneth J. Collins, Professor of Wesley Studies and Historical Theology and Director of the Wesleyan Studies Summer Seminar



asburyseminary.edu
800.2ASBURY
204 North Lexington Avenue
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390