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LETTER FROM SAMUEL DAVIES TO A FRIEND IN LONDON.

Charlotte, 15th November, 1819.

[REVEREND SIR,

I think somewhere in your magazine you requested that all persons having in their possession any of Mr. Davies' letters, would favour you with them. In a pamphlet I have found among the old papers of a deceased relative, entitled, "A Compassionate Address to the Christian Negroes in Virginia, &c. by Benjamin Fawcet; there is a letter of Mr. Davies', which I do not recollect seeing published yet in the magazine. And it does not appear that Mr. Gillies had the advantage of it in his Historical Collections; for although Mr. Fawcet makes several extracts from Mr. Davies' letters found in that work; yet he does not refer the reader to that work for this, but only says it was written to a correspondent in London, in the same year, in which this address was written, as you will see in his own words.

He is speaking of Mr. Tennent and Davies.—"After these gentlemen had successfully finished the business of their late mission in this part of the world; Mr. Davies gave the following particulars to his correspondent in London, in a letter which he wrote in the spring of the present year, six weeks after his safe return to his family and friends."]

"The inhabitants of Virginia are computed to be about 300,000 men, the one half of which number are supposed to be negroes. The number of those who attend my ministry at particular times is uncertain; but generally about three hundred who give a stated attendance. And never have I been so much struck with the appearance of an assembly, as when I have glanced my eye to that part of the meeting-

or some other, I have as glaring evidences that I deeply share of it as of my own existence. 'Tis truly astonishing, sir, that the candidates for eternity should confine their thoughts and projects so much to the trifles of time. Alas! the world is asleep; unapprehensive of the substantial realities which shall soon succeed to these fleeting vanities. Will the freedom of a friend be sufficient to excuse me if I here usurp the character of your serious monitor? O! dear sir, do not trust your eternal all on an implicit venture; do not suspend your everlasting state on a doubtful *perhaps*; but give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. A mere possibility of mistaking in this is more shocking than the certain expectation of any other misery. Remember, sir, that that plausible fashionable religion which the generality seem to rest in as sufficient, is not the religion of Jesus;

Therefore forsake the fashionable crowd;
And claim the honour to be singly good.

May those preludes of your final dissolution which have lately afflicted, if they do not now afflict your mortal frames, be happy excitements to a speedy preparation. If my prayers are heard on your behalf, you will be both heirs together of the grace of life. May Mrs. — be mindful of restoring mercy, and ripe for death whenever it may come! But oh! the world soon begins to charm us with its flattering allurements, and render us unmindful of the juster estimate we formed of them, when on the border of eternity.

Pardon, dear sir, pardon this "new-light cant;" for I should really offer violence to my mind should I write more ingeniously, or less solemnly. Pray, dear sir, write to me sense, nonsense, or what you please; for I am sure you do not know the pleasure your letters afford me. I am your's, &c.

S. D.

Original Letter from the Rev. Samuel Davies, formerly president of the college of New-Jersey.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I REDEEM a few nocturnal hours to breathe out my benevolent wishes for you, and to assure you of my peculiar regards. Human life is extremely precarious and uncertain; and, perhaps, at your return, I may be above the reach of your correspondence; or, perhaps, your voyage may end on the eternal shore. I, therefore, write to you, dear sir, in the last agonies of friendship, If I may use the expression. If,

upon your return, you only hear my worthless name tost from tongue to tongue, and find this system of clay that now breathes, and moves, and writes, mouldering into its native element, you may safely indulge this reflection: "Well, once I had a friend; a friend, whose affections could find room for me in his retired importunities for mercy at the throne of grace, when his own wants were so numerous and great, that they might have engrossed all his concern." Or, if I am doomed to survive you, I shall have the melancholy satisfaction to reflect, "My friend did not live without such assurances of my tender affection as might engage his confidence in my useless friendship."

And now, when I feel the soft emotions of friendship, and speak of the final period of this mortal state, I cannot restrain myself from intermixing some of the solemnities of religion. We shall have an interview beyond the grave, though we should never converse more beneath the skies, in the low language of mortals. But, oh! on what happy, or on what dismal coast shall we meet! On the verdant plains of the celestial paradise, or in the dreary regions of horror and despair? The human mind is incapable of forming a more important inquiry; and if the hurries or amusements of this infant state of things can banish it from our minds, we have forfeited the character of rational creatures; we are as really, and more perniciously mad than any wretch in bedlam, though we are not stigmatized as such by the world, who are seized with the same delirium. The valley of the shadow of death appears frequently gloomy and tremendous to me; but, it is in those unhappy hours, when my views of the glorious method of salvation through a mediator appear in an obscure light, and my complacency in it is wavering or languid; when the fervour of devotion is abated, and my soul is lulled asleep in a carnal security: but my mind cannot rest under this uncertainty: it is too important a matter to make an implicit venture in. Oh! sir, an eternity of consummate happiness! An eternity of the most intolerable misery!—My mind sinks beneath the unwieldy thought, and I cannot finish the sentence! If I am mistaken in this, If I form to myself some easy scheme of religion that may suit the humour of this world well enough, but will not obtain the approbation of the supreme Judge, then my reason is a pernicious superfluity, my very being an eternal curse; *Woe is me, my mother, that thou didst bear me.* But, in those joyful hours, when I can rest my guilty soul on an all-sufficient redeemer with all the humble confidence of a confirmed faith; when I can read the evidences of regenerating grace upon my heart; when I can recollect the solemn

transactions between God and my soul, and renew them in the most voluntary dedication of myself, and all I am and have, to him, through the blessed mediator; then immortality is a glorious prospect; the grizzly phantom death, is disarmed of all its horrors, and with the inviting mildness of an angel, charms me into its cold embraces. Then the mortal pale, the dying cold, the quivering lips, the falling jaws, and all the grim attendants of the last agony, carry nothing terrible in them.

“Clasp'd in my heavenly father's arms
I would resign my fleeting breath;
And lose my life amid the charms
Of so divine and blest a death.”

Dear, dear sir, I have opened to you some of my sentiments on experimental religion, and, you know, we unhappily differ upon sundry points relating to it. Our differences on many other points, and sundry of them even with respect to this, have but a very remote connexion with everlasting salvation; and, no doubt, multitudes arrive in the same heaven, who are tenacious of different sides. But that thorough change of heart, usually denominated regeneration; that distressing conviction of our undone condition by sin, and utter inability to relieve ourselves by virtue of that strength common to mankind in general, that humble acceptance of Christ as our only Saviour and Lord, by a faith of divine operation, that humbling sense of the corruption of human nature, and eager pursuit and practice of universal holiness, which I have, I believe, mentioned in conversation and my letters, appear to me of absolute necessity.

I should be glad you would read the second and third of Dr. Doddridge's Sermons on Regeneration, which, I think, give a very just and rational account of that important change. I would not venture my soul on a religion short of this for ten thousand worlds, and I am inexpressibly anxious, (pardon the perhaps needless anxiety of my love,) lest you should fatally mistake here. My anxiety is heightened when I consider your favourite authors. Tillotson's and Sherlock's Works, the Whole Duty of Man, and such authors, are truly valuable in their place, and handle many points to peculiar advantage; but if I know any thing of experimental christianity, they treat of it very superficially, and, I think, in their most obvious sense, tend to mislead us in sundry things of great importance relating to it, not so much by asserting false doctrines, as by omitting sundry branches of it absolutely necessary. I have examined the matter with some care; and I am sure their delineation of christianity is not an exact

copy of what I must experience before I can see the Lord: I must indeed come up to their account of it; but I must not rest there; there is a necessity of experiencing something farther than they generally inculcate. The same thing I would inoffensively observe with respect to all the sermons I have heard in Virginia from the established clergy. Hence, by the by, you may see the peculiar safety of my scheme; if their scheme of religion be sufficient, I am as safe as they, since mine includes it; but if it should prove essentially defective, then you see where the advantage lies. This difference is not at all owing to their being of the church of England, for many of that church agree with me; and many Presbyterians with them; but it is owing to their imbibing the modern divinity, which, like a pernicious leaven, has diffused itself among all denominations: and however confidently some assert it, I could not embrace it without wilfully throwing myself into ruin.

You know, sir, what use I would have you make of these hints; and I am confident you will pardon the affectionate solicitude for you which prompts me to them. I speak solemnly, dear sir, solemnly as in the presence of God, and not with the contradictory spirit of a disputant. Of all the systems of practical religion which have come under my examination, I have endeavoured to choose the most sure as the foundation of my hopes; and I should show a guilty and unfriendly indifference about your immortal interests, should I not recommend it to you, and caution you against those that appear insufficient. It matters little to me whether you use the ceremonial peculiarities of the church of England, or not; as I know they have but little concern with experimental religion: but our notions of the substance of vital piety ought to be well examined, and impartially formed; as a mistake here may be of pernicious consequences. But I must desist. May almighty grace prepare you for a glorious immortality! May divine providence be your guardian through the dangerous of the boisterous ocean!

May He whose nod the hurricanes and storms
 And blustering waves in all their dreadful forms
 With calm adoring reverence obey;
 May He with friendly vigilance preside
 O'er the outrageous winds and boist'rous tide,
 And safe through crowds of deaths conduct your dang'rous way!

I commit two letters to your care, one to Dr. Doddridge, and one to Mr. Mauduit. Upon your arrival in London, please to write a few lines along with mine to Dr. Doddridge,

informing him where to find you, that he may commit his answer to your care.

And now, dear sir, with affectionate salutations to your family, my whole self wishes you a most hearty farewell.

I am your most affectionate friend,

SAMUEL DAVIES.

September 12, 1751.

ANECDOTE OF ARCHBISHOP USHER AND MR. RUTHERFORD.

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.”

THE eminent Archbishop Usher being once on a visit in Scotland, heard a great deal of the piety and devotion of the famous Mr. Samuel Rutherford, who he understood, spent whole nights in prayer, especially before the Sabbath. The Bishop wished much to witness such extraordinary down-pouring of the Spirit; but was utterly at a loss how to accomplish his design. At length it came into his mind to dress himself like a pauper; and on a Saturday evening, when turning dark he called at Mr. Rutherford's house, and asked if he could get quarters for a night, since he could not go to other houses at so late an hour for that purpose. Mr. Rutherford consented to give the poor man a bed for a night and desired him to sit down in the kitchen, which he did cheerfully. Mrs. Rutherford according to custom, on Saturday evening, that her servants might be prepared for the Sabbath; called them together, and examined them. In the course of examination that evening, she asked the stranger, how many commandments there were? To which he answered, ‘Eleven.’ Upon receiving this answer, she replied, “What a shame is it for you! a man with gray hairs, living in a Christian country, not to know how many commandments there are! there is not a child of six years old in this parish, but could answer this question properly.” She troubled the poor man no more, thinking him so very ignorant; but lamented his condition to her servants: and after giving him some supper, desired a servant to shew him up stairs to a bed in a garret. This was the very situation in which he desired to be placed, that he might hear Mr. Rutherford at his secret devotion. However, he was disappointed; for that night the good man went to bed, but did not fall asleep for some hours. The stranger did not