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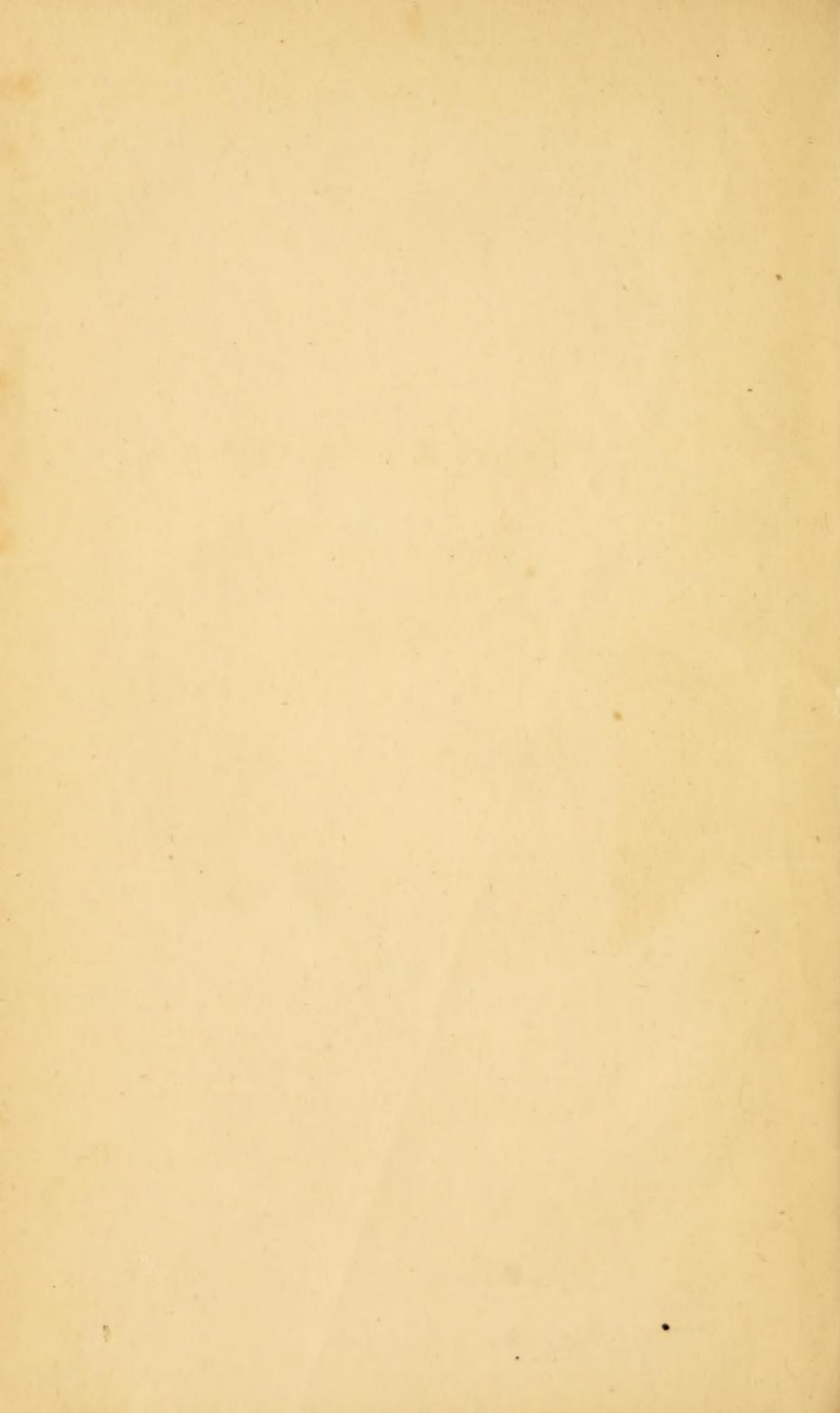
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Theological Seminary
Princeton N.J.

Presented by
Henry James.

1840.







My hearty love be with you all, & the
abundant blessing of Him whose love
passeth knowledge!

Your affectionate brother
J Walker

ESSAYS

AND

CORRESPONDENCE,

CHIEFLY ON SCRIPTURAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE

JOHN WALKER,

SOME TIME A FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, AND A CLERGYMAN IN
THE ESTABLISHMENT.

COLLECTED AND PREPARED FOR THE PRESS,

BY WILLIAM BURTON.

VOL. I.

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SOLD BY LONGMAN, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMAN'S
E. MADDEN, & R. M. TIMS, DUBLIN; A. & C. BLACK, EDINBURGH.

1838.

ESSAYS

CORRECTION D'UN

TRAITÉ DE MÉDECINE

PAR

M. DE LA ROCHE

DE LA FACULTÉ DE MÉDECINE

DE BORDEAUX

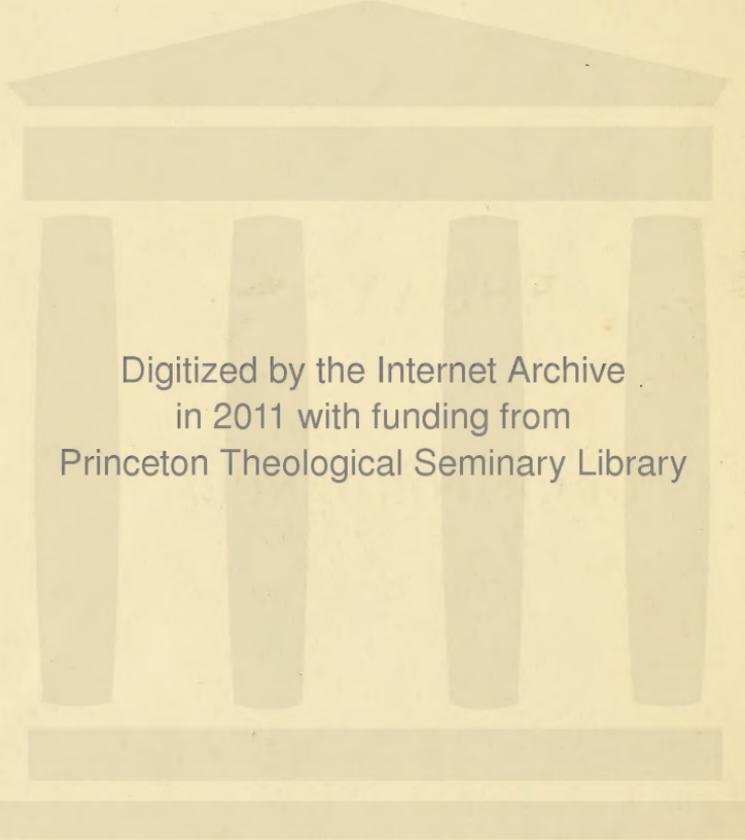
1787

London: G. H. Davidson, Printer
Tudor Street, New Bridge Street.

ESSAYS

AND

CORRESPONDENCE.



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TO

MISS MARY WALKER,

THE BELOVED DAUGHTER OF THE AUTHOR,

THIS FIRST VOLUME OF HER FATHER'S WORKS

IS INSCRIBED,

AS

A TRIBUTE TO HER FILIAL PIETY,

AND IN

TESTIMONY OF THE SINCERE ESTEEM

OF

HER BROTHER

IN THE FAITH AND HOPE OF THE GOSPEL,

WILLIAM BURTON.

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T. LIVII PATAVINI Historiarum ab Urbe condita, Libri qui supersunt xxxv. Textum recognovit, selectis variorum Notis illustravit, suasque aliquot adjecit JOHANNES WALKER, Collegii Dubliniensis olim Socius. 7 tom. Svo. Dublinii: Sumptibus Academicis.

ERRATA.

- Vol. I. page 1, line 7, for "1 Thess. v. 11," read "1 Thess. v. 21."
page 5, last line, for "1821," read "1818."
page 33, line 8, for "2 Cor. vi. 2," read "2 Cor. iv. 2."
page 42, line 23, for "Rom. xi. 23," read "Rom. xi. 33."
page 106, line 31, for "in his operations," read "in its operations."
page 174, line 14, for "successively," read "successfully."
page 248, line 40, for "mean," read "meaning."
page 415, line 48, for "pledging its own," read "pledging his own."
page 474, line 33, for "kind indignation," read "kind of indignation."
- Vol. II. page 51, line 24, for "1 Cor. x. 97," read "1 Cor. x. 27."
page 110, line 13, for "ὁν" read "ὄν."
page 123, line 32, for "which is the bosom," read "which is in the bosom."
page 168, lines 35 and 40, for "rights," read "rites."
page 200, line 9, for "delivered from," read "delivered by."
page 245, line 35, supply "errors" from the line below.
page 282, line 3, for "1818," read "1819."
page 349, line 11, for "No. xxx," read "Nu. xxx."
page 478, line 27, for "Oct. 8," read "July 8."
page 559, line 4, for "ὁ ἄν," read "ὁ ἄν."
page 578, line 18, for "xvii." read "xviii."
page 583, line 48, for "affected," read "effected."

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P R E F A C E.

THE design of this publication is to present the reader with several writings of the late Mr. Walker. Some had become very scarce, some were wholly out of print, and some have not been published before. They are principally on Scriptural subjects; there are, indeed, but four articles in the collection that have not a direct relation to divine truth; and one of these, "The Speech on the State of Ireland," can scarcely be considered foreign to that subject. Several of the articles composing this edition have had considerable circulation and notoriety, especially in Ireland and Scotland; while others appear, for the first time, under Mr. Walker's name. To these I have now been enabled to make a valuable addition of Expository Remarks, and extracts from his correspondence. The whole forms a choice collection of the author's scriptural works, as they may be called in distinction from his classical and scientific publications, a list whereof I have prefixed to this volume. In the execution of my design, I have aimed at observing the strictest regard to the memory of my departed brother. Such articles, as he expressly wished should survive him, form the first and chiefest portion of this edition; and none have been admitted into it, of which, to the best of my judgment, he would have disapproved. Deprived by his death of the valuable corrections he proposed in a new edition, I have supplied the loss, as far as it could be done, by referring the reader to such passages as he would have corrected, and, for the nature of those corrections, to his own words. My object, as editor of this work, has been to promote the great end set

before him by the author in composing the several portions of it; to exhibit the glory of the Gospel of the rich grace of God, the joyful news from Heaven to sinners *as such*, and its mighty power and invariable effect in producing subjection of mind, and obedience to the divine commands in all who are taught of God to believe it. I know no human writings that have done this with the truth, the perspicuity, and the comprehensiveness that distinguish the present: I know not any human works that so clearly display the true mercy of God revealed in the testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ; so searchingly expose the treacherous deceptions employed to obscure or nullify it; that mark so plainly the obedience inseparable from a belief of the truth, and exhibited in the visible union of the first Disciples; or so happily contrast that union with the vague, imaginary, and delusive phantom that forms the common idol of discordant sects in the present day. They have been already made instrumental in exposing the devices of the man of sin, and promoting a great and wonderful revival of apostolic doctrine and practice: and the hope may be entertained, without presumptuously arrogating to them any character beyond humble instruments of Almighty power, that they shall still be rendered useful to the same objects. While day and night succeed, while seed-time and harvest return in their due season, while this earth continues to yield her fruits to man's hand, and to witness his ingratitude, so long there is a divine proof that the Lord has yet on it a remnant to be saved; and so long his people are warranted and encouraged to spread among their fellow sinners the gospel of his kingdom, the word of everlasting life: and notwithstanding every discouragement from without, though every circumstance around tends to make them weary and faint-hearted; though they see religious whoredoms abounding more and more; though they see the love of many who gave better promise, and for a time walked with them, waxen cold; though they see their own assemblies not exempt from painful exhibitions of human evil; they will trust in Him who makes every one of his sheep to hear his voice, and glorifies Himself in giving them all *one mind and one way*; and they will be forward to use every means He has sanctioned for accomplishing this gracious design.

It would be an agreeable task to pursue these topics in connec-

tion with the author's works; to trace the singleness of object discoverable in his earliest productions as in his most matured; to follow the progressive enlargement of his judgment as it became exercised and experienced in the Christian contest; and from an examination of their influence on the contemporaneous appearances of Antichristian religion, to derive instruction and wisdom for meeting the specious simulations it progressively adopts. This, however, were I able to execute it most successfully, would transgress the limit of my undertaking, and detain the reader from the admirable works before him. To give him every facility for making his own observations, I have adopted the simple and most natural arrangement of each class of didactic pieces in chronological order, by the side of which the correspondence, similarly disposed, like a current commentary serves to furnish particulars of the author and his times, meets objections levelled against his sentiments on Christian doctrine or Christian practice, supplies explanations and corrections, as his views of both progressively enlarged; and, what I consider its most instructive feature, exhibits the practical application of the doctrine of Christ, to the various cases of individual brethren, or the churches of God, as well for warning and rebuke, as for encouragement and consolation. I have not materially departed from this arrangement except in the instance of the letter to Mr. Belsham, and the Address to a young Student: the growth of the second volume beyond my original intention forced me to place them at the end of the first. The deviation would scarcely require particular notice, but that the date of the letter to Mr. Belsham is of importance in forming a judgment upon it. It was written some time prior to the date of any other scriptural article admitted into this edition, and while the author was still a clergyman. I have given my reasons for its insertion, and for suppressing at the same time certain passages of it, in a note to p. 567, and I hope they will excuse me with any of my brethren who may still question the expediency of its publication. There is among the Remarks Corrective, vol. ii. p. 76, a biblical criticism on Acts xix. 2, extracted from the "Advocate of Revealed Truth," a periodical published in Dublin in 1804, and to which Mr. W. contributed some articles. I inadvertently neglected to apprise

the reader, by an addition of the date, how long it preceded the other articles of its class. I may, however, generally observe that those who can most justly estimate the value of the present work, and can derive the greatest benefit from it, will be the most ready to acknowledge the infirmity and imperfection inseparable from every work of man, and will most heartily subscribe to that right-minded declaration of the author, not to allow anything he has written to have force against the truth. Error is progressive, ever changing, ever assuming some new shape. Every worn-out cloak that the force of truth strips her of, is found to have covered a garment of finer and more delicate texture, in which she pursues her unwearied task, and presents to every different class and to every succeeding generation of men, the specious dress most adapted to allure it. Disciples must expect this; they must not rest supine under the idea that every description of the deceivableness of unrighteousness has been already exposed; they must look forward to new appearances of their old enemies, and even to see the language of the faithful advocates of truth employed to pervert the doctrines they held most sacred. As the dawning of that great day, that shall finally consume every work of darkness, increases in brightness, the deceived and deceiving adversaries of Christ, calling themselves after his name, are compelled to put on a still more deceitful guise; evil men and seducers, with the titles of pious, devout, and zealous ministers of him, become more and more busy, and employ more crafty devices to draw away disciples after them; churches, counterfeiting a nearer approach to Christian doctrine and discipline, multiply, and open their doors to receive numerous deserters from the more ancient temples of their gods. For all this the children of the kingdom must be prepared, and against all this they must arm themselves, not with the wisdom and authority of man, but with the word of God, the sword of his Spirit. While they hold in high and deserved esteem those who have gone before them, and maintained the good fight in their day; while they enjoy with gratitude the fruit of their labours, they will best follow their bright example by forgetting the things that are behind, and keeping before their view the one unchanging object, who "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,"—

and through whom the weakest of his children is armed for a successful contest with every adversary.

The introduction into the author's correspondence of letters from one church to another may appear at first strange. I would apprise the reader that such letters were drawn up by him at the request of the church with which he met at the time. I have others of the same kind subscribed, but, I think, not composed by him, and which for this reason I have not inserted.

Of the typographical portion of this work I conceive myself warranted in saying, that the compression of so much matter, combined with so much correctness, legibility, and neatness of execution, does great credit to the ability and zeal of my printer, Mr. G. H. Davidson, to whose assistance through the progress of my labour I feel much indebted.

Although Mr. Walker and his sentiments have not of late been much noticed in controversial publications, at least as far as I know, there are one or two notices of both, published since his death, that I cannot pass without observation. The first is by the learned and deservedly respected writer of "Sermons on the Nature and Effects of Faith," Lond. 1833. He represents Mr. Walker as holding faith to consist "in a belief in the narrative of the Bible; or in an intelligent assent to certain propositions concerning the incarnation, life, and death of our blessed Lord." The extraordinary phraseology of this definition leaves me quite at a loss to conjecture from whence it has been derived. It is certainly not taken from Mr. Walker's writings. I can find no such language in his works, though they abound in plain unequivocal statements of the nature and effects of that faith with which eternal life is connected, and in striking contrasts of it with the various notions of religionists on the subject. If his information has been derived from the report of others, he and they have now an opportunity of opposing the deliberate opinions of the author, and not the equivocal definitions imputed to him by those who see just enough of the truth to hate and misrepresent it.

Mr. Walker and his sentiments have been also brought before the public in the "Remains of Alex. Knox, Esq." Lond. 1835. —the same gentleman who, with little consciousness of the unequal contest, attacked Mr. Walker's affectionate and wholesome expostulation with the Methodists, and received

the admirable reply that forms the second article of this volume. Mr. Walker and his opponent are now where alone the question between them can be decided. I shall offer no further observations on these posthumously published remarks of Mr. Knox, than that I have some reason to think, had himself been the editor of his works, several of those observations to Dr. Jebb would not have appeared. I have seen another notice of Mr. Walker in an obscure monthly periodical, entitled "The Millennial Harbinger, &c." for Sept. 1835; but it is of so low and disgusting a character as to be most suitably treated with silent pity.

My inclination would have led me to accompany these works with some memoir of the author. It would have been a gratification, however imperfectly I might have done it, to record the talents, the learning, the work of faith, and labour of love, of one whom I most highly esteemed, and whose memory I cherish in enduring veneration. But I am warned by his own language and example to refrain from thus mixing up human character with divine truth, and diverting the reader's mind from subjects of the highest importance to him, to the examination of what does not at all affect them. Some highly interesting particulars of the author's life may be collected from these volumes, to which I shall only add its happy termination. After having walked with the church for thirty years, in all humility of mind, assuming no official distinction among his brethren, but with unwearied zeal fulfilling the part of a watchful and faithful brother; after a course visited with many and sore trials and afflictions, yet abounding in the joy of the Holy Spirit, he threw off his earthly tabernacle, died in faith, and entered into the joy of his Lord, of whom he was an highly favoured servant, on the 25th Oct. 1833.

EDITOR.

Nov. 1837,

No. 2, Brunswick Row,

Queen Square, Bloomsbury.

AN
EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS
TO THE
MEMBERS
OF THE
METHODIST SOCIETY IN IRELAND.

Bring all things to the test.—1. Thess. v. 11.
To the law and to the testimony.—Isa. viii. 20.

[First Published Aug. 1802.]

THE insertion of the two first articles in this collection, the Address to the Methodists and the Letters to Mr. Knox, renders a few preliminary observations necessary. Both these pieces were published while Mr. Walker retained the situation of Clergyman in the Establishment; and both contain some sentiments which he publicly condemned and retracted, when, soon after their publication, he was led to see the unlawfulness of his religious connexion. To give a renewed circulation to these exceptionable passages had an appearance of inconsistency; but to exclude the entire articles would have been to suppress two productions highly valuable for the perspicuity and strength of reasoning with which the essential principles of the Gospel are vindicated, and the errors of false doctrine exposed. They were well known in Ireland and Scotland, where they had an extensive circulation; the omission of them would have proved a great disappointment to many expectants of the present edition in both countries; and it could not have been satisfactorily accounted for to several, who knew that the subject, on which the author's mind had undergone a change, though of the highest importance, occupied but a very small portion of either work; and that this change did not affect his arguments on the great principles, to the discussion of which nearly the entire of both was devoted. To publish the Address and Letters, with the omission of the comparatively few objectionable passages, presented a plausible and *apparently* easy method of avoiding the imputed inconsistency. But it is at all times a task of no small difficulty to perform such an operation on the works of another; and the editor who undertakes it will seldom afford satisfaction to his readers or to himself. It would also have required a long explanatory statement, not likely itself to escape censure; and would have exposed the whole work to the charge of disingenuous mutilation, and to consequent suspicion and distrust.

The plan now adopted is to give both articles in the same form in which they originally appeared; but to annex, in extracts from his subsequent

writings, the author's castigatory observations on the exceptionable passages. This plan, besides its candour and simplicity of execution, possesses the recommendation of approaching nearer than any other to what the author would have adopted, had circumstances favoured his republication of these works. It is much to be lamented that he did not, according to his expressed intention, supply observations for a new edition of these early works; or if he did, that no search has yet discovered them. Under his hand the most objectionable passages would have been made subservient to the vindication of truth; and an effectual antidote would have accompanied whatever was calculated to mislead. But it is confidently hoped that the subjoined extracts will prove sufficient, not only to warn the reader of the acknowledged spuriousness of that charity which prompted Mr. Walker to apply the term "brethren" to those whom the Scriptures did not warrant him to consider as such, and consequently to address them in language which that spiritual relation alone could justify; but also to direct his attention to the after pieces, in which he will find the doctrines of Christian Charity, of Christian Union, and the laws of Christ's Kingdom, treated at length and with progressive clearness.

The controversy in which the Expostulatory Address involved the author, became an instrument in dispelling his obscurity on these subjects; and it may be expected without presumption, that the opportunity now afforded of tracing this gradual advance from its dawn to clearer light, instead of being injurious, may prove a gracious means in the hand of God for leading one or another disciple, who is similarly bewildered by the specious artifices of the man of sin, and who yet lingers in some one of the numerous anti-christian camps with which the land is overspread, like him to hearken to the word of the Lord, to follow his course, and to experience the same blessed deliverance.

The Address to the Methodists was first published in August, 1802; it underwent three editions from that period to 1804, and was subsequently reprinted in Edinburgh in 1807, but without having been subjected to the author's revision.—ED.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE ADDRESS contained in the following pages has been meditated for many years; and has remained by me for many months nearly in its present form. I delayed the publication, in the intention of rendering what I had written less imperfect, and of treating some of the topics (particularly towards the conclusion) more at large. But finding that it becomes increasingly uncertain, when that intention might be realized, I now send the piece out without further delay; convinced that something of the kind is much needed, and not without hope that it may be made of some use.

To myself, I am aware, it is likely to produce only an increase of various trials, from which nature would desire to shrink; but the prospect of which must not deter the servant of Christ from the onward path of duty. The body to whom this Address is immediately directed, is numerous, active, and jealous of its interests. I can truly say, that I have endeavoured to avoid giving them any *needless* offence; but I know that much offence will be taken.

I am sensible also, that other professors of religion, besides the Methodists, and differing from them, are likely to be offended by various passages in the following address. To some it will appear too liberal; to others, too uncharitable; to many, too little accommodated

(in certain parts) to the systematic forms of expression long current in the religious world. In short, the writer who takes the sacred Scriptures *alone* for the standard of his faith, and takes the *whole* of them, must expect opposition and dislike, more or less, from all sects and parties.

As to the openly careless and carnal, if any such read these pages, while they may perhaps agree with me in condemning some of the practical errors which I mark, yet I am persuaded that to them the views of the Gospel which I propose are much less congenial, than the system of theology maintained by Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher. In every religious system which has *self* for its fundamental principle, the world can find something to approve, and something which it understands. But the Gospel, which proposes a foundation for the sinner's hope, altogether *out of himself*, and calls him to a life which he is to "live, *not by himself*, but by the faith of the Son of God," is on this account peculiarly offensive to the world, and peculiarly unintelligible.

The Gospel, however, is to be declared, and to be maintained; and will continue to be "to them which are called, the power of God and the wisdom of God." To his blessing I commend this little piece; hoping that, if it receive an answer from any of those to whom it is addressed, it may be answered in the same spirit in which I have endeavoured to write.

August 9th, 1802.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

WITHIN these few days, I have read with serious attention a pamphlet containing "Remarks" on this Address, by ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A. The remarks extend to a very small part indeed of the address; and even as far as they extend, are very little apposite. They certainly afford me no reason for withholding from the public this second edition of my little piece; which (after all Mr. Knox has said) I believe contains no more than salutary admonition to the body, whom he thinks I unwarrantably attack. Any verbal alterations that I make as it goes through the press, I shall acknowledge at the end.

The ingenious writer of the Remarks appears to be very solicitous about the *reputation* of the Methodists, which I can assure him I am as little solicitous to invade, as I am to defend my own. Persuaded as I am that the more clearly we maintain and exhibit the simplicity of the real Gospel of Christ, the more we shall be disliked and despised by the *world*,—I consider the reputation of any man or men as too unimportant to be contended for or against. And if, in the writer's zeal about that question (to which I believe he was prompted, in some measure, by very amiable feelings of personal friendship) he had not involved some more important matters, I should not think myself called on to take any further notice of his remarks.

But there are points of *divine truth* at issue between him and me, which will oblige me (if life be spared) to reply to his pamphlet. These are matters from the discussion of which I dare not shrink; though the more I vindicate them, the lower, I am sure, *my* reputation in the world will sink. But God forbid that Christians should wish to have a higher reputation in the world than their divine Lord and Master!

Both the state of my health, and the multiplicity of my engagements, may prevent my remarks on Mr. Knox's pamphlet appearing as soon as some might expect. Perhaps they may appear in about two months. I can very seldom take up my pen at all; and then I cannot write hastily, and dare not upon these subjects. Meanwhile I hope some of the Methodists will be led to attend to the voice of serious admonition in the following pages, in spite of the more grateful sound of panegyric which their advocate pours into their ears. They will yet know that the monitor is their more real friend than the panegyrist.

November 22d, 1802.

AN
 EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS,
 &c.

* BRETHREN,—I have long wished to address you ; and have long been prevented by other engagements, as well as deterred by the difficulty of addressing you as I wish. If my object were to write for one party against another, to expose your errors for the sake of pleasing those who differ from you, I would find no difficulty in the task ; and I have not wanted occasions for undertaking it. But I trust I have a much higher aim. While I would candidly mark what I consider dangerous errors in your body, I would do this, not for the sake of victory, but of truth. While I would address you with all the simplicity of reproof, where I think it needful, I would rather win you by conviction, than triumph over you by argument. While I would attempt to rectify your misconceptions and remove your prejudices, I would desire to exercise all patience and tenderness, towards those who labour under them. While I would boldly contend

* I have got a series of letters, published in Scotland, under the signature of "*Simplex* ;" which I mention here, for the purpose of acknowledging my obligations to the writer. I perceive he gives me a severe castigation for the unscriptural manner in which I occasionally expressed myself of the Methodists, in my Expostulatory Address to them, and Letters to Mr. Knox. His rebukes upon that subject are most just ; and though I have been long sensible of the error I was betrayed into, and anxious for an opportunity of correcting it ; I am not the less indebted to him for publicly animadverting on an evil which was publicly committed. If ever I should be able to republish the work in which it appeared, I shall express myself more fully on the subject.—*Extract from Preface to Observations on a Reply to Thoughts on Baptism*, 1809.

Your remarks on the inconsistency of my Address to the Methodists perfectly accords with the views of it I have been led to for some years past, and have since, as far as opportunity served, avowed. My sin (for there can be no sin greater than unfaithfulness to the truth of God) I cannot palliate by the plea of mitigation you suggest, that I used the word "brethren" only as indicative of the common brotherhood subsisting between man and man. I fear I meant Christian brotherhood ; and was led away by a vague hope that there were a few in the society, who did not really hold the principles which, as a society, they all profess. While men profess sentiments contrary to the truth of the Gospel, we have no right to suppose that they do not believe what they profess ; or that they believe what they deny. Indeed, when I wrote that piece and my letters to Mr. Knox, the inconsistency of my language was even exceeded by the inconsistency of my practice. I held the awful character of a clergyman in the establishment, even while I was latterly attempting, with a few others, to meet on the first day of the week in Christian fellowship. I may truly own with shame that I have been a most slow and wayward scholar, while I may own with thankfulness the mercy and patience of the Heavenly teacher.—*Letter to Mr. Howe*, 1821.

for the most important truth, I am anxious to be kept under the blessed influence of that truth, for which I contend.

To combine these things is no easy matter: it is impossible to man. But I look to him, without whom I can do nothing; beseeching him to keep my spirit throughout this address under his gracious control. Brethren, look ye also to him, as many of you as open these pages; that you may read them with candour, that you may not be suffered to shut your minds against seasonable admonition or reproof: but may examine for yourselves, and "prove all things"—not by human authority, but by that divine word which abideth for ever.

* I have long wished for an opportunity of brotherly intercourse and free communication with real Christians in your society. Such, I am persuaded, differ less from real Christians of other denominations, than they are taught to imagine. I wish that we should know each other, understand and impart to each other. The people of God are all *his workmanship*, and *all taught of him*. His work and teaching are the same in them all, as to their leading characters; and where they seem to differ, their difference arises from the mixture of man's work and teaching with the divine. Amidst all that mixture, I can from the heart join in the apostle's prayer, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!" And I rejoice in the appearances, which have for some time past indicated a more general diffusion of the truly catholic spirit expressed in that prayer.

But suffer me to remonstrate with you on the opposite temper of party-spirit, which seems increasingly to prevail in your body. The Methodist Society in Ireland appears alarmed at the growing union of other Christians, who have lately been stirred up to co-operate in spreading the glorious Gospel of God through the country; and in the magnitude of that one object (in which their hearts feel a common interest) are forgetting the subordinate differences, which before kept them asunder. Is it not a party-spirit, that makes the Methodist Society not only stand aloof from this blessed union, but oppose it? and that in many instances by acts the most unwarrantable, and misrepresentations the most groundless? Those whose exertions you oppose have no object, but to be instruments of turning sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Is it not a party-spirit which suggests a fear, that the Methodist interest will be injured by their exertions? I know that those who have been most violent in the opposition of which I speak, would assign various

* As to the Address to the Methodists of Ireland, I have mentioned in my reply to Mr. Haldane, that I am willing that any one should reprint that and my Letters to Mr. Knox, (they must go together) provided he print along with them *castigatory notes*, which I shall be ready to furnish. With these I should be glad of the republication; for there is much important matter, particularly in the Letters to Knox. But without the antidote of the notes I protest against the reprint. Could I, for instance, now countenance the pages of wicked nonsense, in which I expostulate with the Wesleyan Methodists for their *bigotry* in not co-operating with the Calvinistic Evangelicals in spreading the Gospel? There are strange inconsistencies in that piece, a conflict between light and darkness. I get more clear towards the close of the controversy with Mr. Knox; and I could not agree to the separation of the Address from the Letters.—*Letter to J. L.—m.* 1818.

reasons why they are in this doing God service. But let them take heed: Saul thought the same when he persecuted the early Christians. They ought to take more pains to examine into the principles and conduct of those whom they oppose, before they represent them as hostile to the true Gospel. Some of your Society who professed to have lived for years without sin, in thought, word, or deed, will sooner or later find that they have been living in that most awful sin, of speaking all manner of evil falsely against others, who—though not following with you—are following Christ, and serving him in the Gospel. Far am I from intimating, that all of you alike are influenced by this spirit. I have met among you individuals, who were blessedly delivered from it. I call on such to oppose the growth of it in your Society.

But it is not only your opposition to the present union of Christians in various churches, for the purpose of advancing the interest of the universal church of Christ,—it is not only your opposition to this that marks a too general party spirit in the Methodist Society: other evidences of the same have long existed. The principal concern of many among you has long appeared to be about the increase of your own body. Numbers—numbers to be added to your Society, that has seemed their great object; short of which nothing satisfies them; and with which, and a strict adherence to the discipline of METHODISM, they are, indeed, easily satisfied without any thing else. Hence, when they deal with a person under the influence of divine grace, no evidence of its reality can content them, till he become a METHODIST. Hence their representations to him, that he can never be completely right, till he join in their class-meeting. Hence their industrious arts to blacken in his view other Christians, to connexion with whom he may seem disposed. Hence their endeavours to entangle his conscience, by insinuating that his indisposition to become a Methodist arises from worldly fear or shame,—from aversion to the reproach of the Cross of Christ; as if that reproach were exclusively attached to their Society. Hence the manifestations of affectionate attention and solicitude which are heaped upon him, while any hope remains of attaching him to their body. Hence the indifference and uncharitable surmises which succeed, as soon as the hope is done away.

But the moment any one—however little acquainted with himself or with God, with the law or with the Gospel—gives in his name to the society, how easily are they satisfied! Immediately he is considered as in the way of salvation; and if he only continue to speak the language and observe the forms of Methodism, all is well.

Brethren, be more solicitous to consider, whether there is not too just room for these observations, than to refute them. I do not expect that mere party-men among you, while they continue such, will receive these admonitions, and I can anticipate their answers; but let others attend to them, and beware of the evil. I desire to acknowledge but two great parties—those who through grace are “on the Lord’s side,” and those who are of the world. The former are scattered through various outward churches, under various names: but they are all one body, having one Lord, one faith, one hope.

Nothing but blind bigotry suggests that they are to be found only under one denomination; or leads any to act as if they thought so. That bigotry, blessed be God, is lessening among lively Christians of all denominations. They are daily discovering themselves to be brethren, and acting in brotherly concert for the advancement of that one cause, which alone will certainly prevail. That is not the cause of any human party, or outward denomination in the Church of Christ. It is the cause of Christ's Kingdom. And shall you be alarmed by their union, or jealous of their exertions? *

I pass to another evil among you, closely connected with the former; and that is, an idolatrous attachment to men and submission to human authority in matters of religion. I conceive some of you already startled, lest I should touch the reputation of Wesley or of Fletcher. Brethren, to them it is of little consequence what you or I think of them: but it is of the utmost consequence to you to remember that divine rule, "call no man master or father upon earth:

* This paragraph may be said to comprise in it the greatest part of the unscriptural sentiments so severely condemned by Mr. Walker in the preceding notes. His obscurity at this period on the nature of Christian Union he avows to have been great. Intent on exposing the errors with which the truth of the Gospel was corrupted, and aiming to produce such an intercourse between "lively Christians of all denominations," as he hoped would promote "the inquiry after truth," "the test of all things, not by human authority, but by the divine word," and the manifestation of "who were on the Lord's side," he was not yet awakened to that closeness of union among themselves, and separation from all other religious connexion, which the apostolic commands enjoin on disciples. Although there was sufficient in this language to alarm, not the Methodists alone but all other societies of the kind, it betrays the influence exercised over his mind by the specious pretensions of counterfeit charity; it betrays the leaven of that false principle, which, professing to unite "Christians of all denominations," on the ground of some generally acknowledged doctrines, does really establish an Anti-christian confederacy bound together by a mutual compact to disregard and disobey various laws of Christ's Kingdom. But he was soon led to discover and renounce all such "religious connexion and co-operation," as among "the specious devices of the father of lies for scattering the Lord's flock; and concealing from their view the importance, simplicity, and glory of the rules by which the first Christians walked; and by which the disciples are called to walk to the end of the world" [*See Address to Believers.*] "The word of God discovered to him a religious world that is just as opposite to Him as the most *irreligious*. That word calls disciples to come out from the whole of this world that knows not the true God, and to be separate from it, not by declining the necessary intercourse of civil life with any, but by declining every kind of religious connexion or co-operation with it, as tending, on the part of disciples, to obscure the distinctive characters of the Church of Christ—to shade off the strong outlines of her portrait as marked in the Scriptures, and blend them into a coalescence with the various religions of the world."—[*Ibid.*] He admitted "that the principles of separation which he maintained did tend to divide existing religious bodies called churches, to disturb their tranquillity, and to call away every disciple from among them; but that it held out the only means for uniting disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ." [*See Essay on the Divine Authority of the Apostolic Traditions.*] He shewed "that the most such bodies aimed at was but perpetuating the disunion of disciples, by contending for it as a harmless thing; and concealing the magnitude of the evil, by drawing over it a flimsy veil of occasional and partial fellowship or co-operation. That the peace and tranquillity, which they were afraid to have disturbed, is a treacherous peace, in which disciples are taught to agree to differ about what God had determined in his word, and to compromise with each other their several departures from scriptural rule, by making these things matters of mutual forbearance." [*Ibid.*].—Ed.

for one is your master, even Christ—one is your father which is in heaven." I do think that the Methodist society has awfully forgotten this rule; and under the mask of following these men as they followed Christ, has set them up in the place of Christ; implicitly adopting their sentiments, and regulating its faith and practice by theirs. The more any of you are shocked or offended at this observation, as derogatory to their character, the more is the justice of the observation evinced. Even though they were less deeply erroneous than I think they were, yet it would be surprising if men who had written so much, and done so much, had not erred. But will Methodists, in general, bear the idea of imputing error to those men? Is it not generally enough to impose any maxim or opinion upon them, that Wesley or Fletcher said it? Are not their writings treated by you as paramount to the Scriptures? Is it the Scriptures you put into the hands of those, whom you have made or want to make converts to Methodism? No, you send them for the most part to Fletcher's *Checks*; and stuff their poor heads with bad metaphysics and worse divinity, before they have rightly learned the first principles of the Gospel of Christ. And if they be directed to the Scriptures at all, they must read them accompanied by Wesley's notes, for fear they should imbibe from the Scriptures any thing contrary to Methodism. This is the way to make Methodists—zealous, bigotted Methodists; but indeed it is not the way to make simple and devoted Christians. It is the way to inflame their minds against the persons whom Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher opposed, and to make them bitter controversialists; but it is not the way to combat their natural prejudices against the truths of God, or to feed them with the sincere milk of his word.

Ask yourselves, brethren, how many of your present opinions have you adopted from a serious, diligent, and humble examination of the Scriptures, in the spirit of prayer, waiting on the Father of Lights for that wisdom which cometh from above; and how many from a rash submission to the authority of human teachers? I know so much of this spirit among you, that I am aware many, into whose hands this address will come, are likely to think me worse than an infidel, for even hinting a doubt of the excellence of Mr. Wesley's and Mr. Fletcher's writings. Yes, I know that some will not endure the man, who shall venture to drop a hint derogatory to *their* honour; while they easily bear in their writings, and readily adopt from them sentiments, the most derogatory to the honour of God our Saviour.

The root of this evil lies deep, even in the conformation of your society. According to its original constitution, none could be members of it but those who paid an *absolute submission* to Mr. Wesley's authority in matters great and small.* He claimed and exercised uncontrolled power over his numerous societies; and vindicates himself from the charge of "making himself a Pope," and "shackling

* "Give no tickets to any that wear calashes," nor "to any man or woman who does not promise to leave off snuff and tobacco."—*Minutes of several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and others.* London: printed by G. Paramore, 1791, pages 13 and 29.

† *Ibid.*, page 20.

freeborn Englishmen," by urging that to *him* "the preachers had engaged themselves, to submit to *serve him* as sons in the Gospel;" that to *him* "the people in general would submit;" and that "every preacher and every member might leave him when he pleased."*

How solicitous Mr. Wesley was to attach this authority to every thing he wrote, is evinced even by that instruction to his assistants, contained in his Minutes, to "take care that every society be duly supplied with books, particularly with *Kempis*, *Instructions for Children*, and the *Primitive Physic*, which ought to be in every house. Oh! why is not this regarded?"* It really is not to excite a smile, that I make such a quotation; but, if possible, to excite your attention to a fact, melancholy in its consequences. I pretend not to decide on Mr. Wesley's character in the sight of God. He was actively laborious in his life; and, I am informed, was most amiable in his manners and winning in his address. That, no doubt, contributed to the overgrown influence which he possessed. But this I know, that an apostle would not have attempted to usurp such dominion over you, as he established over his Societies. Nor has his authority died with him. His name and his writings still enable persons, much inferior to him in talents, to maintain that dominion. But judge ye how far a Christian is warranted by Scripture, in becoming a member of any society, upon such terms of absolute submission to the authority of a man, even to the best and wisest of men.

But, brethren, besides your party-spirit and your idolatrous veneration of men, there are other evils, to which I desire to call your attention. Looking at the general aspect of Methodism, and comparing it with the Christianity of the Gospel, I see a striking contrast indeed,—between the obtrusive, tumultuous bustle of the one, and the calm and sober, though happy and heavenly, character of the other. You hold, indeed, scriptural and important phrases; but in the sense in which you hold them, and the manner in which you apply them, (as a body) they appear quite different things from what I discover in the Scripture. Faith, grace, justification, sanctification, &c. are terms in frequent use among you; but they seem all perverted, and employed to sanction a system of *human feelings*, strongly wrought on, either in the way of distressing terror or joyful emotion. These you call *experience*; and any man who maintains the precariousness and insufficiency of these, you are too ready to pronounce an enemy to *experimental religion*.

Brethren, I hold as strongly as any of you, that all true religion begins and is carried on by the power of God experienced in the heart; but I know that this is perfectly distinct from the natural agitation of the passions, into which it seems the object of the Methodistic system to lash the minds of its members. I can see no divine power in the mechanical groan, and the periodical Amen, without which you think your religious meetings lifeless. I can see no divine power in those tumultuous assemblies, which have at various times been encouraged among you, and are now encouraged, where two or three, or more, are at the same moment uttering petitions to

* *Ibid*, page 28.

God with stentorian voices, and others are going about among the people urging them to cry out, till their nerves are wrought upon to screeching, swooning, and various hysterical affections, which you are taught to consider as the power of God. When attempts are made to impose this on the world for religion, serious Christians will be disposed to weep, and the rest of mankind to laugh. I know that you do not all take a part in these meetings to which I allude; that they are not yet universal among you. But there must be some awful delusion on the minds of a society, which not only tolerates, but countenances and approves of such practices.

But do I not see the *principle* of them sanctioned by the highest authority among you, in the return made by your leaders of the specific numbers who were *convinced*, who were *justified*, who were *sanctified* at the several places at which they preached? *i. e.* of the numbers who, under sudden feelings of terror, feelings of joy, or feelings of what they call holiness, *cried out* in language corresponding to these instantaneous impressions. Indeed, brethren, there must be a radical error in the system upon which such a fabric can be built. I restrain myself from expressing what I fear of the men, who lead you into such a quagmire of blasphemous absurdity. But I call on you not to be deterred by the weight of their names or the number of their followers, from looking at the delusion in its naked deformity.

Having mentioned in general, what you call your *experience*, I am led to say a few words on those meetings in which you speak of this experience with each other, your class-meetings and love-feasts. I think I know something of the blessedness of free intercourse and unreserved communication between Christians. But I am persuaded that meetings, conducted as yours are, must prove in many instances highly injurious; and perhaps they are most injurious to those who like them most. At them, each member of your society is weekly called on to declare the state of his soul, in the presence of others, to the number of twelve or twenty. The most truly experienced Christian is best able to say, how nice and trying a matter it is, to speak before others of himself, and of his walk with God. It is not at all times or at any periodical intervals, that he will dare to attempt it; and when he does see it expedient to speak upon the subject, it will be with holy fear, whether he speaks of his sorrows or of his joys. But among you the weakest are every week put upon this exercise; those who have no real experience in religion at all, are brought forward to declare their experience, and drilled either into hypocrisy or self-deceit. They hear one and another around them speaking the language of complaint or of rejoicing, of distressing anxiety or assured confidence; and they, in their turn, retail the gleanings of the phraseology they have heard. They utter, perhaps, the most humiliating complaints of themselves, and are secretly filled with a proud satisfaction at the thought of having complained so well and spoken so humbly. Set in motion by this gust of self-complacency, they are ready to receive the exhortation which their class-leader gives them, to work out strenuously what is wanting of their salvation. They report progress at the next meeting, for which they

have been preparing in the interval. They have now to say, (as they have heard others say) that they are thirsting, wrestling, on the stretch, for *justification*. They are sent away with encouragement, perhaps, to win it that night by violence; and in all probability, by the following meeting, they will have to declare that they have obtained that which they are taught to call *justification*—a lively impression on their minds of some words of Scripture, as if a voice from heaven told them that their sins were forgiven. The poor creature is then rejoiced over, and rejoices over himself, as having experienced the blessing;—talks of this experience with delight; and mistakes his fondness of talking of it for zeal and spiritual fervour. He is given to understand, that all he needs now is to keep up those feelings, and to go on in the same way, to attain what is called *sanctification*. He is questioned weekly as to his progress in this effort, or perhaps is employed to question others; and if he only continue regular in attending his class, and precise in the observation of Methodist discipline, no doubt is entertained by himself or others of his Christianity; while he has only exchanged, perhaps, the sins of drunkenness and swearing, for the sins of spiritual pride, censoriousness, and hypocrisy. If he can only deceive himself then sufficiently to imagine that all sin is at some instant exterminated from within him, the course is finished; and his *experience* held up as a pattern to all the Society.

Let me not be understood to mean that *all* run such a course, who talk of their experience at your class meetings. God forbid! I trust many attend them who are kept honest and simple in heart; though such, I believe, are often made miserable by them. But you have a very different idea from me of the human heart, its deceitfulness and corruption; if you do not think such a course is the natural consequence of such meetings. Yet I am aware that these meetings are a favourite part of your system; and I do not wonder at it, for they are peculiarly adapted to keep you together as a body. I know to what imputations the declaration of my opinion about them will expose me; but I shall be thankful, if what I have said shall even excite any of you, in attending them, to use more caution, more secret prayer, more inward watchfulness, than formerly.

But some of you perhaps are ready to say,—“what right has this man to suppose, that any among us walk in such a self-deceiving course, or make such a false profession of experience, as he has just now described?” I candidly own, that I have met some Methodists, and read of others, who to my judgment gave evidence of being in various stages of that course; but indeed I am not fond of deciding on the state or character of individuals, where there is any room for doubt. But I must add, that there are some among you, of whom I can have no doubt that they are in the last and most awful stage of it: I mean all those who avow that they have attained that same perfection in holiness, in consequence of which they live *without sin in thought, word, or deed*. “Ay,”—methinks I hear some exclaim,—“now what we suspected appears: he is a CALVINIST—an advocate for sin—an enemy to holiness.” Well, brethren! as one said long ago, “strike, but hear me;” so would I say, think of me as ill as you

please, but reject not what I offer without a serious and candid examination. To the charge of being a Calvinist I shall say a few words by-and-by. But whatever I be, I believe as firmly, and declare as explicitly, as any Methodist, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But I believe the nature of that holiness is awfully mistaken by many Methodists, and misrepresented in your system; and while I believe the Bible, I must be certain that any man, who says *he has no sin*, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and my reverence for the *divine* authority will not allow me to be deterred from avowing that certainty, by the names or estimation of any men who have told that lie, or countenanced others in telling it.

The methodistic idea of sanctification is, in plain English, this: that the corrupt nature of man becomes in believers less and less corrupt, through the influence of divine grace aiding their exertions; till at length it becomes wholly good, perfectly purified from all evil; and this of course *instantaneously*;—for, as Mr. Wesley observes, "If sin cease before death, there must in the nature of the thing be an *instantaneous* change—there must be a last minute wherein it does exist, and a first minute wherein it does not."—*Ib. Wesley's Minutes*, p. 39. So that a man, under the work of grace, becomes first, in Mr. Fletcher's phraseology, a *carnal penitent*, then a christian believer, then a perfect Christian.—*Fletcher's Last Check*, p. 115, 116.

Now I scruple not to pronounce the whole of this idea unscriptural, from first to last, though very natural, and harmonizing, more than its supporters are aware, with the popular ideas of Christianity, which prevail among the carnal world. According to Scripture, I am not warranted to consider it any part of the work of grace to *mend* our fallen nature. *That* nature is as bad—as wholly evil—in a believer as in an unbeliever,—as bad in the most established believer as in the weakest;—as bad in Paul the apostle, just finishing his course, and ready to receive the crown of righteousness, as in Saul of Tarsus, a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the church of Christ. Indeed, if that old nature, called in Scripture the *Flesh*, became during our Christian course less and less evil, the believer would have less and less occasion to watch against the flesh, "to deny *himself*, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to walk not after the flesh," &c. And if, at any period, it became purged from all evil, it would then become a Christian duty "to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind." But the Scriptures declare, and the experience of every believer to the end confirms it, that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;" that these two are "contrary the one to the other;" that the carnal mind, or flesh, or corrupt nature, is not only at enmity with God;—(if it were only so, it might perhaps in time become a friend)—but is in itself "enmity against God;" that it not only "is not subject to the law of God," but indeed "cannot be." The Scriptures represent the whole course of the believer here below, as a warfare, not only against the world and the devil, but against the *flesh*, that most dangerous ally of both: and give us no reason to suppose that *any* part of this warfare ceases, but with the present

mortal life. The opposite view which you are taught, is certainly much more self-complacent; but that will not recommend it to the better mind of a believer. It would be much more gratifying to the pride of our hearts, to think that, however bad we may be naturally, yet we are not so bad but that we may be *mended*; and it is the general idea of all men, the most careless and the most profane. But, indeed, our most strenuous exertions to effect that object, are but spending our strength in vain; and it is worse than in vain, when any flatter themselves they have attained it.

What difference then, it may be asked, is there between the believer and the unbeliever? Is it only that the former subscribes to a creed which the latter disbelieves? and can a difference, so small as this, constitute the one accepted in the sight of God, as righteous, and bind the other under condemnation? My brethren, by no means. The difference between them is infinitely great. The believer is, by the rich mercy and saving power of God, brought out of that state of nature, in which all lie originally since the fall of man,—*children of that world* “which lieth in the wicked one,”—*children of disobedience*, in whose hearts “the God of this world reigneth,”—*children of wrath*, under the curse annexed as the immutable penalty to every transgression of the divine law. Out of this guilty and corrupt mass, dead in trespasses and sins, the believer is brought, not by the merit of his faith, but by the mercy and power of God, into a state of union with the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of his mystical body, of that church which he has redeemed, and to every member of which HE is “made of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.

Consider well, brethren, that passage (1 Cor. i. 30.) from which the latter words are taken. Observe in it a declaration of the *author* of the change which has taken place in the state of believers, God—that God against whom we all have sinned, and by whose grace alone any sinner can be saved: “*of him* are ye in Christ Jesus,” not of yourselves, of your faithfulness or your works, but “*of him.*” Observe in it a declaration of the *new state* in which believers are placed;—they are “in Christ Jesus.” Here is that union of Christ and his church, which the apostle pronounces to be “*a great mystery,*” (Ephes. v. 32.) but which is a glorious truth pervading the Old Testament and the New;—that union, the closeness of which is shadowed out to us in Scripture, by the union of husband and wife, who are “no more two but one flesh,” of a tree and its branches, of a body and its members, &c. Observe, again, in the same passage, a declaration of all the blessed *consequences* which accrue to believers from this union: “Christ is made unto them—wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” And observe well, that their *sanctification* is declared to be among these consequences, distinct indeed from their *righteousness* or justification, but equally resulting from their being *in Christ*, agreeably to that description which is given of them in the beginning of the same chapter, (1 Cor. i. 2.) as “sanctified in Christ Jesus.”

But what are we to understand by being *sanctified*, or made *holy*? I answer in a word—*separated* unto God, so as to be brought into a

particular relation to him, appropriated to his use and service. That this separation, from common purposes to sacred, is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word קָדַשׁ , every one acquainted with the original knows: and it may appear evident even to those who are not acquainted with the original, from the application of the terms *holy* and *holiness*, in Scripture, to *things* and *places* as well as to *persons*; as well as from their application to the Jewish people, in their collective capacity, as separated by the Lord from all the nations of the earth to be "his peculiar people," for the purposes for which he had selected them.—(See Levit. xx. 24, 26; Deut. vii. 6, xiv. 2.) For still greater and more gracious purposes are believers "*chosen* out of the world," and *separated* from it, by being brought into union with Christ; even "that God may show the *exceeding riches of his grace*, in his kindness towards them, by Christ Jesus." And thus are they all alike "sanctified in him," from the babe in Christ to the Father;—"a holy nation, a peculiar people to the Lord;"—no one of them more or less so than another.

In consequence of the same union, "the *spirit of holiness*," the spirit of life and of power, of love and of a sound mind, the SPIRIT OF GOD,—with the fulness of which the Lord Jesus their head was anointed by the Father,—dwells in them and descends upon them, producing in them the *fruits of holiness*,—even that cluster of every heavenly affection which is all-declared to be "the fruit of the Spirit,"—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." (Gal. v. 22, 23.) And these fruits are produced in them by their being kept "abiding in Christ," (John, xv. 4, 5.) "*living by the faith* of the Son of God, who hath loved them and given himself for them," (Gal. ii. 20.) "*walking in Christ Jesus* the Lord, as they have received him," (Colos. ii. 6.) And they are kept thus *abiding in Christ*, by the Spirit's keeping them under a continual conviction of their need of him,—as poor sinners, who have *in themselves* neither righteousness nor strength; and testifying to their hearts of him *in whom* alone they "have righteousness and strength," *in whom* alone "all the seed of Israel is justified and shall glory;" "saved *in the Lord* with an everlasting salvation;"—(See Isa. xlv. 17, 24, 25.) testifying of his offices and character, of the fulness of grace and truth, of love and saving power, which it has pleased the Father should dwell *in him*.—(Col. i. 19.) Thus are believers "kept *by the power of God through faith* unto salvation;"—(1 Pet. i. 5.) and thus do they "grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

This work of the Spirit, and these *fruits of holiness*, are indeed various in various believers; and in the same believer at various times: and far be it from me to assign a low standard for the possible degrees of them! In fact I know *no limit* to them, any more than to "the unsearchable riches of Christ," or to the almighty power of God. It is an unchangeable truth of God, that "if any man have not the *spirit of Christ*, he is none of his." And where that spirit really dwells, there will be the *fruits of the Spirit*; and where there is that fruit, there will be *increasing* fruit.—(John, xv. 2.) But they mistake the nature of that work, and these fruits of the

Spirit, who imagine that it is a work which *improves* our corrupt nature, or makes it cease to be corrupt and capable of any good fruit.

Judge, brethren, what I say. Examine it by the revealed word of God, and not by the maxims of your earthly teachers; and the Lord give you a right understanding in all things!

Very different, indeed, from the views which I have endeavoured to propose, are the views which you have been accustomed to receive, from many of Mr. Wesley's, and most of Mr. Fletcher's writings. Mr. W. tells you—(*Minutes*, &c. ut supra, p. 4, 39.) “that men are justified before they are sanctified”—that from the moment we are justified “there *may* be a gradual sanctification,” and that “there must be an instantaneous change,” in our life-time, through which sin shall cease to exist in us; to which change, indeed, the term *sanctification* has been, for some time past, almost exclusively applied by you. This is your favourite system: and forgive me, brethren, when, in faithfulness and love to you, I avow my persuasion that it is a mass of the most dangerous errors.

Error being generally prolific, Mr. F., in defending this system,—in those controversial works of his, the study of which constitutes the education of a Methodist,—has indeed multiplied the errors of it awfully. I do consider that his polemic writings strike at every principle of divine truth; and are the more dangerous, on account of the vein of apparent piety and fervent zeal that runs through them; as well as on account of that logical *subtlety* which pervades them, and which—though easily detected by men accustomed to reason closely—must yet impose itself for argument on the generality of readers. I say nothing of the unchristian misrepresentation which fills his pages, of his aspersions and insinuations against those who opposed his errors, as if they were on that account adverse to the strictness of a life devoted to God; aspersions and insinuations conveyed so much in the language of humility and love, that the motto of his works might well be—“his words are smother than oil, and yet be they very swords.” It is not in vindication of their character I write; it is to warn you against his corruptions of the word of God.

As a specimen of these corruptions, and as connected with the error I have been last combating, I call your attention to Mr. F.'s doctrine of an *evangelical law*, which he asserts his perfect Christian perfectly fulfils; while he is forced to acknowledge that the most advanced Christian in the present state falls short of the obedience which the stricter moral law of God required. The latter he calls, “the Creator's anti-evangelical, paradisaical law of innocence;” and the former, “a *milder law*, adapted to our present state and circumstances; the evangelical, mediatorial, and remedying *law* of our Redeemer.”—(*Fletcher's Last Check*, &c. p. 15, 16, et passim. London, printed by R. Hawes, 1775.) Now I am bold to say, that this is the language of a man ignorant both of the divine *law* and of the *Gospel*, though it is a language perfectly corresponding with the popular divinity current in the world. Speak to the most openly carnal professor of Christianity, and you will find that, without ever having read Mr. F.'s works, his system is the same—only in a less

Pious garb. He will admit that, according to the *strict* and perfect law of God, he is a sinner to be sure, like the rest of the world; and that judged by it he would be condemned;—though he thinks it would be rather hard that he should be judged by so severe a rule. But he comforts himself with the consideration, that Christ has introduced “a *milder* law, adapted to our present state and circumstances;” and that, under this remedial law, his deviations from the former are rather to be reckoned innocent *infirmities*, than damning sins.

But be assured, brethren, there never did, nor ever will proceed from God any moral law but one, which is *immutable* and *perfect* like himself, “holy, just, and good.” However variously promulgated, the spirit of it has ever been comprised in these two precepts, in which the Lord Jesus summed it up,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” “Sin is the transgression of the law;” not, as Mr. Fletcher says, (Last Check, &c. p. 14.) of “a divine law,”—varying according to the various circumstances of men:—but of that one—unchangeable law of the one—unchangeable God, from the curse of which Christ has redeemed his people, and of which he is “the end” or accomplishment, “for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

What does Mr. F. mean by calling this law of God “anti-evangelical?” It contains not, indeed, the Gospel; but, blessed be God! it is not *against* the Gospel. “Is the law against the promises of God? God forbid!” It would truly be against such a Gospel as Mr. F. contends for: but that only proves that the system he contends for “is not the Gospel.” Christ came, “not to destroy the law, but to fulfil.” “Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid!” exclaims the apostle,—“nay, we establish the law.” But certainly Christ would have come to destroy the law, and would have made it void through faith, if he had come to supersede that law by the introduction of *another* and a *milder* law.

I am willing to hope that Mr. F. saw not the consequences involved in his principles; but this does not lessen the danger of his principles, nor the importance of pointing out those consequences to you. And that his name has been so canonized among you, as to make it be considered little short of sacrilege to oppose his principles; this, while it renders the attempt a more ungrateful task, renders it at the same time the more necessary.

Forgetting then, for a moment, that the principle is his, look, I beseech you, at one of the monstrous consequences with which it is pregnant. A *milder* law! What is the plain English of that? A law less perfect, i. e. a law imperfect, i. e. a law which *sanctions sin*. If the Creator gave one law, and that law was but “holy, just, and good,”—what must be inferred from the assertion that the Redeemer has introduced *another* and a *milder* law, but that the nature of moral good and evil is *changed*, or that the new law is neither holy, just, nor good?

But these are not the only moral laws which Mr. F. has introduced. As his *evangelical* law is the standard to which a Christian is to be

perfectly conformed, in order to be his *perfect Christian*; so he has another, a yet *milder* law, which was the standard of a *Jew's* perfection; and another *milder* still, which is the standard of a *Gentile's* perfection. (See his *Last Check*, page 67.) And why he should have stopped there, and left out *Turks, Infidels, and Heretics*,—I cannot see. But indeed I view his system as such a corrupt jumble of law and Gospel, as is neither Gospel nor Law, but alike contrary to every essential principle of both: while it is so flattering to the carnal pride and self-righteousness of men, that I do not wonder it has attracted so many followers. Truly, brethren, I do not wish to offend or irritate you, by speaking thus plainly: but I remember what St. Paul says, on the supposition that even “an angel from Heaven should preach another Gospel, than that which he preached;” and I think it inconsistent with the allegiance we owe to our one Lord and Master, to hold the person of any man in such admiration, as to be deterred, by respect for his name, from the vindication of divine truth.

Error is not only a very prolific, but a very inconsistent thing: and among the inconsistencies, in which you have been involved by embracing this error, that has long seemed to me of glaring magnitude,—that while you hold this deliverance from the inward being of all sin, before death, to be essentially necessary as a preparation for heaven, many of you, notwithstanding, profess to enjoy strong confidence, lively peace, and often extatic joy, before you profess to have attained that deliverance. Now with what consistency can a man rejoice in that state, in which he professes to believe that if he died he would be damned? Uncertain of the moment that will launch me into the eternal world, into an eternity of happiness or woe,—can I feel well-founded peace, while I believe that I am unprepared for an eternity of happiness—in a condition, in which, if death were to overtake me, I *could not* be saved? Such, according to your system, is the condition of every Christian who has not arrived at this perfection. Comparatively few of the body (though, alas! these few are too many) profess to have arrived at it: yet you all commonly talk of high enjoyment. You will join with me, and justly, in lamenting the carnal security of common worldly professors, who speak peace to themselves while they are ready to perish. But however awful their state, they are more consistent than you; for they flatter themselves that they *may* be saved as they are. The system you profess teaches that, even after having believed with the heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, you *cannot* be saved, but must perish for ever, unless a further work be wrought in you before death, to which you give the name of perfect sanctification: and yet, without this change, multitudes among you talk highly indeed of the peace which they enjoy, and the transports which they feel. The truth of this observation will appear, to those who do not know you personally, from a perusal of any among the number of biographical accounts, which you have published. Now I own I can no more reconcile this your conduct to reason, than I can reconcile that your system to Scripture.

For my own part, I am persuaded, that the real believer, from the

moment he is made a partaker of that precious faith, by which (receiving the record of God concerning his Son) he “flies for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the Lord Jesus Christ,” is as truly *prepared for death* as ever he can be. Death is reckoned up, along with life and things present and things to come, among the “all things” that are *his*. Having “come to Christ that he may have life,” he is not cast out by him, but is received. (John, vi. 37.) Being received by Christ, he is *in him*, a member of his mystical body. Being in Christ, he has passed from death unto life, from darkness to light, from a state of condemnation and wrath and distance, as an alien, to a state of acceptance and justification and nearness to God, as a child by adoption and grace. He is justified; he is sanctified; and if he were that moment to be called out of the world, he would “die in the Lord,” in whom he is, and inherit the blessing which is pronounced on such. As to the noise which Mr. F. makes about our holding—what he chooses to call the doctrine of a “death-purgatory,”—because we hold that the believer will not bring with him into the next world any of that fleshly nature, against which he has to contend during his continuance in this; I shall only say, that it is one of those arts of unfair subtlety, which he employs for perplexing the minds of his readers, and prejudicing them against those whom he opposed: while I believe he knew well that the men, whom he opposed, were as far as himself, from attributing to death any part of that work of salvation, which wholly belongs to Christ.

Permit me now to remonstrate with you briefly, on some of your errors (as I conceive) in the doctrine of a sinner's *justification*. The *thing* is of so great importance, that a misapplication of the *word* cannot but be attended with danger. According to your language, we are to understand by the justification of a sinner, his obtaining a certain sudden feeling in his mind of divine peace and joy. Those who get this, you call *justified*; those who have not got it, you pronounce to be in an unjustified state. And if I ask most of you, upon what ground you think you are justified—that your sins are pardoned, and your persons accepted in the sight of God,—you would tell me of a certain day, and hour, and moment, when (as you call it) you *got the peace*; you would tell me of the distressing agonies which preceded it, of the joyful emotions which succeeded it, and of the words of Scripture which accompanied it, as if spoken to you with an audible voice. Now I tell you freely that any of you, who possess no better nor surer ground for your confidence than this, are resting your confidence upon a ground which is indeed most precarious and unscriptural. They, who know any thing of the effects of imagination, must know, that all this *may be* nothing more than the effects of an imagination heated by the expectation of such a feeling, by the earnestness with which you are taught to lash your minds up to the pursuit of it, and by the various accounts you have heard of similar instantaneous impulses on the minds of others. God forbid, therefore, that the Christian's hope and confidence should rest on a basis, so uncertain in its nature as this.

Some of you will be ready to conclude me an enemy to spiritual

and experimental religion, because I oppose the favourite current in which your experience runs. But indeed they mistake. I am persuaded that there is no real Christianity, but what is the work of the Spirit of God; and that work is certainly a matter of experience, from first to last. But you appear to me greatly to mistake the nature of the work of the Spirit, as described in the Scriptures. It is not a work by which any *new revelation* is now to be made to individuals; but a work by which they are made to discern, to believe, and to receive the revelation *already* made and recorded in the word of God. Each of you is taught to look for a divine revelation to himself, of that which is no where declared in Scripture,—that *his* sins are pardoned, that *his* person is accepted; and to build his persuasion of the truth of this, not upon any thing declared in Scripture, but upon the strength of the sudden feeling with which it has been impressed on his mind. Here is *enthusiasm* indeed; and while I know that the unbelieving world will give the name of enthusiasm to what is most scriptural and important,—for “the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man,”—I know at the same time, that there is such an evil as real enthusiasm; and that we are exposed to it, as soon as ever we quit the *word of God*, as the one standard of our faith and of our practice.

This instance of it in your society, I consider as productive of consequences the most dangerous. It tends to puff up many with presumptuous confidence and delusive hopes: it tends to weigh down others, whose consciences are more tender, while their fancies are less warm, with as unwarrantable despondency. It tends to turn aside the minds of all, from the *one* and only *sure* foundation for a sinner's confidence which the Scriptures reveal—the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the end of the law for *righteousness*, to every one that believeth.” Believing on him with the heart, trusting in him as he is exhibited in the Gospel—the Saviour of *his people from their sins*,—the Scriptures warrant me to trust in him with the fullest confidence;—to trust in him as my righteousness and strength; and to know that eternal life is mine, as “the gift of God in Him:”—and this without any supplementary revelation, or new voice from Heaven, to announce to me that I am justified. A voice indeed from Heaven, there is; but it is in the word of God, which through all its sacred pages, in the Old Testament and in the New, in the Law, by the Prophets, and by the Apostles, gives the divine testimony to the Son of God and man, as the only,—the all-sufficient,—and the faithful Saviour of all who believe upon his name. By that precious faith of Him, the Christian is called to walk,—not by sight—not by sense—not by feelings.

This faith, indeed, is productive of feelings the most blessed: but these feelings are not to be put into its place, nor into his; as you confound them, when you give the name of justification to a supposed sensation of it. Peace, and joy, and love are among its heavenly fruits; and they will abound, according as the root of faith, whence they spring, is progressively invigorated. In the infancy of faith, before the believer is yet well acquainted with the “rock of his salvation,” or sees clearly the way in which he is to

walk, these fruits are proportionably weak: though there is often, at this period, a natural movement of the animal affections, by the new objects about which they are exercised, which exhibits such a false luxuriance, as is mistaken for a real growth of heavenly tempers. But to represent these real tempers as starting up on a sudden, into their most strong and lively exercise, at the period when faith is most weak,—in its first communication to the heart as a grain of mustard seed,—this is contrary to the view of their connexion with faith as the principle from which they spring. And to tell a sinner, that he must feel this sudden gust of peace and joy, before he can trust that he is “accepted in the beloved,” is to lead him to look for the fruit before the tree is planted; and to substitute a spurious peace and joy, springing from a spurious faith, for that genuine peace and joy which are the fruits of genuine faith.

If you ask me, “are all then alike warranted to trust in Christ?”—I answer freely—yes; all to whom the word of salvation is sent, without exception and without distinction, are *by this word* not only warranted, but called and commanded, to trust in him for that salvation of which he is the only author. All indeed *will not* obey the Gospel: none will, but those to whom it is “given to believe;” to whom the Gospel “comes not in word only, but also in demonstration and in power.” But the unbelief of others is their great sin, which it could not be, if they were not warranted and commanded to believe: and they die in their sins, not because they had no sufficient warrant to trust in Christ for salvation, but because through the wickedness of their hearts they would not come to him that they might have life, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves;—either atheistically indifferent about their state as sinners against God, or proudly endeavouring to recommend themselves to his favour. Such may *talk* of trusting in Christ for salvation, while they either mean nothing by salvation, but an impunity in walking after the flesh; or mean nothing by trusting in Him, but an expectation that, if they acquit themselves sufficiently in getting some preparation or fitness for him, he will receive them. But they alike disbelieve the Gospel; and whatever form their unbelief assume,—whether the gross form of sensual indulgence, or the sober garb of seriousness and zeal about self-devised religion, it will alike prove their condemnation, and alike evinces that they “love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”

Indeed, brethren, there is a greater difference between the way of a sinner’s justification and salvation, which the Gospel reveals, and the most refined form of false religion which *seems* most like it; than there is between the latter and any,—the most avowedly infidel system,—upon which the most profane and irreligious proceed. Examine the two last, in the circumstances which seem the most remote from each other; and you will find the professors of both agree in this essential character:—the language of both is “Do this and thou shalt live:” they only differ with respect to the degree and quantity of the work which is to be done, in order to acceptance with God and eternal life. The profane infidel will say—be honest or honourable,—and do no hurt to any one, unless to yourself; or if in the violence of natural

passions, which you cannot control, you should do some hurt in the world, make amends for it by your generosity and the goodness of your heart: then fear not;—*if* there be a God he cannot condemn you for following the dictates of nature. The zealous religionist, shocked at his profaneness, will assign a much stricter task; and along with a greater quantity of *doing*, will point you to the *aids*, which he supposes the Gospel offers to the *well-disposed*, and a faithful improvement of which is to help out your natural insufficiency. To a more regulated outward conduct he will direct you to add a number of religious forms; and with religious forms, he will call you to combine various religious affections and religious feelings. He perhaps introduces Christ in the beginning of his system, as giving all men a sufficiency of *materials* to set them up in this work,—if they choose;—and as helping in the work any who are well-disposed to exert themselves diligently in it. And perhaps he introduces Christ at the end of his system, as making up, by his merits or his mercy, the deficiencies of their doings,—provided these deficiencies have not been too great.

The systems of these two men admit of various modifications and various shades of colouring, according to the various fancies and tastes of men: but they are both alike,—and all the intermediate systems by which the chasm between these is filled up,—go upon this principle, that a sinner must obtain justification in the sight of God by *something* that he is to *do*. And a man is not a believer in the Gospel, because he thinks that Christ has either lessened the quantity of work to be done, or meets a sinner half-way in doing it. The GOSPEL stands removed from, and in opposition to *all such* systems. Its language is,—not—“do this and thou shalt live,”—but—“*believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” It reveals Him, as having “come into the world to *save sinners*,” even the chief of sinners; as “*giving* eternal life to all that the Father hath given him.” It reveals a view of God, the possibility of which could not have been conceived by any creature without his revelation; as a “*just* God, and *the justifier of the ungodly*,” justifying them freely by his grace, not for any works of righteousness great or small, which they have done, or can ever do,—and yet in a way which displays the glories of his righteousness and truth, no less than the riches of his mercy and love:—giving his own Son to “make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness; to bear the sins of many, in his own body on the cross; to become a curse for them, and the end of the law for righteousness to every one that *believeth*.”

The word of God acknowledges but one work, by *doing* which any creature can be justified before God: that is the performance of what his LAW commands,—his one perfect law, holy and righteous and good. The word of God, therefore, acknowledges no work, by *doing* which a sinner (a transgressor of that law) can be justified: and the question, how a sinner can become righteous in the sight of God, must remain unanswered either from the law, or from any discoveries of human wisdom. The glorious GOSPEL of GOD our SAVIOUR, pervading his whole word, gives the only satisfactory answer to that question; and reveals such “a righteousness of God,” or such a way in which God justifies sinners, as magnifies the law which they have violated,—as is infinitely

glorifying to him, and unspeakably blessed for them. To know this, is to be wise to salvation; but the knowledge of it is given from above. It is "foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know" it. All the corruptions of his fallen nature lead him to reject the testimony; and it is just as much rejected by multitudes who call and think themselves Christians, as by avowed infidels. The doctrine of a sinner's justification as the *free gift of God* in CHRIST JESUS, to every one that *believeth*, is the essential difference of the Gospel that distinguishes it from all human systems: and all other ways of justification which men propose to themselves, are alike dishonourable to God,—alike opposed to the truth of his word,—and alike ruinous to those who walk in them. This doctrine, as LUTHER justly observed, is the turning-point of a standing or falling church; and it may as truly be said to be the turning point of true or false religion. I dwell the longer on this subject, and urge it the more earnestly on your attention, because an error *here* is indeed a fundamental error; and how far the doctrine of *justification* is held in your Society, so as to involve a multitude of errors,—judge ye.

Let me add a few words on your abuse of two other expressions of weighty moment—repentance and conviction of sin. By the latter, you seem to understand the terror of an alarmed conscience: by the former, that sorrow for sin and solicitude about the things of salvation, which arise from such an alarm, before there is any work of saving faith in the heart. Now I conceive that *such* a sorrow for sin may be most poignant, and *such* a solicitude about eternal things most lively, where there is no real *repentance*,—and that the conscience may be ever so much *terrified*, without true *conviction* of sin.

That repentance, which is unto life, is not any thing preceding faith, or unconnected with it; but is that *new mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to believe with the heart on the Son of God. It is then, and then alone, that we sorrow for sin after a godly manner: it is then, and then alone, that we discern, and are truly engaged by the one thing needful. Any thing called repentance, while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*, is but a spurious imitation of that heavenly gift; is but a refined form of that fleshly and selfish mind, which in all its workings is evil—"only evil continually;" and I would no more be warranted in representing any *such infidel repentance*, as a preliminary step to faith, than in so representing murder and adultery. I know nothing spiritually good but those *gifts* which the Lord Jesus has received to *bestow* on men—yea, "on the *rebellious*;" and nothing preliminary to the reception of them, but that spiritual death in which all men alike lie by nature, and which makes them need such an omnipotent Saviour. All the "exceeding great and precious promises" in the word of God, are an inventory of those gifts which He bestows on his redeemed people. Among these promises is that—"I will *give* them a *new heart* and a *new spirit*; I will put *my spirit* within them." The great work of his spirit, as a spirit of demonstration and of power, is to glorify Christ and testify of him, by confirming the record which the Scriptures bear of Him as the Saviour of sinners: and when the word is made "the sword of the spirit,"—when the gospel comes "not in word only, but in power,

and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," in that full persuasion of its truth, which God the spirit only can produce,—then, and not till then, is that promise fulfilled:—then, and not till then, is there a *new heart* and a *new spirit*,—in "the spirit of faith." And this is nothing different from that *change of mind* which is the simple import of the word translated repentance, both in the Greek and in the Hebrew. Before that, there may be changes in the sinner's mind, but they are only various workings of his evil heart of unbelief; various garbs of the old mind, of that "carnal mind which is enmity against God."

With respect to the difference between terror of conscience and conviction of sin,—I would observe that either of these may be without the other. There *may be* an apprehension of divine wrath,—excited perhaps by alarming providences, by lively representations of death and of judgment to come, or by the consciousness of some outwardly gross crime,—where there is yet no view of the spirituality, holiness and extent of the divine law,—no conviction of its righteousness in denouncing a curse, as the immutable and deserved penalty of every transgression of its commands—no discernment of the root and seat of sin, in a heart and nature fallen and "alienated from the life of God." And there *may be* all these essential characters of true conviction of sin, where notwithstanding the conscience, cleansed by "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh" peace, is delivered from guilty apprehensions,—and where "the spirit of adoption" in the heart enables the sinner to look up to God as a reconciled Father, in him who "has become a curse for us." Nay indeed, it is only in the same *believing* view of the cross of Christ, which brings peace to the conscience, that a sinner can get the deepest conviction of sin; inasmuch as it is there he beholds at once the most awful display of its demerit, in the sufferings of Him who was "made sin for us," and the most glorious discovery of the kindness and love of that God against whom we have sinned, in providing such a sacrifice to take away our sins. Any views of the nature of sin obtained elsewhere, than before the cross of Christ, tend to drive a guilty soul from a righteous God, and to involve it in the blackness of despair: but the views of it which are *there* afforded to the believer, while he "looks upon him whom he has pierced," lead him to the Father of mercies,—and lay him low before the throne of grace, and make him abhor himself, and renounce all confidence in the flesh. And as this truest conviction of sin begins with the life of faith, so it continues during the believer's course; and is deepened more and more, as he "grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

It is not about the meaning of words that I would contend, except so far as they are connected with practical errors of the most dangerous tendency. Let those who are spiritual among you, consider how many evils have arisen from dealing with every man, who has a sudden impulse of alarm in his conscience, as if he were therefore *convinced of sin*: and with every man who, after such an alarm, has a sudden gust of joy, as if he were therefore *justified*.

But, methinks, I hear the cry of prejudice again,—“you are a Calvinist, and a Calvinist is an Antinomian, and every thing that is bad;—in principle at least, if not in practice.” I am aware that it is the great

labour of your teachers, to instil this prejudice into your minds. But, brethren, if even a Calvinist say what is true, is truth to be rejected, because it comes from a Calvinist? Examine what I have written, upon its own intrinsic merits, by the unerring rule of God's word,—independent of the enquiry, what the writer is. To that enquiry, however, I shall now proceed to say a few words.

I cannot prevent others from calling me a Calvinist; but it is a name that I never wish to assume:—and this, not from any cowardly desire to conceal my views of divine truth,—for I would rejoice to proclaim them to the world,—but because I see that the Scriptures positively testify against the practice of Christians distinguishing themselves by the names of *human* leaders. If I were to chuse any man by whose name I would distinguish myself, I would be apt to select Paul, and call myself a *Paulite*. But against this, Paul himself would protest: and shall I call myself a disciple of Calvin?

“But we call you a Calvinist, because your views of Scripture are the same with Calvin's.” I do not know that. In some points, I believe they are; in some, I believe they are not. At any rate, it is not from Calvin's works I have learned them;—for of his works, which I have long possessed in nine ponderous folios, I have never read nine pages, and probably never will. I must decline the admission of any name, which would involve me in the necessity of maintaining all that Calvin has written; nor would I ever wish to descend from the high character of “a *servant* of the Lord Jesus Christ,” to that of a champion for the opinions of any man;—much less of one, whose conduct I think in one instance very reprehensible,—however its guilt may be extenuated by the consideration of the age in which he lived.

“But you evade the point. We call you a Calvinist, because you hold the shocking doctrines of election and the final perseverance of the saints.” Brethren, I wish not to evade this point; but I wish to clear the ground: and when charges of error are brought against me, I think it desirable that they should be stated definitely, and not in vague and ambiguous terms. I do hold these doctrines, which you call shocking; and I am sure Calvin was not the first who held them, nor the only one of his time. If I mistake not, they were among the doctrines maintained by all the reformers, against the Popish church: but, what is infinitely more important, they are doctrines as clearly revealed as any others in Scripture.

Yet I do not wonder that they excite such indignant clamour; and are so decried by many, who make a high religious profession. While all the truths of God are offensive to that *carnal mind* which is *enmity against Him*; those which assert his sovereignty, and declare the salvation of a sinner to be the act of his mere *grace*, “having mercy on whom he will have mercy,” and setting aside all those distinctions between man and man, which we naturally expect to be grounds of God's discriminating favour,—those truths are peculiarly hostile to the pride and atheism of our natural hearts, and have ever been the objects of the peculiar resentment of the world. It appears that those hated views were what stirred up the murderous principle in Cain: and that the same, after a lapse of four thousand years, were

what sometimes converted the admiration, with which the Jews regarded our Lord, into the utmost violence of persecuting rage. (See Luke iv. 22—29.) The same opposition to these humbling views, has made some professors of the present day, hardly avow—that they would sooner go to hell, than be saved in a way of such mere mercy; and has made others boldly deny the *mercy* of God, even in sending his Son into the world to save sinners;—asserting, that if the Divine Being had not appointed this way of salvation, he would have been bound in justice to provide some other. But—“the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted.” Isa. ii. 17. It is an awful woe which is denounced against him that “*striveth* with his Maker:” (Isa. xlv. 9.) and I am persuaded that all, who are saved, must be saved from that proud rebelliousness of heart, and be subdued to a thankful acquiescence in the revealed way of salvation; glad to be saved by mere *mercy*,—and convinced that, if it were not *mere* mercy, they could not be saved at all.

And now, brethren, let me come closer on this question to you, who profess to be at peace with God,—to have been translated from darkness into light,—and to be living members of Christ’s mystical body. Not to call in question, at present, the reality of what you profess, I would observe that it is by a great *change* you have been brought into your present state. You “were once darkness,” whence is it that you “are now light in the Lord?” The real Christian will not hesitate to give the glory of this change to him “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,”—and, by the same almighty power, “shineth into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” You were once “dead in trespasses and sins,” and “children of wrath, *even as others.*” Whence is it that you are now alive unto God, “and have received the adoption of children?” The real Christian will not hesitate to ascribe this work to him who “quickeneth the dead, and calleth things that are not as though they were;”—whose divine power executes what he has declared in his “exceeding great and precious promises.”

Well, brethren; others around you are in darkness, children of disobedience, going astray like lost sheep: “What maketh you to differ” from them? The scriptural answer to that question includes all that I believe concerning God’s *electing love* and *distinguishing grace*: and it is in connection with that question, that I always desire to view these doctrines.

Do you say, or think, that the difference has been produced wholly or in part by any superiority of worth, of wisdom, or of power, in you?—or, what amounts to the same thing, by your having been not quite so sinful,—so unworthy, blind, and impotent,—as they? In that case, whatever profession you make, however specious and however high, taking the word of God for my rule, I must consider you as yet in darkness, ignorant of yourselves and of God,—of the Law and of the Gospel. And unless that *free grace* and *sovereign mercy*, which you oppose, interfere for your deliverance,—you will perish under the just consequences of your pride and unbelief. I am sure that, were it not for that *grace* and *mercy*, I would still be like you,

—fighting against God. While I warn you, therefore, of your sin and danger, it is not with proud and uncharitable censoriousness, but with tenderness of humble concern for you; and with hope also, not that you can be saved in your present unbelief, but that God will yet mercifully give you to believe, and graciously guide you into that only way of salvation, which He has appointed and revealed.

But if you answer the question I have proposed, as I am sure every real Christian will answer it; if you cordially and fully ascribe the difference between you and others, who are yet out of the way, to Him who hath said—“I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out,” (Ezek. xxxiv. 11.) to that “God who is rich in mercy,” and to “his great love, wherewith he loved you, even when you were dead in sins;” (Eph. ii. 4.)—in that case, brethren, I will only say, that you are in this matter as much Calvinists as myself; and I think I have found among you, from time to time, a few who were so, without knowing it; and with such I would never waste time in arguing about phrases.

It is but an evasion to say, that “others *might* repent and believe to the saving of their souls, *if they would*; but they resist the offered grace of God.” This is such trifling with words, that I might pass it by without observation, were it not a current argument among you, and employed for supporting many awful errors. In reply then to this evasion, let me ask again,—how comes it that you have been made willing—that you no longer (if indeed it be so) resist the offers of divine grace, as you formerly did yourselves, and as others still do? Is it that you were naturally less unwilling than they? or that your resistance was more easily subdued, from being less stubborn? or is it that God in mercy *gave* you repentance, that is a new mind and a new will, “making you willing in the day of his power?”

But the terms of the argument seem to imply an idea, that God only gives to sinners certain *offers* of blessings, and certain assistance towards obtaining them—leaving it to sinners *themselves* whether they will ultimately accept those offers, and avail themselves of that assistance. Those, who know what human nature is, will be certain that, if this were the case, not one sinner ever would be saved, but all would go on to the end—wilfully indeed but infallibly—in the broad way of impenitence and unbelief, which leadeth to destruction. Does it then, brethren, depend upon the will of fallen man, whether any seed shall serve the Redeemer or not? When the Lord Jesus Christ died to “bring many sons unto glory,” is it left to the discretion of sinners, whether “he shall see of the travail of his soul,” or not? When it is declared that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church,” is the certainty of this suspended upon the supposed good dispositions of the sons of men? Away with such a thought!

But I repeat it, that it is mere trifling with words to say, that sinners might do so and so if they would. It is to say no more, than that they might if they might, and they would if they would. The want of a *will* towards God, and the dominion of a *will* that is opposite to God,—this is what constitutes the evil of their nature, and makes it *impossible* for any man to see the kingdom of God,

without being “born again,”—without being created anew. And it is awfully striking to the enlightened mind, to observe those who deny the existence of that evil, at the same time affording the most decisive evidences of its reigning power,—in their neglect of the great salvation, and opposition to the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour.

Nor let any of you urge that objection, that those views of man’s natural corruption and God’s sovereign and efficacious grace, reduce men to mere *machines*. There is this essential difference between them and machines, and it is enough for us to know:—men are *voluntary* agents, both in the state of nature and under grace. They act according to their reigning dispositions and will; while machines are destitute of thought and volition. I freely admit that the course of men’s conduct will, in some sense, be determined by the character of the will, that reigns in them, as necessarily, as if they were machines. As long as that will is corrupt and opposite to God, their course will be evil, while they “fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind;” and this, as *infallibly* as “a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.” And when He, who alone can create anew, gives the sinner a new mind and a new spirit—i. e. a new *will*—when the kingdom of God is set up in the sinner’s heart, and he is delivered from the dominion of the flesh;—a correspondent change will as certainly take place in his course, as a good tree will certainly bring forth good fruit. Now, if you mean by the free will and free agency of men, about which your writers often make so much noise, only that he is a voluntary agent, and (like such) necessarily regulated by his reigning mind and will, you mean what, I believe, none of those, whom your writers oppose, ever thought of denying. But while I admit this, I must urge that observation of our Lord—“if the Son of God make you *free*, ye shall be *free* indeed.” In our natural corrupt state, though voluntary agents, we are the “slaves of sin,” because our will is evil: and from the *liberty* (so called) of being *left to ourselves* and our natural wills, every believer will, above all things, desire to be delivered.

Upon that old objection, retailed in various forms, that “if men be so corrupt, that they have not of themselves the ability of doing good, they then cannot be *blamed* for doing evil;”—I shall only observe that, if this objection have any force, it must follow from it that, the more diabolically *wicked* any voluntary agent is, the more *innocent* will he be. A creature is certainly not a subject of blame, if he be not a voluntary agent; and if he be, and his will and disposition be altogether wicked, he is certainly incapable of doing any thing good; and, according to your argument, is therefore not to be *blamed* for doing evil. A consequence—so monstrous—may convince you that the argument, from which it would necessarily follow, is of no force.

But if any press the objection, and presumptuously demand—“why doth God yet find fault? why hath he made me thus? and who hath resisted his will?”—I know not any answer more reasonable, than that of the Apostle—“nay but, O man, who art thou that replest against God?” It is more seasonable to warn such

an objector, that unless *he* repent and be converted, he will perish, and be convinced too late that he is *justly* an object of condemnation ;—than to follow him in the depths of metaphysical subtleties.

I regret, Brethren, that I have had occasion to touch upon any such bewildering topics. But your writers have handled them so frequently—so dogmatically—and, in my mind, so weakly and erroneously—that I have thought it expedient to go thus far in the subject ; and to offer you some of the simplest principles, which I think may be useful clues, for bringing you out of their intricacies. This is all the use I ever desire to make of metaphysics ;—not to go myself or lead others, into such endless speculations ; but (if it may be) to lead out those who have been lost in them. They are full of dangerous shoals and whirlpools ; and men of the most penetrating and cultivated minds have found depths in them, which they could not sound : while it too often happens, that the most illiterate among you are taught to think themselves qualified for the task ; and just learn enough of false metaphysics, to be “ corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

But I have avowed not only my belief of God’s electing love—that he “ hath chosen his people in Christ before the foundation of the world ;” (Eph. i. 4.)—not only my belief of his effectual grace in their calling—“ that whom he doth predestinate, them he also calleth”—calleth “ with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began ;” (Rom. viii. 30, & 2 Tim. i. 9.)—but I have also avowed my belief of the final perseverance of the Saints—that “ of all who have been given unto Christ he will lose none—that his sheep shall never perish—but shall be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory.” (John vi. 39, x. 28, xvii. 24.)—Upon this topic much need not here be said : it is inseparably connected and interwoven with the preceding.—The salvation of a sinner is from first to last the work of God, and “ his work is perfect ; nor will “ he forsake the work of his own hands.” If I believed not that HE is “ the keeper of Israel”—that HE “ keepeth the feet of his saints,”—I would not merely, with you, talk doubtfully about their perseverance unto the end, but I would be certain that not one of them would persevere. We know from Scripture that “ whoso persevereth unto the end the same shall be saved,”—and none else ; for “ if any man draw back, my soul, saith the Lord, shall have no pleasure in him.” The only question then between us is,—how it comes that those who are saved do persevere unto the end ; whether it be by their own sufficiency, or by God’s grace.

They but raise a dust to obscure the question, who represent it as relating to the importance and necessity of our *faithfully* “ cleaving with purpose of heart unto the Lord.” It is agreed that the characters of those who shall be with him in his heavenly kingdom are “ chosen and called and *faithful* :”—but the question is, whether this character belongs to them as part of his work “ who worketh in us both to will and to do,” or as the work of their own power.

Some of you who will read these pages, would probably not be backward to declare your expectation of getting to heaven. I call

on you, brethren, to consider on what that expectation is founded. Few, perhaps, will avow that it is founded on themselves: but if founded upon God, recollect that he works in his people according to his revealed word. What mean you then by denying his *word*, which warrants his believing people to trust in him that he "will guide them by his counsel and afterwards receive them to his glory,"—while at the same time you talk of trusting in him for the *work*?

But I dare say that some of you ere now have been ready to cry out—as I know is too often the language of your preachers and your writers,—“this man conceals the cloven foot of *reprobation* behind the fair cloak of election and final perseverance: remove the cloak, and you will see behind it, in the representation which he gives of God—a gloomy and cruel tyrant, arbitrarily saving a few and damning a multitude.”—Ah, brethren, these are rash and awful expressions—though but a small specimen of the language in which some in your Society have indulged themselves without fear, in order to excite in the people a horror of Calvinism and Calvinists.—The observations that I shall make on the objection must be but few and brief; but I hope will be made with more attention to the word of God, and more reverence for his sacred name, than the objection is often stated with.

I would observe in the first place, (and the observation, though apparently verbal, is not unimportant) that the term *reprobate*, where it occurs in scripture, is used in a signification altogether different from that, in which you and some others apply it. It is employed simply to denote a thing or person which cannot *stand the test*, by which we try whether it be really what it professes to be. See for instance Jer. vi. 30, and 2 Cor. xiii. 5. According to the language of Scripture, every sinner is a reprobate till he is a genuine believer; for till then, tried by the word of God, he will be found wanting. If some name therefore be thought necessary as a watch-word of alarm against Calvinism, invent some other term, and forbear to pervert and misapply the language of the Bible.

I would observe in the next place, that I no more than you believe that the destruction of those who finally perish is the act of God, except so far as it is the execution of his righteous sentence against their wilful sin. Their sin (the cause of their destruction) is their own; while the salvation of those who are saved from their sins is his.

Again I would observe, that as to the number of those who shall be saved, I know not any difference between John Wesley and John Calvin, if the former did not hold the unscriptural doctrine of *universal restoration*. All I know from the Bible upon the subject (and I know nothing of it but from the Bible) is this,—that it will be “a great multitude which no man can number;”—while all in the countless multitude will ascribe their “salvation unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.”

Whether *their* salvation be the fruits of their own deserts, or the work of the Redeemer’s grace; the condemnation of those who perish will be, in either case alike, the righteous consequence of their own sin. How then, brethren, do I represent the Almighty as cruel, in maintaining that “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord?”

I would observe in the last place, that to charge God with cruelty for not extending the same grace and saving mercy to others, is in effect to deny the existence of his mercy altogether. The very idea of mercy is, that it is *gratuitous*. That is not the gift of mercy which may not *justly* be withheld; which it would be cruelty to withhold. So that if you look with a more enlightened eye at the objection, which is so clamorously and rashly put forward by some of your society, you will find that it resolves itself into this—that God cannot *justly* punish sin in any of his creatures with everlasting destruction from his presence.—Does that assertion shock you? It will shock every sober and truly awakened mind. Then if God be “just when he judgeth,” he is merciful when he saveth a sinner; and if the salvation of any be of his *mere mercy*, who is the proud worm that will dare to arraign him of cruelty for not saving all?

Do you ask *why* God does not extend his saving mercy to more? Many such questions, I know, may be rashly started, and as rashly determined by poor purblind creatures. But, dear brethren, let me beseech you to observe that the Scriptures have been given to “make us wise unto salvation;” not to satisfy presumptuous curiosity: and I do discern as striking characters of divine wisdom, marking the word of God, in what is concealed, as in what it reveals. Every thing that a sinner can need to be informed of for his own salvation is discovered as with a sunbeam. Am I a sinner? the word of God testifies against my sin, warns me of its consequences, but at the same time declares that God “has no pleasure in the death of a sinner,” and proclaims a “great salvation.” Do I ask where is that salvation?—the word of God points to the “Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” To him Moses in the law, to him all the prophets, to him all the apostles bear witness, that “*whosoever* believeth on him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.” In the word of God I hear the voice of his invitation,—“whosoever will, let him come:”—I hear the voice of his promise,—“him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.” Do I reject the revealed counsel of God against myself, and stand enquiring into his everlasting purposes concerning me,—enquiring whether I am among the number of his elect or not? Impenetrable darkness graciously rests upon the question; but the warning voice is heard,—“except ye repent ye shall perish.” Do I believe, and turning to the Lord, enquire—“what wouldst thou have me to do?” the word of God abounds with every gracious consolation for my encouragement, with every gracious admonition for my safety, with every gracious instruction for my guidance, with all that I need to know, for maintaining a happy and a holy walk with the God of my salvation.

Do I begin to enquire about others? Every needful and profitable question is resolved for the regulation of my conduct and tempers towards them; but every question unprofitable and vain is stopped,—with “what is that to thee?” Such glimpses of discovery are afforded into the dealings of God even with other orders of intelligent creatures, besides those of the human race, as are calculated for our profit, for our admonition, and for the enlargement of our

minds with grander views of his majesty and his works. But we may ever estimate the clearness, with which we may expect to find any question resolved in the word of God, by the immediate importance of that question to the enquirer, and the *usefulness* of the information which he seeks. Alas! what a different book would the Bible be, if systematic divines,—if uninspired men of any sect or party—had the compilation of it!

Wherefore do I urge those remarks? To call your attention to that solemn declaration of our Lord,—“whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” The little child may ask many questions of the tender parent. Every kind and degree of information which the parent gives, the child receives with implicit credence; and where information is withheld, acquiesces with implicit submission in the parent’s wisdom.—Let us.—“GO, AND DO LIKEWISE.”

Alterations from the First Edition.

Page 7, line 19, of *many* among you—*for*, of *most* among you.
Page 23, line 9, and all *other* ways—*for*, all *the* ways.

A
SERIES OF LETTERS
TO
ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A.

OCCASIONED BY HIS REMARKS ON THE AUTHOR'S EXPOSTULATORY
ADDRESS TO THE
METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

*By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.—2 Cor. vi. 2.
Wisdom is justified of her children.—Mat. xi. 19.*

[First Published Dec. 1802.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

It is very contrary to my own expectation, that I am obliged to publish my Answer to Mr. Knox's Remarks in a series of separate letters. But I find that if I should reply to the whole of his pamphlet at once, as I originally intended, I must either treat the subject more superficially than its importance demands; or else must allow a longer interval to elapse before publication than I think expedient, and produce in the end a larger work than many readers would be willing either to purchase or peruse.

In the letter, which I now send into public, and hope to follow shortly by a second, the reader will perceive in what manner I aim at handling the controversy. I wish to clear away all disputes about the characters of men, and about modes of expression; in order to bring forward and discuss with plainness the infinitely important *principles*, which are concerned in it.

In one respect, I can confidently predict the issue of the discussion; and the Vindicator of the reputation of the Methodists may look at it with satisfaction. Their reputation in the world will rise, in proportion as the attention of the public is directed to the differences between them and me. The world will progressively discover—what I intimated in more than one passage of my address—that its creed approaches much nearer to the system of Methodism, than to that called Calvinistic; and will therefore become much more favourably disposed to the sentiments of a body, which it finds

strenuous in maintaining opinions that are generally current in the world.

Impressed with the certainty of this result, I must be either strangely fond of reproach, or strongly persuaded of the importance of the truths for which I contend, in wishing to continue the contest. The former, I know, some are ready to suppose, who cannot believe the latter. However that be, I confess that I view all the reproach which can be heaped upon me as a matter of perfect indifference, in comparison to the object of being blessed to win one soul—either in or out of the Methodist Society—to the knowledge of that glorious Gospel, which is the wisdom and the power of God to them that believe.

I beseech the reader to give a serious consideration to the topics handled in the following pages; and to excuse the unadorned garb in which they appear, for the sake of their intrinsic importance.

Dec. 23, 1802.

J. W.

A SERIES OF LETTERS,

&c.

LETTER I.

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SIR,—I cannot, like you, commence by expressing either reluctance or regret in taking up my pen, to reply to your Remarks on my Expostulatory Address to the Methodists of Ireland. It was not without the most serious consideration that I wrote that

Address; and, after the most serious and repeated consideration, I do not regret having brought into discussion the topics, which are handled in it. Nor is it with reluctance that I find myself called on, by your Remarks, to continue the discussion of them. I was well aware that I should be so called on by some respondent; and surely were I to select an antagonist, I could not choose any one, with whom I should more gladly enter the field, than a gentleman of cultivated mind,—capable of understanding the force of an argument,—disposed to acknowledge it when perceived,—not unexperienced in the general subjects which come into debate,—and towards whom I cannot be supposed to harbour any sentiments contrary to those of personal regard.

In avowing the satisfaction with which I meet any antagonist, and especially such an one as you, I know that I express a feeling very different from that which many possess who view the contest. I know that many, even of those who profess to think with me on the leading subjects discussed in my Address, are yet concerned that I have brought them into public agitation. Some of them think it imprudent in *me*, to involve myself in the odium of such a controversy; and others think that all controversy about matters of religion, between professors of religion, is to be deprecated. The latter sentiment alone is worth consideration. Allow me, Sir, to premise a few observations upon it; because I know that it is generally prevalent, and appears indeed in more than one passage of your letter, while I think it most deeply erroneous.

The sentiment against which I protest, (protest at least in the latitude in which it is commonly put forward) seems to me to originate—partly in a natural insensibility to the *importance* of divine truths,—and partly in a prejudice occasioned by the *manner*, in which religious controversy has been too often handled. If the Scriptures contain a divine revelation, the matters which they reveal cannot be unimportant; and if they be important, the discussion of them must be desirable, for the purpose of ascertaining the real import of the revelation, and of vindicating its truths against every opposing error. Accordingly we find, in all ages of the church, that the professors who manifest the grossest indifference to the revealed truths of God, are those who are most forward to decry every attempt to examine or assert them: and that as a sense of their importance has at any time been excited in any country, there has appeared with it a corresponding zeal to maintain them against all adversaries.

Indeed it is among the peremptory precepts of Christianity to “hold fast the form of sound words,” (2 Timothy, i. 13.) to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints;” (Jude, 3.) and this—as appears from the following verse—not merely against those who are without the pale of the visible church, but against false professors who are within it. See also the praise and the reproof, that are dispensed to the seven churches of Asia, (Rev. ii. iii.) according as they faithfully discharged this duty, or treacherously neglected it.

Neither is the nature of the duty changed, nor its importance

diminished, by the numbers who—under the semblance of performing it—have either contended for the doctrines of men as the truths of God, or in vindicating the latter—have departed from the spirit in which Christians are called to maintain the contest. That it is a nice and trying thing to discharge the duty aright, I readily acknowledge, and desire to remember: but if this were a reason for shrinking from christian duty, there is not one that I would ever attempt; for I know there is not one that I can perform aright, but as I am enabled to perform it in a spirit not my own.

But will those, who are so anxious that we should not disturb the repose of the *Christian World* (as it is called) with religious controversy, prevail on that world to give up their opposition to the truths of God's word? No:—the peace they would promote is a treacherous peace. The adversary is not idle, even when he propagates his errors most quietly, or under the most specious form: and it becomes those who “know the truth,” not to be imposed on by his wiles, but to advance the standard of the Gospel, and maintain “the good fight of faith.” There must be a controversy between divine truth and human error, as long as there are any men in the world who oppose that truth: and those who desire Christians to give up the controversy, do but ask them to surrender their Lord's cause to their enemies.

Many *professors* of his name will be angry with those who disturb them, by the introduction of such topics. They would rather have their unbelieving minds left to the uninterrupted enjoyment of carnal repose. “They could do well enough,” as they say, “and be good Christians enough, without being troubled with the truths of Scripture. The Bible, to be sure, is all true; but then there are a great many things in it, which we had better let alone. Those who mind them too much are apt to get enthusiastic, and to become strange kind of people, thinking and acting very differently from the rest of the world; and *they* can see no use in contending about these *speculative* matters.” Such sage observations are very common, and very natural from those who really do not believe what the Scriptures declare; but at the same time desire to sail smoothly down the current of the world, in a reputable profession of Christianity. But they must excuse those, who do believe the truths of God's word, for asserting and vindicating them, though it should disturb their quiet. How far these preliminary observations are applicable to the present occasion, will appear more clearly as I proceed in my reply.

You take up your pen, sir, under a most mistaken idea, which you carry with you through the whole of your letter. You commence by speaking of “charges,” which I have made against the Methodists; and by which you conceive I have “attacked” their body. To repel those charges, and “vindicate” them from this supposed attack, evidently is your great object from first to last. In this you appear to know little of my object in addressing them; and you invite me to a field, into which I have no disposition to follow you. My object in writing was not to accuse the Methodists at the bar of the public, nor to attack them as those whom I wanted

to put down: but to give them an admonition which I knew to be needful; and to testify to them for their profit, against evils in their practice and errors in their principles, the existence of which your pamphlet says nothing to disprove. Your object being to vindicate them at the bar of the public, you zealously endeavour to convince the world that my admonition was not needed. But I have no anxiety to prove to the world that it was. That is a question, in which my character alone for propriety of conduct is concerned, on the one side; and on the other, their reputation among men: and I view all such questions as too unimportant to deserve discussion.

Your flattering remarks, of course, will be much more grateful to the Methodists than my faithful address: and the only view in which I regret the publication of your remarks, is, as it tends to shut their ears against the voice of salutary admonition;—to which, without your assistance, many of them would have been sufficiently deaf. It is very natural to us (but a very bad part of our nature) to regard as an *enemy* the man who *tells us the truth*; (Gal. iv. 16.) and it is for you seriously to consider, how far the fundamental principle, upon which you took up your pen, countenances that evil, in representing a testimony against pernicious errors as the attack of an enemy. Still I am not without hope that some of that body—even some of those among them, who are at present much incensed against the monitor—will eventually be benefited by the admonition; by being excited to examine for themselves into the nature of several practices and opinions, which have hitherto passed current among them, under the stamp of human authority. And if this effect be produced in any degree, I trust I shall be very indifferent to the determination which the world may give to that question—whether I had sufficient cause, or not, to address the Methodists as I did. The *world* is a bad judge of any matters relative to Christianity: and while I desire to be kept open to instruction in the Scriptures—through whatever instrument it may be conveyed,—it is by the Scriptures, and not by the judgment of the world, that I desire to have my opinions formed, and my conduct regulated.

You assign, sir, one reason for remarking on my address, the cogency of which I am indeed most ready to admit. You think that I have “given some very erroneous views of certain Scripture doctrines, which seem to you to be pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences.” Thinking so, the apology at the close of your pamphlet for taking up this part of the subject is altogether superfluous. No Christian man *steps beyond his line*, in maintaining the truths of Scripture, according to his ability, against all who corrupt or oppose them. That this is the business of priests and theologians alone, is a papistical idea, which is only calculated to hoodwink the eyes of the people, and to lead them blindfold after blind guides. And however useful some learning—rightly applied—may be, for determining the precise meaning of particular passages in Scripture, yet (blessed be God) the leading doctrines of Scripture are as open to every English reader, as to the most profound scholar.

Here therefore you have undertaken an office, in which, if you have

failed, your failure is not to be attributed to the want of human learning; and an office which I shall at all times be glad to see others undertake. If they succeed in the execution of it, they will be instrumental in propagating the knowledge of Scripture doctrines: if, in the attempt, they bring forward mistaken views of Scripture,—they will afford an opportunity to others of combating errors, which are naturally rooted in the human mind, and are generally prevalent—even when they are not publicly maintained. And in this view I confess I look with more satisfaction at your “theological remarks” than at all the rest of your pamphlet. In the observations which I have to offer upon other parts, I shall have continual need to guard against wasting my time, or the time of my readers, upon topics of no eternal—that is of no essential—importance. But when I come to your *theological remarks*, after separating from them questions which might issue only in *verbal* controversy, I am certain of the importance of the subject, and certain of the one rule, which is to guide me in the discussion of it.

I have already intimated that, in replying to your remarks on what you call my “charges against the Methodists,” I have no intention of going into the proof of any facts to which I have alluded in my admonitions. But be assured you greatly mistake, when you intimate that my pamphlet “would probably never have been published,” had they abstained from opposition against certain persons, whom you suppose me “concerned for.” In truth, sir, there are no persons for whom I am concerned—in the sense in which you appear to use the word; and so far from that opposition having given occasion to my Address, I am not conscious that it was even a concurring cause; though I thought it expedient (having taken up my pen) to call their attention to that opposition, as marked with the characters of a party-spirit.

You intimate that the blame of this opposition ought to be at least divided—that it is but party against party; and adduce in evidence my entering as you say “into a detailed exposure of every thing” I deem faulty in methodism.—Here, sir, it is more important to clear the meaning of those terms—*party* and *party-spirit*, than to prove that I entered into no such detail as you impute to me, nor into any exposure of faults in the Methodists, but what was necessary to call their attention to the evils, which I wished to mark.

A party, sir, is a good or bad thing, according as it is engaged in a good or bad cause, and promotes it by good or bad means. The world may give the name of a *party* to any or to all Christians, as combined together to promote the cause of Christ's Kingdom, by the propagation of his truth; and may give the name of *party-spirit* to the zeal of Christians in pursuing those objects. But the things cease not to be good, because they are marked with a bad name. Now if I, in my Address to the Methodists, opposed any point of Christian truth, or any instance of Christian practice, which they observe, I there must plead guilty of what deserves a worse name than party-spirit; must plead guilty of having taken part (whether intentionally or not) with the enemies of the true God. And if you, or any one, can point out such an instance in my Address, I trust I

shall have grace to acknowledge my fault with shame, and to regard the person who detects it as my best friend.

And again, *if* in that opposition of the Methodists, against the exertions of other denominations of Christians in this island, they are opposing persons who are not really engaged in the cause of Christ, or opposing any errors in their doctrine, or evils in their practice,—I will freely admit that their opposition deserves a much better name than that of party-spirit:—it is Christian fidelity. That “they deem” the opinions of those, whom they oppose, peculiarly pernicious—is indeed, as you observe, no justification of their entering into a party-war. But let me say for the Methodists—hypothetically—more than you seem disposed to say: that if the opinions of those persons *be* unscriptural, they are pernicious; and that would amply justify the Methodists in opposing them by the word of truth, while nothing can justify them in employing any other weapons. I have warned the Methodists to take heed that their opposition was marked with these characters, which alone can vindicate it from the charge of party-zeal of the *worst* kind; and I am glad of the opportunity you have afforded me of tracing those characters more distinctly.

But besides those two great parties, of which I have taken notice in my Address as the only parties I desire to acknowledge, and the contest between whom I can never desire to see abated, as long as there are any men on earth who oppose the cause of Christ in opposing the truths of his gospel;—there have been too long subordinate parties among those, who are alike on the Lord’s side, and too much of party-zeal manifested by them for their subordinate differences, and the several peculiarities of forms and modes, by which they are distinguished. That such distinguishing peculiarities should exist, I think is unavoidable in the present imperfect state; and I think many wise reasons appear for the providential permission of them. But while they continue to exist, they destroy not the unity of the Christian church; which consists not in a unity of modes and forms, but in having one faith, one Lord, one baptism of his Spirit, and one God and Father of all.

I have therefore long lamented, that they should have so much estranged different Christians from each other, excited mutual jealousy, and prevented that manifestation of the unity of all believers, which is one of the circumstances, by which they ought to let their light shine in the world. I have long lamented that Christians should waste so much of their zeal about those distinguishing peculiarities, which cannot be essential to the Christian church, because they are borrowed from characters not common to all its real members. All such zeal also is party-zeal of a bad kind, though not so bad as the former; and I did, in my Address, intimate my satisfaction at the rapid decrease of that spirit in the present day, manifested by the growing union of Christians of various outward churches—co-operating cordially to promote the common cause of their common Lord. I look with satisfaction at that union, because it obviously has no bond but that in which all Christians are agreed—the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour:—for the persons, who are thus acting in concert for the propagation of it, retain, and are likely

to retain, all their former diversity of sentiments about modes and forms. And I did drop a word of remonstrance to the Methodists upon that jealousy, which I know many of them have manifested against this Evangelical Union. Nor do I regret the remonstrance; for it was needed: but the proof I decline entering into; my object being to convince—not to *convict* them.*

But here, sir, let me freely say—that the only Methodists, whom I could wish to see coming forward to join that union, are those who do *not* for themselves adopt those “favourite doctrines” of methodism, a zeal for which you seem to think so harmless. That there are such in the Society—I have avowed my opinion. I only regret that such should countenance the fundamental errors of the methodistic system by not protesting against them; for that some of the errors of it (as standing opposed to the freedom, sovereignty, and efficaciousness of the grace of God in the salvation of his people) are so *fundamental*, that no man is a believer of the Gospel who really adopts them for himself—uncharitable as the declaration may appear to you—I cannot but testify. Nor can I be so certain that any of those who *profess* the methodistic system are real Christians, as I must be, that several of the tenets of that system are Anti-christian. The Scripture assures me of the latter; but nowhere of the former. And with those who really do not believe the Gospel of the grace of God, believers of that Gospel cannot co-operate in Christian union.

You express your conviction, sir, that “what well-disposed Arminians aim at will then only be secured, when they keep the controversial sword within its sheath, and confine themselves strictly to what is practical.” I quote this passage not to avail myself of the concession, which would appear to be implied in it, that their opinions will not stand the test of a close examination by the word of God;—but to protest against that prevalent, but most erroneous sentiment—that Christian practice ever can be separated from Christian doctrine.—Throughout Scripture these two things appear indissolubly connected. All the most practical directions to the people of God are immediately derived, in Scripture, from the views which they have received of Him, his grace and his salvation; however an unbelieving

* This and the preceding paragraph contain sentiments similar to those already pointed out in the notes to the Expostulatory Address. The same observations will equally apply to them, and render little more necessary in this place, than to warn the reader of the recurrence of exceptionable language, and direct him to the former animadversions upon it. One remark only will be added on this subject.

Although the defence of their own consistency is a matter of infinitely small importance to disciples, compared with the assertion of divine truth; yet it becomes them to refute, on proper occasions, unjust imputations of inconsistent change. Change of opinion is generally viewed in an unfavourable light; and too often indiscriminately censured. But it may, in many instances, be the result of inflexible adherence to principle. An attentive perusal of the Address to Believers, and the Essay on the Apostolic Traditions, will prove that the change in Mr. Walker's mind was of this description; and the reader will find, even in these letters, sufficient to justify this assertion. He has only to apply the principles, which he will find inculcated as he proceeds, to the conviction that the apostolic commands for regulating the walk of disciples still continue in unabated force; and he must admit that this accounts most consistently for all the alteration of sentiment which took place in the author's mind on the subject of Christian Union.—ED.

world may deery the importance of those views as *speculative*. In Scripture the only principle, which is represented as working by love, is *faith*—or “the belief of the *truth*.” “By the word of *truth*” are believers begotten unto God; (James i. 18.) through the same *truth* are they sanctified. (John xvii. 17, 19.) Nay, it is declared that “this is life eternal to *know* the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” (John xvii. 3.) And on the other hand, to *walk in darkness—to believe a lie—to know not God*—are phrases synonymous with a course of evil and ungodly practice. Let no Christians, therefore, for a moment admit the idea of “confining themselves to what is practical,” to the neglect or exclusion of the doctrines of the Gospel. I do not say, sir, that you intended to convey such an idea: but it is so generally current in the world, and *seems* to be so countenanced by your expression, that I have thought it not inexpedient to bear this testimony against it. I shall indeed have occasion to examine it more at large hereafter.

But you seem to intimate, that the points of divine truth at issue between the Methodists and those who are called Calvinists, ought by both to be laid aside as incomprehensibly mysterious, as “*gulphs—where*” (you say) “St. Paul himself confesses that he found no bottom.” I could wish, sir, that you had referred to the passage in the apostle’s writings, which you have in view. Is it possible that you allude to that exclamation of the apostle’s, Rom. xi. 23? “O! the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Why,—in that very passage the apostle has been asserting most plainly the dealings of God, as working all things after the counsel of his own will, for the purpose of magnifying the sovereignty of his grace and the riches of his mercy, in saving sinners both of Jews and Gentiles; and then breaks out into believing admiration at the view of the divine wisdom in this procedure. And shall his admiration of its wisdom be employed to call in question the certainty—of what he has so expressly declared? Shall the great assertor of the doctrines of free grace be quoted, as leaving them in dark uncertainty? If I have conjectured right as to the passage to which you allude, I think your candour will acknowledge, upon examining it, that it has nothing to do with the purpose for which you employed it. But allow me to say a few words more upon the fallacious argument, no longer now as yours, but as too commonly employed by others, to excuse their unbelieving rejection of what God has declared in his word.

“These things” (they cry) “are abstruse and incomprehensible; no one can understand them: therefore let us not hear any more of them.” Often have I known the most avowed infidels to shelter themselves in this refuge of lies, from the first principles of revealed truth; and often professors of every shade and degree, who while they own the divine authority of the Bible in a mass, reject its truths in detail. Now I will readily concede to those objectors two points:—the one, that there are various questions *connected* with all the truths revealed in the Scriptures, which our understandings cannot fathom;—the other, that no man can believe what he cannot understand. But

what then? Do the Scriptures call us to believe what is unintelligible? No; they *plainly declare* the truths which men are required to *believe*: and let these objectors show me that opinion which is not intelligibly declared in the word of God, and I will show them that opinion, the belief of which (whether it be true or false) cannot be essential to salvation.

But are the doctrines of the free grace and electing love of God, which Arminians *systematically* reject,—are they such? No; they are throughout the Scriptures revealed in language so plain, that the most illiterate, who believe them, understand its meaning. But, “why,” said Christ of old to the unbelieving Jews, “why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word.” The unbelief of the heart,—indisposed to receive the truth,—is a veil upon the mind, and blinds the eyes of the understanding.

Or—are those doctrines, so plainly revealed, to be rejected as uncertain mysteries, because other questions *about* them, which the presumptuous curiosity of man suggests, are left unrevealed in the word of God, and therefore baffle the utmost stretch of the human understanding? As well might I reject all the evidence of my senses about natural objects, because so many topics of inquiry concerning them may be started, which I never can resolve. As well might I call in question the certainty of my own existence, because I cannot understand *how* I exist. Let us have done then with the talk of laying aside, as *unintelligible*, any of the truths revealed in Scripture; and let those who will talk of laying them aside, as *unimportant*, avow that they lay aside their Bibles.

You think that “Christian charity is violated by thus judging of men’s hearts,” as I seem to you to have done, in admonishing the Methodists against the prevalence of a party-spirit in their body. Sir, it is a very small matter whether I am thought uncharitable or not; but it is a matter of serious importance to vindicate that scriptural term, CHARITY, from the perversion of its meaning, which this and other passages of your letter more than countenance. And it is the more important, because similar misapplications of the term are so common, and pregnant with consequences so awful,—tending to harden men against the force of divine truth, and to lull them in carnal security.

What is the cry of the unbelieving world, when warned of the evil of their ways and the evil of their hearts? “O! be not so *uncharitable*. It belongs to God alone to judge our hearts.” As if God had not pronounced in his word the awful characters of the heart of fallen man; or as if it were a Christian duty to disbelieve what he declares, and to think well of that which he testifies against as evil. You need not be informed, sir, that the word translated *charity*, means neither more nor less than LOVE; and that it is *faith* that “worketh by love.” Let not that love therefore be set in opposition to the parent from which it springs; as it is, when a “judgment of *charity*” is made synonymous with a favourable opinion of men’s state and hearts, whether that opinion be regulated by the Scriptures of God or not.

The word of truth warrants me not in thinking well of the human

heart at any time,—neither of my own heart, nor of the hearts of others; and the same word teaches me to consider the corruption of that heart as the one fruitful source of every evil, both in the tempers and conduct of men. (Matt. xv. 18, 19.) The word of truth admits but two principles of moral good or evil in man, and plainly characterizes their distinct fruits;—the fleshly or *natural mind* of fallen man—the fruitful source of evil and nothing but evil continually,—and the *new mind* of the spirit in believers—the fruit of which is altogether good. When I see any of the fruits of the flesh, even in believers, I know from Scripture that they cannot proceed from the spirit, no more than a good tree can bring forth evil fruit; and the truest Christian charity—or love—may call on me, not only to testify against the outward evils which I discern, but to admonish them of the inward principle of evil from which these proceed.

Look, sir, again at those fruits, to which I called the attention of the Methodists in that passage where you think I have “violated Christian charity;”—fruits, the existence of which in their society you have not attempted to deny, though I believe you are little acquainted with the extent to which they exist: and perhaps you will find reason to alter your opinion, that I have there “resolved doubtful conduct into its worst possible cause.” The fruits are not *doubtfully* evil; and a scriptural believer can therefore have no doubt whence they spring; and knows that the worst, which can be said of that source, must fall short of expressing its real corruption.

You think that I would have resolved their conduct into a more favourable cause, if I had imputed it to their real attachment to the favourite doctrines of the Arminian system—as opposed to the Calvinistic.—Viewing, as I do, these doctrines as anti-christian, and opposite to the truth of God’s word, I am glad to have room to *hope* that, in many of them, this conduct originates in a different cause:—that they adopt the unscriptural peculiarities of Mr. Wesley’s and Mr. Fletcher’s system, rather in name than in reality; and that they oppose those who hold and declare a simpler Gospel—rather from the false views of the doctrines, called Calvinistic, which are sedulously obtruded on their minds, by misrepresentations of what Calvinists hold,—than from a real opposition to the truth. Yet even this supposition does not render it unnecessary to admonish them of the evil—of taking up such hasty and unfounded prejudices: much less does it vindicate the means, which many in the Methodist Society have employed, for opposing those who are the objects of these prejudices. But where any of them are prompted to this opposition by a real adoption of the peculiarities of Arminianism,—I must (however it may shock you as a violation of Christian charity) warn such, that they are opposing the truths of God in the blindness of their minds,—that unless they repent, they will perish in their unbelief,—and that the persuasion they have of being right cannot exempt them from condemnation.

“What!”—some one will exclaim—“what more can be required from any man, than that he should be *sincerely* convinced that what he believes is true, and act accordingly? And is it not a breach of charity to condemn any, whose hearts are thus *sincere*?” Is not this

(in the language of the charming poet) *to deal damnation round the land—on each we judge God's foe?*—Well then;—if this objection be founded in truth, let us shut our Bibles for ever. The objection, in fact, is founded in disbelief of what the Bible declares; and was very suitable in the mouth of an infidel poet, who plainly intimates that the worshippers of the heathen Jove and of the true JEHOVAH, who has made himself known in the Scriptures, differ from each other in little more than a name. My Bible tells me, that *whoso believeth the Gospel*—that is the glad tidings which it brings of salvation for lost sinners—*shall be saved*; and that *whoso believeth not shall be damned*;—that *whoso believeth not the record that God hath given of his Son is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him*. But if that objection be true, then whatever a man believes—provided he is *sincere* in believing it—(and I am sure I know not well what the *insincere* believing of any thing is, it is so like *disbelieving*)—it is of no essential consequence, so his conduct be good. But let Christians never countenance that *sincerity*, which is nothing but *sincere* pride of heart and *sincere* enmity against the true God: for such are the corruptions of the human heart, which make a sinner reject the Gospel, “*and love darkness rather than light.*” Let not Christians ever countenance that conduct as good, which springs not from a mind *obedient to the faith*;—which is the conduct of men yet in that state, in which the Scriptures declare, that they *cannot please God*. Let not Christians ever be deterred, by the outcry made in favour of an *infidel charity*, from testifying against principles so mischievous, from warning the unbelieving world of their danger. This is one of the prime duties of *christian* charity, or love.

I know, sir, that these views include one of the peculiar offences of the Cross of Christ. *The offence of the Cross* would long ago have ceased, if Christ were preached as a Saviour—in whom men might believe (to be sure) if they pleased, and be the better for it,—but whose testimony they might also reject without ruin. The infidel world would contentedly bear such a Gospel as this, and give its advocates credit for much *charity*. They would contentedly suffer us to take our own way, if we would only give them to understand—that they might safely take theirs. And we find, in fact, that those professors of Christianity who hold such a Gospel, or countenance it by their indifference to divine truth, go very quietly through the world, and are much respected by the world. But such professors of Christianity are but professors: *they are of the world*, and therefore *the world loves its own*. But far be that carnal policy from Christians which would recommend to the world something under the name of a Gospel, by stripping the Gospel of its essential principles—because they are offensive.

So far as any really give up or deny those essential principles—(and all those principles are essential to the Gospel, which affect the *one foundation* of a sinner's hope towards God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.)—I trust I shall ever address them,—whether they bear the name of Christians or bear it not,—as infidels, and as opposers of the revealed truths of Scripture; while I desire to address them with that tenderness of concern which springs from a

view of their danger, and with that lowliness of mind which springs from a persuasion that it is by *grace*—by *free grace* alone—I am made to differ from them. Such I know will be very angry, at not finding me as ready to compliment them with the surrender of the divine truths which they dislike, as they would be to return the compliment in that case to me. This they call *charity*; this *thinking well* of every one, or of a great many, whatever they believe, and however they stand disposed to the Gospel. And they find that they possess so much of this charity that they commonly *think very well* of themselves for being so very charitable; and if there be any one for whom they can have no charity, it is the man who has not quite so much of this charity—this infidel charity—as themselves. They think it very hard that such a man should disturb them, and invade their characters, by testifying against their unbelief. But, indeed, Sir, if charity be such a thing as they mean by this term,—to have the most charity a man needs only to be the greatest infidel in the world. It is very awful to pervert any part of Scripture, and very awful to apply, what is spoken in Scripture of charity, to such indifference or opposition to the truths of Scripture.

It may perhaps excite to consideration some bigots to our established church, to observe how vehemently she protests against such infidel charity in her 18th article*. I mention it only in this view; and not in the vain idea of proving this or any other part of Christian doctrine, by the authority of that or any other church. By the Scriptures alone the doctrines of Christianity must be proved. But while some profess themselves favourable to a kind of orthodoxy, because they cannot help seeing that it is patronized by the church;—and others are zealous for the church who avowedly hate her doctrines,—I confess myself attached to that church, because I see her orthodox—i. e. scriptural, on all the essential parts of Christian doctrine.

But methinks I hear some one exclaim—“Is it not written in Scripture—*Charity hopeth all things?* and again,—*Judge not, that ye be not judged?* Yes; and again it is written—“*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil.*” In calling us to the exercise of such a charity as they contend for, under the sanction of those much-perverted passages of Scripture, they call us to incur the woe that is denounced in the latter passage. True charity “hopeth all things” indeed,—all things that the word of God warrants us to hope for: but that word warrants us not to hope that any who die under the power of *unbelief*, will escape the righteous judgment of God; or that any who live under its power are in a state of acceptance with him. The word of God testifies the contrary: and that faith—which receives the testimony of God’s word,—must ever regulate the hope of that charity which springs from it. We may transfer to this the limitation of the apostolic power mentioned by St. Paul, (2 Cor. xiii. 8.) and say, —true charity *can hope nothing against the truth but for the truth.*

* “They also are to be held accursed, that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.”
—*Articles of the Church of England.*

And when these men quote that gracious precept of our blessed Lord, "Judge not," i. e. presume not to pass a *judicial sentence against* any of your fellow sinners, let them learn from the following clause, "that ye be not judged," to interpret the precept better, than they do, when they represent it, as amounting to a prohibition against forming an unfavourable *opinion* of the state or character of other men;—that is, to a prohibition from our Lord against *believing* the most express declarations of his own word. When our Lord elsewhere (John xii. 47.) says—"If any man hear my words and believe not, I *judge* him not; for I came not to *judge* the world, but to save the world;"—are we to understand him as declaring, that he formed no *unfavourable opinion* of such a man's state? No; the next verse, as well as the whole current of his testimony, forbids the supposition. He testified against the children of the world, that their works were evil, and that they had not the love of God in them. But he obviously declares that he came not—(then)—to pass sentence judicially against sinners, but to save even the chief of them.

In the sense in which that precept—"Judge not"—is commonly quoted, it would be easy to show, that it was violated continually by all his apostles and prophets; and is utterly inconsistent—not only with the *belief* of his revealed truth,—but with the discharge of numberless practical *duties*, enjoined on his disciples to the end of the world. But let it suffice to have said this much in vindication of the real import of these scriptural expressions; which have been so long and so commonly perverted by men, *willingly ignorant* of their meaning, that even more serious and candid inquirers too often fall into the grossest misapplication of them.

But you apprehend that I have—not only violated Christian charity, by my admonitions to the Methodists against a party-spirit,—but also given "fresh force to the charges brought by infidels against the propagators of Christianity in general"—as "covering with a pretended concern for truth their own desire of unrivalled ascendancy." Your remark, Sir, comes to this;—that Christians ought not to protest against the unchristian conduct, or tempers, or principles of others, if they also be professing Christians, lest the deists—the avowed infidels—should thence borrow an argument against Christianity. You see that the remark only needs to be put into plain English, to show its fallacy. It is very true, Sir, that the tribe of deistical writers abounds in invectives against the professors of Christianity, put forward as if they were charges against Christianity itself. And their cause needs such sophistry. But indeed those, who would meet them by a vindication of the professors of Christianity, give very undue force to their charges. The only effectual—for the only true—answer to all such objections, is to distinguish between the Gospel and its professors. If the things for which deists censure us be scriptural, they attack an authority higher than that of any man: and I am not afraid of the consequences of their attack. It is the puny effort of a worm to shake the rock of ages: and I know that "whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." But if the matters objected to us by them have not the authority of scripture, let who will fight for them against the deists:—I trust I

will never. I am persuaded that among nominal Christians there are numbers of real infidels; and let them employ themselves in fighting with their brethren the deists, about their nominal differences. I desire to maintain the truths of scripture against both; and never to lower the dignity of the matter for which I contend, by involving it in the character or conduct of any mere men. Nor will I ever desire to conceal from the deists, that there is too much of evil in the spirit, and error in the principles of various religionists. But that evil and those errors are not Christianity. And I hope to be ready to protest against them, whenever called to it, without the fear of giving infidels any real handle against Christianity. Infidels are to be combated,—not by denying or concealing the abuses existing among religionists,—but by opposing those abuses, and shewing that they are opposite to the Christianity of the Bible.

You proceed, Sir, to remark on the next instance of a too prevalent party-spirit, upon which I thought it needful to admonish the Methodists;—the predominant eagerness to have numbers added to their own society. I did say that this has long *appeared* to be the principal concern of *most* among them; and I did subjoin in the same paragraph six different evidences of this, which I have long observed in their body. All these evidences, as usual, you overlook in silence; while you are solicitous to vindicate their character, by disputing the fact. You seem also to have altogether forgotten, that the “terms of absolute assertion,” which you think “scarcely consistent with strict candour,” contain an assertion only of what has long *appeared* to be the principal concern of most among them. For the last fourteen years, though never in their society, I have observed and known many of them, and been acquainted with their proceedings in various parts of Ireland;—and that such has been the *appearance* presented to my view in a very large majority—(with some blessed exceptions, which in various parts of my address I have rejoiced to acknowledge)—I can say with the strictest candour and with deep regret. However, as it is impossible for me, or any other individual, to have had opportunities of observing an actually numerical majority of their members—although I think that unnecessary to vindicate the terms of my assertion, to any unprejudiced interpreter,—yet I have gladly expunged the offensive term—“most,” and substituted the word—“many”—in the second edition of my address. And be assured, Sir, I would, with much more heart-felt satisfaction, come forward to the public to testify that the appearances of this, or any other evil upon which I have admonished the Methodists,—have ceased, or become less general,—than ever I came forward (as you conceive—to prefer accusations against their body—but as I am conscious) to testify to them against evils, the existence and prevalence of which I know.

But indeed, Sir, I will readily acknowledge, that the unscriptural zeal for *numerous* proselytes to be joined with us in outward church membership, is an evil by no means peculiar to the Methodists. It is a natural fruit of the *carnal* mind, which has been always looking for some externally-attractive circumstances in the Messiah and his Kingdom. Great numbers *professing* the same faith with us, tend to give so much credit and respectability to our cause in the eyes of the

world, and to keep us (as it were) so much in countenance, that the flesh, in Calvinistic as well as in Arminian professors, has commonly on this ground been passionately desirous of them. But our Lord's flock, throughout his word, is addressed as a "little flock," a poor—a despised—and an afflicted people;—corresponding in the mean appearance they make on earth with the King of Zion, who was meek and lowly, and in whom there was no beauty seen that the children of the world could desire. But there is more true glory resting upon ten real believers, found in the faith and living by the faith of the Son of God,—though reproached and calumniated by the professing and unprofessing world—though a sect "everywhere spoken against,"—than there is in the most numerous church unsound in the faith,—though consisting of ever so many thousands of professing Christians—ever so high in reputation for morality and piety.

We are told in scripture what the glory of the true church is:—"THY GOD THY GLORY."—Aye:—He,—her God and her Redeemer—her only Saviour, in whom alone she has righteousness and strength,—He is *her glory*: and she knows him as such; and glorying in him, is enabled to welcome reproach and shame and tribulation for his name's sake. And just in proportion as any church begins to glory in anything else, we may name her—ИСЛАВЪ—"the glory is departed from her;"—however splendid her appearance in the eyes of the world, or in her own. To make Christianity *respectable* in the world and *palatable* to the world, has been long attempted; and just in proportion as men pursue the attempt with ardour, they manifest that they have lost sight of the scriptural characters of Christianity and of the world;—and in proportion as they seem to succeed in the attempt, they corrupt the Gospel of God our Saviour. We find plenty of such Christianity, as men may profess, and even be very zealous about, without losing their *characters* and good name in the world, or *offending* its children: but I desire no further evidence than this, that such Christianity is spurious. The mind of the world towards the true Messiah, and his true Gospel, is just the same that it was, when that cry was raised—"Crucify him—crucify him;"—and whenever the world seem better disposed to Christianity, it is because something under the name is presented to their view, that is not the Christianity of the Gospel. For the "offence of the cross" to unregenerate men has not ceased, and never can:—and our Lord's word must stand true to the end of the world—"Whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

You go on to observe that—in a strict adherence to the discipline of Methodism, I must "mean to include their injunctions of morality and general piety:" and where these things are combined with a strict attendance on meetings of piety, you ask, am I—or "is any one on earth entitled to pronounce, that such persons are really destitute of Christian faith?" Now, Sir, I answer without difficulty, that such persons *may be* really destitute of Christian faith; and may manifest such evidences of infidelity, as will entitle any Christian on earth, who observes them, to pronounce that they are so. If the observance of what is called morality and general piety cannot of themselves constitute a Christian character, certainly no attendance on meetings of

piety can. And that the former cannot, is certain from scripture, and from acknowledged fact. For strict morality—(so called)—and for general piety,—not only some of all denominations of professing Christians have been eminent, from the Arminian Methodists to Pelagians of all degrees,—and from them—through all the shades of Arianism—to the thorough-paced Socinian, who considers the Bible only as containing a collection of moral and pious precepts—well exemplified in the life of a man,—and regards its revealed truths only as so many *eastern metaphors*, which he may interpret away into any thing or nothing at his pleasure ;—not only some of all these have been eminent as moralists and pietists,—but some avowed infidels and heathens also.

In short, sir, while I know that there may be a kind of morality and a kind of piety, ever so fair and imposing in the sight of men, where there is no Christian faith ; I know from my Bible, that there can be no true morality or piety—because no real love for man or God—but what springs from the Christian *faith*. And, therefore, where infidelity is avowed by rejection of or opposition to the fundamental truths of the Gospel,—believing my Bible—I must reject all the nominal morality and piety also of such professors, as spurious. The one only true God makes himself known to us in his word. The man, who rejects his revealed truths, may have a kind of piety : but the true God is not the object of it, and his piety is no better than that of a heathen. Nor can I doubt that many *pietists*, as well as *moralists*, will be found among the “ haters of God,” when I observe the indignation and enmity, that are stirred up in their minds against his attributes and dealings with men, by the proposal of his revealed truths, in which these attributes and dealings are made known. And I do beseech the CHRISTIAN Methodists, who know and love the name of the Lord,—(for otherwise they would not be Christians)—to attend to the admonition—notwithstanding the advocate who represents it as illiberal ;—and not to be so easily satisfied (as they too commonly have appeared to be) about the state of those, who give in their names to the society ; and not to be so hasty in considering them as in the way of salvation. If they have grace and wisdom from above to exercise more fidelity towards the souls, over whom some of them are called to watch, they may soon discover, from the offence that will be taken, and the opposition that will be made to them, how far some of their people are from obedience to the faith of the Gospel ; and how little acquainted with themselves or with God.

You ask me—whether I am “ so thoroughly informed of *all* that such persons say in the language of Methodism, as to be sure that they give no mark of acquaintance with God or with themselves.” Indeed, sir, it does not require an acquaintance with *all* that any man says, in any language, to mark him unacquainted with God or with himself ; if he be an opposer of the Gospel of the grace of God. In Scripture the power of *unbelief* is synonymous with the power of *darkness* : and the universal character of all by nature is—“ alienated from the life of God through the *ignorance* that is in them because of the *blindness* of their hearts.” And when any are brought out of that state, it is by God’s “ shining into their hearts, to give them the *light* of the *knowledge* of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” Then,

and not before, they are "children of the light and of the day:"—and then instead of hating the light, which discovers at once their entire vileness and helplessness, and the glory and all sufficiency of the Saviour, they love that light and rejoice in it;—instead of disputing against the sovereignty and exceeding riches of the grace of God, they prize "the joyful sound" that proclaims these, and abhor themselves, especially for their former opposition to it. You ask me—whether *I* am "accustomed to lay no stress whatever on the morality, &c. of my own religious friends."—Extraordinary as the question is, I am glad to answer it. Yes, sir;—so great stress, that the man—who does not *shew* his faith *by his works*—I can see no warrant to consider him as a believer; though the creed that he *professes* to believe were as orthodox as an Apostle's, and his talk as heavenly as an Angel's. And there is no truth of Scripture, that I more firmly or explicitly declare,—for there is none more clearly revealed,—than that those who "*say* that they have fellowship with Christ and walk in darkness,—lie." No:—that very "grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth" the objects of it "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" and, "the fruit of the Spirit is, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance." And just according as the believer "grows in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"—this fruit will assuredly abound.—Be assured, sir, my testimony against those false professors, who "live after the flesh"—in any of its varied forms, while they *say* that they believe the doctrines of grace, is as explicit, and as offensive to some of that description, though Calvinists,—as any testimony I have ever borne against those who deny those doctrines. But what then? The latter do not *profess* the faith of the Gospel; the former shew, contrary to their profession, that they do not *possess* it. The *avowed unbelief* of the latter proves their most specious morality to be but "dead works,"—as not springing from faith; and the open immorality of the former (and I reckon under this head any of the allowed workings of the flesh enumerated by the Apostle—Gal. v. 19—21.—though some of them may be indulged with very little discredit even in the religious world)—proves that their *professional faith* is vain, as not "working by love." I pray God to keep me testifying alike against the *infidelity* of both.

You ask me—whether "merely being an Arminian forfeits all right to a judgment of charity?"—Let us have done, sir, with that expression. My judgment or opinion, both of my own state and the state of others, must be regulated by *truth*—by scripture truth,—not by my wishes, nor by what I might hope to be true, if I set aside the declarations of God's word. Being an Arminian excludes not a man from being the object of charity—or love—in its various exercises: neither does his being a Turk or an Infidel exclude him. Neither do I conceive—(as I have before observed)—that making a general *profession* of Arminian doctrine, precludes a hope, that the man is a

real believer of the Gospel. But I am as sure, that a man's being *really* an Arminian precludes that hope (though not the hope that he may, through the free grace which he denies, become a believer)—as I am sure that the tenets of Arminianism are contrary to the essential doctrines of the Gospel.

The essential character of the Gospel—(whoever may deny it)—is that of glad tidings of salvation to sinners—wholly lost—who have destroyed themselves;—of a great salvation, of which the *one* author is that God against whom they have sinned;—glad tidings of eternal life, as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus to the chief of sinners who *believes* the joyful record;—and that faith itself his gift, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. I need not spend time to prove to *you*, sir, that the essential character of Arminianism stands in direct opposition to this, which I maintain to be the essential character of the Gospel. But I shall have occasion, in a subsequent letter, to go into the proof of the assertion, that the Gospel is what I have described. Meanwhile I say nothing, but what is included in that assertion, in saying that *no real Arminian is a real believer*. This “deliberate opinion,” connected with the avowal that the belief of the Gospel is essential to salvation, will doubtless “bear an appearance of” much “illiberality” to many—to all who do not believe the Gospel. But I remember that passage in the history of our Lord—(Mat. xv. 12, 14.)—“Then came his disciples and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind.” If all *appearance of illiberality* is to be deprecated, we had better give up our Bibles at once; for be assured, sir, if *you* hold—with the Bible—that “whosoever believeth not, shall be damned,”—putting what interpretation you please upon the Gospel that is to be believed,—there is a numerous class to whom *you* will appear very illiberal; and many a one will be ready to address you with such a question as you directed to me—“Does merely being a **DEIST** forfeit all right and title to a judgment of charity?”

Thus, sir, I have gone through a little more than the first eight pages of your remarks; and mean to proceed, in subsequent letters, through the remainder. I trust you will not think any apology needed for the plainness with which I examine the principles asserted or countenanced in your pamphlet,—as far as they appear to me to be unscriptural. Many of them are so generally prevalent, and so deeply rooted in our fallen nature, that I am well aware how invidious a task he undertakes, who attempts to oppose them: and aware that, whatever force of argument or clearness of demonstration he employs, the only success he can hope for is—from the divine blessing, rendering the declaration of divine truth effectual to some; while all other readers will of course assign the victory to his antagonist,—because he contends for principles, which already have possession of their minds.

I am, sir,

With every sentiment of personal regard,

Your faithful humble servant,

JOHN WALKER.

LETTER II.

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Is. ii. 22.

The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. 1 Tim. i. 5.

Purifying their hearts by faith. Acts xv. 9.

Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. Tit. i. 15.

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SIR,—I resume my observations on your letter,—according to the plan, which I have already prescribed to myself in my last.

You remark on the passage of my Address, in which I admonish the Methodists against their idolatrous attachment to men, and submission to human authority in matters of religion,—that it is with them as with Calvinists, that “some weak individuals” talk extravagantly about their favourite authors. I am glad of the opportunity, which your remark affords, of extending my admonition. I have met Calvinistic professors, who need it; and I have never forbore to give it, because they were Calvinists.

If we make an idol, it matters little whether it be of gold or silver,

or a bit of wood : and it is pernicious idolatry to put the authority of any men or their writings in that place, which exclusively belongs to the authority of God and his word. I care not whether the men be Hervey and Romaine, or Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher :—their sentiments and their conduct are not to be the rule of my judgment or practice. The Scriptures afford the only standard, by which mine are to be regulated, and theirs are to be tried. And if I even adopt what is right—upon the ground of their authority, I adopt it in a wrong way ; and it becomes in me no better than a human prejudice.

Indeed—the little influence which many of the truths of the Gospel have, upon the hearts or lives of some evangelical professors, is sufficient to show in what school they have learned them. They may learn of men to talk about them, and express their assent to them, and perhaps, to argue in defence of them : but men cannot bring them to the “knowledge of the truth”—cannot discover to them its glorious reality, nor persuade them of its certainty : and those who learn from no higher teacher remain, therefore, in darkness and in death—even while they are puffed up with a vain conceit of their orthodoxy ; and mistake attachment to the tenets of an earthly leader, for a saving acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ.

You ask me, sir, whether such *extravagant talk*, as “some weak individuals” fall into about their favourite authors, be “ground for a serious charge” of awfully forgetting our Lord’s command—not to call any man master. I answer—without hesitation—that it is. Wherever that evil appears, it is a most *serious* evil and needs a most *serious* admonition : and—as arising from ignorance or forgetfulness of our Lord’s command,—I know not any more suitable remedy for the evil, than to urge that divine precept. Surely, sir, if the Scriptures be given “to make us wise unto salvation,” it cannot be a light matter, or an evil of small magnitude, to form our scheme of salvation from any other writings.

Christians, no doubt, who believe the declarations of God’s word, will value in their place those authors, who state its truths most clearly, or vindicate them most ably. But let Christians themselves be on their guard here ; and on their guard especially with respect to their most favourite authors. All that is true and that is useful in their writings—is in the word of God : and it is *there* unmixed with any error. And one of the surest evidences of our having profited by their writings will be—our returning from them to our Bibles, with an increased relish, and with increased insight into the depths of divine wisdom that are there, and with an increased jealousy to try whatever we meet elsewhere by that unerring standard.

But when professors adopt a human system from human writings—however excellent,—it is no wonder if, when they read their Bibles at all, they read them rather to pick out passages that appear coincident with the sentiments of their earthly teachers, and to wrest others into a coincidence with them,—than to have their minds subjected to the truths of God. How far the body of the Methodists need an admonition upon this subject, or only “some weak individuals among them,” I shall not stop to enquire. If only the latter, I pray God to make those weak individuals profit by the admonition which I have given them.

You observe, sir, that “*you* cannot complain of any such blind partiality” in the Methodists to the names of Wesley and Fletcher: and testify that *you* never “saw the *slightest* reason—to think that any human writings were treated as *paramount to the Scriptures.*” I am glad that I have no occasion nor inducement to combat a testimony—so forcible. Let it remain, with its full weight, in the public estimation of their religious character. But it is of importance to call their attention, and that of other professing Christians, to an indication—which you may possibly have overlooked, in forming your own judgment; and which, *if* it exist, affords much more than a *slight* reason—to be certain that my admonition on this subject was needful.

Did you ever happen to observe, sir, that the Methodists universally, as a body, adopt *all* the doctrinal opinions of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher? Did you, for instance, ever happen to meet a Methodist—(perhaps you have met some such solitary individual—but would not such a one be a *rara avis* in their Society?)—who dissented from those writers, on the subject of a *multiplicity of moral laws*, proceeding from God, and differing in degrees of strictness?—or on the subject of a supposed *instantaneous transition*, from a state of conflict against the flesh, to a state in which that corrupt principle ceases to exist, and the man becomes what they call a *perfect* Christian? Do not these and similar tenets *universally* characterize the Methodist society?—Well;—if those tenets be Scriptural, the circumstance of their general adoption by the Methodists certainly does not prove—that they treat the human writings of their leaders as paramount to the Scriptures. But as certainly it does prove this, *if* those tenets—so strenuously supported in the writings of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher—be contrary to the word of God. And that they are so—that they are contrary to every essential principle of divine truth in the Scriptures,—I am bold to affirm, and am glad to see that you, sir, in your letter, have not attempted to deny. Let the Methodists, therefore, look to it whence they have got those opinions: and I admonish the Christians among them—not to be deterred by the weight of the names of men, who have supported those antichristian errors, from examining them by the light of the sacred word.

You add—that *you* never saw the *slightest* reason to think—“that they neglect to put the Scriptures into the hands of their converts.” This is a question of fact, to which their own consciences will bear the most conclusive testimony. It is with reluctance I say any thing more upon the subject;—but your vindication of them here obliges me.—It is so forcible, that the natural tendency of it is so to blunt the edge of my—call it what you please—charge or admonition,—as to persuade the Methodists that the Scriptures have not been neglected in their Society; and thus to prevent any reformation of the evil. Indeed—indeed, sir,—what the public think about the Methodists, I care but little; and let the Methodists have done with caring about it. But let them listen to the voice of truth. The Scriptures have been awfully neglected among them; and the unscriptural opinions, so prevalent in their body, are one of the lamentable evidences and effects of this neglect. That they should be neglected by those who make no *serious* profession of Christianity—who profess it only as the *hereditary* religion of their ancestors,—is not wonderful. But,

indeed, it is a wonderful inconsistency, when any make such a profession as all the Methodists do, and yet neglect the Scriptures.

You say they do not neglect to put them into the hands of their converts. Suppose they do not altogether. But which do they put first into their hands—the Bible—or the writings of their human leaders? Of which do they urge the study most?—Mr. Wesley himself, in the questions that he prescribes to be asked those who are proposed as helpers—(Minutes, as quoted in my Expostulatory Address, p. 10.)—never mentions the *Bible*,—though each is to be asked—“Have you read the *plain account*?—the *appeals*? Do you know the *rules of the society*?—Of the *bands*? Have you read the *minutes of the conference*?” &c.—And let it not be said that he took for granted that those persons had read their Bibles. Would to God that none were acting in the capacity of helpers in the society now, and in various other capacities of most important trust, who have never read their Bibles!

I do not reckon the man to have read his Bible, who has merely read some pet passages of it, that he thinks favour a system which he has swallowed in the lump; nor do I reckon any man to have read his Bible with much profit, who does not habitually search it as the great treasury of all that he needs—for instruction, admonition, and consolation: who does not at least *seek* to regard it habitually as the one standard of his practice and his faith, and the one test by which he will prove every thing. I know the Methodists in general neither use the Scriptures thus, nor are exhorted by their leaders to use them thus:—but, as far as they study them at all, seem rather to study them for the purpose of finding confirmations of their pre-determined system, and sometimes for the purpose of casting a kind of lot—by the help of the first passage, perhaps, that may happen to open to their view,—than in the way of a continued, diligent examination of them, for discovering the whole revealed counsel of God.—Nay, sir, I could name to you a part of the country,—and I fear there are many others,—where—till the exertions lately employed by other bodies for disseminating the Scriptures,—there were several Methodist families destitute of a Bible in their houses, though they possessed various pieces of Wesley and of Fletcher. Now a CHRISTIAN man must be indeed as poor as Lazarus, who would be without that inestimable volume—in this country.

But is there not, sir, an indication of the evil, which I lament,—obvious to every observer,—in the circumstance that—numerous as their “meetings of piety” are—the reading of the Scriptures constituting not any part of one of them?* I know that the *public* reading of them never can supersede the *private* study of them. But, indeed, when they are *never* read in public, among a body whose members meet so often for religious exercises,—it is no wonder that the people are led to neglect them in private. Let the Methodists correct this evil; and then, say what they will, and think what they will of me—I shall rejoice.

* Since this was written, I have heard—and heard with lively satisfaction—that in one place in the north of Ireland, a meeting has lately been formed among the Methodists, at which a chapter of the Bible *is* read. I mention this instance with much pleasure; and trust that it will soon be followed by many others.

And indeed—if I could have engaged you, sir, or any one—at whom they would look with a more favourable eye, than I am regarded with—to give them this admonition, I would gladly have resigned the task into hands more likely to accomplish the object; so convinced am I of its magnitude. But let them be assured that while the same neglect of the Scriptures continues in their Society,—however their numbers may increase, and however respectable the character or talents of those who may stand forward to *vindicate* them,—they cannot truly prosper, with that prosperity which—to a Christian body—is alone desirable. You may tell them, that “they will not materially err, *if they follow the faith of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher.*” But our Lord is a “*jealous God,*”—jealous of his own glory: and it is one of his revealed characters, for which his people thank him. He has said—“them that honour me, I will honour.” And in vain do we think to honour him, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

I know how prevalent the notion is, even among nominal PROTESTANTS, that the text of the Bible is so obscure and so uncertain, that we had better not meddle too much with it; but may rather more safely take it—interpreted for us—by men who (we think) understand it well. I will not call the notion rank POKERY, though it be the very essence of Pokery; but it is rank INFIDELITY. The Christian, who says from his heart—“*thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths,*”—will not undervalue any aids, placed within his reach, for a right understanding of that word; but on the contrary, will prize them the more, the higher *it* rises in his estimation. But it is as *aids* he will use them; and will not suffer them to usurp the place of that, to which they profess to minister.

I come now, sir, to your eulogium on the character and conduct of Mr. WESLEY:—and indeed I approach this part of the subject with considerable timidity, and shall say as little upon it as possible. My apprehensiveness arises—by no means from a fear of being unable to say enough, to convince every unprejudiced reader how well founded the observations in my Address were, which gave occasion to this part of your reply;—but from a fear of being led to say too much,—of being allured by the facility, with which documents might be brought forward to establish those observations, into a discussion unprofitable to all, and irritating to many.

Do—consider, sir, whether your letter affords not an instance of the evil, which I took notice of in the Methodist Society;—such a jealousy of idolatrous attachment to Mr. Wesley, as will not bear a hint derogatory to his honour. Excuse me for saying that—long as it is since you have ceased to be a member of his Society—you seem to have retained that general character of its members. Mr. Wesley seems to be your own idol. For were his character as superlatively excellent as you describe, it is making him an *idol* to think that, on that account, any of his errors—especially such as affect a society so numerous as he has formed—are so consecrated that they ought not to be noticed. I think I noticed them with as a tender hand, as it was possible to mark them with. Of his character in the sight of God, I pretended not to decide: and the only mention I made of his laboriousness, and his manners, and his talents was a respectful one.

—Yet, as I conjectured, you were so startled that you thought a long, and, I must say—an extravagant panegyric needful, to counterbalance the caution with which I expressed myself.

I am sensible that very amiable feelings, of friendship and grateful affection, prompted you to the warmth, with which this part of your letter is penned;—but I regret that they betrayed you (as I think) into a forgetfulness of—what it is always well to remember—what poor creatures the best of us are in ourselves: and of that important rule of Scripture, “to judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come—who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” 1 Cor. iv. 5.

I did indeed say that Mr. Wesley claimed and exercised an uncontrolled power over his societies; and that none could be members of them but those who paid an absolute submission to his authority. And, in saying this, I stated a notorious fact—a fact acknowledged and vindicated by Mr. Wesley himself;—a fact, my assertion of which needed no personal knowledge of him to authenticate;—and a fact which cannot be overturned by your declaration—that *you* “never could discover anything of this kind.” You have only, sir, to read his minutes (ut supra) from the 17th to the 20th page inclusive, to discover that the power, which he claimed and strenuously asserted his right to, was absolute and uncontrolled indeed,—to a degree greater than that possessed by the whole bench of Bishops over the members of the established church, or by the governors of any church ancient or modern,—except that which is claimed and exercised by the pope over the Church of Rome.

That Mr. Wesley’s power originated very differently, and was exercised for very different objects, I admit; and that he exercised it with the greatest suavity of manners, I am ready to believe: for had he not, it could not have been maintained. Neither will I impeach his motives for asserting this power; though I think you seem to take a very confined view of selfish motives, and express yourself with a force, which—in the case of any mere man—the Scriptures do not warrant, in declaring your absolute certainty that no “heart corrupting, selfish love of power operated, or even *existed* in him.” With the question of Mr. Wesley’s internal motives, I will have nothing to do. I am sure I did not drop a hint against them in my Address. But I repeat what I there intimated,—and I repeat it because it is a principle of no small importance,—that no man *ought* to claim such a power over the members of any Christian society, as Mr. Wesley asserted to himself; and that no Christians *ought* to submit to the claim.

You say that had I known Mr. Wesley, as you knew him, “his greatest foibles would scarcely excite a smile.” I had not said a word of his foibles; nor will I be induced to touch upon them now. I desire to keep in my view topics of much higher import. But this I say, that if he were my father or my brother, his opposition to the principles of divine truth would excite much more than a smile; and that—not to go beyond those Minutes so often quoted—he at the close of them opposes all the fundamental principles of the Gospel; and was followed by Mr. Fletcher in a more laboured and systematic

opposition to them. Of such men I can only say—however dissatisfied their admirers may be—that I hope they were brought to repentance,—that is—to another mind,—before they died. And it is in that Gospel of the free, sovereign, and effectual grace of God, which they opposed, that I see the only ground of such a hope.

It is an awful thing to set up the *characters of men*, as of more importance than the *truths of God*; as we do, when we think that the latter ought not to be vindicated, lest the former should be injured. A man may be very amiable, and yet may be no Christian: and even if he be a Christian, his errors or his faults are not to be spared as sacred, on account of his personal amiableness. Against all such ideas our Lord's expostulation is pointed—"How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

Indeed, sir, the Gospel discovers something too great, to be sacrificed to the glory of men—of worms; even "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In this view, what is Mr. Wesley to me, or St. Cyprian, or St. Austin, or any other man? If they saw that glory and knew Christ, I trust through grace so do I; and so does many an old woman, and many a young stripling. So far, I will hail them as brethren. But do they say anything against that glory? I know them not:—"get thee behind me, Satan." And so I trust shall I be treated by any Christian, who shall find that—through the evil of the flesh—I drop a word against that glory; in which I include the glory of the whole work of Christ, in giving himself for his people, and calling them, and leading them, and keeping them to the end, till he bring them to behold his glory in the celestial mansions. Here, sir, is an object worth striving about: and the weakest believer, when he is in a right spirit, will be ready to strive for it against the whole world.

And here, also, is the only true touchstone of human character. I have indeed heard the Gospel spoken of, as a test of moral character, in a way and sense—in which none, who know the Gospel, would assent to the proposition. I have heard many a laboured discourse to prove, that the evidences of revelation were so nicely adapted,—(neither so strong as to extort the assent of the ill disposed, nor so weak as to leave the well-disposed dissatisfied)—that it thus tried men's sincerity of heart and good dispositions:—and that this, along with a collection of excellent rules to the well-disposed sinners, and a certain quantity of aid to help them in observing these rules,—was the great end of Christianity. And no doubt the persons, who put forward such a system, must look at themselves with great complacency, when they consider what sincerity of heart, and good dispositions they have shewn, in not being Deists like others:—while all the while they are as far from possessing the Christianity, which the Bible describes, or believing the Gospel which it reveals, as any Deist upon earth.

But in another sense, nothing can be more true, than that this Gospel is a test of moral character: and it is equally true that—applying this test to the moral character of all men by nature—they appear haters of God and godliness. Trying men by any other test,

they may seem a race of very well-disposed beings,—however frail. All men (even the most vicious) acknowledge the necessity of good morals; and almost all men—that *general piety* is a very proper thing. But “the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour” comes; and “the thoughts of many hearts are revealed.” He is *despised* and *rejected* by men;—alike by learned and unlearned—civilized and barbarous—sober and profligate—serious and profane: by all but those who—receiving a new mind and a new spirit from above,—are drawn to him, and “made willing in the day of his power,” and given to know him as “the only true God and eternal life.”

This *contempt* and *rejection* of Him—“God manifest in the flesh”—coming to his own, and not received by them—is a heavy charge indeed against human nature; against the atheism and pride and worldliness of our carnal minds;—but is verified daily even by those, who are most indignant at it; and acknowledged to be true of their own nature by all, who are “created anew in Christ Jesus.” They have done with all glorying except in his Cross; and therefore they ever have been, and ever will be—like their divine master—despised and hated by the world.

Here then, I repeat it, is the only infallible test of any man’s character.—*What thinks he of Christ?* of that Christ whom the Scriptures declare,—the one and only Saviour of his people from their sins,—who came “to seek and to save that which was “lost,”—who “calls—not the righteous—but sinners to repentance,”—and is “exalted to give repentance and remission of sins?”—Does he believe the glad tidings? are they his joy—his glory? Blessed is he: flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto him.” He is born from above; and believing in this anointed One of God, he hath life and shall have life through his name. But does he oppose this record, and is he blind to the glory of this Saviour?—either in the open form of avowed infidelity,—or assuming (through fear, shame, or interest,) the name of Christian, but setting up an imaginary Christ of his own formation against the Christ of God, by rejecting the testimony of God in his word;—or perhaps *professing* to believe that testimony—but evidencing that he does not believe it by continuing to cleave to his idols and his sins? That man (whatever be his name or reputation in the world) I am obliged to consider as yet among the children of disobedience, and alienated from the life of God;—and to set up his character for morality or piety or wisdom, in opposition to the evidences of his unbelief, would be to sacrifice the truth of God to a lie.

The Bible tells me but of *one* Christ;—and owns as children of the light none but those who know and believe in him. It knows no *half-Saviour* for the *half-sinful*; and owns not, as believers of the Gospel, those who believe such a system. Many false Christs and false prophets also are gone out into the world; and we are warned that they “work such signs and wonders as would deceive, if it were possible, even the elect.” I desire therefore ever to be on my guard against the wonderful reputation, or wonderful (apparent) usefulness of those, who do not preach the Truth. And if, in that fidelity to the testimony of God, I offend the infidelity of men, I

hope I shall be ever willing to meet the consequences: and I *shall* be willing, so far as I am kept in memory of that blessed word—"mine eyes are upon the *faithful* in the land, that they may dwell with me." You will pardon me, sir, for this seeming digression. I think it much more important to declare the only Scriptural rule, for estimating human character, than to examine the particular character of any individual.

In the paragraph, which immediately follows your panegyric of Mr. Wesley, you greatly mistake my meaning. When I briefly took notice of the general aspect of Methodism, as contrasted "with the calm and sober, though happy and heavenly character" of the Christianity of the Gospel,—believe me I was far from intending to intimate, that the genius of true Christianity is adverse to any degree of *zeal* for God—of *boldness* in declaring his truth—or of *activity* in propagating the knowledge of it:—far from intending to intimate, that these things are not so essentially included in the spirit of the Gospel, that—in proportion as Christians imbibe that spirit—they will abound in these fruits. That zeal, activity, and boldness gave occasion to the charge you mention against the primitive Christians, as men who "turned the world upside down:" and the same causes will ever continue to offend and irritate the world.

But truly, sir, these were not the appearances to which I alluded, in the general aspect of Methodism; and whether you can enter or not into the meaning of that passage in my Address, on which your remark is founded, you may be satisfied that this was not its meaning—by reading it again in connection with the observations, by which it is immediately followed. I shall here only add, that there are two mistakes very common in the world, and—though apparently opposite to each other—yet springing from the same source—ignorance of the true Gospel:—the one is the mistake of those Laodicean professors, who indulge a cowardly indolence, or carnal indifference about the cause of Christ, and mask it perhaps under a plea of the calm and inoffensive genius of Christianity:—the other, more specious, but no less unscriptural, is the mistake of those, who often pride themselves on their exemption from the former, but mistake a rash and heady turbulence of animal fervour for Christian zeal.

You appear much displeased, sir, at the observations I have made on what the Methodists call their *experience*; and on what I conceive a most dangerous perversion of the most important Scriptural terms, which they employ to sanction it. You think that some of my "observations on this head—have too near a resemblance of the manner of Lord Shaftesbury and Dean Swift." To that I shall only say—that it is far from my ambition to imitate either the laboured pleasantry of the noble Peer, or the easy but sarcastic keenness of the reverend Dean. You think that the "epithets of *mechanical* and *periodical*—savour much more of epigrammatic wit, than of the charity that hopeth all things." To that I shall only say—without attempting (which would be no difficult task) to produce facts to prove them awfully just—that I was very *serious* when I penned these offensive epithets; and that I view the whole subject as of such vast moment,

that I would not intentionally let fall a single witty expression, to lighten its solemnity.

You bring forward the authority of two Saints—(and here, sir, I hope I shall not be charged with being witty—though I have no objection that my expression should be considered as a serious testimony against the appropriation of that epithet to the so-called Fathers of the Church, as if it could either with certainty be said to belong to all of them, or were not, in the language of Scripture, employed to denote the common character of all believers in all ages)—you bring forward, I say, the authority of two Saints, with the authority of two Bishops, and two Doctors,—to prove what I never controverted, and am not now disposed to controvert—the frequent “occurrence of sensible relief, where there has been deep distress of conscience.” In truth, sir, that is a fact, which stands in my view upon infinitely higher testimony, than all you have adduced—upon the testimony of Scripture. And even if it were not supported by this, it is in itself a fact of that nature, about which I would admit the testimony of many a Methodist,—(even though I might consider the sensible relief he had experienced as of the most spurious kind) as soon as St. Cyprian’s.

But with the indisputable facts of this nature, which my Bible records, it declares also the way in which the relief was brought to the sinner’s mind, and by what it was produced. And *here* I will not admit the opinion of any man, to invalidate the authority of Scripture: and when there is interwoven with the narration of instances—of such sensible relief and sudden feelings—an unscriptural account of those feelings and that relief,—I shall be ready enough to admit the existence of the facts, wherever I have reason to depend on the veracity of the narrator;—but I shall be as ready to deny that—(if their account of them be true)—the facts are of any value, or constitute any part of the gracious experience of a Christian;—and this, even though they be “received and respected by the whole religious world.”—How far any of the instances, which you adduce, come under this description, I will not stop to enquire: for I am anxious to divest my subject of all questions, in which nothing is concerned but the authority or character of men.

You quote my assertion that—all true religion begins and is carried on by the power of God experienced in the heart; and my observation that—*I know that this is perfectly distinct* from that natural agitation of the passions, into which it seems the object of the Methodist system to lash the minds of its members. You then add—“Sir, *if you know this matter so distinctly*, I conceive you ought to have carried that distinctness into your statement.”—Here I might urge in my vindication, that it is one thing to say I know two matters are perfectly distinct, and quite another to say—I know them *distinctly*,—so distinctly as to be able to carry that distinctness into my statement. Had I said the latter, perhaps I would have exposed myself to a heavier, though different, charge from you—to a charge of arrogance.

I might also urge that, in a pamphlet so short—and embracing such a variety of topics—as my Address, it could not reasonably be expected that I should enter fully into each; and that, in this part

of the subject,—besides asserting the distinction between the gracious feelings of a Christian and all that *natural* agitation of the passions, which is too often mistaken for them by many Christians, and awfully confounded with them in the Methodistic system,—I illustrated the nature and origin of the latter in many instances, and expressly stated the origin of the former. See Expostulatory Address, p. 6, 20, 21.

But waving all these observations, in extenuation of the fault which you reprehend,—I shall proceed to make the best amends in my power, by now stating the important distinction, as plainly as I am able. And that I may be the better understood, allow me to make some preliminary observations, connected with the subject. I have declared in my Address, that genuine *faith* is “productive of feelings the most blessed;” and to discriminate between these, as part of the gracious experience of a real Christian, and the spurious feelings—which, I think, are often mistaken for them—is my present business.

By *feelings* here—(whether genuine or spurious)—I understand—the more *perceptible* movements of the *affections*. There is often, perhaps, annexed also to the word an idea of the *suddenness* of their excitement: but it appears to me that this no farther enters into its proper import, than as the circumstance—of their being suddenly excited—tends to make the excitement of them more sensible. Attention to this signification of the word—(which might be abundantly confirmed by considering its application to the movement of the passions by *natural* objects)—ought to render many more cautious than they are, of decrying (as it were) all feelings in religion.

In fact—that any religion, in which the affections are not concerned, is not the religion of the Gospel,—is obvious from almost every page of Scripture:—nor is it possible, in the nature of things, that the faith of the Gospel can exist—without the affections being excited; and—(in one sense)—the very same affections, which are excited in natural men by natural objects.—Are *their* minds influenced to love, hatred, joy, grief, fear, hope, desire, &c.—according to the nature of the visible and temporal things with which they are conversant? So must the mind of the *believer* be influenced,—according to the nature of the invisible and eternal things, which are revealed in the word of God. These things are of such infinite importance and deep interest, that they only need to be known—in order to engage all the powers of the mind, and to give the same affections—which before were engrossed by vanity and idols—a direction altogether new. And the more clearly the believer discerns the things of God in their *true nature*,—and the more firmly he is persuaded of them in their *certain reality*,—the more strongly must his affections be moved, and his will be regulated by them.

In short, in no state of man—either in a state of nature or of grace—can he be divested of his will,—and those motions of the will—which are called the affections, and in their more sensible exercise—the *feelings* of his mind. Nor can we, in any state of man, dissolve the necessary connection between those determinations of his will, and his views of the objects—to or from which it is inclined. In this respect there is no difference between a lunatic in Bedlam,—

whose anxieties and joys and sorrows are excited by his views of the objects that are presented to his mind,—and the most rational man in the world, whose hopes and fears, desires and aversions, delights and pains are equally excited by his more sober views of things.

Nor, in the same respect, is there any difference between the greatest worldling and the most gracious believer. To talk of a real *belief* of what is declared in the Gospel—as inoperative and a mere *speculation*,—is as contrary to sound philosophy, as it is to every page of Scripture. We may indeed believe a speculative truth—such as a mathematical theorem,—and rest in the mere speculation of it, without having one *affection* excited. But why? Because we view it as neither good nor evil, and therefore uninteresting to us. But we cannot really believe what is unspeakably interesting to our happiness, and believe it as such,—without being interested by it, in proportion to the clearness of our perception and the strength of our persuasion of its nature.

Such—unspeakably such—is what the glorious Gospel of God declares. And therefore those professors of the Gospel, however nominally orthodox, who rest in talk and speculation about its doctrines,—while they produce no effects upon their hearts or in their lives,—do but deceive themselves; and shew that they do not really believe the Gospel which they profess. They may give a verbal assent to its truths, or to something very like them; but that is not really to believe—or to be persuaded of their truth. They may even have an *opinion*—that it is either very possible or very probable that they are true; and may succeed in covering from their own view the real dubiousness of their mind, by not adverting to what they do not like to observe. And such an opinion may produce very little effect; and will certainly produce none decisively characteristic of a Christian. But such an opinion is not Christian faith. The truths of the Gospel are not proposed as matters of high *probability*; but are authoritatively declared—as the certain word of that God, who cannot lie. And the more these truths are examined, the more will they be found adapted—powerfully to excite, and duly to regulate—every motion of the will—every feeling of the heart.

Most justly therefore do the Scriptures, in describing the natural state of sinners, connect the *blindness* of their minds with the corruption of their wills and carnality of their affections. Are they described as “alienated from the life of God?” It is—“through the ignorance that is in them—because of the blindness of their hearts.” Under “the power of darkness,” they are lovers of their own selves, lovers of the world, haters and despisers of the true God:—they are all gone astray—they have turned every one to his own way—they have set up idols in their hearts; and after them their affections go, and to them their lives are given.

And as justly do the same Scriptures connect *the knowledge of the truth*—the glorious truth of Him who has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel,—with the conversion of the heart from idols, to serve the living and the true God with a willing service.—“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”—“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”—

“ Chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth,”—“ *faith* worketh by love:”—and wherever there is the *love* of any object, there will be *delight* in the enjoyment of it,—there will be *desire* after it,—there will be *fear* of whatever threatens its loss,—there will be *hatred* of whatever is contrary to its nature.

Now, sir, I may appear to some to have digressed unwarrantably from my subject:—but, in fact, all that I have written in the two last pages has been designed—to make way for the repetition of that observation in my Address, that—the real *faith* of Christ is “ *productive of feelings the most blessed.*” Those feelings alone, which spring from that source, do I acknowledge to be gracious,—in contradistinction to all others—whether sensual or religious.—You know, sir, as well as I, that there have been the strongest *religious feelings* in the wildest enthusiasts, and others—who have been most remote from having any thing like Christian faith. And shall the strength of their feelings, or the circumstance of their being excited by certain views that they had of *spiritual* and *eternal* things, make me afraid to say that their religion was vain, and their feelings spurious?

It is a very narrow view of the carnal mind which supposes it nowhere to be found—but in the garb of profaneness, or the eager pursuit after worldly objects. It appears in some in a form—ever so *serious* and *contemplative* and *abstracted* from the things of sense:—and in a *religious* form also—according to a religion suited to its ignorance of the true God, and aversion to him. And just as the carnal sensualist will have his *feelings* wrought on by the objects which engage his mind,—so may the *carnal religionist*—(excuse the combination of these terms)—by the objects which occupy him. But *the exciting causes* of the strongest feelings in both are alike delusive; and the things which move their affections are but vanity:—and the carnal mind reigns in them both equally, though in different forms, because they are both alike under the power of unbelief, and alienated from the life of the only true God through the ignorance that is in them.

Now let it be remembered—that all the matter, which true *faith* believes, is what God reveals in his word. The Scriptures have been given “ to make us *wise unto salvation* ;” and are so sufficient for the purpose for which they are designed, that the idea of any *supplementary revelation* being needful to any individual among us, can originate in nothing but ignorance of Scripture. We, each of us indeed, need “ the spirit of wisdom and revelation,” to “ enlighten the eyes of our understandings,” that we may see—in their truth and glory and certainty—“ the things that are freely given of God” to his believing people:—but these are the things which his *word* declares, and no other things. In other words—we need the Spirit of God, to give us to *believe* what his word reveals;—because that is so opposite to all the natural errors and corruptions of our carnal minds: but it is, at best, but *enthusiasm* to expect—that the Spirit of God should now be given, to reveal to sinners any thing, that his word does not contain.

When, therefore, the religious feelings of any spring from a supposition—that any thing is revealed to them, which the Scriptures do not declare,—as that *they* are in a state of acceptance with God;—or any thing contrary to what the Scriptures do declare,—as that they are delivered from the inbeing of every principle of evil, &c.—I care not how strong their transports of joy are;—I care not how strong their persuasion of the reality of the revelation is:—the thing that they believe *may be* a lie, and in the latter case certainly *is*;—and all the feelings that spring from their believing it are essentially different from the feelings that are truly gracious,—are at least delusively precarious in their tendency, and often ruinous in their effects.

I know that some of the men, who boast of such feelings, will think that I preclude the possibility of all joy and peace,—because I confine the exercise of genuine *faith* to the things already revealed in the Bible. But it is to be feared they think so, because—the veil being yet upon their minds—they have never seen the glorious nature of what the Bible reveals. With every declaration of the wrath of God revealed against sin, that is calculated to awaken the most insensible conscience which believes those declarations,—it reveals every thing needful to give the most oppressed conscience “peace and joy in believing” the Gospel—the glad tidings that proclaim a SAVIOUR—all sufficient for the chief of sinners—provided for such—and faithful to save unto the uttermost all who *believe* in him.

If we turn to the Scriptures, we shall find the *belief* of this simple—but glorious—Gospel of God our Saviour to be described—as the spring of every gracious affection and emotion,—whether of joy, or love, or desire, or grief,—in the Apostolic ages of the church. It was this that sent the Ethiopian eunuch on his way rejoicing. It was this that made the Philippian jailor—whose hand had, the hour before, been raised with rash desperation against his own life—rejoice, while he set meat before them, who had spoken to him the word of the Lord. Yea, it was this—the belief of all that they testified concerning the Lord Jesus,—that had filled the hearts of Paul and Silas with every heavenly emotion, while they lay in the inner prison—with their feet made fast in the stocks—and their backs bleeding from many stripes;—so that at midnight they were heard by their fellow prisoners, “praying and singing praises unto God.”—The greatness and glory of the Saviour, whom the Gospel reveals, and of his salvation, are such—that they who believe that Gospel will acknowledge, that they only need to have the faith of it invigorated and maintained in their minds, in order to have all the most blessed feelings brought into the most lively and constant exercise.

As to the *suddenness* of their excitement, that is a circumstance which affects not the nature of the feelings, so as to make them either better or worse. President Edwards justly observes, in his treatise on Religious Affections—(to which I would refer the reader, who desires to see my present subject handled more at large, by a man whose writings appear to be the result of a deeply thinking and well-informed mind)—that there are here two opposite errors, into

which different persons seem to fall. The one, and the more dangerous one, is of those who imagine, that all very strong movements of the affections,—that are of a religious nature, and very *sudden*—must come from the Spirit of God, and therefore must be good and genuine; and this, because they cannot account for their excitement upon other principles. But, in fact, they may come from the father of lies, who (we are told in Scripture) sometimes “transforms himself into an angel of “light:” and they may come, in a variety of ways, from ourselves,—though we are not at all conscious of the mode in which they originate. For we are too much unacquainted—not only with our connection with the invisible world of spirits—but with the internal constitution of our own minds, the influence of the imagination, the mutual actions and reactions of soul and body, &c.—to decide upon the origin and character of our feelings, from the circumstance of their being *suddenly* moved. And there is no extreme of wild or wicked fanaticism, to which the adoption of such a standard—(both unphilosophical and unscriptural)—would not expose us.

But perhaps there are others, who—observing these dangers—have fallen into an opposite error; and either altogether deary, or look with unwarrantable suspicion at every account of religious emotions that are suddenly excited. But if they acknowledge the authority of Scripture, and the influence of the Spirit of God—in giving his people to discover and believe the great truths of his word,—they cannot deny that such feelings *may* be genuine and gracious. And perhaps there are few Christians, who—in a greater or less degree—find not such at various times in their experience. How often, when their “spirit is overwhelmed” and their “hearts disquieted within them,” is the soul—“or ever they are aware—made like the chariots of Amminadib!”—by the clear discovery and lively persuasion, which the Spirit gives them of the things of Christ.

We have, therefore, a more sure standard in the word of God, by which to estimate the nature of our religious feelings, than either the circumstance of their being in general *religious*—(i. e. moved by some views that we have of spiritual and eternal things)—or the circumstance of their being *sensibly* strong, and accompanied with a perceptible *emotion*,—or the circumstance of their being *suddenly*, or not suddenly, excited. The only certain standard, by which we can judge of them—(and it is a standard, to which the Scriptural believer will, at all times, desire to adhere)—is to be found in the word of God,—that declares the truths, the *belief of which* produces every affection that is truly gracious.

And here, sir, let me observe, that—while I have obeyed the call you gave me to treat particularly of those more sensible determinations of the affections which are called *feelings*, for the purpose of distinguishing between such as are genuinely Christian and such as are spurious imitations of them,—I must ever maintain that the best of those feelings—so far as their perceptible liveliness is occasional and temporary—is of very subordinate importance, in comparison of the more *permanent* and *habitual* regulation of the affections, and determination of the will, which “the belief of the truth” must produce

in us, as far as we walk by faith. The latter—combined with a profession of that truth, and manifested in the various exercises of willing devotedness to God, and humble—active love one to another,—constitute the only scriptural evidence, to mark those whom I can recognize as Christians indeed.

Too—too often have I met with those, who were forward to boast of the times—when they had such and such sudden impressions, and fine feelings of divine joy, &c. brought into their minds,—and who appeared to keep up a considerable elation of mind, and confidence about their state, by feeding their self-complacency with such periodical recitals;—in whom at the same time no one decisive “fruit of the Spirit” could be found;—some of them the bitterest opposers of the fundamental truths of God;—others evincing by the earthliness of their minds, or the indulged malignity of their tempers, or the unbridled falsehood of their tongues, or the injuriousness of their conduct, that they never truly believed the first principles of the Gospel which they profess:—and others, who—from the defect of every temper of love to God or man—had much more reason to examine themselves whether they were indeed in the faith, than to talk of the time when they first believed.

Far am I, sir, from wishing to intimate that the observations, into which I have been led on the whole of this important subject, are *exclusively* applicable to the Methodists. I think them indeed *peculiarly* applicable to that body, and peculiarly needful to be addressed to their most serious attention. The truth of this position—it would be easy to demonstrate, by the most copious extracts from their most authentic documents. For instance, sir,—you know that there is scarcely a number of their Magazine, published by Mr. Wesley and others, that would not afford me materials for executing this task. But I willingly abstain, at present, from thus making the application of my observations: and hope I may not hereafter be forced to it. Nothing, I trust, shall force me to it, but the necessity of defending important truth; and that necessity may be created by their vindicators.

I would not wait for this, if I had no higher object—than to vindicate myself for having written the Expostulatory Address, or to turn the tide of popular opinion against the Methodists. But I can assure them with truth, that I have no wish to discredit them with the public,—much less to irritate their minds. I regret, for their own sakes, that some of them appear so much irritated by what I have already written. It is a bad sign; particularly bad, so far as I shall be found to have written the truth. But perhaps, after the present object of their resentment is in the grave, they may yet be led to give a more serious and candid consideration to his admonitions.

And here, sir, I find myself obliged to close this Letter; and to intreat your indulgence, and the indulgence of all my readers, for the slowness with which I proceed through your Remarks. Their indulgence, I am sure, would be afforded, if all the circumstances under which I write were known. I had hoped in this Letter to arrive at the end of your Remarks on the Methodistic discipline, and

in another perhaps to finish my observations on the remainder of your Letter—in which you more expressly treat of doctrines. But I find that I could not execute this plan, without exceeding the limits I have prescribed to each of my Letters; and that I must trouble you with two more, before I shall be at liberty to meet another antagonist. Meanwhile,

I remain, sir,

With the best wishes,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

P. S. The terms, in which I have expressed my sentiments of Mr. Wesley's *principles*, may appear to some Christians, who are unacquainted with them, unwarrantably severe. But let them judge, after reading the following extracts from the close of his Minutes.

“Nothing can be more false than the maxim, that a man is to *do* nothing *in order* to justification.” To confirm this assertion, he observes that—

“Whoever repents should *do works meet for repentance*. And if this is not *in order* to find favour, *what does he do them for?*”

After declaring his opinion that—“we are rewarded *for the sake of our works—secundum merita operum—and as our works deserve,*”—he goes on to state the following objection against one of his propositions:—“God does in fact justify those who, by their own confession, neither *feared God nor wrought righteousness*”—i. e. before their justification:—and then adds—“Is this an exception to the general rule? It is a doubt whether God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness? His own thinking so is no proof: for we know, how all that are *convinced of sin, UNDERVALUE THEMSELVES IN EVERY RESPECT.*”

These are some of the deliberate sentiments, which Mr. Wesley maintained, which Mr. Fletcher still more strenuously and systematically defended, and which constitute, to this day, the standard of doctrine as held in the Methodist Society. I shall not here make any farther observation on them than this,—that the more acquainted any man is with the truths of the Gospel, the more he will abhor such propositions, as contrary to its essential principles: and that whoever really believes those propositions, asserted by Mr. Wesley, does not really believe the Gospel. He may often speak an evangelical *language*, as I freely own that Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher frequently did: but he must speak it in an unevangelical sense. He may, at times, talk of being *justified by faith*—of being *saved by grace*, &c.—but he must employ these scriptural terms—*grace, faith, salvation*, &c. in a meaning altogether unscriptural.

Trin. Coll. March 14th, 1803.

LETTER III.

The heart is deceitful above all things. Jer. xviii. 9.

The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom. viii. 7.

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other. Gal. v. 17.

We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Phil. iii. 3.

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SIR,—I was well aware that my observations on the Methodist *Class-Meetings* and *Love-Feasts* would be particularly offensive, be-

cause I knew how highly they rate the importance of this part of their discipline, and how much it does contribute to maintain their entire system, and is essentially interwoven with it. I was not therefore surprised at the earnestness which you manifest to repel my observations on this subject. That *you* have so much misconceived my meaning, I can only impute to the warmth of your zeal; and that you have imposed on yourself by arguments the most fallacious and inconclusive, only to the indefensible nature of the cause which you advocate.

Yet while I am conscious that I shall here have no difficulty in replying to you, (for it is often easy for common sense to detect the false glosses, which it has required considerable ingenuity to impose) —I have notwithstanding hesitated whether I should not leave this part of your letter unanswered. I have hesitated whether the topics connected with it were not of too *subordinate* importance to call for discussion. But while the unscriptural constitution of the Methodist discipline originates indeed in the fundamental errors of their system, I yet perceive—looking at the most dangerous of those errors—that it awfully contributes to maintain and propagate them.—It is not without a deliberate conviction of this that I proceed to the subject; and I shall be as brief as possible in handling it.

Your arguments in favour of Mr. Wesley's Class-meetings may be reduced to the following heads.—1. St. James advises Christians *to confess their faults one to another*; and the Methodists only make the practice regular instead of occasional.—2. There have been similar meetings among the Puritans—the German Pietists, and the English Societies; to the latter of which Dr. Woodward bears the strongest testimony of approbation.—3. There have arisen very beneficial effects, especially among the working classes, from these meetings of the Methodists, for more than sixty years; and those effects you strongly attest from your own knowledge.—4. Such meetings are necessary to the existence of the Methodist Society, and evince the sagacity of its founder.

To each of these topics of argument I shall distinctly reply.—The first claims the precedence, as being borrowed from the words of Scripture; but it is a striking instance of the way Scripture is commonly quoted to defend the inventions of men.—An apostle says —“*confess your faults one to another*”—and *therefore* Christians are to meet from time to time, to be examined as to the state of their souls, and to declare before each other what progress they have made in the ways of God! Is it necessary, sir, to do more than lay the argument—and the thing which it is adduced to prove—beside each other, in order to expose its fallacy? I might ask—whether in the apostolic precept, which you quote, there is any intimation that the confession of our faults is to be made in a *Meeting* of several Christians assembled together; though I know that there are cases in which such a confession before many may be called for—(according to the primitive discipline of the Christian church)—because the faults to be confessed have occasioned scandal to many.—I might ask—whether at the Methodist Class meetings the communications, which the members severally make about themselves, be commonly

in the way of confessing their *faults*; though I know that they declare their religious feelings of sorrow or of joy—and their religious state of supposed declension or progressiveness in grace.

But it is of more consequence to state plainly—what the *real* import is of that much neglected precept of St. James.—It obviously is this—acknowledge to each other with candour and self-humiliation your *faults*—*wherein soever you have transgressed one against the other*; and pray one for another that your wounds thus opened may be healed*—the wounds which you have sustained by indulging, in word or deed, a spirit contrary to mutual tenderness and love;—that they may be healed, instead of franking within and spreading like a cancer.

Here, sir, is a scriptural injunction, which harmonizes with the whole tenor of the Gospel;—and which is of too great importance to be sacrificed to the misapplication you have made of it. Here is a scriptural injunction, which needs indeed to be inculcated on Christians of the present day; and which, when attended to, will send one and another of them—not to a Methodist Class meeting, to tell how they are walking with God, whether under the light of his countenance or the hidings of his face,—but to the chamber of an injured Christian brother, to take shame to themselves for having walked so contrary to the rule of his word towards men.—Ah! sir, if you but knew, even as well as I do, how every principle of truth, of kindness, and of common honesty is daily violated under the mask of a high, but false, religious profession; and how this profession is kept up and strengthened by ignorance and disbelief of the word of God;—surely you would rather help to vindicate the truths of that word, than wrest it by misinterpretation into the service of a party. We are apt to look with wonder and with pity at the infatuation of the poor Papists, who are taught to see in this abused precept of the Apostle their *auricular Confession* of sins to a priest. I think it just as strange that you should discover in it an open confession of them to a Class leader. In both instances I see the word of God made of none effect by the traditions of men—and a human invention obtruded in place of a divine command.

Leaving the ground of Scripture, you pass in the second place to the example of other Christians, who, you say, have adopted the same practice, with no other difference—but that, what was occasional with them, is constant in the Methodist Society.—*If* it were so, it

* If this passage in St. James be considered—(as it is by some, and with much appearance of probability)—as a continuation of the Apostolic direction in the preceding verse, the word "*healed*" must be interpreted literally of the removal of bodily maladies,—with which they were visited, as a chastisement from the Lord, on account of their sins. In this case, it is obvious that the text can have nothing to do with such a confession of faults, as Mr. K. supposes to be made in the Class meetings. But in either case, the word rendered "*faults*" can relate only to *those* faults by which our brethren—to whom we are directed to acknowledge them—have been affected; and the original word is used in just the same application—Matth. vi. 14, 15, & xviii. 35.—Undoubtedly in the general profession, which the believer makes of the Christian faith—there is included an acknowledgment of his own sinfulness and the evil of his nature;—but neither is there any precept in Scripture for his making known to other men the particular workings of that evil nature, where they have not been injured by them—nor in many cases would it be consistent with Christian wisdom, or Christian love to do so.

would not alter my views of the practice at all.—No prescription of age can sanction a custom that is unscriptural and evil.—But I am bold to say, that no attentive reader need go farther than your own letter for a refutation of your argument—for a proof that the practices you appeal to, as similar to the Methodist Class-meetings, were essentially different. You refer to meetings, in which *room was always left* for such communications of spiritual experiences—from those who *chose* it. Now I do not enquire at present, how far even this is expedient, except under very considerable restrictions. But I say—this is essentially different from a meeting, in which *room is not left to any* to forbear making such communications, whether he *choose* it or not.

You urge that “no one is subject to any inquiry which could imply *embarrassment*.” You know, sir, that the inquiry commonly runs thus—always, I believe, to this effect: “What is the state of your soul?” Perhaps it never would embarrass *you* to answer that inquiry;—but the mischief is—that they, who are most ready to answer it, either generally or in detail, are the least acquainted with the state of their souls, and therefore the most unfit to answer it. You acknowledge indeed elsewhere, that “persons of *extreme sensibility* may possibly be embarrassed” by the custom. But believe me, I consider that, as the smallest of the evils resulting from it. Nor had I that in view at all, when I observed that many, who attend these meetings, and are kept honest and simple in heart, are often made *miserable* by them. I spoke of a misery arising—not from embarrassment in declaring their experience before others—but from an honest consciousness that *they* are not as they hear others say they are,—and have not that impassioned experience, which is talked of all around them.

When you say that Dr. Woodward’s testimony in favour of the English Societies, is *strictly applicable to the present case*, you really seem to have persuaded yourself into a belief that the meetings of those Societies were any thing like the Methodist Class-meetings:—and yet no one who has ever been present at the latter, and who reads the quotation from Dr. Woodward adduced by yourself, can seriously suppose it to be applicable at all;—unless he suppose that, because religious meetings—conducted in one way—are very profitable, it therefore follows that religious meetings conducted in a way altogether different—must be so too. Christians acquainted with each other’s cases—“partly” as the Doctor says, “by their familiar conversations, and partly from their own experience”—occasionally admonish and speak one to another in their meetings, and find it profitable. Can you really suppose, sir, that this proves the expediency of meetings, in which all are stately required to speak about *themselves* and their own experience?

Your third argument is borrowed from the beneficial effects, which you attribute to the Class-meetings of the Methodists; and from the continuance and prosperity of their society—for more than 60 years. No very long period, sir:—especially if we consider that, for more than 50 years of that period, the founder of the Society lived to superintend it, with an influence and authority which effectually kept

together all the parts of his system ;—and that in the short interval since his death, important changes—(some of them not of the most desirable nature)—have been introduced into it in England, and still greater changes attempted. But waving this—to make your argument of any force, it would be necessary to shew—that the beneficial effects, which you so strongly assert, have arisen from *that part* of the Methodistic discipline, which I reprobate—the weekly communications that all the members make of the state of their souls ;—and have not rather been produced by other circumstances in their constitution, in spite of the pernicious tendency of this practice. If Methodism had done all, that you feel yourself bound to attest, it would afford no reason why I should not admonish them of what is wrong : and before I am charged with unwarrantable severity of animadversion, the particular principles and customs on which I animadvert ought to be vindicated from scripture, or shewn to be the real cause of acknowledged good.

But when, among the effects of Methodism, you reckon “the greatest number of the *most truly religious* people that you have met with,” and as great a quantity of “*true Piety* towards God” as any religious institution in modern times has produced,—I must pause, and inquire what is your standard of *true* religion and of *true* piety. Mine is the Bible : and to that I have appealed. I acknowledge no religion or piety as *true*, but that, which has the *true* God for its object ; and it is in his word that he has made known his name and character. Upon this subject I shall have occasion to write more at large in my fourth letter. That the Methodistic discipline has excited—and is well calculated to excite—much of *some kind* of religious zeal and pious fervour, I am certain :—so have many religious institutions, which were not even nominally Christian. And I know it is a popular notion that—provided there is much religion and piety—it matters little of what kind they are. If so, the *devotees* of all sects are equally right. But if not, it remains to be examined of *what kind*—whether true or false—the piety and religion are, which you so much admire in the Methodists.

But there is another class of effects, which you take notice of, as arising from the spread of Methodism, that I most readily acknowledge :—(though I would not join with you in the very strong assertion, that nothing superior of the kind has yet appeared *in any portion of human Society, or in any stage of human civilization* ;—for I remember what is declared to have appeared in the Primitive Church—(Acts ii. 42—47, & iv. 32, 35.)—I mean the practical effects in the production of “*Characters of the most substantial worth,*” and “*respectable Members of Society.*” In a *civil* view, sobriety and decency—moral integrity and conscientiousness—are of no inconsiderable importance ; and if it were as a *Politician* that I considered the Methodist Society, I might rest satisfied with seeing that it has been productive of such effects. But I am bold to say, that these effects—while they will necessarily take place wherever real Christianity prevails—may be produced without it : and that what is unscriptural and antichristian in the Methodistic discipline and principles, rather counteracts than promotes them.

In this part of your letter, you keep out of view all those *circumstances* in their Class-meetings, upon which I had particularly animadverted, and consider them in the light of weekly interviews for Christian fellowship—against which I should be so far from dropping a word, that I have a much higher view of their importance than you seem to take. That Christians should assemble themselves together for the purpose of mutual edification, I consider not merely as a matter of peculiar expediency to the *lower* classes of society,—but of divine obligation upon all. For such meetings, scripturally conducted, none of the *refinements* of social life in the higher classes can be a succedaneum; nor are they ever represented in scripture as designed to be a substitute for the *rude revelry* of social intercourse in the lower ranks. They are among the appointed ordinances of the great Head of the Church, for *all* its Members, whereby their fellowship one with another in him their common Lord is avowed and maintained—their brotherly affection invigorated—and all the graces of the Spirit exercised and strengthened under his blessing. But what I deny is that the Methodist Class-meetings are *scripturally conducted*: and however they may have contributed with the rest of Mr. Wesley's institutions to benefit the state, I assert that—instead of tending (as you say) to keep the consciences of men “sensible and tender”—they eminently tend either to harden their consciences in a false peace, or to mislead and perplex them.

But from the utility of these meetings, you go on in the fourth place to assert their necessity to the existence of the Methodist Society. “Such a society,” you say, “could only exist by being *interesting*; and to be so it must have an object: they must meet to do *something* suitable to their design, or the whole would sink into inanity.” I am curious to know how the Methodists will relish this defence of their Class-meetings. Yet I really believe, sir, that in this you have told the true cause, which makes their leaders so attached to this part of Mr. Wesley's institution; and you have only told more plainly what I intimated (as I thought—less offensively) in my Expostulatory Address,—where I acknowledged that these meetings are *peculiarly adapted to keep them together as a body*.

But let us look this argument a little in the face. “Such a Society could only exist by being *interesting*.” Do you not here, sir, tacitly give up their body as a *Christian Society*, and consider it as indebted for its existence to the natural operation of physical means—just as a literary or political *club*?—A Christian Society, formed on Christian principles, requires for its existence the use of none but the Christian means—prescribed in the word of God; and these will *interest* its members—so long as they walk in the spirit of Christ. But the Methodist Society requires for its existence something more—to make it sufficiently *interesting* to its Members; and this additional *something* of human invention—(because it must be something suitable to their design—that is—of a *religious* aspect, and therefore must not be reading fairy tales or any thing else that interests the members of societies not professedly religious)—*this religious something* has been discovered by the *sagacity* of their founder in the practice of telling each other weekly *what the state of their souls is*.

Pardon me, sir, for saying plainly that I am persuaded they would be often much more innocently employed in reading fairy tales,—though that would not have answered the “pious purpose” of forming a religious institution.—You speak of “the guidance of some one discreet director” at those meetings. Alas! Sir,—you seem to have written without any recollection of the Methodist Society, or the mode of its proceedings. According to that mode it is *impossible* in the nature of things that their Class-leaders should correspond with the description of character you suppose them possessed of.

What is the first thing at which the preachers aim, in any place to which they come?—The formation of a class. After sermon, when the congregation is about to be dismissed, those are exhorted to wait who have “a desire to save their souls.”—The call is a very general one—perhaps co-extensive with those who acknowledge that they have souls to be saved. Some wait from curiosity—some from serious emotions—some from a bashfulness which makes them loth to incur the appearance of being so profane—as to have *no desire to save their souls*. The preacher proceeds to expatiate on the advantages of the Methodistic discipline—especially their Class-meetings: he tells them perhaps his own experience, and ascribes the happiness of his state to the benefit derived from Mr. Wesley’s Class-meetings: he tells them of thousands of others who have derived equal benefit with himself; and scruples not to assure them that, if they expect to be *altogether Christians*, they must overcome their reluctance to the institution of Class-meetings. That reluctance he confidently traces to carnal motives of worldly shame—or fear—or love of sin. He reads to them the rules of the Society, and appeals to them whether they are not very good rules. If he can thus persuade—I will say if he can thus trepan any to give in their names as Members, he rejoices over *them* as the real subjects of divine grace, who only need to be faithful to what they have received by a steady adherence to Methodism:—he returns God thanks in their behalf, and prays for the awakening and conversion of others,—that is—for their joining the Society. Thus a class is formed; and one of them is appointed Class-leader, to be the spiritual director of the rest under the preacher; and he is armed for the office with some controversial pieces of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Fletcher.

I knew such an one appointed in a village with which I was well acquainted: and what were the qualifications that recommended him?

He was more talkative—and more self-confident—and in a little more easy circumstances than the rest who gave in their names. As to Scriptural Christianity, I have reason to believe that he was more ignorant of its first principles than many:—but—he had picked up some vague idea of Methodistic religion, as consisting of instantaneous impulses and impressions, and new revelations. I remember my attempting to engage his ear, about that period, to some of the important truths of the Bible: and I remember well how he cut me short. “Ah! sir,”—said the poor man—“I only know that it is never right with us till *something* comes—like—like—like a clap of thunder.”

Say not, sir, that I argue upon a solitary instance. In the nature of things, the course adopted for the formation of Class-meetings—and the selection of Class-leaders,—*must* render such instances, in various shades of degree, awfully common. My own opportunities of observing the characters of the Class-leaders have been—perhaps not so numerous as yours—but sufficiently numerous to warrant the conclusion, that they are commonly selected for qualifications which make them likely to promote—instead of counteracting—the worst evils in those meetings;—for a bigotted attachment to the Methodistic System—a facility and forwardness to argue in its defence—a heat of imagination and precipitancy of judgment, uncorrected by any Scriptural views of divine truth—either doctrinal or preceptive.

Indeed a Scriptural believer in the situation of a Class-leader—would have to combat so many errors, and to set his face against so many evils in their meetings (if he faithfully discharged his duty)—that I cannot well conceive—as long as the Society is what it is—how he could be allowed to continue long in the post:—and the more informed his judgment became from the word of God, the more clearly he would discover that no efforts of his could remedy the mischiefs of a custom intrinsically pernicious—the custom of calling on the members indiscriminately, and weekly, to declare before each other their experience and the state of their souls;—a custom that originates in ignorance at once of the varied deceitfulness and corruptions of the human heart, and of the nature and character of the work of Grace—a custom that must kindle and spread the flame of false and fanatical religion—*whoever* were the directors of their meetings;—while, at the same time, I consider the character of their actual directors to be so opposite to that discretion which you attribute to them—(I mean by discretion here—*Scriptural wisdom*)—as to constitute in itself a distinct and additional evil of no small magnitude.

To you, sir, who appear to look upon the nature and ground of religious feelings as of so little importance—provided they be fervid and generally *religious*,—the Methodist Class-leaders may appear sufficiently qualified to exercise that kind of pastoral office which they are called to:—for certainly they are well qualified to work on the feelings of the people, and train them up to zealous Methodism,—much better qualified for this than so many apostles would be. But I do call upon any Christians among the Methodists, who may read these pages, and who acknowledge the essential importance of *Scriptural* religion, to consider with seriousness and to consider with candour—(though I know that I am attacking one of their strongest holds of prejudice)—the qualifications which ought to be possessed by those who undertake the office of spiritual guides to others; and the awful consequences which must result from the absence of those qualifications in the leaders of their Class-meetings; to consider what false views of Scripture—what deadly errors must thus be weekly disseminated, and how the minds of the poor bewildered people must be “corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus.”

You charge me, sir, with having made suppositions, in what I wrote upon the Methodist Class-meetings, which I could not be justified in making without "the miraculous discernment of spirits."—Let any person attentively read the suppositions I have made in my Address; and—unless he be grossly ignorant of Scripture and of the human heart—I am not afraid that he will consider that charge as justly lying against me. To warrant those suppositions, nothing more is requisite than some acquaintance with the views of the human heart—its deceitfulness and corruptions—which are given in the word of that God, who "knows what is in man." Nay, sir, to imagine that these suppositions *must* not, in numerous instances, be realized—would be to assert the continual interposition of that kind of miracle, which we have no ground for expecting—in order to prevent the necessary tendency of the practice which I reprobate.

I have supposed that in the Class-meetings there are "those who have no *real* experience in religion at all;" and have asserted that they are "brought forward to declare their experience." The latter you do not attempt to deny; though you strive to cover it. The former—no Christian Methodist will deny. Every Christian knows that there is no *real* experience in religion, till the sinner—naturally under the power of darkness and unbelief,—dead in sins, and alienated from God,—is enlightened—quickened and converted to God by his spirit of power, giving him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This change the Methodists do not even pretend that all their members have received—immediately on their introduction to a class. Nay, there are very few instances in which this change is supposed to have taken place, till some time *after* they have become Members of the Society.

I repeat it then—no longer in the form of a supposition (though even that was so offensive to you)—but now as an assertion of an indisputable fact,—that not only some of them, but a vast majority of them, are brought forward to declare their *experience* in religion and the *state of their souls*, at a time when they have no real experience at all, and when their state is that of unconverted and unbelieving sinners—yet under the dominion of a carnal mind that is blind and proud and "deceitful above all things," and "enmity against God." And I repeat my assertion, that this practice is—but an "apparatus for drilling them either into hypocrisy or self-deceit." Nor am I apprehensive that the assertion ever can be refuted; though its warning voice may be drowned by the outcry of—*severity* of judgment—pretensions to the *miraculous discernment of spirits*—assuming the *divine prerogative* of searching the hearts, &c. And I know so well how few readers think while they read, that I am aware that the person—who raises this outcry—will appear to have the best of the argument. But no matter:—a few may hear the voice of truth, and to them it will be profitable.

I proceeded to illustrate the way, in which I think such meetings eminently calculated to drill—either into hypocrisy or self-deceit—those who enter them without any really Christian experience—(for of such throughout that passage I expressly treated);—and I illus-

trated that way by drawing a picture of the progressive steps of delusion, through which they may be supposed to pass: and concluded with the observation that "*such a course*"—a very awful one indeed in all its stages—"is the natural consequence of *such Meetings*." Now, sir, how do you meet these observations of mine? Is it by attempting to shew that such is not their natural consequence? Not at all; but—quoting different passages from the *case* that I described—you exclaim at the strong colouring of the awful picture, as if I took upon me to pronounce on the individual *instances* in which it is realized. Thus—when I describe the case of persons—brought forward at those weekly meetings to tell their experience, without having any real experience in religion—retailing the gleanings of the phraseology which they hear around them,—and, while they utter the most humiliating complaints, secretly filled with a proud satisfaction at having complained so well and spoken so humbly;—you ask me—"how can you or any mortal *assert* this concerning his fellow-mortals?" How indeed, sir, can any one assert this at the time of any particular individual? But concerning which of my fellow-mortals have I asserted it? Not one. I have indeed described a very dreadful and very natural case: and your question would be as apposite to one of THEOPHRASTUS'S characters, as to that which I have drawn.

If you think that the case which I have described, exceeds the malignity of *human nature*,—I tell you honestly that it does not exceed the malignity of mine. If you think that such cases are not the *natural consequence* of such meetings as you contend for,—allow me to say that you ought to have disproved the tendency which I attributed to them, instead of transforming the description which I drew of their natural effects into *assertions* concerning individuals, and then gravely appealing to the *candid reader*—"whether he does not think that such assertions have much more appearance of prejudice, than of dispassionate observation." Far am I, sir, in making this remark—from imputing to you—any thing like wilful misrepresentation. I know too well what writers are unintentionally led into, when they take up the defence of a weak cause against its assailant, to impute that hastily to any: and I have the pleasure of knowing so much personally of *you*, as would not allow me under any circumstances to suppose you capable of it. Most gladly would I leave this and other misrepresentations undetected—if the importance of the subject permitted me to let your pamphlet remain unanswered.

You perceive, sir, that you are mistaken when you tacitly attribute inconsistency to me, where you observe that—on *second thoughts*—I deprecate my being understood to accuse *all*, who talk of their experience at such meetings. In my *first thoughts*, where you accuse me of such severity of judgment, the severity of judgment fell upon an unscriptural practice—the perniciousness of which I illustrated by describing the course of hypocrisy or self-deceit—through which it naturally tends to lead. And in this there was nothing inconsistent with my subsequent declaration—that I did not mean to say, that *all* ran such a course, who adopted the practice;

though I do think it a miracle of grace where any escape it:—nor is there, as you supposed, any thing in this declaration that ought to have restrained my foregoing censures.

You lament, sir, that I “should have spoken of such a body of people”—as the Methodists—“so very much in the style of their grossest and most vulgar opponents, as to talk of *THEIR only exchanging*, perhaps, the sins of drunkenness and swearing for the sins of *spiritual pride, censoriousness, and hypocrisy*”—(the word *censoriousness* is by mistake printed in your letter *covetousness*—a sin which has no immediate connection with the matter in hand.)—This is a heavy charge, sir. A Christian and a Christian minister talking so of any *body* of professing Christians—would indeed speak of them in a very unwarrantable style; though perhaps not precisely in the style of “their grossest and most vulgar opponents.” If I had fallen into such an evil—so unbecoming my profession—and so unsuitable to the task which I assumed of admonishing others,—I hope I should have grace neither to attempt repelling your reprehension, nor to pass it over in silence:—I hope I would take shame to myself,—acknowledge my fault—and make the best amends in my power, by owning the justness of your castigation. But I must add, that I plead—not guilty—to your charge; and I assert with confidence, that I shall prove it to be without any shadow of foundation.

The passage, which you profess to quote from my Address, and upon which you found the charge, is taken from that paragraph—throughout which I am shewing, how the Methodist Class-meetings are calculated to drill those, who have no real experience in religion at all, either into hypocrisy or self-deceit:—and following *such persons* through the various stages of that course, which I observe is the natural consequence of such meetings, I describe one of them at length as having got that instantaneous feeling of religious joy, which they are taught by Mr. Wesley’s system to call *justification*.—I then go on:—“The *poor creature* is then rejoiced over, and rejoices over himself:—*he* is given to understand that all he needs now is to keep up those feelings, and to go on in the same way to attain what is called *sanctification*;—he is questioned weekly as to his progress in this effort, or perhaps is employed to question others:—and if *he* only continue regular in attending his class, and precise in the observance of Methodistic discipline, no doubt is entertained by himself or others of his Christianity:—while *he* has only exchanged, perhaps, the sins of drunkenness and swearing, for the sins of spiritual pride, censoriousness, and hypocrisy.” The latter words you quote detached from their connexion:—in quoting them you change the word *he* to the plural number, and represent it as spoken of the *body* of the Methodists;—and thus you support your charge against me of speaking of them in the style of their *grossest and most vulgar opponents*. It may be necessary here to repeat, that in thus plainly repelling your charge, I have not the remotest idea of charging you with any thing wilfully unfair.—It was inattention—it was precipitancy—it was over-zeal for the cause which you had espoused. But it will afford me great satisfaction, if you should be led to consider

more seriously the mischievousness of exerting ingenuity and talents, for the purpose of screening any religious body from salutary and important admonition. Some such play of genius may be comparatively admissible, where divine matters are not concerned: but indeed where they are, I think it is a very awful evil.

You say that I ought to have limited my condemnation to the *custom* of Class-meetings, and “not so broadly extended it to the persons who pursue it.”—Now let us see how far I have extended—what you call my *condemnation*—to the persons who pursue the custom.—What do I say of them?—I say that, in spite of its most injurious tendency, “I trust that *many* attend those meetings, who are kept honest and simple in heart;”—but that, “I have met *some*, and read of others, who to *my judgment* gave evidence of being in various stages of that course,”—that self-deceiving course, which I had just before described. Allow me to ask, sir, is this extending my condemnation either *broadly* or presumptuously to the persons who attend Class-meetings?—After the maturest consideration of your reproof, I do not find that I can consistently with candour introduce any additional limitation: nor do I think that what I have said of those persons violates any precept of Scripture, or trenches in the least on the divine prerogative—of “pronouncing on men’s hearts.”

That I was kept on my guard against this, while I wrote, you may perceive from the observation, which I immediately subjoined,—that “I am not fond of deciding on the state or character of individuals—*where there is any room for doubt.*”—I suppose, sir, you will scarcely say that there may not be cases, in which those—who believe the word of God—can have no room to doubt about the state of others, as a very awful one. Now, what is the only case of that kind among the Methodists, upon which I have ventured to pronounce? The state of those—“who avow that they have attained that same perfection in holiness, in consequence of which they live *without sin in thought, word, or deed;*”—who imagine that all principle of *evil* has been exterminated from within them, and that they have no longer any flesh—or carnal nature—that “*lusteth against the spirit.*” And of all such I *have* said—that I can have no doubt that “they are in the last and most awful stage”—of that self-deceiving course which I described;—(indeed I think it probable they have each gone through the preceding stages of it, before they could arrive at this deadly delusion):—and I have assigned the reasons from Scripture, upon which that certainty is founded.—Not one of these reasons do you even attempt to refute throughout your letter; nor take the least notice of their pretensions to this *sinless* state; but content yourself with declaring—that I ought not to have extended my condemnation “so broadly.”

You say that I think “*no truly experienced Christian*” would dare to attempt speaking of himself, and of his walk with God, at periodical intervals. I am sorry to observe, sir, that here again you change my expression. My expression is—that “*the most truly experienced Christian*” will not: and by the change, slight as it is, you represent me as at one time denying that any of the Methodists

have any truly Christian experience, which I have elsewhere avowed my hope that not a few of them possess.

I briefly mentioned one reason for that assertion, about the most truly experienced Christian,—namely—“that *he* is best able to say how nice and trying a matter it is, to speak before others of himself and of his walk with God.” I intimated another reason,—namely,—that it is not at all times he will “see it *expedient* to speak upon the subject.”—Are you, sir, prepared to deny either of these reasons, upon which the opinion is founded that you dissent from? Do you really think that the speaking of ourselves—of our religious state and course and experience, is a matter so safe—so easy,—that there is little or no danger connected with the periodical practice of the custom?—or no such danger, as calls for all the wisdom and the watchfulness of the most experienced Christian, when he occasionally does see it expedient to speak upon the subject?—that it is a matter in which not only *he* may at *any* time safely engage, but even the least experienced Christian,—nay, men who have no Christian experience at all?—So you appear to think, by taking up the defence of the practice of Class-meetings; for if you maintain not all this, the practice falls to the ground as indefensible. But if you really and deliberately think this—pardon me, sir, for saying that you have very little knowledge of the human heart; and for appealing from you to all the Christians in that body whose advocate you are.

You say that “*hypocrites* may certainly abuse the practice.” Alas! sir; that deception by which we purposely assume a false garb in order to impose upon *others*,—which is commonly called *hypocrisy*,—is but a small part of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and a form in which it rarely appears,—in comparison of those various deceptions by which we impose upon *ourselves*. Of these deceptions indeed we know little or nothing, till we have that light of divine truth which enables us to detect the evils that are within us; because we are till then under their power: and the longer we walk in that light, the more we shall discover of those evils, and the more jealous shall we be of ourselves. The whole practice of the Methodist Class meetings is eminently adapted to fall in with all the *self-deceiving* tendencies of our hearts; and just to give a new and a worse direction,—though a more specious one,—to our natural vanity and self-love.

But perhaps, relinquishing the safety of the practice—its safety to the individual who speaks of himself,—you are disposed to maintain its *expediency* to those who hear him. This at least cannot vindicate the utility of their *Class-meetings*, where all are in their turn speakers about themselves, as well as hearers about others. In their *love feasts*, I know, those who do not choose to speak are left at liberty to be silent. But I would be glad to know in what that profitableness consists—of hearing stately about the inward course of others. The Methodists rate it very high; because by it their feelings are often strongly wrought on, and the whole machine of their system effectually worked. But this will not prove its profitableness to a Bible-Christian.—Is the experience of divine things, which is declared, *scriptural*? or is it not? If it be not, you will

scarcely assert the expediency of having it put forward as true. And if it be,—do not the truths of Scripture, which coincide with that experience, contain all that is profitable in it?—The Christian, from his experience, will be the better qualified to state—enforce—and apply those truths;—and let Christians thus qualified—“able to exhort and admonish one another”—speak to their mutual edification. But may they not do this without bringing forward *themselves* and their own state as individuals?—Or do the truths of God lose their profitableness, when not declared, in connection with the cases of individual professors? To suppose this, is to take those truths off the basis of divine authority, and rest them on human assertion:—and the consequence has been—the currency in the Methodist Society of experiences, cried up as something wonderfully fine, which—tried by the test of God’s word—would be found destitute of the first principles of the experience of a Christian, or contradictory to them.

Is the body of experience,—standing on sure record in all the Scriptures,—so incomplete—so insufficient for illustrating and enforcing the truths of God, that its deficiency must be weekly supplied, and too often the whole of its tenor set aside, by the experience of those who are—or are not—believers of the gospel now?—Let not the person, who is to succeed* you in replying to my Address, tell me of the fondness for such accounts in other bodies, beside the Methodists. I know it, and I lament it: for I know the mischiefs of it:—though I believe the abuse is in no other body carried to such a height and extent as in the Society to which I directed my Expostulatory Address. But his task will be shortened and simplified,—though perhaps not facilitated,—by recollecting that I think myself not concerned with any arguments, that are derived from the practices—or assertions—or opinions of *Men*;—with none, but such as are derived from the word of God.

I am glad to hear from you, sir, that the *tumultuous assemblies*, of which I briefly took notice, are disapproved of by “almost all the old and experienced members” of the Society:—and I suppose the preachers, who encourage them, are not to be considered as of that class—though I know that some of these are men of the greatest note in the connection. We shall see by the event, whether the Society does not tolerate and countenance such practices. Certainly I had every right to consider it as doing so, while they are not avowedly discountenanced in the Society, and are avowedly en-

* Since writing the above, another reply to my Expostulatory Address has made its appearance in this city, by a person signing himself—*The Ulster Herdman*. How long it may have been circulated in the country, where it was printed, I know not; as it bears the date of February last. This pamphlet affords as fair a specimen of *thorough Methodism*, as I could desire; and from one so well versed in it, that his quotations from Mr. Fletcher are scarcely to be distinguished in style, or spirit, or argument—from much of his own writing. I shall make no unnecessary delay in attending to this antagonist, and to another who appeared before him, as a *Vindicator of Human Nature*.—I do not expect a speedy termination of the controversy. Would that it might excite more serious and general attention. My Respondents however must be content with being taken notice of in the order, in which their pieces may appear.

couraged by some of its principal leaders:—and I own that those who are afraid “of repressing *pious ardours*,” by stopping the proceedings of these assemblies, seem to know little of what *Christian Piety* is. But I fear you mistake the reason why they have not been stopped. One of those meetings, where the preacher succeeds in agitating the poor people, and the wild-fire of those “*pious ardours*” runs well through the assembly, is the successful means of gaining more new members to the Society, than twenty others more decently conducted. I shall say no more on this subject at present; but will indulge the hope that the weight of your opinion may excite the interference of “almost all the old and experienced members.”

I have thus, sir, replied to the first 35 pages of your letter, in which you remark on the first 10 pages of my Address, and on a very small part of them. I am glad to find myself arrived at what I consider the most important—though it be the shortest part of your letter,—that in which you treat of doctrines;—partly (as in the four following pages) to vindicate the Methodists from the charge of error in doctrine, which I advanced in my Address; and partly to retort a similar charge in different instances upon me. Here we have before us a subject of unspeakable moment indeed; in comparison of which the reputation of individual men, or bodies of men, vanishes into insignificance. Here—it is to me indeed of great consequence not to be found opposing truth, or maintaining error: but—on which ever side the truth may lie—the knowledge of it will be promoted by the serious discussion of the subject.

Entering on this part of your remarks, you say—“I think the deepest ground of your dislike remains yet to be adverted to.”—You conjectured rightly. But let me tell you *why* it is, that the deepest ground of my dislike lies in the Methodistic doctrines. It is because their false and unscriptural doctrines are at the root of all the other evils, to which I directed their attention:—while many of those evils—(by a kind of reciprocal action that is not infrequent)—increase the cause from which they spring.

You are mistaken, however, when you intimate that I have formed my estimate of the character and conduct of the Methodists from my sentiments of their doctrines.—In the former, the existence of the evils, which I have animadverted on, is a matter of *fact*; which I do not infer *a priori*, but know as any other matter of fact is to be known:—and their malignant nature I estimate by the same rule of Scripture, by which I detect the errors of their doctrine.—Here there is not, as you suppose, any thing like an inversion of our Lord’s rule—“*By their fruits ye shall know them.*”—while that rule indeed would warrant a believer, who did not know the Methodist doctrines, to conclude that there must be some great erroneousness in them, from the practices that prevail in their Society.

But you seem, in that passage, to intimate that you would approve of an application of our Lord’s rule, against which I must protest;—of an inference that the doctrines which men hold are good, or good enough, if the fruits in their conduct appear good. Thus—many would bar all examination of Mr. Wesley’s or Mr. Fletcher’s system of doctrine, on the ground that it cannot be very wrong—inasmuch

as it has produced so much *general piety* and extensive *usefulness*: and will quote with you the rule—"by their fruits ye shall know them." But they altogether misapply the rule, and fall in with the infidel principle of the poet—"For modes of Faith let graceless bigots fight—His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."—If the faith which a man avows be radically unscriptural, I am obliged to consider all the fairest fruits that appear in him as but *apparently* good; nor could I ever be so certain, on other grounds, that they are genuine—as I am from the word of God, that the root from which they spring is evil, and therefore that the fruit—however specious—is corrupt. Our Lord's rule never was designed to convert the *seeming* piety or usefulness of men into a standard of doctrinal truth, in place of the revealed word of God: but it was intended to admonish his disciples against those false teachers, the corruption of whose lives should betray the evil of their inward principles. This rule—rightly applied—teaches us from the *acknowledged* evil of the fruits, to estimate the corruption of the tree that bears them; but is wholly perverted, when applied to infer the goodness of the tree—in opposition to the testimony of Scripture—from the *seeming* fairness of its fruits.—The importance of Scripture principles, and the wide mischiefs arising from the misapplication of them, must plead my apology for this digression; which has been suggested, however, by your expressions in this passage,—as well as by the tenor of your arguments in other parts of your letter.

In the next paragraph, you proceed to vindicate the Methodistic doctrine of *sanctification*, and to shew that I have misrepresented it. I had stated—that "the Methodistic idea of sanctification is, in plain English, this: that the corrupt nature of man becomes in believers less and less corrupt, till at length it becomes wholly good—perfectly purified from all evil,—and this *instantaneously*." In opposition to this idea I asserted—that, "according to Scripture, it is not any part of the work of grace to *mend* our fallen nature." (This word *mend* seems to have displeased you;—as if I charged the Methodists with using "an *awkward* expression:" but if you read again the passage, where it occurs in my Address, you will find that I no where impute the use of it to the Methodists,—but merely employ it as a very intelligible expression for the idea which I am opposing.)—I go on—"that nature—that old nature—called in Scripture the *flesh*,—is as bad—as wholly evil—in a believer, as in an unbeliever; as bad in the most established believer as in the weakest;—as bad in Paul the apostle—just finishing his course, and ready to receive the crown of righteousness, as in Saul of Tarsus—a blasphemer and a persecutor of the church of Christ."

Thus far, is a plain statement of two opinions, in direct opposition one to the other. Upon the latter of them, which I have asserted to be scriptural, you say not a word throughout your whole pamphlet—but you attempt to shew that in the former I have *misrepresented* the opinion of the Methodists.—Am I to understand by this, that their opinion is really coincident with that which I have here asserted to be the opinion warranted by Scripture? It would really,

sir, give me great satisfaction to think thus. But I do fear that neither theirs nor yours is so.

But let us see how you shew—that I have misrepresented their idea.—Why, you say that—by our *fallen nature* the Methodists evidently do not mean “*our contracted depravity*.” Truly, sir, I have no where intimated that they do. I have throughout supposed that they mean—not the *depravity*—but the *thing depraved*:—and the question, as I have stated it, is—whether—by the work of grace in sanctification—that *thing* becomes less and less depraved, being progressively mended or improved, till at length it becomes wholly good;—or, as I have asserted, continues to the last of our course here *wholly evil*.

But, after denying—what I never asserted or intimated—that by our fallen nature they mean “*our contracted depravity*,” you add—“but they mean the *very substance* of the human mind.”—Excuse me, sir, for saying no more upon that, than that it is explaining a very intelligible expression by one much less intelligible: for that neither you nor I have any notion whatsoever of the *very substance* of the human mind, distinct from its qualities and operations,—or—what in common language is called—its *nature*.

You go on to observe—that human nature is “but another word for the *man himself*.”—Well, we have now got back to another very intelligible expression,—and I am glad to settle in it for awhile;—only observing that, when I adopt your phrase, I speak of the *man himself* according to *his own* nature (because in the believer there are two distinct, and, as I assert, opposite natures—*his own*, and the “divine nature” or spirit, of which he is made a partaker through faith in Christ, in consequence of his union with him);—and that it was in this very sense, which you accuse me of overlooking, that I use the word *flesh*—or our fallen nature—in my statement. This you may perceive, by looking again at that repetition of it which offended you, where I say—“it would be much more gratifying to the pride of our hearts, to think that however bad *we* may be naturally, yet we are not so bad but that *we* may be *mended*; and it is the general idea of all men—the most careless and the “most profane.” Surely this is precisely the same thing, as if I had said—according to your expression—“that however bad the *man himself* may be naturally, yet he is not so bad but that the *man himself* may be mended.”

Now, sir, you say that one of my arguments—(the only one indeed of which you take any notice)—against the Methodistic idea of sanctification, as consisting in the *progressive improvement of our fallen nature*—is a “mere play on words;” and this, because I do not use the expression *fallen nature* in the same sense, in which they do, it being with them “but another word for the *man himself*.” If this charge be founded, all appearance of force will vanish from my argument, and the “play on words” will be exposed, as soon as we substitute your expression for that which I employed. Let us try:—I am not apprehensive of the event.—“Indeed if the *man himself* became during his Christian course, less and less evil, the believer would have less and less occasion to watch against *himself*—to *deny*

himself; and if at any period of it, the *man himself* became purged from all evil, it would then become a Christian duty not to *deny himself*." Really, sir, whatever force the argument had before, or appeared to have, it appears to possess all the same force still. I have, therefore, yet to learn why you assert it to be "a mere play on words."

But you mistake my object in the argument, when you give me credit for—"some ingenuity, in thus turning upon the Methodists the charge of Antinomian doctrine." I would be ashamed of imitating them in any such perverted ingenuity:—nor is it Antinomian doctrine to say, that it will not be necessary for us to *deny ourselves*, whenever we ourselves become purged from all evil. That, sir, will be the case of glorified Saints in Heaven; and therefore the *denial of themselves* is one of the spiritual exercises, which—without any antinomianis—will have no place there.—But the object of my argument is to shew, that their idea of sanctification must be unscriptural, because an unscriptural inference would not only "almost," but absolutely and necessarily follow from it.

In this argument, there have been two things taken for granted; which I shall now proceed to state, that my future opponents may see more clearly where they have to look for a point of attack in it—if they can find one. First, that the Scriptural precept of *denying ourselves*, implies and is founded on the vitiosity of *our own nature*.—Secondly, that this precept marks the course, to which a believer is called to the last of his continuance in the body.—The former is testified throughout the whole word of God; though I know that many who admit the precept verbally, but in the pride of their hearts deny the truth on which it is founded,—imagine that they fulfil the precept of *denying themselves*, by a kind of work of supererogation, in forbearing occasionally certain *innocent* indulgences;—just as they imagine that they observe another Christian precept of *mortifying the flesh*, by another work of supererogation, in putting their bodies to unnecessary pain. And all the while these poor souls, puffed up with a false notion of *themselves*, and feeding their self-complacency with these denials of a supposed *innocent self*,—are walking after the *flesh*, and not after the spirit.

But to "deny *ourselves*" is the same thing as to walk—not after *our own nature*; and if that nature were not *evil*, we may rest assured that we would no more be called to deny it, than an angel in Heaven can be called to "deny himself:"—if it were not altogether evil, we would not be called to deny *ourselves*—but only what is evil in ourselves. Or wherefore does the inspired Apostle (Eph. ii. 3.) describe the course, in which they walk who are "dead in trespasses and sins,"—as a course of "fulfilling the desires of the *flesh* and of the mind,"—if the moral propensities of *our own nature* be partly innocent and good, though partly evil?—But what do the Scriptures expressly assert of the character of *our own nature*—or the *flesh*? what is its mind? it is "enmity against God."—What is its continual tendency? it "lusteth *against* the spirit"—that good Spirit of God, which dwells and reigns in his believing people, and works in them both to will and to do.

I fear, sir, that some of the Methodists will be ready to think that

these and similar passages of Scripture, which declare the character of our *flesh* or *fallen nature*, are marked with shades too dark to describe the *man himself*; and will desire to be excused from adopting your interpretation of the expression:—perhaps will desire to affirm that meaning of it, which you have denied to be theirs,—that is, that we are to understand by the flesh our “*contracted depravity*,”—so reducing all those self-abasing truths of the Bible to a simple proposition that *depravity is a depraved thing*. Nor am I surprised that carnal men should be insensible to that *enmity against God* which constitutes their natural character. Sin, reigning in them, reigns as the “*power of darkness* ;” and when the *true God* is presented to their view in the declaration of his gospel,—the very *unbelief* which rejects and opposes that gospel,—while to the enlightened observer it affords the clearest evidence of their character,—is that kind of evidence, by which from the nature of it they cannot be themselves convinced, while they continue under the power of unbelief.

Other evidences of a “*contracted depravity*” almost all men more or less acknowledge; because their natural consciences acknowledge the evil of those workings, in which it manifests itself; and according as they succeed in repressing *those* workings of it, they are ready to pride themselves in the progress they have made towards *reforming themselves*. Scarcely any, but those who are settled in the delusion of Methodist *perfection*, have their consciences so seared, as to think they have completely succeeded in this task, and that all remnant of a depraved nature is exterminated from within them;—while those very persons who think so, often give the most decisive proof that the carnal mind reigns in them, and is indeed “*enmity against God*,” in the hardihood of blasphemy with which they oppose the truths of the gospel that manifest his name,—denying his perfections with peculiar violence of hostility, and presumptuously arraiguing the righteousness of his law and the sovereignty of his grace.

And as our natural *disbelief* of the glorious gospel of God marks the character of *our own nature* or fleshly mind, in our unconverted state,—so when we are brought to the knowledge and belief of the truth, we are born again, *not of the will of the flesh*—but of God. This *faith* is the continued work of *his* good spirit, in opposition to all the tendencies of *our own*; and produces the “*new mind*” of the spirit—continually opposed by the “*mind of the flesh* :” and “*these two are contrary the one to the other* ;” the latter not a whit more disposed to God, or capable of producing any good fruit than it was when we walked after it and fulfilled its desires. In consequence of this the Christian,—who “*walks after the spirit*,” and “*lives by the faith of the son of God*,”—lives not after the flesh,—or *his own nature*;—continues to “*deny himself* ;”—and while he can say with the apostle—“*I live*,”—must with the apostle add—“*yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*.”

This warfare—arising from the *contrariety* of *our own nature* to the divine,—ceases not—(I repeat it)—but with our earthly course. Those who think that, at any period of it, one of their threefold adversaries has become extinct, by the fleshly nature (their own nature) being *annihilated* or having *changed* its character, and that they have

then only to contend and watch and pray against the two remaining foes—the world and the Devil;—they have fallen into one of the most awful snares of the Devil:—amidst all their towering profession of religion, they have yet to learn the first principles of the Gospel of Christ;—and unless God—that God against whose attributes they are often the loudest to blaspheme—“give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” this delusion will continue, till they perish in it.

The Methodists are perfectly consistent in maintaining that they arrive at this state, in which *the man himself* or his *own nature* ceases to be evil: for their system sets out with an idea that, in consequence of the grace of God—(if *grace* it could be called, which they deny might justly be withheld)—there is such a general *improvement* made in the nature of all men, that they *can* repent and believe the gospel—as they say—*when they please*;—that the powers of *men* to do good are so restored by Christ, that HE—does not save any—but puts all in a state of *salvability* (as it is called), in which they may *save themselves*. And then, to be sure, it easily follows that this *improvement* of themselves and their own nature goes on in those, who are *faithful* to what they have received,—till the reformation is complete, and what was never entirely evil becomes altogether *good*. But certainly the advocates for such a system have not yet *pleased* to repent and believe the Scriptures: and indeed, unless the power of a Spirit, opposite to *their own*, cast down those “imagination” and high thoughts, that “exalt themselves against the knowledge of God,”—they never will.

By this time, sir, you may perceive, that when I—“state, in terms of Scripture, that believers *grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour*,”—I speak of a work very different from any in which the *man himself* is supposed to be *mended*. In the walk of faith, the old man—or our own nature—remains corrupt as it ever was; and not the less intrinsically and totally corrupt, because “sin shall not *have dominion*” over those, in whom Christ reigns by his spirit, “who are not under the law, but under grace.” Rom. vi. 14. And, therefore, it is that believers are called continually to “put off the old man,”—to “mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts,”—to “deny *themselves*,”—and to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”—in which “*all things are become*”—not *mended*—but “*new*,” 2 Cor. v. 17.

I know that Mr. Wesley and many of his followers interpret the latter expression of scripture, as if it related to those Christians, who are—according to their idea—*perfect*. But it is one of the many instances, in which they pervert the word of God.—“If any man,”—says the apostle—“If *any* man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are pass’d away; behold, *all things are become new*.” Words cannot more expressly assert this to be the character of *all* who are *in Christ*; and will the Methodists pretend that this is not, in scripture language, synonymous with all who are *Christians* indeed—who *believe* in his name?—To be consistent with their interpretation of the text, they should maintain that none are Christians but those, who have arrived at this boasted perfection.—This they do not maintain; and the natural inference from their interpretation is,

that men may be Christians—(though not *perfect* Christians)—without having that mind in which “all things are become new.”

Nor does this inference suggest itself merely from this one perversion of scripture, but from all that Methodistic idea of sanctification, against which I have contended. The Scriptures testify that, “if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his;”—that “as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God;”—that “hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of *his* spirit.” Now his spirit is good—*altogether* good: and the mind of his spirit is, therefore, a mind *universally* tending to him, hating *all* that is contrary to him, to his glory and revealed will,—loving *all* his ways and *all* his truths, as far as they are discovered to us. By these characters, those who profess to be his have continually to try themselves: and while it is no evidence against the reality of their profession, that the mind of the flesh—or *their own* nature—is continually *opposite* to this,—(but rather it is one of the marks of divine teaching that they discover it to be so),—they can at the same time have no scriptural evidence that their profession is not vain, except so far as they have that mind of the spirit which is *altogether* and *universally* turned to the Lord—as coming from him,—and is opposite to the flesh in *all* its workings.

But, according to the system which represents the work of sanctification as the *gradual reformation* or *improvement* of our own corrupt nature, a mixed mind, partly evil and partly good, is that, according to which even the believer walks, till “the man himself” becomes perfect:—and from such a mind—(absurd no doubt in the very idea of its existence)—what criterion can be borrowed, by which to examine ourselves? What a wide door does this open for all the worst delusions of false hope, which men are otherwise so apt to cherish,—who have not “respect unto *all* the commandments” of God,—and therefore have no real respect to *any* of them,—who “turn not to the Lord with the *whole* heart, but *feignedly*,” and, by endeavouring to “serve two masters,” prove that they are yet altogether the servants of sin!

And in what a different view must they regard their corruptions, who consider them as the remaining infirmities of a nature—*diseased* indeed but *convalescent*, from the light in which they appear to the believer, who sees in the smallest of them the workings of the same deadly nature—of his sinful flesh—wholly evil and “enmity against God”—which formerly reigned in him, when he “walked after the course of this world,” and was “led captive by Satan at his will,”—from the continued tendency of which, to lead him from the living God, he needs to be continually “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!”

It would be an easy but invidious task, to prove by copious extracts from accounts published by the Methodists of their experience, that their unscriptural view of *sanctification* has had in fact upon many that very influence, which it is calculated to produce; has encouraged them to make little of the evil of their own hearts,—to deny in several instances that breaches of the perfect law of God are *sin*,—to cover them with the extenuating phrase of *infirmities*,—to con-

tend for their innocency,—and where this could not be maintained, to throw the blame off *themselves* upon Satan—in order to support their own pretensions to a nature perfectly purified.—But I forbear.

You observe, sir, that, as reasonably as I oppose the Methodistic—and indeed popular idea of the *improveableness* of our own nature, and of its being *improved* by divine grace,—I might “accuse the established church of error in praying to God to *cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, &c.*” on the ground of the scripture having said that “*the thoughts of man’s heart are only evil continually.*”—I know not any Church, established or not established, which may not use an erroneous expression; or which is of so great sanctity, that the error countenanced by such an expression should be screened from animadversion. Nor is it my business to vindicate every expression in our Liturgy, which however excellent—is of human composition. Would to God that the multitudes, who join in using it, believed the scripture truths, with which it abounds! But you happen to be rather unlucky in selecting this passage, as exposed to my animadversion. That it is understood by many in a sense similar to that, against which I have protested,—I believe. But they misunderstand it. And—fairly interpreted—it is so far from being in opposition to the passage of Scripture which you quote, that the petition expressed in the one is grounded upon the very truth asserted in the other. Wherefore do we pray that God would—“by the inspiration of *his* spirit”—(words of too deep significancy and close connection, to be left covered by your &c.)—“cleanse the thoughts of our hearts” or make our inward thoughts clean? wherefore but because *our own* spirit is unclean, and incapable of producing any good thoughts;—because it is literally true, that “the thoughts of man’s heart are only evil continually.”

I have done with this important subject: and must reserve the remaining topics for another letter. Meanwhile I remain,

Sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,
JOHN WALKER.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
June 24, 1803.

LETTER IV.

Knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.—Prov. xiv. 6.

By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.—Is. liii. 11.

They shall call them, the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.—Is. lxii. 12.

He that is of God, heareth God's words.—John viii. 47.

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SIR,—Having remarked, in one short paragraph, on my numerous objections to the Methodistic idea of *sanctification*—(with what success the attentive reader of my last letter will judge)—you proceed, in the next paragraph, to repel the charges which I brought against their system as deeply erroneous in the doctrine of *justification*. And your reply amounts to this—that upon this point there is no *real* or no *important* difference between them and me; while you guard your readers against supposing that you coincide in sentiments with either of us. I cannot but observe that, in the subsequent part of your letter,—(see for instance pp. 54 & 55.)—you discover so wide a difference between my sentiments on this very subject and those—not of the Methodists only—but, as you conceive, of all "*sober Calvinists*," that you appear struck with astonishment how any man can

seriously hold the tenets which I avow. Shall I account for the tenor of your reply in the present passage, by supposing that you penned it before you had made the discovery of my sentiments; and afterwards forgot to expunge the statement, that there was little or no difference here between mine and Mr. Wesley's?

But let us examine the proof which you adduce to support this statement. Your words are—"If the Methodists speak of a *day*, an *hour*, a *moment*—so do you. *A real believer*, you say, *from the moment he is made a partaker of that precious faith, &c.*" Such is your first proof of my agreement with the Methodists in the doctrine of justification: they speak of a *moment*, and the word *moment* is to be found in my Expostulatory Address!—*They*, as I have observed, are taught to ground their persuasion that they are justified, or accepted in the sight of God, on being able to state the *day*, or *hour*, or *moment* when they got a sudden feeling of religious peace and joy:—and *I* have declared my persuasion that a sinner, from the *moment* he really believes the gospel, is as truly prepared for death as ever he can be.—(see the two passages to which you allude—Exp. Add. p. 19.)—And hence you conclude that—"if there be any difference" between them and me on the doctrine of *justification*, "it is not a great deal more than verbal!" I believe, sir, you are sufficiently sensible that proofs—equally conclusive—might be derived from every word, which they and I ever use in common.

Your next argument is very near akin to the first, and not a whit more forcible. It is this:—the Methodists speak of sudden *feelings* of divine peace and joy;—and I also have stated that faith is productive of *feelings* the most blessed. Hence you may certainly conclude that, in opposing the Methodistic errors, I do not mean to contend for an unfeeling religion: but by what rule of logical deduction you can conclude from it that *we agree on the doctrine of justification*, I am at a loss to conjecture. Neither they nor I conceive that a Christian is destitute of spiritual feelings:—*therefore* you infer that our sentiments upon a perfectly different subject coincide! The subject of religious *feelings* I have handled at some length in my second letter; and perhaps it has convinced you before this, how little agreement there is—even on that point—between the Methodists and me.

Your third argument, to prove the resemblance of our opinions on the doctrine of justification, deserves to be more seriously considered; because it involves a very dangerous mistake as to the meaning of a scriptural truth. You say—"if the Methodists talk of words of scripture, as if spoken to them with an audible voice,—does this amount to more (when received with any *candour* of construction) than what is implied in that assertion of yours—that none will obey the Gospel but those to whom it comes, not in word only, but *in demonstration and in power*?" Sir,—in the construction of *truth*, it amounts to something much less, and to something altogether different. *My* assertion amounts to this—that sinners are naturally so blinded in their understandings to the things of God, and so incredulous about them, that—notwithstanding the clearness with which his truths are testified in the Scripture, and not-

withstanding all the evidences—internal and external—which corroborate the testimony, and leave those who reject it without excuse)—none will discern the glory of these truths, or be persuaded of their reality, but those to whom the Spirit of God accompanies his word,—giving them to understand what he declares in the Gospel of his Son, and convincing them of its truth. All who are thus given to believe the gospel, that gospel declares to be *justified* or accepted in the sight of God.

But what is it that a supposed voice from heaven gives a *Methodist* to believe, when he is taught to think himself justified? The Gospel? No such thing:—he is considered and dealt with by his spiritual guides, as believing just the same system of religious truth, before and after his so-called justification. But some words of Scripture,—often detached from all connection either with evangelical truth or with their context,—he conceives are then spoken immediately to himself by God; and from the *strength* of this impression he is taught to suppose that they *become true* as applied to himself. Thus, for instance,—it is recorded in Scripture, that Christ said to one of old—“Thy sins are forgiven thee—go in peace.”—Now if a Methodist, after being led through their preparatory process of what they call *conviction* and *repentance*,—earnestly seeking and striving for what they call *justification*, is on a sudden made to conceive and feel as if a voice from heaven spoke these words *to him*, then he is taught to consider them as *true of him*, and to set himself down without any doubt for *justified*. And then indeed it is but very natural, that he should be very *glad* and very full of *joy*. But I repeat what I said in my Address, that if he has no better or surer ground for his confidence than this, he rests it on a ground most precarious and unscriptural.

As to the words that he then conceives spoken to him from heaven, being words of Scripture and to be found in the *Bible*,—I make no more of this, in such an abuse of them, than if they were borrowed from the *Koran*. A man may be ever so strongly persuaded that these, or any similar words, are at some moment divinely spoken to himself, and be as far as a *Mahometan* from believing one truth of Scripture, to the belief of which salvation is annexed. And when I think of the thousands who are led in such a delusive way in a matter of such infinite moment, I cannot suffer my eyes to be closed to the importance of testifying against the error, and warning them of their danger,—by your telling me that there is no difference between us—but that “the unlearned Methodist uses a *more material imagery*, while I confine myself to the language of *abstraction*.”

You own that I have “*taken some pains*” to shew the greatness of the difference between the Methodists and me on this subject:—and I must own that you have been at *no pains* to disprove it. The method in which you meet my arguments, is a most facile one indeed—one in which any person, of talents ever so inferior to yours, can equally well refute any arguments—however forcible. What is this method? You quote *four unconnected phrases* from my arguments, about which you say I “*have talked* ;” and then add—“but I con-

ceive what you say either rests upon a strained sense of some ill-digested expressions, or it is pretty nearly what any *angry* adversary would be no less ready to say of yourself."—What an *angry adversary* may be ready to say of me, I am not very anxious to inquire. But I hope, sir, his anger is not to be considered as a refutation of my *cool* reasoning. As to the force of that reasoning turning upon a strained sense of any "ill-digested expressions"—as you have neither stated those expressions, nor the sense in which they ought candidly to be understood,—I can only refer to my arguments, to prove that the difference between us is by no means about words, but things;—leaving the intelligent reader to appreciate the force of the arguments, and the Scriptural believer to estimate the importance of the things.

I shall only add a brief summary of what I have said in my address, on these four topics, the *names* of which you enumerate, and say I "have talked" about them;—namely, *enthusiasm—spurious faith—spurious peace—a sober garb of seriousness and zeal about self-devised religion*. 1st. I have said that it is rank and dangerous *enthusiasm* to look for a divine revelation of that, which is no where declared in Scripture; and to build the persuasion of our sins being pardoned—not upon any thing declared in Scripture—but upon the strength of a sudden feeling, with which a supposed intimation of it has been impressed on our minds.—2dly. I have said that all religious *faith* is *spurious*, but that which receives the record of God in his word concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of lost sinners, and as actually saving unto the uttermost all who *believe* in his name.—3dly. I have said that all religious *peace* is *spurious*, which springs from *spurious faith*, or from any thing but the genuine faith of the gospel. 4thly. I have said that all who *disbelieve* the gospel are alike under condemnation, whether their unbelief assume the gross form of sensual indulgence, or *the sober garb of seriousness and zeal about self-devised religion*.—To this effect I have talked on these subjects: and whether it be mere talk,—*vox & præterea nihil*,—a day is coming that will discover.

You have prefaced your observations on this paragraph with saying—that you "will not attempt to ascertain what may be the strictly scriptural sense of the term"—*justification*. It is not in this, sir, that the great difference lies between the Methodists and me. Here, I believe, we are pretty nearly agreed, that by the *justification* of a sinner we are to understand—the pardon of his sins and his acceptance in the sight of God as a righteous person, against "whom there is no condemnation."—But the great point in which we disagree, and in which I maintain that their system essentially disagrees with the word of God, lies in the question, *who are justified?*—*in what way* sinners become partakers of this blessing;—and *on what grounds* any can conclude it to be theirs. And I suppose it must be this question you intend, when you add—that "few points have occasioned more disputation, and perhaps with less success;"—for I know not any such unsuccessful disputation about the meaning of the term,—at least between Arminians and those who oppose their system. You yourself, indeed, in the next sentence, seem to mark, that it is the *doctrine* of justification—and not the mere sense of the *term*—that you speak of.

Understanding you thus, I must confess that few points have occasioned more *disputation*;—not because the Scriptures are at all doubtful or obscure in their declarations on the subject—(for nothing can be more plainly testified than the scriptures testify, that whosoever *believeth* the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the divine record of his name, is justified and accepted in the sight of God, and such alone);—but because the doctrine of scripture on this point has ever been *disputed against* by unbelieving men, and is peculiarly offensive to their pride. I smiled for a time at your calling the *doctrine* of justification “the *polemic* view of the subject;” and it is an odd expression. But I perceive in what sense it may be admitted as a very just one. It is that view of the subject which has ever excited the *hostile attacks* of the unbelieving world.—And that it has been fought against *without success*, I as readily admit. Its adversaries will never *succeed* in overturning it; and such of them as profess to receive the scriptures, will never *succeed* in getting over the difficulties which they find in the declarations of scripture,—so as to reconcile them with their unscriptural sentiments, or so as to agree among themselves how the plain truths of the Bible may be best interpreted away. Much learning and ingenuity of *commentators* and *divines* have been long employed for this purpose, and most *unsuccessfully* indeed: while the word of God will continue to “give light and understanding to the simple” believer, however illiterate; and all such will ever continue to find “the wisdom of God and the power of God,” in that “preaching of the Cross,”—in those *polemic—disputed* truths of the Bible,—which are “foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews.”

But you appear desirous, sir, of smothering the whole controversy, by representing that—“clear ideas of the *doctrine*, and *practical* attainment of the benefit, are happily independent of each other:”—or—as you express yourself towards the close of the paragraph—that while “the *polemic* view of the subject appears of peculiar difficulty—the *practical* view will be sufficiently apprehended by every *humble* and *sincere* Christian.” I could heartily wish you had explained your meaning, and stated what *view* of the subject you consider *practical* in opposition to *doctrinal*. The *practical* view of a sinner’s acceptance before God, separated from the consideration of the question—what sinners are accepted, and how they find acceptance in his sight,—is a matter which I am wholly at a loss to comprehend: though I am sure that the belief of the *doctrine* which the Bible teaches upon this question, never can be separated from the most important *practical* influence.

But indeed, sir, it would be well if your language here were only obscure and unintelligible. In its dark ambiguity there is unfortunately that which falls in with a most prevalent and fatal error;—that men have only to be very *good* people—some how or another,—and need not trouble their heads about these questions, that are represented as so difficult, and little more than an unprofitable *strife of words*. So thought one of old; when, appealed to by the unbelieving Jews against the Apostle Paul, he observed—“if it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness”—(a breach of *practical* right)

—“reason would that I should bear with you;—but if it be a question of words and names and of *your law*”—(one of these *disputed polemic—doctrinal* questions)—“look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.” (Acts xviii. 15, 16.)—So think the great mass of professors of Christianity now: but, by thinking so, only prove that—whatever *humility* and *sincerity* they may attribute to themselves—they are not Christians, except in name and form. A Christian is one who *believes the gospel of Christ*, and by the faith of him is justified—has passed from death into life and from darkness into light; one who knows him in the character, in which the Scriptures testify of him,—as the Anointed One of God, alone holding the office and performing the work—of saving to the uttermost every lost sinner that believes in his name. And however you may “believe that clear ideas of the doctrine”—of justification through faith in him—“and practical attainment of the benefit, are *happily independent* of each other,”—if you mean by this that any can be justified who *disbelieve* the Scriptural doctrine concerning Christ, and the way of justification in him,—you advance an opinion which no Christian can admit. The Scriptures of truth protest against all such principles;—and testify that—“he who believeth not shall be damned.”

Happily indeed for us, *that truth*—the knowledge of which and the benefits of Christ’s salvation are represented in the Bible never as independent of each other, but on the contrary as inseparably connected,—that glorious and joyful truth is there so plainly declared and abundantly confirmed, that there is no *such* difficulty, as you attribute to “the *polemic* view of the subject.” That the *clearness of ideas* upon it is of various degrees in various believers, and in the same believer in various stages of his Christian course, I am well aware. But they are all—*from the least to the greatest*—“taught of God:” and “every man, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto him”—who has been sent of God to be the Saviour of sinners. John vi. 45.

You speak, sir, of reverencing “the pious feelings” of both the Methodists and their monitor, “without subscribing to the theological system of either.” That is of little consequence, if you subscribe to the theological system of the gospel. But I would seek no surer evidence that a man does not believe the gospel, than his considering the belief of it unimportant, and the doctrines which it proposes to our belief—uncertain, abstruse, and unprofitable speculations.—As to the reverence you express for *pious feelings*, I cannot but say that you seem throughout your pamphlet, to treat them in a way very inconsistent with the truth. It follows not at all from feelings being *pious*, that they ought to be an object of our reverence. Many a Musselman or Hindoo has very *pious feelings*: but a Christian, observing them, will observe them with concern and with pity; knowing the false object towards which they are exercised, and the false principles by which they are excited. Nor can I view in any other light the most *pious feelings* of those, who—bear the name of Christians—but believe not the revelation which “the only true

God" has made of himself in his word. But on this subject I have expressed my sentiments at large in my second letter.

You lament, sir, that "such charges"—(alluding to the charges of departure from Scriptural truth, which I have brought against the Methodistic system of doctrine)—that "such charges should be cast by the one on the other, as must afford gratification to the malignant, and can scarcely fail to injure the *common cause* of Christianity, by confirming sceptics in their notion of the uncertainty of revealed truth."—I am not afraid that sceptics should hear the truths of the gospel vindicated, against all opposers of them. It is not by striving to conceal from sceptics the anti-christian errors, which have been introduced into professing Christendom, that they are to be convinced; nor by striving to palm those errors upon them as Christianity; but by exhibiting the real gospel in its simplicity and truth.

The most carnal Jews believed in a MESSIAH or a CHRIST,—whose coming they expected with all impatience of desire: and they grounded this expectation and belief upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament. But misinterpreting these Scriptures, into a sense altogether different from the true, they pictured to themselves a CHRIST suited to their carnal fancies, and rejected the *true* MESSIAH when he appeared. However, they were thus—in one sense—as much *Christians* as any who now profess to believe in Christ as having come, but represent to themselves as the object of their faith a CHRIST—different from him, of whom the Scriptures—both of the Old and New Testament—testify. For the *national faith* which they professed, and by which they were distinguished in their creed from heathen nations, was faith in a *Christ*. Now what would you think, if a person—observing the controversy which the Apostles strenuously maintained against them—should have gravely lamented—"that such charges should be cast by the one on the other as must afford gratification to the malignant, and could scarcely fail to injure the *common cause of Christianity*"—or professional faith in a *Messiah*,—"by confirming Sceptics in their notion of the uncertainty of revealed truth?" Not a whit more reason have you for the lamentation which you express.

The cause of *real Christianity* is *common* only to those who are real Christians, or who *really believe* the *true* Gospel of the grace of God. The cause of *professional Christianity* is quite distinct from this; and involves the reputation and secular interests of its numerous professors. But how, sir, is the former injured, by the world's being given to understand that all are not Christians in truth, who call themselves so?—that all have not the faith of the true God, who profess it? How is it injured by the world's finding that the truths of the gospel are asserted by the *few*, who believe them, against the multitude—of whatever name—who disbelieve them. The *credit of professional Christianity* indeed may be supposed to suffer, by the loss of *numbers*; by the world's discovering that the gospel protests against a great proportion of its professors, as disbelieving it;—just as our Lord protested against the carnal Jews, as not really believing their own Scriptures; and assigns the reason—"for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." (John v.

46.) But I know not how the cause of *real Christianity* is likely to suffer, by being separated from the pretensions of its false friends.

“Sceptics,” you say, “will be confirmed in their notion of the *uncertainty* of revealed truth.” They must be very ignorant Sceptics, if they needed my Expostulatory Address, to make them acquainted with the notorious fact—that professors of belief in revealed truth are not agreed in their interpretation of it; but that there is, and has been, a great *controversy* between two bodies of them, upon the question—“What think ye of CHRIST?” It is a fact not only of public notoriety, but predicted in the Scriptures themselves; and if any choose to cloak their disregard of the authority of God and his word—as many will—under the pretext of declining to examine into that which is *controverted*,—their unbelieving neglect will be upon their own heads; and a *sufficient* number of witnesses will be found to the truth that the Scriptures are able to make those who believe them—“*wise unto salvation*;” and that those who either disregard or pervert them are—“willingly ignorant,” of what God has revealed—or wilfully disobedient to it. It is for you, sir, to consider—which of us contributes most to confirm sceptics “in their notion of the *uncertainty* of revealed truth;”—you—in representing the most important doctrines of Scripture as doubtful questions, “*of peculiar difficulty*,” which it is at least imprudent publicly to discuss:—or I—in openly maintaining them against opposite errors, and appealing to the Scriptures for the ultimate determination of the controversy. Never may I be suffered, under the idea of attaching *respectability* and *weight* to the cause of CHRIST, to attempt identifying my faith with that of *numbers*, who disbelieve the essential principles of Christian truth? The cause of CHRIST requires not the aid of any such treacherous coalition.

Having thus, in four pages, proposed what you consider as a sufficient *vindication* of the Methodistic system of doctrine, from the numerous objections which I advanced against it,—you now take up the character of an *assailant*; and, through most of your remaining pages, animadvert upon what you think—“very erroneous views of certain Scripture doctrines” in my Expostulatory Address,—views which seem to you—“*to be pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences*.” I have already intimated the satisfaction with which I meet you on this ground, and the reasons of it.

You preface this part of your letter with observing that “in the *theological* part”—that is, the *doctrinal* part of my Address, my remarks are “seldom more applicable to the Methodists, than to the *generality* of other Christians”—that is, of other professors of Christianity. If you look at the advertisement prefixed to my Address, you will perceive that I was well aware of this, when I published it. But what then? If my remarks be founded in truth and Scripture, the greater the number they are applicable to, the louder was the call to publish them. Nor, while I have the word of God with me, am I at all intimidated by the *numbers of men*, which you bring into the field against me. “Ninety-nine out of an hundred, of those whom modern Calvinists deem *evangelical*,” may be “decidedly against me.” But truth, sir, is never to be determined by a *poll*:

and divine truths are of such importance, and shall assuredly be so effectually asserted by their Almighty author, that one who knows them will not be afraid to maintain them *singly* against a host of opposers—however numerous and however respectable.

But when you add—that I “seem rather disposed to maintain *a few peculiar tenets of my own*, than to contend for *rational Christianity*,”—I hope you greatly mistake me. I trust my object is to contend for *real Christianity* against all its adversaries; and I am sure *that* will be found ultimately the most *rational* thing in the world—even “the wisdom of God;” though now reckoned *foolishness* by “the wise of this world.” As to what is meant by *rational Christianity*—namely, Christianity cut down and modified to the infidel imaginations of men,—I hope I shall ever contend against it. But I know not any opinion I have advanced, which I am disposed to maintain on the ground of its being *my own*. On the contrary, I am conscious that if you, sir,—or any man—can point out any error of doctrine which I may have unwittingly advanced, it will be doing me the most acceptable service;—a service, which I trust I shall acknowledge with thankfulness and candour: for indeed there are few things that I look at with more dread, than the idea of publishing a false sentiment—in opposition to the *truths* of GOD. And I pray God to keep me in this spirit, knowing that it is only He who can.

The first “*striking instance*” you adduce of my erroneousness in doctrine, is what I have said respecting *sanctification*. You exclaim at my “assertion, that all true believers in Christ are sanctified *alike* in him, and that no one of them is *more or less holy* than another.”—It would have saved you much trouble, sir, to have taken notice of the *sense*, in which I expressly advance this assertion; and would have prevented the waste of pains you have employed, to combat it in a sense in which I never maintained it. I stated the radical meaning of the Hebrew word rendered *holy*: and I hope your avowal that you know nothing of the Hebrew language is not to stand as a refutation of my statement, or to throw a doubt upon its accuracy. I shewed the application of it in this meaning, in a variety of instances; where the same radical idea of—*separation unto God*—appears to be uniformly retained, with no diversity of meaning—but that which is necessarily included in the diversity of the *nature* of the objects thus separated, or in the diversity of the *ways* in which—or the *ends* for which they are *separated unto God*. I shewed how the same radical meaning of the Hebrew word is retained in its correspondent term, in the Greek: and however light you make of that mode of ascertaining the sense of the Greek language in the New Testament, every biblical scholar is sensible of its advantage and importance. I considered the *holiness* of believers as thus primarily intimating their *separation unto God*. I marked the *way* in which they are thus *separated* from the world—namely, by their union with Christ, “*the HOLY ONE of GOD*;”—in consequence of which the Spirit of God dwells in them. And I marked the *end* or purpose, for which they are thus *sanctified in him*,—namely, that God may “shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards them, by Christ Jesus,”

and (I will add—what is indeed included in this)—“that they may shew forth the praises of him,” to whom they are thus “a holy nation—a peculiar people.” I then subjoined—what has so much offended you:—“and thus”—(i. e.—*in this sense*) “are they alike sanctified in him, from the babe in Christ to the father; a holy nation, a peculiar people to the Lord:—no one of them more or less so than another.”

Now, sir, in all this—so far from advancing an opinion in which, as you conceive, “ninety-nine out of an hundred of those whom modern Calvinists deem Evangelical, are decidedly against me,”—I am bold to say that I advance an opinion, which no man who understands it can contradict. Many a one may and does disbelieve the reality of that *union* between Christ and his members, of which I have spoken;—the reality of any being in *him*—one with him—and so “not of the world.” Many also are, with you, ignorant of the literal meaning of the word translated *holy*—in the Scriptures of the Old Testament: and *some* may even think with you,—that its signification there throws no light upon the sense, in which the parallel word is used by the writers of the New Testament. In short, they may deny that the sense I have assigned is the sense—or the primary sense—in which believers are called *holy*: but no man, capable of understanding the proposition, can deny that—in *this sense*—all who are *holy* are *alike* holy,—none *more* or *less* so than another. For in this sense the term becomes the name—not of a *quality*—but of a *genus*: and you know, sir, that while the former admits *degrees*, the latter does not,—but is utterly incapable of *more* or *less*. Who would assert that *Goliath* was *more* a human creature than *Zaccheus*? Different men may possess in different degrees the *qualities* belonging to their species,—of stature—strength—intellect, &c. One man may be a larger man—a stronger man—a wiser man—than another. But I believe it will be conceded to me that all human beings are—*alike*—men. As incontrovertible is that assertion of mine, that in the sense of—*separated unto God in Christ Jesus*—all believers are *alike* holy.

When you therefore call this—“an opinion in which ninety-nine out of a hundred, &c. are decidedly against me,”—I can suppose you to mean only one or other of two things: either that they will deny that believers are separated in Christ Jesus unto God,—or—that they will deny this to be the primary sense, in which they are called in Scripture *holy*. The former—I never heard of any Calvinist who denied:—and as to the latter—I never heard of any Calvinist, moderately acquainted with the original languages of the Bible, who would deny this to be the literal meaning of the words *holy*—or—*sanctified*,—and that this is a meaning in which the epithets are applied to believers. But I am well aware, how much they have overlooked their primary signification, in this application of the words. Be not then displeased or surprised, at my wishing to recall their attention to that which I think it most important to attend to;—yes, sir,—most practically important.

In the apostolic writings, and throughout the Scriptures, we find numerous practical admonitions and exhortations to believers: but we find them uniformly grounded on the consideration of their

character and state as believers ; on the consideration of what CHRIST *is* to them, and what they *are* through rich grace in him. We find them instructed and exhorted to have their conversation—"as becometh the gospel"—and the great things, which are declared in the gospel to be "freely given them of God:" to walk "worthy of"—or suitably to—"the vocation wherewith they are called;"—to be "followers of God, *as dear children*"—as those who *have* received the adoption of sons;—to live not unto themselves, but unto him—as those who *are* "not their own, but bought with a price." "THEREFORE"—are they admonished—to "glorify God with their bodies and their spirits, which *are* God's." (1 Cor. vi. 20.)—In short—the gospel *practice*, as delineated in Scripture, is as much distinguished—in its motives and its grounds—from all the piety and morality of the unbelieving world, as it rises—in its nature and effects—above all their highest attainments. It is, in all respects, a *life of faith*;—*practice* influenced and regulated by the *belief* of those things which the gospel reveals, and of which nature knows nothing. Those who have not this faith, have ever been forward to contend against it as a barren and inoperative *speculation*: and in this they often appear to themselves and others very zealous guardians of practical piety and morality. But those who are partakers of it will ever prove it to be the only—and an effectually powerful spring—of works truly good: and are taught that no works are such—(however specious and highly esteemed among men)—but those which are the works of faith.

Now an attention to the radical signification in Scripture of the words *holy* and *Saint*,—as denoting that *Separation unto God*, which belongs *alike* as his free gift in Christ Jesus to every believer, and of which the revealed purpose is the manifestation of his glory in and by them as *his* "peculiar people,"—an attention to this (I say) stamps with the peculiar *Evangelical* character all the *practical* admonitions and exhortations which are given believers to holiness of walk and conversation; or, in other words, to such a walk and conversation—to such tempers and conduct—as are correspondent to the *state* of persons thus *separated unto God*, for purposes so full of grace and glory. It suggests to believers the only true motive, and directs them at once into the only true *way*, for maintaining such a walk as becomes their profession; to which while any walk contrary, they can have no Scriptural evidence that their profession is not vain.

In those holy *tempers*, and in that holy *conduct*, there are indeed various *degrees*,—according to the degrees of faith and its exercise: and degrees as indefinitely progressive, as the discoveries which "the spirit of wisdom and of revelation" can make, of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This I have expressly observed—(though you have not chosen to take notice of it)—in the two paragraphs of my Address, which immediately succeed the sentence that so much shocked you. And if, in this respect and in *this sense*, any choose to speak of believers as not *alike* holy—far be it from me to contradict them. They assert what—rightly understood—is a certain truth. But I will be as far from giving up that Scriptural and most important sense, in which they *are alike holy*,—though multitudes ever so great were to be "decidedly against me."

You say that, being ignorant of the Hebrew language, you “can argue only from *common sense* respecting the use of the term”—translated *holy* in the Old Testament. In these cases *common sense* often means nothing more than—those infidel principles of false religion, which are *common* to all men by nature. But I take it for granted that you intend to include in its import—a regard to all the rules of fair interpretation, which a *common* English reader can employ. And you will observe, sir, that—agreeably to this—I suggested the observation of the *different things*, to which the term is applied in Scripture: for I conceive that if there be any meaning of the term, which may be fairly accommodated to the various natures of all these,—things inanimate—places—times—individual persons—and a nation,—*common sense* will direct us to adopt that as the interpretation of it, in preference to any other. Such is that meaning of—*set apart* or *separated* to the divine service—which I have assigned to it; and which is more abundantly confirmed by the passages of the Mosaic law, to which I referred the English reader in my Address. It is confirmed also by various others, in which the Jewish people are declared by the Lord to *be*—an *holy* people unto him; which we know they were not nationally in any sense,—except as he had “severed them from other people that they should be *his*.”

Now what is it that you oppose to this? You quote a passage from Leviticus, and conclude from it that the term—“not only signifies *national* separation to the Lord”—but—“*practical* and *personal* separation from sin.” Supposing for a moment the justice of your inference,—let me ask you, sir, where have I asserted that it signifies only *national* separation to the Lord? Have I not expressly stated that it signifies—in general—*separation to the Lord*,—whether of a nation, or of any thing else?

This separation was, in the Jewish nation, *ceremonial* in its nature and *typical* in its design; and accordingly was marked out to them by the instituted distinction between things clean and unclean, concerning which the command was given—“ye shall *therefore*”—(i. e. because I have “separated you from other people”)—“put difference between clean beasts and unclean—which I have *separated from you* as unclean: and ye shall be *holy unto me*—not walking in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you.” Lev. xx. 22—26.—Thus were the Jews, in their ceremonial law, commanded to “*sanctify themselves*,” i. e. to walk as a people *separated unto the Lord*; and this in perfect harmony with the other passages which declare them to be a people *sanctified by the Lord*, and *holy* to him. Nor is there any thing more spoken of, in the passage which you adduce from Leviticus, than this *ceremonial* separation from the use of things ceremonially unclean.

The separation of *believers* to the Lord, as *his* people, is of a *spiritual* nature and for infinitely *higher* purposes. And he has marked out in his word how he will have *them* walk for his own glory, and agreeably to his own will, in a temper of mind and course of conduct—separated from that of the world, out of which they are chosen,—and correspondent with the purposes for which he has chosen them, and with the relation they bear to him—“*as the elect*

of God, holy and beloved." (Col. iii. 12.) And it is as a people—thus all alike holy—or separated to him—or sanctified by him,—that they are called to be holy, or to sanctify themselves;—in other words, to walk in that way which he has prescribed to his own people. As to the various and progressive degrees of this their walk,—it is only raising a dust about the question to represent me as denying them. From the whole it appears hitherto—it appears to common sense—that neither separation from moral evil, nor from ceremonial uncleannesses, is included in the primary signification of the word rendered holy; but (as I said in my Address) "separation unto God, so as to be brought into a particular relation to him, appropriated to his use and service." According to the nature and purposes of that separation, various other things may be implied by it: but neither the nature nor purposes of it are included in the radical signification of the term.

Let us now inquire whether common sense will enable us to discover—that the same idea is annexed to the parallel Greek word, by the writers of the New Testament. And here, I think, common sense suggests that, when St. Peter for instance—(as in the quotation which you adduce from him)—expressly translates a passage from the Old Testament,—it is highly improbable that he intended to use the Greek word, in a sense different from that of the Hebrew, which he rendered by it. But do we not obviously find the same idea retained in the injunction—"give not that which is holy unto dogs?" and again, in all the affirmative declarations that believers are "an holy nation"—"sanctified in Christ Jesus."—But not to multiply proofs; when our blessed Lord says (John xvii. 19.)—"for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth:"—does not common sense tell us that the same word, occurring in the two clauses of this sentence, cannot be used in two different significations? and that as in the former clause, it denotes his setting himself apart to the service of the Father—(which he did, when he "humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant," for the accomplishment of that work of redemption which was "given him to do")—so in the latter clause it denotes their being set apart to God, as his servants and peculiar people? Thus is He "the first-born among many brethren;" and—himself "the HOLY ONE of God"—all "whom the Father hath given him," and who "through the belief of the truth"—are in him, and so brought nigh to God, become "a holy seed," to whom HE "is made sanctification." And they—"walking in him"—"led by the spirit" of holiness,—"have their fruit unto holiness," and their "conversation as becometh the gospel:"—as becometh those who are not of the world, but "of God."

Let me add, that, when the term holy is attributed to God himself, I humbly conceive that it denotes to us the infinite separation of his glorious nature from all the imperfections that we see common to creatures;—"that dwelling in light inaccessible," which is appropriate to God alone:—so that, as that is holy among creatures which is separated from their use, so as to be peculiarly his,—so by an analogy of signification—(which however I would trace with re-

verence)—HE is declared to be holy, as the perfections of his being are infinitely removed from the nature of creatures, and belong with an inconceivable exclusion only to himself.

You observe—that “*practical and personal separation from sin*” is that to which “each Israelite was individually obliged.” Very true, sir; though it is a bad inference from the passage from which you deduce to it. But I will go farther and say—that it is that, to which every intelligent creature is obliged in consequence of the relation which he bears as a creature to the Creator:—though it be that which is impossible to belong to any *sinful* creature through any natural power of his own: and therefore—instead of being *more or less* in such, as “depending on free agency”—(according to your assertion)—could not belong *in any degree* at all to such, if it were not the gift of God’s rich grace and the work of his almighty power in sinners.

Man and all the intelligent creatures of God, as they came from his hands, were created in *holiness*;—they were *his*:—and to walk as *his*—“*holy unto the LORD*”—in the universal consecration of all their powers to *his* glory, and the universal regulation of them by *his* will, *whose they were*,—while it was their indispensable duty—was that to which their uncorrupted nature constantly led. But as soon as *sin*—or opposition to the will of God—entered into that nature—either of angels or of men, as apostatizing from God and *separated from Him*, they became *unholy* in their state, and *unholy* in their nature. At the same time—(whatever the proud sophistry of man may argue to the contrary)—the obligation of his holy law continued unchangeably the same, undissolved by their utter incapacity to fulfil a tittle of its requirements. That incapacity constitutes part of the *ruin* in which sin involves the transgressing creature: and arises from the utter impossibility that a creature *separated from God*—should reinstate himself in the rank of those whom he owns and claims as *his*;—as well as from the contrariety of his fallen nature to the divine will.

But—“what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the *flesh*, God—sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin”—accomplishes. That restoration to the state of those who are *his*—*holy unto the LORD*,—which is the necessary *foundation* of all correspondently *holy walking* with him,—nothing but the arrogance of blinded pride can suppose that an apostate creature is able—by his *free agency*—to obtain: or that he can do any thing to acquire it. Nothing but ignorance of the true God can lead any to imagine, that such a creature—if ever restored to it—can be restored in any way, but by that God from whom he is fallen,—by an act of his free and sovereign mercy; or that it could ever be compatible with his righteousness and truth—with the essential glories of his character—to extend this mercy, but in the way which his gospel reveals, and which it could never have entered into the heart of a creature to conceive, if it had not been revealed.—It is revealed; and is indeed “the *wisdom* of God and the *power* of God to them that *believe*.”

Sin, that separated between God and us must be taken away;—

righteousness must be brought in;—the divine law must be “magnified and made honourable,” while transgressors of it are taken back to God;—God must be “just and the justifier of the ungodly;”—in order that *unholy* creatures may become *holy* to the Lord—his peculiar people. All these impossibilities to men, the Lord Jesus Christ—IMMANUEL—GOD *manifest in the flesh*—has accomplished by his obedience unto death. HE is “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” HE is the voluntary *servant* of JEHOVAH, who has “finished the work which the Father had given him to do” on earth. And now all, who *believe* the record of his gospel, are *in him*—and “in him *complete*;”—brought back to God with full acceptance of their persons, and that consequent *holiness* of their *state*—as a people *separated unto God*—which, in the very nature of it, can no more be partial or admit of *degrees*—than the recovery of this state could depend on their *free agency*;—or that—(what typified this)—the separation of the Jewish people from all the other nations of the earth depended upon theirs.

As those who *are* thus a “holy nation,” through the unspeakable gift of God,—as those to whom CHRIST is thus “made of God sanctification,” and who *are* “THUS”—(I repeat it)—or in this sense—this scriptural and most important sense—“all *alike sanctified in him*—no one of them more or less so “than another,”—they are called to walk;—to walk in that separation of spirit and of conduct which is marked out for them by the will of *their God*:—or, in that sense, to sanctify themselves. And they alone—(whether believers of the gospel—preached by types and prophecies—before the coming of the Messiah; or believers of the same Gospel preached—since his coming—by his Apostles)—they alone have done so; and they alone will or can do so: for they alone are restored to that holiness of state which admits no degrees,—and to that spirit of holiness, which in his operations undoubtedly does.

Now observe, sir, I stated—in that offensive passage of my Address—the proper meaning of the adjective *holy*, and shewed that it signified that *generic state*, which is incapable of *more* or *less*. You oppose to this statement—what?—The meaning of the verb to *sanctify*; which—besides the signification of *making holy*, or bringing into such a state,—is often employed to denote the treating or acknowledging of a thing as holy—the walking as holy—or the evidencing to be holy—(just like the correspondent varieties of application in the verb to *justify*):—and from the *degrees* of which these latter *operations* are necessarily capable, and which I never thought of denying, you argue—as if you argued against me. Well indeed might you say—that “to go on with quotations on this point, would be to transcribe great part of the New Testament.” To quotations—*equally pertinent*—there would be no end. You might as well argue against my position, that—all men are *alike MEN*, no one of them *more* or *less* so than another,—and gravely produce that form of expression—*be ye men*—(i. e. conduct yourselves like men)—as if the various degrees, in which this exhortation may be complied with, were inconsistent with the accurate truth of my assertion, or de-

signed to be denied by it. And allow me to say—that it would not be more preposterous to address that exhortation—*be ye men*—to creatures who, from not possessing the human *nature*, were not *already men*—in that sense in which all men are *alike* so,—than it is preposterous to consider the Scriptural exhortation—*be ye holy*—as addressed to any who are not, or profess not to be, *already holy*—in that sense in which no one is *more* or *less* so than another. We must *be holy*, before we can *walk* holily. And none of the descendants of fallen Adam *are holy*, but those who are in the Lord Jesus Christ;—as every *believer* of the Gospel is. You conceive that the various degrees, which their holy walking certainly admits, arise from its “dependance on their *free agency*.”—If you mean by this, that it *depends upon themselves*,—you advance an assertion which every believer rejoices to know is false. It is well for believers, that the holiness of their walk depends continually—on their being led by a spirit not their own; even the same spirit of truth, which first gave them to know Him—who is “the *way*, and the *truth*, and the *life*.”

By this time, sir, I suppose you are sensible that when you quote St. Peter's expression—“*be ye holy* in all manner of conversation”—to prove degrees in the believer's holiness of walk,—you are labouring to prove what I myself asserted in my Address,—and what is not at all contradictory to the position, with which you attempt to set it at variance. The apostolic exhortation amounts simply to this;—*in all the various turns of human life*,—(I borrow your own words)—*walk as those who are the people of God—a people holy, or separated to the Lord*.—In like manner, the expression you quote from the apostle Paul—“the very God of peace sanctify you wholly”—is as if he said,—*may He whose you are, lead you walking in the consecration of all your powers to his service—as those who are wholly his*.

But I cannot help lamenting an equal infelicity in the way in which you deduce from both these passages—your undisputed inference—that such a walk is certainly capable of degrees. On the former passage you say—“does not such a direction imply, that there was a possibility of individuals *not* being holy in *all* their conversation; just as there was a possibility of individual Israelites defiling themselves with creeping things?”—You, sir, are such an advocate for what is *practical*, that I am sure you will excuse me for suggesting what seems a necessary guard on your expressions. Just as the Israelite, who defiled himself with *one* thing pronounced ceremonially unclean, was as really defiled as if he had defiled himself with twenty;—just so, the professor of the Gospel, who walks contrary to holiness in any *part* of his conversation, is *unholy* in his walk; and while he indulges himself in this—affords no evidence of being among the *saints* of God. The will of God is not regarded at all,—so far as there is not a regard to the *whole* of it, that is made known to us:—and there is no holiness of walk, so far as there is not in our walk a regard to his will—as that God to whom we belong. When you therefore *seem* to infer, from an exhortation to his people to consecrate themselves *wholly* to him, that they may

consecrate themselves to him *partially*;—you *seem* to draw an inference, that is not only logically inaccurate but practically dangerous.

The same observation may be useful, on your remark upon St. Paul's prayer—above quoted. You say—“when he prays that they may be sanctified *wholly*, does he not clearly imply that it was a possible thing for them to be sanctified *in part*?” Nay, sir; a prayer that believers may have a certain blessing, by no means implies that they may have one *half* of that blessing—without the other half: and the professor who seeks but *half* the blessing, has reason to fear that he is destitute of it *altogether*. By these observations I would not convey the slightest intimation, that you meant to sanction the pernicious error in practice against which I protest:—but I think they are observations which the dangerous turn of your expressions called for.

And now, sir, I am aware that—to a great many even of “those whom modern Calvinists deem *Evangelical*,”—perhaps to “ninety-nine out of an hundred” of them,—in a great part of what I have written, I shall seem to have been maintaining a *verbal contest*. And that it is in some respects verbal,—I readily acknowledge. But give me leave to say, that those who know most of Scriptural truth—are most sensible of its importance; and that those who know most of its importance—are most sensible how important it is to ascertain the meaning of the *words*, in which it is conveyed. The BIBLE, sir, is composed of *words*; and the man who is ready to decry—as *verbal*—a contest about the sense in which these words are to be understood, is ready to lay aside his Bible—as unimportant;—while the man who conceives that the *doctrines*, which the Bible teaches, are not practically important,—certainly does not believe these doctrines.

Contrary to my intention and expectation, I am obliged to close this letter without finishing my answer to your remarks. I am obliged—for the sake of giving rest both to myself and to my readers,—and for other reasons which it is needless to specify.

I shall conclude with a brief statement of some—among the many—important inferences, which flow from the scriptural meaning of the term—*holy*. It distinctly marks who—and who alone *are holy*,—namely, those who *believe* the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It cuts down all the vain imaginations, which the unbelieving world entertain, that they differ from those who believe—not in the essential characters of their *state*—but, at most, in the *degrees* of a fancied *goodness*. It shows that those who disbelieve the Gospel are—not *less holy* than those who believe it—but altogether *unholy*. It detects the factitious sanctimoniousness of temper and of conduct, which the *religious* part of the unbelieving world exert themselves to attain;—and proves it, in its highest forms, to be but a specious *imitation* of holiness, and a vain attempt “to bring a clean thing out of an unclean.” It gives to God “the glory due unto his name;” evincing the holiness of all believers—both the perfect holiness of their *state*, and the progressive holiness of their *walk*—to be—not of their *works*, but of his rich *grace* or unmerited favour. It gives a precise and Evangelical direction to all their pursuit after holiness of

life and conversation; putting them—not upon making themselves what they *are* not, but upon walking correspondently to the state in which *they are*.—It cheers them—even the youngest—the weakest believer—in this pursuit, with that “joy of the Lord, which is their strength.” It animates them under every discouragement in the pursuit; and stimulates them to the highest aim,—to the most universal—the most continual—the most willing consecration of themselves to that God, *whose they are*,—to the most humble walking with him,—and to the most unreserved regulation of themselves by his revealed will.

Thinking as you do, sir, that this is—“among the very erroneous views of Scripture doctrines,”—which I have given,—I heartily hope that your charity will lead you to state—the “peculiarly pernicious consequences,” with which it seems to you “to be pregnant.” I have no apprehension that you will succeed in overturning it:—but convinced, as I am, that it is true, and pregnant with consequences the most important and most salutary,—I shall rejoice in every opportunity of giving it a public discussion.

I remain, sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

Trin. Coll. Aug. 19th, 1803.

LETTER V.

If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.
2 Tim. ii. 25.

This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. John vi. 29.

To be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.
Acts v. 31.

*To Him give all the Prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever BELIEVETH
in him, shall receive remission of sins.* Acts x. 43.

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SIR—You employ the ten following pages of your remarks, in opposing my sentiments upon REPENTANCE. That is the next instance, in which I seem to you to have given “very erroneous views of certain Scripture doctrines, and pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences.” I confess that I enter upon this part of your letter with a solemn satisfaction, in the view of the opportunity which it affords me, of publicly maintaining the important truths which you oppose. They seem to have excited in your mind a warmth of offence, which has led you to a more explicit statement of your own doctrinal views, than is to be found in other parts of your

Pamphlet. I have only to intreat a candid interpretation of the plainness with which I must refute your errors,—(I use not this language without having coolly weighed what I say)—and that it may not be imputed to any failure of personal respect towards my antagonist, or to the paltry desire of a personal victory; but to that which I trust is my only allowed motive—a sense of the important nature of the truths at issue between us.

You quote from my Address the passage which you oppose so warmly, and in which I have advanced these three positions:—1st, that “*REPENTANCE unto life* is not any thing preceding *faith* or unconnected with it; but is that *new mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to *believe* with the heart on the Son of God.”—2dly, that “any thing called repentance, while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*, is but a spurious imitation of that heavenly gift:”—and 3dly, that “I would no more be warranted in representing any such *infidel repentance* as a *preliminary step* to *faith*, than in so representing Murder and Adultery.” Before I proceed to repel your attack, allow me to make a few observations upon each of these three assertions distinctly; against the whole of which your subsequent remarks are indiscriminately pointed.

Now upon the first of these so offensive positions, let me remind you, that my expression—*Repentance unto life*—is borrowed from Scripture; (Acts xi. 18.) and let us examine the passage where it occurs there, to see whether it be there used for any thing preceding *faith* or unconnected with it. The Apostle Peter is vindicating himself to his brethren at Jerusalem, for having “gone in to men uncircumcised and for eating with them.” He rehearses to them from the beginning, how he had received a divine commission to go to Cornelius and his company; how he had declared to them the Gospel: and how, while he was speaking, the Holy Ghost fell on them in that open and miraculous effusion, which was then common in the Church. He adds,—“for as much then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who *believed* on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?” It then follows—“when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying—Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted *repentance unto life*,”—or that change of mind which is accompanied with all the blessings of salvation—included in the Scriptural import of the word *life*—or *eternal life*. Now, sir, let me seriously ask you, is there any thing in this passage that countenances your opposition to my assertion? In this instance, at least, it appears that the disciples who used the expression—*repentance unto life*—did not mean by it “any thing preceding *faith* or unconnected with it;—for it is under the preaching of the *Gospel*, and in the *believing* of it, that this repentance is expressly considered as granted to the Gentiles.

But waving this instance,—if you admit that there is any such thing as *repentance unto life*, or a change of mind connected with Salvation, you cannot persist in opposing my assertion about it, without contradicting the whole tenor of Scripture. For, as Peter declared on that occasion to Cornelius and his company, all the Scriptures bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, “that through *his*

name, *whosoever believeth* in him shall receive remission of sins ;” or, as John the Baptist expressed it, that “ he that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that *believeth* not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him ;”—or, as our Lord himself, that “ he that *believeth* on him, is not condemned ; but he that *believeth* not, is condemned already, because he hath not *believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Now, sir, if *repentance unto life* be any thing preceding *faith* and unconnected with it, then those who have this repentance (I must repeat an expression that offended you)—this *infidel repentance*, though they do not yet *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, have *life*, and are in a state of salvation ;—then “ *Faith* is made void and the promise made of none effect ;”—then the concurrent testimony, which all the Prophets and all the Apostles bear to the Lord Jesus Christ,—as “ the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sin of the World,”—is overturned ; and a repentance, unconnected with the faith of him, is substituted in his place. Did I say—*unconnected* with the faith of him ? Nay in direct *opposition* to it : for on such a supposition, there would be no room left for *believing* the Scriptural testimony concerning him at all.

But it is not thus more certain—that those, who believe not, have not *repentance unto life*, than it is certain—that, whosoever indeed *believes* the Gospel, is a partaker of this repentance—or *new mind*. It is throughout the Scripture represented as an inward change, which has taken place in *all* our Lord’s people—all who are in a state of salvation. It is one of the gifts which, along with *remission of sins*, HE is exalted to bestow.—(Acts v. 31.)—All who *believe* in him have remission of sins, and are justified from all things :—I argue therefore that all, who *believe*, have repentance. And I leave it to your cooler judgment to consider, how far these observations confirm the justice of my first position—that *repentance unto life* is “ that *new mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to *believe* with the heart on the Son of God.”

From this, by necessary inference, the truth of my second assertion follows. If *repentance unto life* be thus inseparably connected with faith, any repentance that takes place—while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*—is not repentance unto life ;—or, as I expressed it, is “ but a spurious imitation of that heavenly gift,—is but a refined form of the fleshly and selfish mind, which in all its workings is evil—only evil continually.” It would be a waste of labour to argue in confirmation of so plain a consequence. Unbelieving professors will fret under it, and exclaim at it :—and the more they have laboured at obtaining such *infidel repentance*, and the more they seem to have succeeded in working themselves into a sober and very religious form of the fleshly mind, the more indignant they will probably be at the warning voice, which testifies that they remain as before—“ dead in trespasses and sins ;—that, as unbelievers, “ the wrath of God abideth on them ;”—that they are yet carnal—and that “ they who are in the flesh *cannot* please God.”—But the truths of God must not be concealed through fear of the offence which they will excite. We must declare them, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

As to my third assertion—that any such *infidel repentance* is no more “a preliminary step to faith, than Murder or Adultery,”—I consider it so important, that I am solicitous to clear it, as much as possible, from all ambiguity:—not that I think you have in the main mistaken the meaning of it, but because I conjecture that you will not be the *last* who will attack it.—Now it is obvious that my meaning is not—that such spurious repentance never takes place *previous* to saving repentance and faith: for I have expressly observed that there may be many such “changes in the sinner’s mind,” before he believes the gospel. Neither do I mean to deny—that the Lord’s hand may be in such changes,—permitting and ordering them: for we have reason to know that his hand is over those who are never brought to the knowledge of the truth; and that even upon them his Spirit variously works, according to the purposes of his own will. And it is certain that his hand is from the beginning *graciously*, as well as wisely and powerfully, over those whom he has “ordained to eternal life,” controlling and leading them—even while they know him not,—and ordering all their circumstances in subserviency to the designs of his grace and mercy, which are afterwards manifested to them. But the meaning of my assertion is simply this—that no such *infidel repentance* brings a man a whit nearer to the state and character of a *believer*, than the most open profligate;—that the latter is not more “dead in sins and alienated from the life of God” than the former—than Mr. Fletcher’s *carnal penitent*;—that the same Gospel of the grace of God is addressed to both, as precisely upon a level—proclaiming Salvation to the murderer and adulterer, who shall *believe* the faithful record, as freely and as immediately as to the *carnal penitent*; and not requiring any such change of infidel repentance to take place in the former—in order to *authorize* him to believe the glad tidings—or in order to *qualify* him for a participation of all the blessings that are connected with believing it.

Such, sir, is the plain import of my assertion; and perhaps the more plainly it is stated the more it will shock your feelings. Yet—perhaps also—it may, through the blessing of God, be made the occasion of giving you such a view of the nature and glory of the Gospel, as you have not yet had. The assertion thus stated, does indeed stand pointed—not only against the whole of the Methodistic system of theology,—but against a great mass of falsehood, that is current among many who call themselves Calvinists, and pride themselves in the name of *Evangelical*. But do not they who oppose this assertion, betray their ignorance of the first principles of the gospel of Christ; and shew that their unbelieving hearts yet stumble at the *offence of his cross*? Is not his Gospel—*good news to sinners*, to *lost sinners*, to the *chief* of sinners?—glad tidings of a *Saviour* for such, a Saviour of his people from their sins? a Saviour, *in whom* “the gift of God is eternal life—to *every one* that believeth” the Gospel which testifies his name?—A Saviour, given for the express purpose—“that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?” And was it not his own express command, that *this*

Gospel should be preached to all the nations—even those most sunk in heathenish darkness, and in diabolical corruptions?

Glorious were its effects in such:—it was indeed the *rod of his power*. And awful have been the effects, in the *Religious world*, of those departures from the truth, which men have introduced—too wise to become fools for Christ—and too proud to submit themselves to the righteousness of God. To such the foundation laid in Zion has been a *stumbling block* of old. They were long ago *offended* at Him, who avowed himself the friend and saviour of publicans and sinners;—at him who addressed those, who were most wise and righteous in their own esteem, as on a level with the vilest—as blind, and servants of Satan, and haters of God. Such at that day openly rejected him: but since, through the establishment of national Christianity, it has become not creditable to be *avowed* infidels,—they now take the Gospel, and variously *accommodate* it to their unbelieving fancies; and frame to themselves a Saviour—whom they call Christ, and for whom they often shew much zeal,—who shall acknowledge the *distinctions* between sinner and sinner, which they set up in the pride of their hearts;—who shall be a nominal saviour to those who are so *good* themselves—that they have little occasion for any,—to well-disposed and qualified sinners,—to those who make themselves meet, by *preliminary repentance*, to get the blessings that he bestows.

The systems of such are various: they are often greatly puzzled by the plain declarations of Scripture; and they have come to very little agreement among themselves about the best way of getting over these declarations. Some of the bolder ones are for leaving them out of the Bible, as *mistakes* of the sacred penmen, or as *interpolations* of the text. Others, who scruple this, find—in *Eastern Metaphors*—a ready way of making them mean any thing or nothing; and then the distinction—between Christianity in the *apostles'* days and Christianity *now*—brings them over many difficulties; and—learning, and ingenuity and sophistry are called in aid to cover up others: and the clamour—the stupid but vehement clamour—that “great is Diana of the Ephesians!”—is raised to cry down the truths, which they are unable to refute. But however little agreement there is among those men in other points, they all *agree* in the indignation they express against the few who declare the true gospel, which owns no distinction of character or state between man and man,—but that of those who *believe* it and those who *believe* it not;—which addresses all men as lost sinners;—and levels to the dust all the fancied superiority of some above others—in declaring that “*WHOSOEVER believeth shall be saved.*”

But I now turn to the remarks which you make, on the obnoxious passage you have quoted from my Address. You observe—that you must “conceive it clearly to mean, that men are to *do* nothing in order to their obtaining God’s grace and mercy.”—Let us pause there.—Sir, you conceive very right. I do mean that the Gospel reveals the divine grace and mercy,—not “to him that *worketh*” or *doeth* any thing in order to obtain it—but “to him that *believeth* on Him who justifieth the *ungodly.*” I do mean to assert that this is the essential character of the Gospel. It proclaims that “when we

were *without strength* in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*;" and that "in him *all who believe* are justified"—"have righteousness and strength;"—"not by works of righteousness that they have done, but of his mercy who has saved them." And I do mean to assert farther—that, if it were otherwise, it would not be *grace*, or mere *mercy* in the Scriptural sense of the word. For the Scriptures tell us that—"to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of *Grace* but of debt:" and again—"if it be by *Grace*, then is it no more of *works*—otherwise *Grace* is no more *Grace*; but if it be of works, then is it no more *Grace*—otherwise work is no more work." But when I say that I do mean to assert all this, let me remind you that the assertion rests upon an authority infinitely higher than mine. It has been, and ever will be, offensive to those who think that they are not altogether *without strength*, nor altogether *ungodly*. They would rather be put upon trying their supposed remnant of strength, by having some little task assigned them, that they should *do* in order to obtain the favour of God: and then they would be content to compliment the Almighty, with calling it *Grace* and *Mercy*. Yet that Gospel which they reject is the only real *glad tidings* to sinners: and "blessed is the people who know the joyful sound."

Those who contradict the assertion—that men are to *do* nothing in order to their obtaining God's grace and mercy—must suppose that they have found a different way of obtaining it from any which the Apostles knew of.—When one of these was addressed of old by an alarmed sinner, scared by the terrors of the Lord, with that question—"What must I *do* to be saved?" did he tell him in reply—*do this or that preparatory work in order to obtain or be qualified for the mercy of God?* Nay—the Apostles were better taught, and were better teachers.—The answer is explicit—"BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

But I would be glad to be informed explicitly—what kind of work this is, that sinners are to *do* in order to their obtaining God's grace and mercy. It must of necessity be something *done* by them independently of that grace and mercy, of which they are yet supposed to be destitute; and I suppose it must be something of a *religious* nature. Now what say the Scriptures concerning the Religious works of unrighteous men? *The sacrifice of the wicked*—that sacrifice, by offering which they intimate an expectation of its being accepted—*is*—what? something that contributes to their obtaining God's grace and mercy?—no such thing—*is*—*an abomination to the Lord*.—What else indeed can it be? Their persons unrighteous in his sight, how can any of their works be accepted? Their hearts enmity against him and "alienated from the life of God—through the ignorance that is in them,"—how can their offerings be imposed on the Searcher of hearts, as any thing good?—and if there were no other text in the Bible to prove, that by the *wicked* we are not to understand merely the *irreligious profligates* of the world, that text which I have just now quoted, would be sufficient to prove it: for the wicked is there presented to our view in a *religious* exercise—offering his *sacrifice*.—And if his religious acts—so far from contributing "to obtain God's grace and mercy"—are *an abomination to*

the LORD, I am at a loss to know what else he is to *do* in order to obtain it. The word of God testifies against all he *does* as sin; and protests against the proud hopes that he cherishes from his *doings* as vain and deceitful:—but, in the glorious Gospel, *brings near a righteousness and salvation* suited to such a wicked sinner; and suited to him—as in every thing else—so in its assurance that *who-soever BELIEVETH shall be saved*. And I am bold to assert that, the more every system different from this is examined, the more absurdly inconsistent it will be found with the dictates of right reason; as well as the more impiously derogatory to the perfections of JEHOVAH.

You go on, sir, in your statement of what you conceive to be my meaning; and you observe that you must conceive me to mean—that if men be of “the number of Christ’s redeemed people, it will be given them, without any effort on their part, to believe on Christ with such a faith as will imply the *spirit of adoption* and a *new heart*!” The mark of *admiration*, which you annex to this, is designed, I suppose, to intimate your astonishment that I should hold an opinion, which appears to you so incredible and preposterous. But strange as it appears to you, I shrink not from accepting your statement of my opinion. And I must observe to you that your note of incredulous admiration would be just as much in place, if affixed to those declarations of our Lord:—“all that the father giveth me shall come to me:”—“no man can come to me except the father which hath sent me draw him—except it be *given* unto him of my father:”—“the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live:”—“a *new heart* will I *give* you:”—“I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they all *shall know me* from the least to the greatest: for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” No words can more expressly assert the truth—so offensive to the pride of man,—but so glorious to God, and so joyful in reality for sinners—that the whole of this work of faith—whereby they are brought to the saving knowledge of the true God—are turned to him, and are partakers of a new mind and a new spirit,—is the exclusive work of Him, who hath said—“*I will work; and who shall let it?*”—and his work—in those who are represented as no less incapable of doing any thing to obtain those blessings, than the *dead* are incapable of contributing to their own resurrection.

Men, naturally in the blindness and pride of their hearts, will not credit these declarations of God concerning his name, his purposes, and his work; and you will always find unbelieving professors endeavouring to lower the greatness and the freedom of the gift of God. They think that they can do without receiving quite *so much*; or without *receiving* it in the way of a free gift—“not of works but of grace—or of mere mercy;—that they can get it, without having it bestowed on them, as on those who themselves deserve nothing, but that eternal death, which is “the wages of sin,”—and who can *do* nothing to avert the righteous sentence pronounced against sin, or to

qualify themselves for being made partakers of the blessings of salvation. They will be content to talk of themselves and their powers very *humbly* (as they think)—if you only allow that they can do *something*, ever so little, upon which the difference in their favour is to turn, and not upon the sovereign grace of God. And they will be content to talk very *honourably* (as they think) of his grace, and of receiving a very great deal from it, if you only allow that they are not to receive all—the whole of salvation from first to last; or that they are not to receive it as his free gift, which might justly be withheld.—But let them dispute against it ever so much, “this is the record—that God hath *given* to us”—to us who *believe* on the Son of God—“*eternal life*; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.”

You intimate your astonishment at my supposing that sinners are given to believe on Christ—“without any *effort* on their part:” and while I do not wonder at your holding such language, as I know how common it is in the professing world—even in that part of it which is falsely called Evangelical,—and by what great names the language has long been sanctioned;—pardon me, sir, for plainly telling you that it is language as pregnant with absurdity, as it is opposite to the whole tenor of Scripture. Let its advocates come forward, and if they can, in unambiguous language, describe the *effort* of an *unbelieving* sinner to *believe* the Gospel; the *effort* of a man to *believe* the truth which he *disbelieves*—and not only disbelieves but *hates*, and is making every *effort* to overturn! Pardon me for borrowing your note of admiration, to distinguish one of the many glaring absurdities, involved in the denial of that opinion—to which you annex it.

You proceed to state that you must conceive me to mean—that “until this work is divinely wrought by the Spirit of God, all endeavours are fruitless, all repentance but mere workings of the evil nature;—and the most poignant sorrow for sin, and the most lively solicitude about eternal things no more a preliminary step to *faith in Christ* than Murder or Adultery.” Indeed, sir, I have said so: and I am glad to find that upon this subject at least I have spoken so plainly in my Address, that you have not failed to understand my meaning. In the *religious world*, to be sure, my meaning—as far as it is attended to—must excite great indignation.—“What! all our endeavours fruitless—because we *believe not* these strange doctrines called the Gospel. What! all our efforts to repent and reform ourselves and qualify ourselves for being objects of the divine grace and mercy—worth nothing or less than nothing. What! we who have been so long striving to make ourselves so good—shall we be represented as on a level with the murderer and adulterer; and not brought one step nearer to God than the vilest profligates? What! are we to be told that the wretch, who has been to the present moment the vilest profligate, if he now *but believes* the Gospel, is justified and shall be saved eternally?—and that we so religious and so well disposed, shall be damned unless we believe it, and—believing it—repent with a repentance of which we are yet destitute? Away with such *licentious* doctrine, and with such *pestilent fellows*

as preach it! *It is not fit for any rational and virtuous hearers; and they are not fit for any respectable society.*" Such is the language of the Pharisaic heart, stumbling at the cross of Christ. Such is that offence of the cross, which many Evangelical professors are very solicitous to conceal or disguise, lest their good name and popularity in the religious world should suffer; but which those who know the grace of God in truth, will desire to bring forward into view,—lamenting indeed that so many are offended at it, but well knowing that "the preaching of the cross—while it is to them that perish foolishness, is unto those who are saved the *power of God.*"

Were I as ambitious as many, of supporting my opinions by the aid of human authority, I might call your attention, sir, to the sound words contained in the 13th Article of the Church of England; in which it is declared *of works before justification—that forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, they do not make men meet to receive grace; but rather have the nature of sin:*—and I might express my surprise at any member of that church decrying this as a novel and strange doctrine. But it is rather to be wondered at that men should do this, who have the Bible in their hands, and profess to receive it as the word of God. Have they never read in Scripture the contrast between "the righteousness which is of the law," and "the righteousness which is of faith?" (Rom. x. 4—9.) that while the language of the former is—"the man which *doeth* these things shall live by them,"—the latter speaketh on this wise—"the word is *nigh* thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that if thou shalt *confess* with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe* in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."—Have they never read how—"the Gentiles which *followed not* after righteousness"—took no *preliminary steps* towards it—"attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of *faith*;" while "Israel which *followed* after the law of righteousness"—busied in doing this and that *in order to obtain God's grace and mercy*—"had not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore?"—Let the Apostle answer his own question—"Because they sought it not by *faith*, but as it were by the *works* of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone, as it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence:—and *whosoever believeth* on him shall not be ashamed." Rom. ix. 30—33.

Nor tell me, sir, that the *works* which you would have sinners *do* now as *preliminary steps* to Justification, are of a different kind from those about which the unbelieving Jews busied themselves. The Apostle marks their fatal error, as consisting—not in any mistake about the *kind* of works to be done for justification,—but in their radical ignorance of "God's righteousness," and of the only way in which a sinner can be justified in his sight;—not by *doing* any thing, but by *believing* in Christ, who is the end of the Law for Righteousness to *every one* that believeth." The distinguishing glory of the Gospel is, that it reveals *his Work*, finished in his obedience unto death, in which every thing that was necessary to be *done* for the justification and acceptance of the *chief of Sinners* has been completed by himself alone: and that it brings *near* this righteousness, to the most ungodly,

in the divine declaration, that "WHOSOEVER *believeth* in HIM, is justified from all things, has peace with God, and is accepted in the beloved." Those who represent something still to be *done* by the sinner—(under the name of repentance, or whatever other name)—as a *preliminary step to faith in Christ*, contradict the essential principle of the Gospel;—represent righteousness as still at a distance from sinners (perhaps only a *few steps* off) put them upon *getting near* to it, and so *following* after that which they never will in this way attain. Those who act upon such principles prove in this, that they *disbelieve* the Gospel; and that their works are works of *unbelief*. You may tell them that they are *preliminary steps* to believing: but I must still testify that they are no more so than Murder or Adultery. "Whosoever *believeth* that Jesus is the CHRIST is born of God,"—"begotten with the *word of truth*," (1 John v. 1. James i. 18): and till then the sinner is "alienated from the *life* of God—*dead* in trespasses and in sins;" and all his works are "dead works"—no one of them more than another a *preliminary step* to faith. And especially those works which constitute his *Religion*—which he "does in order to his obtaining God's grace and mercy"—they above all others are grounded upon a denial of the Gospel, and stand pointed in direct opposition to the *faith* of Christ.

You think it very hard that nothing should be allowed to "the most poignant sorrow for sin, and the most lively solicitude about eternal things," as preliminary steps to faith. But what kind of *sorrow for sin* is that, which precedes the faith of the Gospel? Not certainly a godly sorrow; not a sorrow springing from any *love* to God or to his Law:—for the unbelieving sinner hates the true God, and manifests the hostility of his mind especially in his rejection of that Gospel—in which the glory of the divine character is most conspicuously displayed. His sorrow is at most but the carnal grief, arising from apprehension of a God against whom he is at enmity; and be not shocked, sir, when I say that it is in hell that sorrow will be most poignant,—though I do not conceive that it will bring the condemned subject of it one *step* nearer to heaven. And as to the most lively solicitude about eternal things—it is, in the unbelieving sinner, but an awful foreboding of that judgment to come, of which he still hates the thought; and for which all his most strenuous efforts to *prepare* himself are but—so many strenuous efforts to subvert the principles of righteousness and truth on which it shall proceed. How far such workings of his evil nature are calculated "to obtain God's grace and mercy,"—how far they "are things to be *done* in order to his obtaining it,"—I recommend to the consideration of the advocates for *preliminary steps to faith in Christ*. I well know that they are very numerous: for half the books that I have seen—even under evangelical titles—and written by men of great name in the religious world for evangelical principles,—seem to be stuffed with directions to sinners who are considered as mid-way to Christ,—mid-way, between a state of nature and a state of grace. But while I take the word of God and not the writings of men for my rule, I can acknowledge no such characters;—and can consider the fairest directions given to sinners, *as in such a state*, calculated only to lead them fatally

astray,—directions for walking very *religiously* to hell. It was an old lamentation of the prophet—“The leaders of this people cause them to err: and they that are led of them are destroyed;” and it is one, for which there has been continued occasion to the present day.

After having stated what you conceive me to mean in that obnoxious passage, which you quote from my Address—(and it appears that you conceive my meaning aright),—you add; “to *reason* against such positions would I apprehend be a very hopeless attempt.” Indeed, sir, it would; for it would be an attempt to overturn the everlasting Gospel,—to annul that word of God which *abideth for ever*. “The simpler and surer method,” however, of combating my positions, which you say you will have recourse to, would be the most conclusive mode of *reasoning* against them, if they were unscriptural. For you employ the nine following pages in attempting to prove, that they are inconsistent with the language of John the Baptist—our Lord himself—and his apostles. If you had only called in to your aid the prophets who preceded the appearance of our Lord,—which you might have done with equal facility,—you would then have employed *all* the scriptures in attempting to prove—what?—that sinners under the power of *unbelief*, rejecting the concurrent testimony which all the Scriptures bear to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, may yet have *repentance unto life*. This, sir, is indeed a very *hopeless* attempt; but alas! it is also a very awful one. I proceed with a sigh, but without apprehension of the issue, to examine your arguments.

The first witness you produce to combat my position, that without *faith* in CHRIST there is no *repentance unto life*—no saving change of mind,—is John the Baptist:—the immediate harbinger of the Messiah’s appearance in the flesh produced to testify that sinners may have *repentance unto life*, though they *disbelieve* his testimony concerning that Messiah! And how is this proved?—Why—John the Baptist was sent “before the face of the Lord to prepare his way;” and therefore the repentance which he preached must be *preparatory* and *preliminary* to faith. Nay, sir, he “prepared the way of the Lord;” by announcing that the Messiah, whom the people professed to expect and desire, was immediately about to appear; by declaring that he was sent “to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might *believe*.” And accordingly he did bear witness to Christ as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,”—as “above all,—all things given into his hand by the Father.”—He proclaimed “salvation to his people by the remission of their sins,—through the tender mercy of God, whereby the day-spring from on high had visited them.” His testimony was thus most explicit against that for which you contend;—“he that *believeth* on the Son,” said he, “hath everlasting life; and he that *believeth* not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” And most careful was he to guard his hearers against resting in any false view of himself,—in any view of him but that of a *witness* of CHRIST “that HE should be made manifest to Israel.”—And from this preacher of the *faith* of CHRIST you endeavour to extort a testimony, in favour of a repentance “preceding *faith* and unconnected with it”—as *repentance unto life*.

But you urge that the Baptist said—"Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is *at hand*." Why, sir, this his call to *repentance* is palpably founded on the *Gospel* of CHRIST, in the very reason by which it is enforced. The Baptist's call—rescued from the cloud of ambiguity in which you have endeavoured to envelope it,—amounts to this :—"Ye children of Abraham according to the flesh! Ye, who profess the *faith* of believing Abraham;—who expect and desire the appearance of that redeemer, that King of Israel whose day Abraham saw afar off—of whose glorious name and office and work Moses and all the prophets—sent unto your nation in times past—have testified! Ye professors of the faith of Patriarchs and Prophets! the long expected *appearance* of the King of Israel is *at hand*. The Lord whom ye seek is about to come to his Temple. But who shall abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? The thoughts of many *hearts* shall be revealed. Multitudes who have professed the faith of him, shall be *offended at him*,—shall stumble and be broken; and by their rejection of the true MESSIAH when he is revealed, will shew that they have not had the faith of that Abraham whom they call their father—in their natural descent from whom they pride themselves. Be ye therefore warned; and prove that you are indeed the spiritual children of *believing* Abraham—that you are really partakers of that *faith* which you profess,—not by any of your outward ceremonies, but—by an inward renewal of your hearts and minds,—by that *repentance unto life* which distinguishes *true believers*. And evince the reality of that repentance, by bringing forth *fruits suitable* to it; and parting each of you with that offending right hand or right eye, which are the characteristic evils prevailing in your several professions of life. Let hypocritical professors know that the axe lieth at the root of the tree; that no speciousness of false profession will conceal them from him whose *eyes are as a flame of fire*:—that his fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat—*his true disciples*—into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire."

Such, sir, was the preaching of John the Baptist;—and it would be well for you to have considered its import better, before you represented him as an advocate for *unbelieving repentance*; and before you indulged the keenness of sarcastic indignation at the truth, in comparing him with the *profane infidel* and *zealous religionist*, of whom I have spoken in my Address;—and concerning whom I have observed that—they differ only with respect to the quantity of work to be *done*, "in order to obtain God's grace and mercy."—Let me tell you, sir, that the Baptist prescribed no *task*, great or small, to be *done* for any such purpose; but expressly preached the *faith* of CHRIST to the chief of sinners—(whom you would think most unqualified for it)—and free remission of sins *in his name* to every one that *believed*. And had he not done so, he would have preached a very different Gospel from all the Prophets, and all the Apostles; and from that which HE declared, whose way the Baptist was sent to prepare.

You endeavour to prop up the weak cause which you espouse, by observing that—by the *kingdom of Heaven* which John declares to be

at hand, we must understand—"the *spiritual kingdom* of the Messiah, which *was to be* set up in the hearts of believers:" and that it not having yet actually *come*, the repentance which he called to must be repentance preliminary to believing. Well, sir, let us try this argument by applying it to another part of John's preaching. You cannot deny that he preached CHRIST,—the Lamb of God;—that he called the people to "*believe on HIM:*"—for so the Apostle Paul expressly asserts—(Acts xix. 4.); and so it appears from the whole tenor of his testimony to Christ;—as it would be rather odd to give a *testimony* that he intended should not be *believed*. But according to you, the *spiritual kingdom* of the MESSIAH—which *was to be* set up in the hearts of *believers*—had not yet actually *come*: so that the *faith* to which he called them must be an *unbelieving faith*,—as you think the *repentance* to which he called them was an *unbelieving repentance*!—I believe I might dismiss your argument here. But let me add that the expression of the Baptist's—"the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"—means neither more nor less than this,—*the promised and long expected King of Israel is about to be openly manifested*:—and that long before his *appearance* in the flesh, at least from the time of Abel, there were *believers*, in whom his *spiritual kingdom* was set up—that kingdom which the Apostle declares to be "*righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*" Indeed if it were not so, the true God had no spiritual church or people upon earth—for more than the first four thousand years.

I know it is a very common idea that the gospel was not known, till after the coming of Christ in the flesh; and that—before this—sinners were justified in the sight of God and saved without *faith*, by their good dispositions and good works;—but that now, to be sure, we are called to believe the Gospel in *some* sense or another,—to assent to the proposition that *Christ has come*:—but this, rather as the best *criterion* of *good dispositions* than any thing else,—and with a perfect license to put our own *meaning*, whatever pleases us best, upon the Scriptural testimony about CHRIST, his person, and his work. And the men, who think this, often talk very finely and honourably of the religion of Christ, as the *perfection of the religion of nature*,—carrying it further and higher than any man could have carried it without him;—and as therefore the *best* of all the religions, that have ever appeared in the world. But indeed those men know nothing of *Christianity* yet; and believe not what the Scriptures either of the Old or New Testament declare. All who have ever been justified in the sight of God and saved since the beginning of the world, have been justified and saved in one and the same way—(here those men will agree with me, unless perhaps they question whether any have really been damned);—but not one, except by Christ and through *faith in him*.

The same glorious gospel has been in the world, since the first promise of God to fallen man:—the same *glad tidings*, to *lost sinners*, of *JEHOVAH the Saviour*, or (in one word) *JESUS*;—for the former is but a literal translation of the latter. He has been testified of in the same character; and not only as the Son of God, but as the Son of Man—"the seed of the woman, that shall bruise the serpent's

head;" the LORD in whom Israel—(his believing people) "shall be justified and saved with an everlasting salvation." The record of him has been the same, whether it pointed to him as yet to appear in the flesh,—or as having appeared, and finished the work of obedience unto death which the Father hath given him to do on earth. And all who from the beginning have "known the joyful sound"—or, in other words, have *believed* the GOSPEL which proclaims his name,—they and they alone have been justified and saved; whether they lived before his manifestation in the flesh, or since. Their faith and hope and joy have been the same; their Saviour and their God has been the same; their religion has been the same: and all religion but theirs,—whether called the religion of *nature*, or by whatever other name, has been a religion of lies, suggested by the father of lies, to hide the view of the truth;—has been the religion of infidelity;—and its end is destruction.—No wonder that righteous *believing* Abel (Heb. xi. 4.) fell a victim to the indignation of unbelieving Cain. No wonder that the *little flock* of Christ have been a people ever hated by the world. (1 John iii. 13.) No wonder that the *religious world*, more especially, is filled with wrath and bitterness, at the testimony borne against their false gods and false hopes. And in the view of the rich Grace which makes believers to differ from those who are yet out of the way,—no wonder that they should rejoice when they are "counted worthy to suffer for his name," who is their Saviour;—and even resign their lives with that language, in which he of old prayed for his murderers,—“Father! forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

You appear, sir, to have been secretly half conscious that you stood on weak ground, in arguing from the supposition—that there were not in the Baptist's time any *believers*, in whose hearts the *spiritual Kingdom* of the Messiah had yet been set up: for you immediately change your form of expression, and observe that he called them to repentance—"before they could have the *spirit of adoption*;"—referring your readers for the proof of this to Acts xix. 1—5. and John vii. 37—39. Now, sir, it might be sufficient for me to reply that, if you mean by having the *spirit of adoption*, the same thing as having the *spirit of Faith*,—or being given to *believe* the record of God concerning the Messiah—I have already proved, both from the preaching of John the Baptist, and all the Scriptures, that this spirit was given long before; and that to have this spirit was the distinguishing mark of God's true Israel, from the beginning of the world. But, if you mean by the *spirit of adoption*, something distinct from the *spirit of Faith*, and by having it something distinct from *believing*,—then your argument obviously has nothing at all to do with the question at issue between us. I have asserted that *there is no repentance unto life preliminary to faith*:—you assert there is, and attempt to prove it by shewing that the Baptist called the people to repent before they could have—*faith*? no;—but something (on this supposition) altogether different from *faith*. If I had asserted that men cannot walk before they are *alive*, you might just as conclusively set about disproving it, by shewing that they may be exhorted to walk before—they *have wings*.

But with respect to your assertion itself—that men could not at that time have the *spirit of adoption*,—I conceive that it is false; and I am certain that the passages, to which you refer for the proof of it, are wholly misapplied. The former of them (Acts xix. 1—6.) evidently speaks of the *miraculous gifts* and open *effusion* of the HOLY GHOST, which took place in the church after our Lord's ascension. And that the latter passage (Jo. vii. 37—39.) alludes to the same, appears more than probable, from the express reference in it to the prophecies of the Old Testament—concerning the *pouring out* of the spirit in the latter days—(see for instance Joel ii. 28, 29.) :—which Prophecies the Apostles declared to be accomplished, in that outward and miraculous *effusion* of the HOLY GHOST, which commenced on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 16, &c.

If the passages, therefore, to which you refer, proved that men could not have the *spirit of adoption* in the days of John the Baptist, —because this visible out-pouring of the Spirit in his miraculous gifts had not yet taken place;—they would equally prove that men could not have the spirit of adoption *now*, or ever since that visible out-pouring of the Spirit has *ceased*—with the accomplishment of the ends for which it was designed :—an inference—which, I trust, you, sir, would not wish to sanction. But in truth the passages have nothing at all to do with the purpose, for which you have quoted them. The spirit of adoption is so distinct from that effusion of the Holy Ghost in his miraculous gifts, to which those texts relate, that either may subsist without the other;—but is not, I conceive, at all distinct from the spirit of *faith*, or that spirit—whereby sinners are given to *believe* the glad tidings of the grace of God,—are warranted and emboldened to view and call on him as their “ FATHER who is in Heaven.” Such was the language of *believers*, long before the time of John the Baptist;—“ doubtless thou art our FATHER, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not :—thou, O LORD! art our FATHER—our REDEEMER.” And such was the language, which the carnal *presumption* of *unbelieving* Jews imitated, while our Lord was yet upon earth; when—warned by him that “ they were of their father the Devil, and that the lusts of their Father they would do”—they vainly boasted—“ we have one Father even God;”—grounding their proud confidence on their natural descent from Abraham. But their boast was repelled by our Lord, as the similar presumption of *unbelieving* professors of Christianity is to be repelled at this day;—“ If God were your Father, ye would love me.”

But while I thus contend that the faith of the people of God has been the same from the beginning,—the author, the object, and the fruits of it the same;—let me not be understood to make light of the superior advantages which believers enjoy, since the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, and since the accomplishment of so many prophecies concerning his incarnation—his work on earth—his sufferings unto death—and the glory that should follow.—The *clearer discovery* of the *same* joyful truths (as well as the wider promulgation of them), which has thus been afforded to the church, renders *the least in the kingdom of Heaven greater than JOHN* the

BAPTIST: the least believer,—since the shadows have passed away, and the true light has shone by the appearance of the Son of righteousness,—higher in his privileges than the most favoured believer of the same gospel, who preceded that period. This, sir, I readily—I thankfully concede: but this, rightly understood, detracts not a tittle from the force of my argument.

You next produce the LORD JESUS himself, as a witness to prove—that sinners may have *repentance unto life*, who yet *believe not* in him. This attempt, sir, might have been spared; and I am glad that you forbore to “hurt my feelings or sully your own page,” by enlarging on it more. You rest your argument—on its being written of him also that he “began to preach, saying, *Repent*; for the kingdom of Heaven is *at hand*.” I believe I have already abundantly refuted that argument, in the case of the Baptist: but in this instance it happens very unfortunately for you, that in the parallel passage of the Evangelist Mark—expressions are employed that tear away all the flimsy covering of ambiguous language by which the weakness of your argument might be concealed—from readers unacquainted with the phraseology of scripture.—“Jesus came into Galilee, *preaching the GOSPEL* of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent ye*, and *believe the GOSPEL*.” (Mark i. 14, 15.) Yet you appeal “to all *impartial* judgments,”—(in these matters there is less *impartiality* than you are aware of in the judgments of the unbelieving world; they *hate* the truth)—“whether our Redeemer in thus opening his mission did not clearly intimate, that they whom he addressed might *truly repent*,”—though they *believed not the GOSPEL*; “and also that their thus repenting would prove a *preliminary step*” to *faith*.—In stating this monstrous inference, which you draw from our Lord’s preaching, I only substitute my own plain words, that you expressly contradict, in place of the equivocal words,—“spirit of adoption” and “appropriate blessings of his spiritual kingdom”—in which you wrap up your sentiments.

I would be very glad to know what you suppose this *true repentance* of an *unbelieving* sinner to consist in;—of a sinner whom our Lord himself so often declared to be a hater of God and a child of the Devil. I perceive indeed that in a subsequent paragraph you give some account of it, which I shall have to take notice of in its place: but it is all couched in metaphorical language. Let me recommend you to speak it plainly: and then I shall have an easier task in shewing—that no one part of it can be *true, genuine, spiritual*, except in those who *believe the gospel*; and that your *unbelieving repentance* “is no more a preliminary step to faith in Christ—than murder or adultery.”

But you proceed to marshal against my offensive position—the APOSTLES of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. What! Sir:—those apostles who were commissioned by him “to preach *in his name* repentance and remission of sins,”—are they too produced by you to prove, that there may be *repentance unto life* (and consequent remission of sins) *without faith in his name*? But let me curb the feelings, which such an attempt must excite in a believer of the truth; and calmly pro-

ceed to vindicate it against you. You own that the Messiah's spiritual kingdom had now come; though here also you misapply a text (Mark ix. 1.), the accomplishment of which had not at that time taken place. But you go on to say—"on the day of pentecost the *terror of an alarmed conscience* produced in those who had come together *sorrow for sin* and *solicitude about the things of salvation*." Stop a moment, sir:—the words which you here mark in Italics are borrowed from that offensive passage of my address which you are opposing; and in which I have said that there may be such *sorrow* and such *solicitude* produced by the terror of an *alarmed* conscience, without any *real* repentance—or—*repentance unto life*,—because without any work of saving *faith* in the heart; which faith, I have asserted, must ever accompany and produce *true* repentance. Now let us see how far the instance you are producing from scripture, will support my assertion—or your contradiction of it. I resume your words:—"they therefore say to the Apostles, *Men and brethren what shall we do?* Peter forthwith answered—*REPENT and be baptized every one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins.*" Well, sir,—it undeniably follows from this, that Peter thought with me, that all their *sorrow for sin* and *solicitude about the things of salvation* which sprung from the *terror of an alarmed conscience*, constituted not true repentance; for while they manifest all that sorrow and solicitude, he yet calls them to *repent*. So far—the passage is point blank with me, and against you.

But you ask whether it does not from this passage, "inevitably follow—that in St. Peter's judgment repentance was a *preliminary step* to saving *faith*?"—I answer your question with saying—that the contrary inevitably follows from it: it inevitably follows that in St. Peter's judgment there can be—as I have asserted—no *true* repentance—no repentance *unto life* previous to *faith*, or unconnected with it; but that he considered *repentance*—(as I have stated it)—to be "that *new mind* of which we are made partakers when we are given to *believe* with the heart on the Son of God."—For, if he included not *faith* in Christ in his idea of repentance, then he called them not to believe in him at all;—then he preached to them *remission of sins* independently of Christ and unconnected with the faith of him; nay, he called them to be *baptized* in his name previous to *believing* in him.

The fact is, sir, that—in calling them to *repent*—the Apostle called them to nothing else, than to be of *another mind towards the LORD JESUS* than that mind of *unbelief* which they had hitherto manifested. In the preceding part of his address he had charged them plainly with the wickedness of their *unbelieving* rejection of him; and had testified to them that "God had made that same JESUS, whom they had crucified, both LORD and CHRIST,"—his Anointed one,—to whom that work of salvation—in which all the Prophets had foretold him—exclusively belonged. And when interrogated by the multitude with that question, "What shall we do?"—(a question very natural to men struck by the extraordinary display of divine power which they beheld, and assured by the Apostles that it was a display of the kingly power of that JESUS,

whom they “by wicked hands had crucified and slain, but whom GOD had raised up,”—assured that HE had “shed forth that which they then saw and heard”)—when thus interrogated by the alarmed multitude, Peter directed them—not to any *preliminary step* to believing in him—but to believe in him as *the CHRIST*—to *repent*, or be of *another mind* towards him than they had before;—(and if their former mind was *unbelieving*, this *new mind* to which they are called must be the mind of *faith*)—and to be “baptized every one of them *in his name* for the remission of sins.” He directs them to no *preparatory* works that they should “do in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy;” but—amidst all the load of sin which lay upon them, as the betrayers and murderers of the Prince of life—he at once points them to Him as the saviour of sinners; and proclaims remission of sins to them through faith in his name.

And accordingly what was the result? “They that *gladly received his word*”—a word which, according to your misinterpretation of it, did not call them to believe in Christ at all—“they that *gladly received his word*”—or *believed* his testimony of the LORD JESUS,—“were *baptized*—the same day—and continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers;”—joined together—“having all things common—eating their meat with gladness and singleness of heart—praising God—and having favour with all the people.”

Such was the glorious result in them that *believed*: while the rest, whatever *sorrow for sin* and *solicitude* and *alarm* had been excited in them, remained as they were before—dead in sins and enemies of the cross of Christ,—nor brought one *step* nearer to God, by all their infidel conviction or infidel repentance, than the murderer or adulterer. Yet many of them, no doubt, prided themselves in their self-righteousness,—in what they had *done* or could “do in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy;” and scornfully rejected that gospel which put them on a level with the vilest—by proclaiming pardon and righteousness and eternal life to *all whosoever believed* in the LORD JESUS.—If the limits of this letter allowed me to draw the contrast—between the mode of the Apostle’s address to that multitude, and the mode in which we might conceive them to be addressed by the grave and pious advocates for *preliminary steps to faith in Christ*—(whether under the name of a *sound law work*—or a preparatory *repentance*—or whatever other name)—a striking contrast indeed would be afforded. The enlightened observer will be at no loss to see as striking a contrast between the effects.

But you adduce the similar expression which the same Apostle used, in addressing the multitude—assembled on occasion of the healing of the man lame from his birth. On that occasion also, Peter having testified to them that GOD had *glorified his Son Jesus—the Holy one and the Just*,—that JESUS, whom they had *delivered up—denied—and killed*—but of whose resurrection from the dead the Apostles were witnesses; having declared to them that *those things which GOD had before shown by the mouth of all his prophets, he had so fulfilled*;—he adds, in the words which you quote, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” And

from this passage also, you ask whether "it does not inevitably follow, that in St. Peter's judgment *repentance* was a *preliminary step* to saving *faith*?"—The imposing tone of confidence, with which such questions are put, is the only thing that renders them dangerous. No, sir,—I repeat my former answer :—the contrary inevitably follows. Otherwise, the Apostle directed them to some other way for their sins being blotted out, than through the *faith* of that SAVIOUR whom he had so expressly preached to them.—Nay—on your supposition—he gave them to understand, that their sins would be blotted out, though they should continue to *disbelieve* the testimony of Christ. For he certainly gives them to understand, that their sins would be blotted out if they should *repent* and be *converted* : which you contend was but a *preliminary step* to saving *faith*. And in this case it is hard to say what you mean, by attributing to FAITH the epithet of *saving* at all ; for salvation then accompanies some *unbelieving repentance*.

From the use you make of that quotation, it appears that you conceive that *conversion* also, as well as *repentance*, precedes saving *faith* ; for the same inference, which you assert inevitably follows about the one, must *as* inevitably follow about the other. Now do, sir, seriously consider this question :—if sinners—yet under the power of *unbelief*—may, notwithstanding, have *repentance unto life* and be *converted* to God, and so (according to the Apostle) may have *remission of sins* ; may they not—must not such sinners be saved—whether they ever *believe* in Christ or not ? whether, or not, they ever take that *farther step*, to which you consider repentance and conversion as *preliminary* ? And in that case, must we not—to be at all consistent—lay aside the talk of *saving* FAITH ? And may we not as well lay aside the GOSPEL of CHRIST altogether, and set about making sinners *good men*, and calling them to *repent* and *turn* to God without perplexing them with those offensive *doctrines* of the cross of Christ ?—In fact, those who really hold such systems, as you attempt to vindicate, have laid aside the GOSPEL altogether ; though decency and fear make them still encumber themselves—with something essentially different, under the same name. And to this class belong all those who really hold that any thing is to be *done* by the sinner "in order to obtain God's grace and mercy ;"—that *any* sinner is more or less authorized or warranted than another to *believe* the gospel of his grace ;—or that *any* sinner who *believes* it, without having *done* any thing that could be a *preliminary step to faith in Christ*, is not in that gospel assured of salvation.

You assert, sir, that—*on my plan*—"St. Peter ought not to have called on them to repent, until they could believe that their sins *were blotted out*." And among all the extraordinary assertions which I have had to combat in your letter, I know not one more extraordinary than this. Let us observe what you call *my plan*, and I call the Apostolic—the scriptural plan.—I have asserted that sinners—previous to their believing in Christ, have no *repentance unto life* ;—and that whosoever believeth in him has *true* repentance, and has *remission of sins*. Hence—(to borrow your expression) it *inevitably follows* that, until they repent and believe the Gospel, they have no scrip-

tural warrant for believing that their sins are *blotted out* :—and that any—either *lunble hope* or *strong confidence* which they cherish, that their sins are blotted out—while they continue to dis-believe the Gospel of Christ, and therefore continue *impenitent*,—is nothing else than the delusive expectation of infidel presumption. Yet you assert that, upon this plan, they “ought not to be called on to repent—until they can believe that their sins are blotted out?”—while the essential character of the plan, against which you contend, is this,—that *no* sinner can be warranted to believe that his sins are blotted out—until he has “that *new mind*—or *repentance*—of which we are made partakers, when we are given to believe with the heart on the Son of God.” Your assertion is so extraordinary, that I am indeed at a loss to account for it from *you* ; especially *as*—upon this subject—you appear to have so clearly understood my meaning, while you were warmly indignant at it, that I cannot suppose you mistook the plan, from which you attempt to draw such a preposterous inference.

I need say nothing upon the next sentence in your remarks ; as you only beat the air in opposing a notion which cannot be more inconsistent with your plan, than it is with mine.—But at the close of the paragraph, you seem to return to the point, from which we set out. Again, quoting the Apostle’s words, “repent—that your sins may be blotted out”—or (as you prefer translating them) “*IN ORDER to your sins being blotted out* :”—you ask with an air of triumph—“if this does not describe one thing as a *preliminary step* to another, what terms in language could ?” that is, sir,—(if your question mean any thing connected with the subject in debate, and be not introduced merely to impose on inattentive readers—a supposition which I cannot admit, for a moment when I consider who my antagonist is)—it describes *repentance* as a *preliminary step to faith in CHRIST*. Can you, sir,—a gentleman versed in the meaning of language,—can you deliberately assert that it describes any such thing ? Must you not acknowledge, that the two *things* mentioned in the apostle’s words, one of which you call a *preliminary step* to the other, are—the one—*repentance*—and the other—*the blotting out of sins* ? And because *repentance* is declared to be essential that our *sins may be blotted out*, or (as you choose strangely to express it) to be a *preliminary step* to the *blotting out of sins*,—do you mean to infer that *repentance* is a *preliminary step to faith in CHRIST* ?—It would be an inference, as good as many that you have drawn ; but such an one as indeed is most puzzling to an antagonist. It is very puzzling to cope with that, which—like an unsubstantial phantom—“is, as the air, invulnerable.”—I shall hasten to resume the subject in my next.

I remain, Sir,

Your faithful humble servant,
JOHN WALKER.

TRIN. COL., Sept. 15, 1803.

LETTER VI.

Then came his disciples, and said unto him, knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Mat. xv. 12, 13.

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. John xii. 46.

If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. 2 Cor. iv. 3.

Not as many which corrupt the word of God. 2 Cor. ii. 17.

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SIR,—The more frequently I read that paragraph in your Letter, which next offers itself to my consideration—the more unable I am to conjecture what rational bearing you intended it should have upon the question at issue between us;—whether *repentance unto life* be

(as you assert) a *preliminary step to saving faith*,—or (as I assert) that *change of mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to *believe* with the heart on the Son of God, and not till then.

You produced authorities from the preaching of John the Baptist, our Lord himself, and his Apostles; all of which I have shewn in my last letter, are decisive against that *preliminary* sense for which you contend:—and you now observe—“that the mere etymology of either a Greek or a Hebrew word ought to weigh little against *such authorities* ;” but that you cannot see that the terms translated *repentance* and *repent* in the New Testament, “contain any idea *incongruous*” with that sense. Allow me to ask you, sir, is there a shadow of opposition between the etymological meaning of the words which I have assigned in my Address, and their application in those passages of scripture which you produce? Let me ask you again, did I borrow any argument from the mere etymological meaning of the words, to support that assertion about the *nature of repentance*, which you controvert? Your expressions appear to imply the affirmative of both these questions: but your good sense and candour, I am persuaded, will not let you hesitate to acknowledge that they are both to be answered in the negative.

You say,—“that the terms are generally so used as to imply a *moral change*, is certain; but that *this* meaning is necessarily conveyed, may be disputed.”—For me, sir, you will have that dispute to yourself. Where have I asserted or intimated, that the meaning of a *moral change* is necessarily conveyed by the terms? I did observe that “the simple import of the word translated *repentance* is—a *change of mind*” —or a *transition* from one mind, thought, or purpose, to another: and I stated, from scripture, what constitutes *repentance unto life*, or a *saving change of mind*, and when it takes place. On that question you have warmly opposed me: but we shall have no dispute, sir, on the question whether there may not be repentance, or a *change of mind*, without any *moral change*. I thought I had asserted that myself very explicitly.—I again readily concede it; and what does it make for your argument?

But it is with some astonishment that I read the next sentence, in which you call in question the literal meaning that I have assigned to the Greek word; and say that “the strict sense is not *change of mind*, but *efficient reconsideration*.”—You quote Greek, sir; and you own at the close of your pamphlet, that you know enough of it—“to follow a critical clue, when afforded you by another.”—Excuse me, however, for saying, that every smatterer in the language knows, that the strict sense of the Greek word rendered *Repentance*, is—*change of mind*, and is NOT *efficient reconsideration*; knows that neither *efficiency* of any kind enters into its strict sense at all, nor *reconsideration* either,—unless so far as this may in some cases be the occasion of a *change of mind*. If I were as fond as many others of making a shew of learning, I could here easily, like them, display a great deal more of it than I possess. But upon this *little* question—any detailed confirmation of my assertion must only make every scholar smile, and the unlearned—stare. To satisfy you, however, that I do not contradict you so positively without sufficient authority,

allow me to refer you to Viger. de Idiot. ed. Zeun. p. 639, and to any or all of the following compilers of Lexicons to the Greek Testament—Schwarz, Schleusner, Krebs, Parkhurst, Stock; and even Mintert and Leigh. In examining these and other writers of the same class, you will need to distinguish between what they say as Lexicographers, and what they often absurdly blend with it as Divines.

But in fact, sir, I will not allow the *great* question in debate between us, to be entangled in any of the intricacies of human learning. It is a question, upon which a mere English reader, with the English Bible in his hands, is as competent to judge as you or I: and I willingly accept that expression of—*coming to himself*,—which you “take to be a strict and beautiful paraphrase” of the Greek verb translated *Repent*. The question still recurs—*when* a sinner can be said—truly to *come to himself*: whether before he believes the gospel, or when he believes it. You maintain the former; and that *true repentance* is but a *preliminary step to faith*:—I maintain the latter; and that any repentance previous to faith, “while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*,” is spurious, and “no more a preliminary step to faith than murder and adultery.” I thus repeat the plain state of the question, in order that the reader may perceive that it does not turn at all (as you have intimated) upon the mere etymology of a Greek word; and that, in accompanying me through your remaining observations on the subject, he may not lose sight of the real question—in the cloud of ambiguous language in which you at times involve it;—though at other times your language is sufficiently precise to prove that you understood what the question was, and intended to give a decided opposition to my sentiments upon it.

Having premised this, I now follow the course of your remarks.—“*Therefore*,” you say, “when we find both our Lord and his Apostles so solemnly commencing their instructions with *repent*, can we doubt that the precise amount of the exhortation was, *come to yourselves—awake from the delirium of a sinful state—that ye may be PREPARED for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom?*” Let us put the latter part of the sentence out of its present vague language, and say—(what it appears from your own statement elsewhere you must have meant)—*that ye may be prepared to believe the Gospel, or may take a PRELIMINARY STEP to saving faith*. Now, sir, you begin this sentence with the particle *therefore*: and you know that implies an inference, or deduction of what follows from what went before. And really it is the second **THEREFORE** in this paragraph, the illative force of which I am wholly at a loss to comprehend. But alas! so many readers are carried away by the mere sound of words, that an argumentative *language*, without any reasoning, is often more effectual for supporting and propagating error, than real argument. The latter is easily detected by those who know the truth; but the former is always dangerous from its imposing *colour*, and affords no *substance* for its opposers to handle. “**THEREFORE**”—that is—because you take *coming to oneself* to be “a strict and beautiful paraphrase of the verb” rendered to *repent*,

—*can we doubt* that true repentance, or truly *coming to ourselves*, is a preliminary step to believing the Gospel,—a step which sinners may take while yet under the power of unbelief? Indeed, sir, I more than doubt it: I am certain of the contrary. I am certain that every sinner, who still disbelieves the Gospel, has not yet truly *come to himself*, but is still in the *delirium of a sinful state*; whatever infidel repentance or conviction he may have. You see that I take your own expressions, by which you choose to paraphrase the word *repentance*; though they are expressions which seem to me only *figuratively* to denote that *change of mind*, which I observed is the *literal* import of the word.

I have before shewn at large, in opposition to you, that our Lord and his Apostles, from the commencement of their preaching, and throughout it, preached the Gospel: so that you must look for some other argument, to prove that the repentance they called to was *unbelieving repentance*, beside the mere circumstance of their *commencing* their instructions with it. But let me add—that I would not think I departed at all from the character of a minister of the Gospel, or spoke at all inconsistently with the principles which you controvert, if—in addressing an unbelieving multitude—I *commenced* my instructions with a testimony against the sinfulness of their state, as alienated from the true God,—against the corruptions of their hearts and minds as enmity to him; and with a declaration of the necessity of an inward *change of mind*, in order to serve him acceptably in spirit and in truth: and all this—before I said a word explicitly about Christ and his salvation:

But I would think that I departed from the character of a minister of Christ, if I did not at the same time declare to them the revealed character of the true God, as “a just God and a Saviour”—“just and the justifier of the ungodly;”—if I did not at the same time declare to them that “glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” in the knowledge and faith of which alone sinners can really turn to the true God, and can serve him with acceptance. I would think that I departed from the character of a minister of Christ, to that of an agent of Antichrist, if—according to your principles—I put them upon *doing* any thing “in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy;” if I forbore to preach Christ to them as the Saviour of sinners, till they had taken a *preliminary step* of some infidel repentance that they might be “*prepared* for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom”—or *prepared* to believe in him;—if I did not proclaim to them the *exceeding riches* of the *grace* of God, and the *effectual working of his power*, and his complete *salvation*, including present *acceptance in the beloved* and an *inheritance among all them that are sanctified*—as free unto all (without any difference) who should *believe* the joyful tidings. I would think that I departed from the character of a minister of Christ, and dealt treacherously with their souls, if I gave them to understand that any of them could *truly repent* or turn to God, while they continued to *disbelieve* this glorious Gospel;—that any *unbelieving* sorrow for sin, or alarm of conscience, or solicitude about eternal things, brought them one step nearer to its blessings;—or that all its blessings were not immediately *sure* to every

one among them who should really *believe* the faithful record,—to those whom you would represent as most *unprepared* for believing it, just as much as to those whom you would think most prepared—from having been under the longest *preliminary* training.

You say “that the precise amount of the exhortation,” which our Lord addressed to the people in calling them to repent, “was—*come to yourselves—awake from the delirium of a sinful state—that ye may be prepared for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom:*”—that is, sir, its precise amount was in short this—*Become good men—that ye may be fit to believe the Gospel.* But let me remind you that the Gospel is good news of a SAVIOUR for sinners,—for ruined and ungodly sinners; that all the spiritual blessings of his kingdom which it reveals are adapted to the situation and wants of *such*, and revealed as the *free gift* of God *in him* to every one that *believeth* in his name: and that, as long as any disbelievèd that testimony, they continue under the power of darkness and of sin, however they may boast of having sight and freedom. How then can such be said to have *come to themselves*, and to have *awaked from the delirium of a sinful state*? In truth they are just as much beside themselves, and as much in that delirium, when they are filled with the most poignant—but unbelieving sorrow for sin, and with the most lively—but unbelieving—solicitude about eternal things,—when they are putting forth the most strenuous efforts to attain unto righteousness by the deeds of the law, by *doing* something—(no matter how little or how much)—“in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy,”—as when they are most careless and unconcerned, and giving the freest loose to open profligacy and irreligion.

Say not, sir, that—in asserting this—I give encouragement to the openly profligate and irreligious, to continue in that state. It is a state—in which if they continue they will perish; in which they are far from God, and far from righteousness: but not a whit farther than those, who are most busily and earnestly engaged in the *religion of infidelity*. Nor shall the one more assuredly perish than the other, except they repent and believe the Gospel. And to call sinners to that kind of repentance which you maintain to be *repentance unto life*, is but calling them to embrace a *false* religion, that they may be prepared to receive the *true*;—is but calling them to be zealous worshippers of *idols* that they may be fit to become servants of JEHOVAH.

You proceed to account for your dwelling so long on the subject of *repentance*; and you assign its importance as the cause. Here, sir,—we are perfectly agreed. Most cordially do I assent to your observation, that “error in judgment here leads naturally to error in practice.” Yes;—I am persuaded that “wrong notions” upon this subject are the destruction of thousands, who least suspect that they are in the *broad way*. And I am glad that you have saved me the trouble of making any apology for the prolixity and minuteness, with which I discuss the subject, and examine the question—which of our *notions* upon it are *wrong* and unscriptural,—whether yours or mine. But it is lamentable to observe that you could not even assert the importance of this doctrine, without involving the asser-

tion in a mass of error and misrepresentation, to which it becomes necessary for me to advert.—Quoting a passage from my Address, (page 23.) you represent my expressions as relating to—“the mere meaning of the *term* justification;” while the reader who takes the trouble of turning to the passage, will see at once that they are expressly applied by me to the *doctrine* of a sinner’s justification in the sight of God.

To establish the importance of the doctrine of *repentance*, it was not necessary, sir, to decry as unimportant the doctrine of *justification*. According to Scripture, they are so inseparably interwoven, that they must stand or fall together; and we find accordingly, that all who are erroneous in the one are correspondently erroneous in the other. Those who deny the declarations of God’s word, concerning the only way of a sinner’s acceptance or justification in his sight—through the obedience unto death “of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” and as the *free gift* of God to *every one that believeth*,—will be always found, while they insist on repentance, to speak of a false and unbelieving repentance, by which they vainly think that sin will be more or less taken away, and the sinner made an object of the divine favour. And those who conceive repentance unto life to consist in any other change of mind than that which is wrought in every sinner who believes the Gospel,—to consist in any thing which they consider a *preliminary step* to believing, and what puts the sinner in a *fair way* for obtaining God’s grace*,—let them at times talk ever so finely of the doctrines of grace and of justification by faith alone,—will be always found to employ the words in a sense utterly subversive of their real evangelical import: and while they speak a Gospel language, and by it impose on many hearers, have a secret meaning as opposite to the gospel as any of those against whom they sometimes verbally contend.—Such men, if preachers, will get a name in the *religious world*—as evangelical; may be followed and admired by crowds, who think themselves evangelical; while they know nothing of “the true grace of God,”—and manifest that they hate it—by their opposition to its faithful witnesses. And they will commonly be borne with, if not liked by the *irreligious world*; and come under that woe which our Lord has denounced against those—of whom “all men speak well.”

But you take some pains, sir, to prove the comparative unimportance of the doctrine of justification. “Justification,” you say very truly, “is God’s work;” but repentance “is man’s duty:” and you add, that “to have mistaken notions of what God is to do for us, is not necessarily more than error of judgment.” Stop, sir:—the same God who “commandeth all men every where to repent,” commandeth them to “believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John iii. 23); commandeth “repentance and remission of sins”—or justification—to be preached—“in his name.” His inspired witnesses have testified “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts xx. 21.): and let no man put asunder what God hath joined. Justification is *his* work and *his* gift—(so indeed is repentance);—

* See post-script.

but he has declared to whom and how it is given. And though you think that "to have mistaken notions on this subject is not necessarily more than error of judgment," the word of God declares—"he that *believeth* not God hath made him a liar, because he *believeth* not the record that God gave of his Son." (1 John v. 10.)

You say that "this alone, if we be upright in heart, will scarcely stop the course of his mercy." Sir, nothing will stop the course of his mercy;—but the Scripture acknowledges no *uprightness* of heart in the unbelieving sinner. "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not *upright* in him; but the just shall live by *faith*." (Hab. ii. 4. Rom. i. 17, Gal. iii. 11.) The sinner who has not faith, is lifted up—in proud opposition to the revealed counsel of God; and though you may represent him as "sincere and earnest in seeking God's mercy and grace," the scriptures represent him as under condemnation and blindly fighting against God—in that very strenuous effort which you admire to establish his own righteousness; and as stumbling at the foundation laid in Zion—in his refusal to *submit himself unto the righteousness of God*. (Rom. x. 3, 4.)—That this proud and blind rebelliousness "against the God of all grace" is the natural sin of all men, is certain; and it is as certain that it will not stop the course of God's mercy; for his grace, or mercy, "*reigns* through righteousness unto eternal life,"—triumphing over all the opposition of the sinner's heart and of the power of darkness, and forming to himself a people who "shall be willing in the day of his power." But it is no less certain that, wherever that sovereign mercy takes its course, it produces this effect and operates in this way—of subduing the sinner "to the obedience of faith:" and that as long as men continue to disbelieve the Gospel, they continue dead in sins and strangers to the grace of God; and if they continue to disbelieve it to the end of their lives,—in spite of all their fancied *uprightness* of heart, and *sincerity* and *earnestness* in doing much "in order to obtain God's grace and mercy,"—they shall die eternally. But they shall die—not (as you intimate) because they misapply a name—but because they "reject the counsel of God against themselves," and persist in seeking—what they call salvation—in a way against which God has testified as inconsistent with his essential righteousness and truth, and in which therefore no sinner *can* be saved—unless he can overcome the Almighty.

You go on, sir, to enforce the great importance of the doctrine of repentance, and the great danger of having wrong notions about it. On this point—I have told you that we are fully agreed, while I totally dissent from your ideas of the comparative *unimportance* of the doctrine of justification. And I think you as deeply erroneous in the manner, in which you attempt to shew—the dangerous consequences that you apprehend from the doctrine of repentance, as I have stated it. I must quote the passage at length, because it contains so much misrepresentation and mistake; and at the same time forms one of the most popular objections to the Gospel. Your words are as follows:—"But *if* a hearer of yours should *infer* from what you have said of repentance, that he is *neither to cease to do evil, nor learn to do well*, but *to go on* in his own evil ways until a *new heart*

a new spirit shall be given to him from above; is there not a much greater probability that such a man's heart should become more and more hardened through *the deceitfulness of sin*, than that he should be surprised into that happy state, on which (*I must say*) he would so presumptuously speculate?"—And so *must I say*. Presumptuous speculation it would be indeed, one instance of the presumption and folly of that evil heart of unbelief, which rejects the testimony of God. And considering how few are—(as you choose to express it)—“surprised into that happy state” of those who believe the Gospel,—considering how few obtain that *precious faith* which characterizes the *little flock* of Christ,—considering (*I say*) the comparative numbers of those to whom it is ever given to believe and of the world that “lieth in the wicked one,”—I am ready to admit that there *appears* a much greater probability that such a man will be suffered to go on—hardened in his presumptuous infidelity—till he perish, than that he will prove a subject of the grace of God.

But while—on the ground and in the sense which I have mentioned—I readily admit this, I must tell you plainly that it is just as “probable” that even he should prove a subject of rich and saving grace, as that the carnal penitent should—whom you and Mr. Fletcher, with all the unbelieving world, imagine to be in so much a *fairer way* for salvation. Both are at present under the power of unbelief, and in a state of hostility against the true God. Both are presumptuously speculating in opposition to his revealed word. The infidelity of the one works in a form, that perhaps produces murder and adultery:—the equal infidelity of the other in a form, that produces much zeal about *self-devised religion*, sincere and earnest efforts to establish his own righteousness, and to *do* much “in order to obtain God's grace and mercy.” He can be brought to repent and believe the Gospel by nothing—except that sovereign mercy of God which he is opposing, but the course of which nothing can stop. And if ever he be made partaker of repentance unto life, he will be brought to see “the exceeding riches of the grace” of God and “the effectual working of his power”—in casting down the imaginations and high thoughts that now are exalting themselves against the knowledge of God; and he will then no longer suppose that his brother—the despised Publican—needs a greater stretch of divine grace to save him, than himself: he will be brought to understand the value of those Scriptures—“**WHOSOEVER** believeth on him, shall not be ashamed:—for there is *no difference* between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto *all* that call upon him:—for **WHOSOEVER** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Rom. x. 11, 12, 13.)

But I now, sir, come closer to the question which you have proposed in order to shew the dangerous tendency of my notions of repentance. You ask whether—*if* a hearer of mine should draw a certain inference from what I have said—of repentance—it be not very probable that he will be damned: and I have answered your question in the affirmative. Well;—what then? Why—*if* the inference, which you suppose him to draw,—be a fair inference from what I have said of repentance,—if it be one that a person who

really believes what I have said *can rationally* draw,—then I must acknowledge that it constitutes a valid objection against me. But if not—*if* it be an inference in which there is nothing of what logicians call *vis consequentiæ*;—if on the contrary it be one absolutely repugnant with the principles which I have asserted, and one which a man who truly believes those principles *cannot* draw from them,—then you, sir, must acknowledge that your question is perfectly irrelevant. And here let me observe that the Gospel, which the Apostles preached of old, was in their day objected against as warranting that most terrible inference—“let us continue in sin, that grace may abound,”—“let us do evil, that good may come:” so that the mere circumstance—of a similar objection being advanced against my doctrine now—forms no presumptive argument that my doctrine is different from the Apostolic.

Let us now examine the inference, which you suppose a man to draw from what I have said of repentance. It is this—“that he is neither to cease to do evil, nor learn to do well; but to go on in his own evil ways, until a new heart and a new spirit shall be given to him from above.” In order to make this a legitimate inference, I must have asserted or intimated one or other of two things:—either that a sinner *may* without condemnation and ruin go on in his evil ways,—or that, although he be subject to condemnation for them, he *cannot help continuing* in them—even if he *believe* what I tell him,—but must *wait* to be surprised with some farther supernatural gift, before he *can* turn from them. And to both these ideas the system of divine truth, which you oppose, is directly contrary. It proclaims death as the wages—the deserved and appointed recompence of all sin:—it proclaims that, unless saved from their sins—from both the guilt and power of them,—sinners shall perish everlastingly. I ask you, sir, can the sinner believe this, and infer that he is to go on in his evil ways without condemnation and ruin?—It proclaims a Saviour for sinners—for the chief of sinners,—who “saves his people from their sins,”—who “brings them unto God” with full acceptance, having for this very purpose “once suffered *the just for the unjust*”—and who is “sent to bless them in turning away every one of them from his iniquities.” (Acts iii. 26.) It proclaims free and full salvation in his name—eternal life as the GIFT of God in HIM—to *every one* that *believeth* the joyful sound. It invites—it commands upon the authority of God—*all* men every where to *repent*—(or be of a new mind)—to believe the glorious Gospel—and believing it, to *turn* to the Lord; testifying that whoso believeth shall be saved, and whoso believeth not shall be damned.” I ask you, sir, *can* the sinner believe this, and conceive that he must wait for any thing before he turns to the Lord? *Can* he believe this,—can he see life and death set before him—death in his sins—and life in God the *Saviour of sinners*,—and not turn willingly—thankfully—devotedly—to the God of Salvation? *Can* he believe the Gospel—(with the *faith of which* I have asserted that *repentance unto life* is inseparably connected)—and not have repentance unto life,—not have “a new heart and a new spirit?” *Can* he really believe what I have asserted, and draw that inference from it which

you suppose? No, sir; he *cannot* rationally; and he certainly *will* not: for it is by the Spirit of God he is *given to believe* this glorious Gospel of our salvation, and by the same Spirit he shall be led—"walking in Christ Jesus as he has received him." Shew me a man that *pretends* to draw such an inference from the Gospel which I have declared,—and I will shew you a man that believes it not,—and whose presumptuous speculation springs from his disbelieving it. And do you, sir, seriously, advance, as an objection against what I have said, that presumptuous speculation that can only arise from not believing what I have said?—We read in the word of God of those who "wrest all the scriptures unto their own destruction." (2 Peter iii. 16.) Yet these scriptures are declared to be "able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. iii. 15.) I need not be much alarmed by an objection against my doctrine, which equally lies against the word of God.

But I do not at all wonder that men, who do not believe the Gospel—but are at the same time warm friends of *virtue* and *piety*,—should be very uneasy lest the interests of religion and morality may suffer by the plain and faithful declaration of the Gospel. Blind to the glory of the truth, they cannot conceive its powerful and sanctifying influence on those who know it: and incredulous about the faithfulness of God to his word of promise, they cannot be satisfied that the believer is "born of God," and shall be "led in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Such men if they make an evangelical profession—(as it often happens)—are the men who set about what they term—guarding the Gospel,—securing the interests of piety and virtue, while they speak (as they think) evangelically. And perhaps they will occasionally say every thing which, understood in a scriptural sense, would be the Gospel; but always in such a manner, and accompanied with such guards and modifications, that they *cannot* be understood in an evangelical sense by those, who do not already know the scriptural meaning of the words they employ. And that they do not intend that evangelical sense; or wish to be understood in it, is manifest—from their apprehensiveness that their hearers will become immoral and irreligious, if they should take them so. Those are very wise and prudent in their own conceit; but they shall be "taken in their own craftiness; and the folly of their thoughts shall be exposed, in attempting to correct and improve "the wisdom of God:"—while his glorious Gospel, in spite of all their efforts to disguise and corrupt it, shall win its way,—shall *guard* itself,—and prove the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Nor let any of them, who may see this testimony against their unbelief, and perhaps be made sore by it, suppose that I am an advocate for the equally unscriptural preaching of those who—in order to avoid the error which I have marked—lay aside some truths of scripture, as if they were needless (if not unprofitable) to the believer:—who think it necessary, in order to preach the Gospel plainly and faithfully, to be always speaking of Election and Predestination and the divine decrees; and often speak of them with a rashness and in a connection which little becomes worms of the dust.

and is no where countenanced in the word of God. Such men also, while they often think themselves eminently evangelical, often shew that they know nothing of "the true grace of God;" and that they are as hostile to the real principles, from which both Gospel joy and Gospel holiness spring, as any whom they despise as *legal*. That the man who really disbelieves the doctrine of election, for instance, —cannot really believe the Gospel, is certain. But it is as certain that a man may be a zealous champion for that and similar doctrines, without knowing or believing a tittle of the Gospel. He may be very fond of these doctrines as finding in them a prop to the confidence, which he cherishes about his own state —and his final salvation; while that confidence is derived from a source perfectly different from the great truth—that "CHRIST HAS DIED FOR THE UNGODLY;" and while he only betrays the false foundation on which his confidence is built—by his aversion to certain truths of God, which he is desirous to suppress.

But to return from this little digression.—I have shewn, sir, the futility of your attempt to fasten the charge of error in doctrine, or dangerousness in practice, upon the views which I have given of repentance. I have shewn that your views of the subject are utterly repugnant with scripture:—and while you think them so salutary in practice, allow me plainly to warn you of the "peculiarly pernicious consequences"—(to borrow your own words) with which they are "pregnant." That they may prompt many to much strictness and zealous efforts in morality and religion, I readily acknowledge. They have done so, and they daily do so. But they will lead any, who continue to act upon them, to eternal ruin. Thousands of the religious world—in the Methodist Society—and out of the Methodist Society—are walking in the broad way to destruction, while they take precisely that path to which you direct them. You charge my doctrine, sir, with an inference, which you suppose some one to draw from it, and which no man can rationally draw from it, and which the man who believes it *will not attempt* to draw:—but I charge your doctrine with its inevitable consequence to those who really adopt it. The man who believes the doctrine which you oppose—will be saved: and the man who to the end believes the doctrine which you assert—will be damned. This is a charge—not to be advanced lightly: and it is with mature consideration and deep solemnity that I advance it, —and am ready to maintain it from the word of God, against all who shall be offended at the charge.

The sinner who believes what you have said of repentance, *must* believe that he is to *do* something in order to be "*prepared* for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah's kingdom;" that there must be some *good change* in him, before he can be warranted to believe the Gospel as glad tidings; that he must in some way or another take away or lessen his sin, in order that he may be *fit* for coming to Christ. And I will suppose you to have the utmost success with him that you can aim at:—I will suppose that he is excited to the most lively solicitude to perform this task,—that he puts forth the most strenuous efforts to become a good and a pious man "in order to obtain God's grace and mercy;" and that he succeeds in obtaining all the

preparation you could wish, for—what you call—saving faith. And now I say that you have only succeeded, at most, in forming an infidel religionist out of an infidel profligate; that all his works, which you think have brought him so near the kingdom of Heaven, have—as works of unbelief—been pointed against the gospel of that kingdom, to the proud rejection of Christ, and in hostile opposition to the true God:—that, instead of being truly awakened, he is asleep in sin; instead of having come to himself, he is beside himself in the delirium of pride and self-righteousness;—instead of seeking the true God, or having any good disposition towards him, he is manifesting the reigning power of that fleshly mind which is enmity against him;—instead of being now in a fair way towards heaven, he is still in the high road to hell,—though perhaps in a different path from what he before walked in.

I know, sir, that you would not think *all* that was necessary yet done, while he had only this infidel repentance;—perhaps you would take great pains to persuade him of the contrary; and I shall suppose him to continue still under your training, and really to believe what you tell him. Now that he is sufficiently *prepared*, you will call him to *believe in Christ*; you will declare to him the Gospel, as good tidings for a sinner so *qualified*;—perhaps you will encourage him much to put his trust now in God's grace and mercy, in the atonement of Christ, and in the aids of his Spirit. I shall suppose you to succeed in this also, and to have him what you will call a rejoicing believer,—possessed (as he is taught to think) of the “spirit of adoption,” and the *spiritual blessings of the Messiah's kingdom*. And supposing all this, I must plainly tell you that he is now—as he was before—in the delirium of sin, and false religion, and infidel opposition to God; that what he has received as the Gospel is not *the GOSPEL*;—that the Christ in whom he believes is a *false Christ*;—and that the spirit, which emboldens him in his approaches to the idol God he has set up in his heart, is the spirit of antichrist; and that the joy, with which he is filled, is but the presumptuous elation of false confidence. He worships and is zealous for a God, that is neither *just* nor the *justifier of the ungodly*: he believes in a Saviour, that is not the Saviour of *sinners*—but of the comparatively *righteous*: he talks of grace,—and thinks of the *distinguishing circumstances* in his own favour which have *qualified* him to receive it, and the quantity of *preliminary* work he has done to obtain it:—and however loud he may be in declaring that it is only by the *grace* of God he expects to be saved, the grace that he talks of is no GRACE;—and however full of love he may be to the imaginary Christ that he thinks is suitable to himself,—however explicit, and sincere also, in his declarations that he builds on no foundation but that Christ,—he is yet full of enmity against the *true CHRIST*, and building a high tower of evangelical profession upon the sand. PUBLICANS AND HARLOTS GO INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEFORE SUCH.

Of the offensiveness of this testimony I am so well aware, that—were I not convinced of its importance and of its truth—I should be indeed very imprudent in publishing it. Men will bear, with comparative patience, the plainest and sharpest testimony against their

sins,—or what they acknowledge to be sins. Here the consciences of many take part with the reprover; and the pride of more contributes to make him liked and admired. They are fond of hearing the vices of *others* lashed. But a testimony against their fancied *goodness*, and especially against their false RELIGION, the world cannot bear. You take away their gods which they made, and what have they more?

But you have not yet done with your attack upon what I have said of Repentance. You return to the charge in the next paragraph, and observe—that the Methodists will readily acknowledge that such a sorrow for sin and solicitude about the things of salvation, as arise from the terror of an alarmed conscience, “do not *always* imply true repentance.” Let them or you, sir, plainly say what does imply true repentance, or what is implied in it. Do they not always talk of it in that sense, against which I have protested as *always* coming short of true repentance? Do not you—their advocate—expressly maintain that true repentance *precedes* justifying faith and is a preliminary step to it? Perhaps you and the Methodists will desire to include in true repentance *more* than—sorrow and solicitude about the things of salvation. What more it is that you mean to include in it, I can only conjecture; as you have chosen to cover your meaning in the metaphorical language of—“coming to ourselves—and awaking from the delirium of a sinful state.” Perhaps you would desire to include in it—a sincere purpose and endeavour to break off our sins. Well, sir; include what you will in it, and your repentance will still be spurious,—will still be *infidel repentance*. The sorrow, and solicitude, and purpose, and endeavour, and whatever else you add, will constitute nothing spiritually good: for you maintain that they must take place previous to saving faith;—and I maintain that, whatever changes take place in an unbelieving sinner, leave him—as an unbeliever—yet under the power of the devil, and an enemy of God.

You intimate a wish to make your repentance arise from something else than—“the terror of an alarmed conscience;” but you say not from what else you suppose it to arise,—only that it does not spring from faith, to which you say it is a preliminary step. Then, sir, let it arise from what it will, it arises from nothing good; and is no more a preliminary step to faith than murder or adultery. You would probably wish to represent it as arising from *love* to God: but you must suppose that an unbelieving sinner may be a very good kind of man indeed, if you suppose that he can have any love to the *true* God. “FAITH worketh by love:” but the sinner, while yet under the power of unbelief, is uniformly represented in Scripture as a “hater of God,”—as not having the love of God in him. The Gospel is sent to *such*, as though God did beseech them by the ministers of his word to be *reconciled to him*; declaring his amazing love in “sending his own Son to be the propitiation for our sins:”—testifying the completeness of the *work* which HE accomplished on the cross, for taking away sin:—proclaiming that *in HIM* the FATHER is WELL PLEASED, and that WHOEVER BELIEVETH *in HIM* is accepted *in the beloved*, and has peace with GOD. They who disbelieve this Gospel, continue enemies of God and dead in sins;—whatever

changes of mind, that you may call repentance, take place in them. And in fighting for such infidel repentance, as "preparing them for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah's kingdom"—you do but encourage them in unbelief, and preach to them a *false* repentance and a *false* Messiah.

You proceed to say that such feelings of sorrow and solicitude, as spring merely from the terror of an alarmed conscience, may be a *preliminary step* to—*true repentance*. What! Is the question between us changed? I thought, sir, you were maintaining some such false repentance—(under the name of true)—to be a preliminary step to FAITH.—But now, in place of *faith*, you slip in TRUE REPENTANCE: without apprizing your readers at all that you intend to introduce a new question. Am I to conceive that, by this, you mean tacitly to concede the former point; and to acknowledge—what I have asserted—that there is no true repentance till we believe the Gospel? Or am I to consider it a new topic of controversy; and that, from the question whether there be true repentance previous to faith and a preliminary step to faith, you turn aside to assert that there is a *false* repentance previous to *true*, and a preliminary step to *it*? Indeed, sir, I would not have expected from you such trifling, upon such an important subject. But I do hope that you will be induced to state, without ambiguity, what you mean by true repentance. I have stated what I mean; and if you only come forward as explicitly, I think I shall find an easier task in maintaining my assertions against you. Till you do,—in order to avoid shifting the ground of controversy,—I must suppose that you intend, through the remainder of the paragraph, to argue on the old question—"whether such a sorrow for sin, and solicitude about the things of salvation—or such a repentance" (whatever you please to mean by the word) "as arises merely from the terror of an alarmed conscience, or from something" (whatever you please) "in an unbelieving sinner,—be *true repentance* and a *preliminary step* to saving *faith*."

Understanding you thus, I find you bring forward a new argument, to support the affirmative of this question. You derive it from the parable of the Prodigal Son; to which I gladly lend the serious attention you call for; and in which you say there is "a series of preliminary steps, all tending to, and all issuing in one happy conclusion." After adverting to "the mouth of unerring wisdom," from which the statement in this parable proceeded, you gravely ask—whether we can "conceive it right to assert that the prodigal's *perseverance* in his profligacies would have been equally conducive to the *same happy issue*." This passage also you distinguish by a note of admiration; intending no doubt to challenge your reader's wonder,—that I should advance such an assertion: and with many readers it will have the effect desired. Your note of admiration, sir, may well stand there; for it is wonderful how you could intimate that I conceive it right to assert—that the prodigal's perseverance in his profligacies would have been conducive to any—happy issue, or could have issued in any thing but his perishing in a strange land. Probably we shall agree in considering the state of the prodigal, in that distant land, as illustrative of the condition of a sinner in his

state of alienation from God. Now, sir, have I ever asserted—have I ever intimated, that a sinner can *continue* alienated from God, and *persevere* in his sinful course, without inevitable destruction? Have I not borne the most explicit testimonies of the contrary? And are they all to be set aside by an insinuation—that I think he may continue in sin, and yet arrive at a *happy issue*?—an insinuation enforced by a mark of wonder annexed to it. And this, only because I maintain against you, and the Methodists, and so many others, that he never is truly turned from his sinful course, or brought out of his state of alienation from God, till he *believe* the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. A man who would argue upon any literary or scientific subject, in such a manner as you argue against me, would receive an answer—(if he received any)—such as I would be unwilling to offer to you. But when the religious systems of men are to be maintained in opposition to the truths of God, there is no sophistry too gross, to pass current in the world for the soundest reasoning.

But in this parable there is—“a series of *preliminary steps*, all tending to and all issuing in one *happy conclusion*.” Well, sir, *if* these preliminary steps be designedly illustrative of the unbelieving repentance, for which you contend as true repentance and a preliminary step to faith,—and if the happy conclusion in which they issue be designedly illustrative of faith, or of believing the Gospel:—then the argument which you borrow from the parable will have considerable weight. But *if* neither one nor the other be the case,—then this argument, which you introduce with so much solemnity, resolves itself into that, which I had occasion to take notice of in my last letter, (p. 129)—that, because some one thing is a preliminary step to some other thing, therefore repentance is a preliminary step to faith. I fancy your own good sense must by this time anticipate the answer to your argument. The happy conclusion in the parable is this—that the poor wretched prodigal is restored to the enjoyment of all the blessings of a son in his father's house. Is this, sir, illustrative of faith? Is it not obviously analogous to that enjoyment of blessedness, as the sons of God, which is consequent on true repentance and faith? And if you choose to call repentance and faith preliminary steps to that enjoyment, far be it from me to contend with you about a favourite expression.

But you seem very desirous of representing the preliminary steps in the parable, as illustrative of your unbelieving repentance. That they are to be considered as illustrating many circumstances in the true repentance of a sinner, I readily acknowledge: but how you find out from the parable that they represent a repentance “preliminary to faith and unconnected with it,” I am at a loss to conjecture:—unless it be, perhaps, that there is no circumstance mentioned in the parable analogous to the hearing of the Gospel, by which faith cometh. And if this be your implied argument—(for in the absence of any explicit reasoning, I am obliged to guess what may have floated in your mind)—let me remind you, sir, that in the two parables preceding this—the parable of the lost piece of silver and of the lost sheep—both designed by our Lord, as well as that of

the prodigal, to illustrate the rich mercy of our heavenly Father ;—in these parables, I say, there is no circumstance illustrative of either repentance or faith. And would you infer from them that a sinner can be saved—without either repentance or faith? you might as well draw that inference from them, as draw the inference you have attempted from the parable of the prodigal.

This parable, sir, was not designed to illustrate the way in which *repentance unto life* is produced. Had it been so, it would be easy to conceive the introduction of a circumstance, which should be aptly analogous to the sending of the Gospel, and the calling of a sinner to repentance in his believing it. But the parable is complete for the purpose for which it is designed, and you pervert it in wresting it to a purpose for which it was not designed. It was designed to represent—to the crowds of publicans and sinners, who drew nigh to the friend of sinners,—to represent to them the rich mercy of God to the poorest—vilest sinners ; and to convey to them that they would find the tenderness of his compassion in meeting any such that turned to him, unspeakably greater than their utmost expectations, in turning to him, could imagine it.

In this design it was pointed against all the murmuring Pharisees, who “ stood afar off ”—scorning the glad tidings that were proclaimed to the most *unprepared*, unqualified, scandalous sinners ; while it preached the Gospel to all, without distinction, who would hear it ; and presented to them at once a picture of the wretched apostasy of a sinner from God, and of the character of God our Saviour, as waiting to be gracious and delighting in mercy. And from the parable which thus proclaims his Gospel, you endeavour to extort an inference that a sinner—who *disbelieves* it—may yet have *repentance unto life*,—and by his infidel repentance be “ *prepared* for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom.” You have failed in the attempt : and all such attempts, however plausible in their colouring, will be found upon examination to fail. But pardon me, sir, for saying that you, as a gentleman of education, versed in the letter of the Scriptures, and zealous in supporting their divine authority,—ought rather to have been forward in testifying against that abuse of Scripture, which is so lamentably common ; whereby men, interpreting the parables without attention to the leading scope of each, and imagining that all the distinct minutizæ of *natural circumstances* introduced into them were designed to represent some distinct spiritual truths,—endeavour to force each parabolic narrative into an illustration of every Scripture doctrine ; and too often, either from the introduction or omission of some natural circumstances in them, derive inferences the most contrary to Scripture truth.

Before I conclude this letter, and dismiss for the present that most important subject which I have discussed in it and in my last ;—allow me to make a few observations on a passage in the Épistle to the Hebrews ; by which I shall at once mark the wide difference between us, and anticipate an objection that will probably be advanced against me.—The Apostle closes the 4th chapter of that epistle with the following words—“ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne

of grace, that we may obtain mercy"—(or, as it may literally be rendered, *that we may receive mercy*)—"and find grace to help in time of need."—It may be asked, does it not appear from this—that "men are to *do* something in order to their obtaining God's grace and mercy?" I answer; the direct contrary of what you, sir, obviously intend by that expression, and have in various passages explicitly asserted—appears from the Apostolic exhortation. The Apostle's exhortation to come that we may receive mercy and find grace—means, what is not only perfectly different from your principle of doing something in order to our obtaining God's grace and mercy,—but is in absolute opposition to it.

You contend that men must do something, previous to their believing in Christ, by which they shall be "prepared for the spiritual blessings of his kingdom;" and therefore when you say that this is to be "done in order to their obtaining God's grace and mercy," the words can have no other meaning but this—that the unbelieving work which they do (whatever it consists in) will incline God to extend to them his grace and mercy—or qualify them to be objects of his grace and mercy—or *warrant* them to come to him with an expectation of receiving grace and mercy. Now, sir, look at the Apostle's exhortation; "Let us THEREFORE come boldly unto the throne of grace."—WHEREFORE? Because we have done a sufficiency of *preliminary* work? Because we have repented so well, and have such poignant sorrow for sin, and such lively solicitude about the things of salvation, that we are sufficiently "*prepared* for the spiritual blessing of the Messiah's kingdom?" According to the system for which you are an advocate, the exhortation of—coming boldly to receive grace and mercy,—could be founded on nothing else but this; and the more any sinner complied with the exhortation, the more presumptuously self-confident he must be.

But it is grounded by the Apostle on no such basis; and you have only to observe the connection in which it stands, and in which a parallel exhortation stands (Heb. x. 22.)—to be convinced that they are diametrically opposite to your system. The Apostle grounds them both—not on any thing that any sinner has *done* or could do—but on what CHRIST has *done* in taking away sin—and on what HE *is* as the great high priest over the house of God;—on the propitiation which HE has made, for the justification of the most ungodly sinner, by the one offering up of himself for sin;—on the way which HE has opened for *sinner*s into the holiest, in which "all things are ready,"—and by which the poorest—vilest—most wretched outcast from God is invited to draw nigh to God, and take of the waters of life *freely*,—"without money and without price."

The Apostolic exhortation is that which—none but the sinner who believes the Gospel, on which it is founded, will or can comply with. And the system for which you contend, instead of being countenanced by the Apostle's exhortation, is no less repugnant with it, than it is with all the scriptures. To represent me as contending for a system according to which a sinner can *remain ungodly* and yet be a partaker of the grace of God,—can enjoy the spiritual blessings of his kingdom *without drawing nigh* to him,—is to misrepresent—

not merely what I have asserted—but what the word of God declares ; is to raise a cloud of prejudice against the truth, in order to cover an attack upon it.

As little real aid will you find from the numerous scriptures, in which the richest promises are made to those who *fear* the LORD—who *seek* him—who *call* upon him—who *serve* him—who *follow* him, &c. Every one of these is a character, which truly belongs only to the BELIEVER: and (to repeat the words which so much offended you on the subject of repentance)—“any thing called by these names while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*, is but a spurious imitation of those heavenly gifts; is but a refined form of that fleshly and selfish mind, which in all its workings is evil—only evil continually: and I would no more be warranted in representing any such *infidel fearing*, or *seeking*, or *praying*, or *servng*, or *following*—as a *preliminary step to faith*, than in so representing murder and adultery.”

It would extend this letter beyond the limits I have assigned to each, to prosecute in it the remainder of your remarks. I must therefore reserve them for a seventh letter;—but think I can promise that in it our present controversy shall be closed.

I remain, sir,

Your faithful humble servant,

TRINITY COLLEGE,

JOHN WALKER.

Oct. 5, 1803.

POSTSCRIPT.

If the reader wish to see exemplified that class of men whom I have described above, let him read almost any of the most popular religious publications of the day, which go under the name of evangelical. But if he wish to be directed to one, in which he will see this false theology exemplified in its most specious and respectable form,—let him read the *Christian Observer*,—a periodical work published monthly in London, and conducted by members of the established church. The great object of these gentlemen appears to be to prove themselves true sons of the church; and to shew that they do not deserve the opprobrious name of Methodists which some how or another has been attached to them.—(The Irish reader may need to be informed that, in England, the word *METHODIST* has for some years been employed as the name of reproach, by which the world distinguishes believers of the gospel, or those who are at least supposed to hold the doctrines of grace.)—Calvinists and Arminians have made a common cause of it, and formed a friendly coalition in conducting this work. It would be a very interesting and profitable employment, to examine the religious principles of this and similar publications, which are of very general currency in England: but it would present an awful picture of departure from the Gospel—in a

country, which is disposed to boast of the multitudes that profess the Gospel.

The conductors of the *Christian Observer* have found out a great many more *preliminary steps*, that put a sinner in a *fair way* for obtaining God's grace than Mr. Knox contends for.—(See No. 15, for March 1803, page 192.)—They speak of the *distinguishing* circumstances of a *hopeful* nature in the case of penitents, who *appear* to have been “peculiarly atrocious offenders” before their repentance: and I dare say they would be at no loss to discover or to conjecture such—in the case of the thief upon the cross. They think that the *smaller* sinners are *much nearer to the kingdom of God* than the *greater*; and the sense in which they employ that expression is clear, from their talking of the *probability* of a man's repentance being diminished in *proportion* to various circumstances of greater sinfulness in him; of the *degrees* of which it is to be hoped those gentlemen will construct a table. As to “old offenders”—they say they “may in general affirm of *them*, in the language of Scripture, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots?”—They have found out that the Pharisees “were probably far *greater sinners* than the Publicans;” and that this was the reason why “the Publicans were preferred to the Pharisees by Jesus Christ.”

And among the distinguishing circumstances, that now render some sinners much *smaller sinners* than others, and therefore more likely to be converted and become subjects of—what they call—the grace of God, we find them enumerate their having “an utter detestation of *revolutionary* principles”—their being “strongly *prejudiced* against *atheism*”—and the being “the son of a *CLERGYMAN*.” If we could but get all the men in the world to wear black coats, and to have the hands of a Bishop laid on them—(I mean no disrespect to the episcopal order)—I suppose the next generation would then stand a fair *chance* of being all converted.—Yet those gentlemen *talk* of *GRACE*; and there is much reason to suspect that *some* of them occasionally *talk* of *ELECTION*;—though for the sake of peace with their *Arminian brethren* they drop that subject in the *Christian Observer*; and—to make the stronger head against those who presume to call them *Methodists*—agree to say that the articles of the church of England are neither Calvinistic nor Arminian. And really Dr. Kipling has been very uncivil in refusing them the right hand of fellowship, and attempting to shew that none but Arminians can conscientiously subscribe the articles;—when those gentlemen had found such an accommodating way to screen the reputation of both. Nor do I wonder that they should be so angry with him upon this subject. But it is to be supposed that he and they will soon understand one another better. For I am sure that the Doctor will not *verbally* deny the doctrines of Grace, when couched in scripture language; and it is too clear that those divines do but *verbally* hold them. About what then are they making so much ado? Ought not the conductors of the *Christian Observer* to be the first to address the Dean of Peterborough, in that language—“Let there be no strife between us and thee, for we be *brethren*.”

Indeed, although these gentlemen often speak a hard word against

Popery, yet in this they are very inconsistent with themselves:—for we find them (No. 19—for July 1803—page 412) sanctioning the piety of popish monks in the abbey of La Trappe—as “*genuine piety* ;”—speaking of them as having retired from the world “from motives of *penitence* and of *zeal for the glory of God*, feeling in their souls the *divine influence of true religion*, and delighting in the service of their Maker.” We find them (page 410) holding out the mode in which these monks pass their life—(chanting hymns to the Virgin, &c.)—as affording “a laudable example to pious Protestants.”—Truly, if these things be so, the REFORMATION was a very foolish matter. It appears that religious protestants can agree with religious papists, in what constitutes *true piety* and *true religion*: and why then should they squabble any longer about matters which cannot be essential to Salvation, as not essential to true religion? O! for a second Luther, to lash the Popery of false Protestants!

The gentlemen who conduct the Christian Observer, if these lines should meet their eye, may perhaps complain that I employ a language of severity against them, which does not coincide with the spirit in which I have aimed at maintaining the general controversy. But I do not think it misplaced severity. An open opposer of the truth is to be dealt with much more tenderly than those who contradict and betray it—in the guise of friends. From some of those gentlemen, if I mistake not, there was formerly reason to hope better things. Let them “remember from whence they are fallen, and repent.” Let them be less solicitous about their reputation, and more “valiant for the truth.” Let them remember him who hath said—“them that honour me I will honour;” and—henceforth seeking “the honour which cometh from God only,”—they will find themselves more than recompensed for the reproach that will be cast on them by men.

LETTER VII.

I am come in my father's name, and ye receive me not : if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.—John v. 43.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth.—Mat. x. 34.

This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.—1 John v. 20, 21.

Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, therefore it is no great thing, if his ministers also be transformed into ministers of righteousness.—2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

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SIR,—You express your hope that “it will be felt by all *candid* Calvinists, that on the point of repentance,”—I am not with them, nor you against them. Whether you mean by this, to attribute to such of them—as agree with you on this subject—a monopoly of candour, or a monopoly of Calvinism—I am not very solicitous to inquire. For the possession of the former quality I have not, in my observation, found such persons eminently distinguished; and their title to the name of Calvinists, I shall give myself no trouble to dispute. Yet I would briefly observe, as a matter of curiosity, that Calvin would certainly have disowned them all.

It was mere curiosity that led me just now, before taking up my pen, to brush the dust off one of the volumes of that reformer. I took down his *Institutes*, and turned to that part where he begins to treat of repentance. (l. iii. c. 3.) I scarcely thought it credible, that I should find him agreeing with you in sentiment on that subject; but I as little expected to find that he expressed himself clearly and decisively in opposition to you. For could I suppose that you would, in that case, have talked of yourself as—not opposing any candid Calvinist on this point? Could I suppose that you would, without any examination, have hazarded the expression of your belief—that “all wise and pious Calvinists have hitherto given” to the Scriptures, which you have quoted, a sense that is—in substance the same with yours?—What then was my surprise, when the two following sentences met my eye, before I had read a page in that part of Calvin's *Institutes* to which I have referred you?—“That repentance not only immediately follows upon faith, but springs from faith, must be admitted as beyond dispute. As to those who think that repentance is rather *previous* to faith, than that it follows from it, or is produced by it as its fruit,—they have never known the real nature of repentance, and ground their opinion upon a weak argument indeed.”—What was my surprise, in casting my eye forward, to find that this very *weak argument*, which Calvin proceeds to mention and refute, is identically the same which you have borrowed, from misapplied and misinterpreted Scriptures, for opposing me?

I closed the book, glad to find that the old Reformer was not so much in the dark on this subject, as many who are now distinguished by his name: but am no more disposed to rest any weight upon his authority being with *me*, than I would have allowed any weight to it, in determining the question, if his authority had been decidedly with *you*. I mention it only as a curious matter; and one which may perhaps impress upon you the need of greater caution, when you write for the public. For you perceive, sir, that—however exclusively candid and wise and pious you suppose the persons who

agree with you (in thinking that Repentance unto life is a preliminary step to Faith)—they certainly are not Calvinists—except in name. *That*, I readily admit, is of very little consequence if they be Christians—more than in name. When you add therefore, at the close of the paragraph, the following words—“to deny that repentance is a preliminary step to Faith in Christ, is to contradict the almost unanimous sentiment of Calvinists, just as much as of Arminians”—I shall make no further use at all of the discovery that no *real* Calvinist adopts the sentiment, which you attribute almost to all. I am too well aware of the infinite importance of the question itself, to be diverted from it to the inquiry—what Calvinists or Arminians think about it. I give you the unqualified force of your assertion,—the undiminished weight of their supposed authority in your favour: and I ask you—what then?—What does their authority weigh, in determining *what is truth*? No more, sir, in my estimation—than a grain of sand. “To the Law and to the Testimony.” While my sentiments are sanctioned by the word of God, I shall not care whose sentiments they contradict.

But you introduce in this paragraph a new argument, which deserves a little more consideration. You say—“all wise and pious Calvinists have always held that when God decrees *Ends*, he appoints suitable *Means*.” Whoever have held it, sir, it is an indubitable and important truth. You go on—“and that *CONSEQUENTLY* where he determines to bring an individual to the saving knowledge of himself, he gives to him awakening and enlightening grace, as *preliminary* to that blessing.”—If you intend by *grace* here—the influence of his Spirit; and if by the words “as preliminary to that blessing” you intend—as the means requisite for that blessing;—you assert another indubitable and important truth. “Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God.” But the word of God, though the instrumental means by which the end is produced, is wholly ineffectual for the production of that end, (on account of the natural *blindness* and *pride* of man and his carnal *enmity* to the word of truth)—except where God accompanies it with his awakening and enlightening spirit; and so gives his word entrance into the heart, begetting that *belief* or persuasion of it, which constitutes the *saving knowledge of himself*. In this sense, sir, the consequence you draw is good, and your assertion is incontrovertible: but in this sense it stands in direct opposition to the inference which you proceed to deduce—that “Repentance is a *preliminary step* to faith in Christ.”

I fully agree with you in calling the knowledge of God—*saving knowledge*. It is an essential part of the work of CHRIST, as the *Servant* of JEHOVAH, “to manifest his name:” and in the person and work of CHRIST it is, that the glory of the only true God shines and is discovered to sinners: (2 Cor. iv. 6.) “It is life eternal, to know him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” (John xvii. 3.) The knowledge of the *true* God cannot be separated from the *belief* of his word, in which he has revealed himself. *Where he determines to bring an individual to the saving knowledge of himself*—where he has decreed this *end*,—he employs the appointed *means*. He sends his word of truth (*the sword of the Spirit*)—and his

awakening and enlightening Spirit with it,—as the only efficient means for communicating that blessing, for producing that faith in Christ—or that saving knowledge of himself—which is declared to be “of the operation of God.” Well;—it follows demonstrably that there is no *repentance unto life* previous to *faith*;—because there is no truly awakening or enlightening grace, previous to the communication of this saving knowledge. I remain therefore wholly at a loss to conjecture what argument you intend to derive in aid of your opinion—that repentance is a preliminary step to faith—from the principle that “when God decrees *ends* he appoints suitable *means* :” as I suppose you will scarcely allege that any *infidel repentance* is a suitable means for producing *faith*,—any more than Murder or Adultery.

You tell me, sir, that “when tenets of this nature”—(that is, like the tenet of mine which you oppose—that *there is no true repentance previous to faith*)—“were broached in England toward the conclusion of the seventeenth century, none were more zealous in opposing them than the *respectable* Calvinists of that day.” And I think it very likely that you are tolerably correct in this assertion: for I am persuaded that none can be known to hold such tenets, and continue *respectable* Calvinists—respected by the world. There is no surer road to become contemptible in the world. Just in proportion as the gospel of Christ is clearly and faithfully declared, it will irritate and disgust those who believe not the testimony; and its witnesses will appear *base* in their view, and lose all the *respectability* which they had perhaps before. They are witnesses of a *despised* Saviour; and must lay their account with sharing in the contempt, of which he has ever been an object—especially from the *religious world*.

You tell me of a Mr. Richard Davis, who in the year 1692, broached such tenets. I take it upon your authority, that they were such as mine which you oppose: and indeed, from the brief statement you give, it does seem that he intended to assert nothing different from me.—You tell me that, upon this, “the united non-conforming ministers in and about London forthwith published—a *DECLARATION solemnly pronouncing* such positions to be not only repugnant to the gospel, but strong temptations to carnal security and libertinism.” Truly, sir, it would have been better for them to have tried to *prove* this, than to publish a *DECLARATION pronouncing* it—ever so *solemnly*. I make no more of such a declaration, though from “the united-nonconforming ministers in and about London,” than I do of—a *POPE’S BULL*. You have tried to refute such positions; and to prove that they are repugnant to the gospel, and pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences. I have proved from scripture and from reason, that you are mistaken; that the principles, against which you contend—(while pregnant indeed with offensiveness to unbelieving religionists)—are essentially interwoven with the Gospel, and infinitely important in the most salutary consequences to those who believe them. Nor am I at all apprehensive that all the ministers in the united Kingdom, conforming and non-conforming, will have any more success than you in opposing them. I wil-

lingly divide with a contemptible Mr. Richard Davis, of Rothwell in Northamptonshire, advancing positions agreeable to the word of God;—and look the whole tribe of respectable Calvinists and anti-Calvinists, who contradict them, in the face—without either fear or shame.

You begin your next paragraph with the following words—“When you therefore so strangely put murder and adultery on a footing, I might almost say, with the prayers and the alms-deeds of a Cornelius, you certainly are correct in not assuming the appellation of a Calvinist.”—In my Expostulatory Address, I have assigned my reasons for declining to *assume* the appellation of a Calvinist; while I have explicitly avowed in what sense I am—what is called a Calvinist. But why do you assert, sir, that you *might almost say* that I put murder and adultery on a footing with the prayers and alms-deed of a Cornelius? You certainly might quite say that I put them on a footing with—that infidel repentance for which you contend; as being the one, no more than the other, a *preliminary step* to faith, or any *preparation* for the blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom. But you, sir, greatly err in putting the prayers and alms-deeds of Cornelius on a footing with that infidel repentance.

I read in scripture (Acts x. 4.) that the prayers and alms of Cornelius “came up for a memorial before God;—that he was one who “feared God and wrought righteousness:” and the whole account given of him marks his character, as that of a *believing* worshipper of the *true* God; and, though not a Jew by birth nor circumcised, yet—(like the proselytes of the Gate)—acquainted with the revelation which the LORD had made of himself in the Jewish scriptures, and a partaker of the *faith* of the true Israelites. How, sir, could his prayer have been heard and accepted by JEHOVAH, if it had been offered to a false God? How could his alms have been “had in remembrance in the sight of God,” if he were destitute of that *love*—which is at once the fruit and evidence of *faith*? Indeed sir, you wrong his character, and pervert the Scriptures, when you represent his prayers and alms-deeds as the works of an unbeliever; when you more than intimate that they were little better than *infidel repentance*.

“*Sober Calvinists*,” you say, “have most explicitly and solemnly condemned” the system I appear to hold. Well, sir; among the various reproaches to which the Lord Jesus submitted, that of being *beside himself* was one; (Mark iii. 22.) and “the disciple is not above his Master, neither the servant above his Lord.” One of the most honoured of his servants met with the same reproach; (Acts xxvi. 24.) and I know that either the Gospel, or the unbelieving world, must be strangely altered since that day,—if his faithful followers can now pass through the world with a high character for *sobriety* and *respectability*. I claim no prejudice however in favour of my system, from its having been condemned by *sober Calvinists*: but on the other hand their most explicit and *solemn condemnation* of it, unsupported by any refutation of it from scripture or from reason, ought not to constitute any prejudice against my system.—You add, sir,—that I “seem still more directly and personally to have condemned”

those *sober* Calvinists; and you quote an assertion of mine, as “appearing to apply to them,”—the truth or falsehood of which must be determined by a very different criterion, from that which you would try it by.

The assertion occurs in my Address (p. 21.) and is this—“that there is a greater difference between the way of a sinner’s justification and salvation which the gospel reveals, and the most refined form of false religion which *seems* most like it, than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.” You make a very solemn preparation, sir, for combating this assertion. You *aver* that *nothing is further from your purpose than to put any force on my expression*. “But”—you add—“there is an *Emphasis* and studied decisiveness of manner in this denunciation, which it is impossible to overlook.” I am glad of it, sir; and I would that the denunciation (as you call it) might arrest the attention of all, as it arrested yours. For you are very much mistaken in expressing a *hope*—that *my zeal for my particular notions did*, at the moment I penned that sentence, very much outrun my own sober persuasion, and that I was *not deliberately in earnest*. Believe me, sir, I was; and am deliberately in earnest in maintaining that assertion, which has so much shocked you.

You ask me—*whom do I not condemn*, if I were deliberately in earnest? Do you then admit sir, that vast multitudes in Christendom adopt at most “a refined form of *false religion*” which only *seems* like that which the Gospel reveals? I verily believe it; but their multitude, while it renders the assertion I have advanced about their false religion very offensive, calls aloud for a serious examination of it, and cannot determine either its truth or falsehood. When you say that “St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, and the Saviour of the world himself—would come within the broad circumference of my Anathema,” and distinguish this sentence by another note of admiration,—you say what is very shocking indeed; but I am sure did not intend to convey the meaning which I shrink from expressing, but which your words would necessarily bear—if admitted as an argument against my assertion. As to the “inferior names—the *celebrated* Calvinists, both English and Foreign,” with whose suffrages you say you “might fill pages,”—I shrink not at all from saying of them, however *celebrated*, that any of them who adopted the most refined form of *false religion*, which seems most like the Gospel, differed less in their system from the most avowed infidels, than they differed from real Christians. You say—if you are to understand the words of my assertion, *according to their obvious meaning*, you “must think they amount to”—Nay, sir; if you please—we must not for a time be diverted from the words, in which I have couched my own assertion, to the words into which you choose to translate it.—I shall come to *them* by and by. But you admit that the meaning of my words is *obvious*; nay that there is “an *Emphasis* and studied decisiveness of manner” in them: and in this, indeed there is only what I aimed at giving them; for I well knew how offensive and how important my assertion was. Allow me then to dwell upon it a little longer.

“There is a greater difference between the way of a sinner’s justification and salvation which the Gospel reveals, and the most refined form of false religion which seems most like it; than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.” I take it for granted, sir, that you admit that the Gospel reveals the *true* way of a sinner’s justification and salvation. And admitting this to be the case, the logical truth of my assertion, which has so much offended you, is beyond all controversy. In that case, every system of religion—which proposes any *other* way of a sinner’s justification and salvation—must be a system of *false* religion: and the most refined form of it, which *seems* most like the religion of the Gospel, but is *not* the religion of the Gospel, must necessarily differ more from it than it does from any other system—that is also false and different from the religion of the Gospel. The resemblance of the most refined form of a false religion to that of the Gospel—is only a *seeming semblance*; but its agreement with the grossest form of false religion—is a *real agreement*, in that both are false—both different from the true religion of the Gospel. An illustration may render my meaning plain. There is a greater difference between a real human body and the finest statue of marble, that seems most like it,—than there is between the latter and the rudest rock.

But from the logical truth of my assertion, I gladly pass to the consideration of its importance. If any of these refined forms of false religion, which propose a way of a sinner’s justification and salvation different from that which the Gospel reveals, will answer the important purposes of religion as well or nearly as well;—if in short a sinner, who continues to adopt it, can be justified and saved in it; then, sir, I readily admit, that my assertion, however true, is of no essential importance. And then—I as readily admit, that my controversy with you is very unimportant; and all controversy indeed between any of those religious systems, which will *alike* answer the purposes of salvation. But upon this supposition also, it would be very important to ascertain the *common* character of those religious systems, which will alike conduct their respective votaries to eternal happiness; in order that those who adopt them may lay aside unprofitable controversies with one another, and all unite in maintaining and contending for that which is essential to salvation.

But till you, sir, or some one else, will come forward to do this,—I must maintain from the word of God that there is *no other way*, in which a sinner can be justified and saved, than that which the gospel reveals; and that every religious system which proposes any other way—different from that which the gospel reveals, however nearly resembling it in appearance,—is not only essentially distinct from the religion of the gospel,—is not only a *false* religion, but will as infallibly lead those who adopt it to eternal ruin, as any the most avowedly infidel system. The one may better answer the purposes of politicians than the other; and may be more subservient to the interests of human society in the present world. In this respect there is certainly a very great difference between different systems of false religion. But, as affecting our state and character in the sight of God—as connected with the eternal salvation of our souls—(in which

view alone I am considering them)—there is no difference between them. They all alike fail of conducting to that end; they all alike leave the sinner under condemnation; they all alike issue in eternal death: while the gospel reveals that way of a sinner's justification and salvation, which infallibly conducts every one who believes the gospel to eternal happiness.—In this respect, therefore, “there is a greater difference between the religion of the gospel, and the most refined form of false religion, which *seems* most like it, than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.”

I know the violent outcry which the world raises against the *il-liberality* of the assertion that I maintain; but it is the outcry of infidelity. If the one and only true God has indeed revealed in his word the way of salvation, we may *a priori* conclude it to be impossible—that those, who unbelievingly reject the revelation he has made, should be saved in any other way. It is at once absurd and impious to suppose that the Bible is the word of God, declaring to us from Him the way of salvation; and at the same time that it is not of essential importance to believe what it declares. The idea is dishonourable to the authority of God, is inconsistent with his glory, and can be maintained only by men who say in their hearts—that he is even such a one as themselves. It is therefore one of the numberless internal characters of divine truth and authenticity, which the Bible exhibits to the enlightened observer, that it demands the credence of our minds with that *authoritative* declaration—“Whoso believeth not shall be damned;”—that it disdains to accommodate what it reveals to the infidel liberality of men, by giving them to understand that they may disbelieve it without perishing. And it is one of the internal characters of falsehood in various religious systems, which are at this time current in Christendom,—that they propose their respective creeds as matters, which men may accept or reject consistently with salvation. *Such* a creed cannot, without an insult on the divine majesty, be supposed to be founded in a revelation from God.

Let me not be understood to say—that every religious system must be from God, which bears that mark of authenticity which I have mentioned. I only assert that those which are destitute of it—*cannot* be from God. But I know that this essential character of a really divine revelation has been affixed by men to some of their falsest systems. The hierarchy of Papal Rome, for instance, blasphemously demands submission to its most anti-christian lies, under the same sanctions which JEHOVAH has affixed to his revealed truth. Arrogating to itself divine authority, it acts in this but a consistent part; and acts but wisely, in refusing to have its tenets tried by the word of God, and in deterring * its infatuated followers from search-

* I say this, because it is a *fundamental principle* of Popery to do so; and a principle ever acted upon, as far as it *can* be enforced. Those who think that *Popery* is altered, and has become something less formidable, or less false than it was of old, only betray their total ignorance of the essential characters of that system.—I speak not of the private character or sentiments of its individual professors; nor is it very long since they were reminded by one of their own prelates in this country, that it is not by their private sentiments the tenets of the church are to be ascertained; and that those tenets—*cannot alter*.

ing that word. Nor has this usurpation of the sanctions of the gospel been confined to the papal see; though it is perhaps there alone, that they are usurped for the purpose of imposing opinions directly *opposite* to the gospel. But there have been and are Protestants, who presumptuously apply them for enforcing tenets—*distinct* from that Gospel of our salvation, to which alone they belong. To that, and to that alone, will it be found that God himself has annexed the authoritative declaration—“whoso believeth shall be saved, and whoso believeth not shall be damned.” And this declaration, I repeat it, establishes at once the truth and the importance of my assertion—“that there is a greater difference between the way of a sinner’s justification and salvation, which the Gospel reveals—for that is what the Gospel reveals)—and the most refined form of false religion which *seems* most like it, than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.”

Allow me, sir, to prove the truth and importance of that assertion, from another circumstance.—As the religion of the Gospel is the *only true* and the *only saving* religion, so it is that which alone has for its object the *true God*. And the man who—disbelieving the Gospel—adopts the most refined form of false religion that seems most like it, worships and serves a *false god*—the idol of his own infidel imagination. In his word—the *only true God* has made known his name, or character. To *manifest his name unto those who were given him out of the world*, is one of the declared purposes for which the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world: and in the knowledge of that name *eternal life* is declared to consist. (John xvii. 3. 6.) The real character and perfections of Jehovah are displayed in the way of a sinner’s justification and salvation, which the gospel reveals; and they who believe that gospel have the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”—They *know the name* of JEHOVAH, and they alone, (2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.) The minds of all *who believe not*—remain blinded: and denying Him “the *only true God*,” whatever religion they adopt, and however zealous they may be in it,—they worship they know not what—false gods that cannot profit nor deliver them. Nor is it their calling themselves Christians, nor their giving the *verbal titles* of the true God to their false objects of worship, that can exempt them from the application of those words of the Psalmist—“*ALL the Gods of the nations are idols.*” (Psal. xcvi. 5.)

I know how fashionable it is to represent the Pagans themselves—at least the wiser and more pious of them—as worshipping the same God with Christians; only under different names, and with a less clear discovery of his nature and of his will. I know how much the world admires the *liberality* of that sentiment, that He has been—

—————In every age,
In every clime ador’d;
By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage,
JEHOVAH—Jove—or LORD.

So rhymes Alexander Pope,—whose infidel verses are commonly lisped by our children, and sung in some places of so called christian

worship. But what saith the word of God?—*The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils, and not to God.* (1 Cor. x. 20.) “Confounded shall they all be, that serve graven images; that boast themselves of idols.” (Psal. cxvii. 7.) “They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” (Psal. cxxxv. 18.) “They shall be ashamed and confounded all of them; they shall go to confusion together, that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD, with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” (Isa. xlv. 16, 17.)

Nor let it be urged that professing *Christians*, whatever notions they form of the Deity, do not in general make to themselves visible representations of him with their hands, as the pagans did.—We know that *all* the pagans did not so;—yet *ALL their gods* are declared to be *idols*. And as to such visible representations—the work of men’s hands, they are declared in Scripture to be *in themselves* “nothing in the world,” (1 Cor. viii. 4. x. 19.)—nothing but wood or stone. Their great evil consisted in their being—expressions of the false and unworthy *notions* of God, which their worshippers had formed in their minds; and therefore we read of those “whose heart departeth from the Lord”—who *set up their idols in their HEART—and separate themselves from JEHOVAH* (Jer. xvii. 5. Ezek. xiv. 4—7.)—even while they profess to be worshippers of Him. And such a *departing from the living God* there is, wherever there is an *evil heart of UNBELIEF*. (Heb. iii. 12. 1 John v. 20, 21.)

Such as the notion or idea is, which we form of God—such is our God: and all who form false notions of Him, as all do who reject the revelation he has made of himself in his Gospel, are worshippers of false gods,—and in the worst sense of the word—worshippers of *idols*—the work, if not of their hands, yet of their as vain imaginations. Nor will a believer, observing the various religious systems of Christendom, perceive at this day less reason for that charge, than when it was of old recorded against a professing people—*according to the number of thy cities, are thy gods.* (Jer. ii. 28. xi. 13.) And as the idolatry of those in Christendom, who disbelieve the Gospel, is persisted in against a clearer and fuller discovery of the *true God*, than was afforded of old either to the Pagans or the Jews,—so much proportionably greater will be their condemnation. *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for such.* And the ground of their condemnation will be—not any innocent error of judgment—but this, that they have “not *liked* to retain God in their knowledge”—“because they have not received the *love* of the TRUTH that they might be saved”—but “have changed the truth of God into a lie,” and are righteously left under “strong delusion that they should believe a lie.” (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. Rom. i. 25. 28.)

But perhaps, sir, you will demand—“what is that falsehood in the notions that any professing *Christians* form of God, which can authorise you to place them on a level with *idolaters* of the heathens? I answer the question:—all professing Christians, who *disbelieve* the Gospel of the Grace of God, and look for justification and salvation

in any way *different* from that which his Gospel reveals,—must necessarily represent to themselves a God neither merciful, nor righteous, nor true;—and these are among the essential perfections of JEHOVAH,—as essential as his eternity, omniscience, ubiquity, and omnipotence. The latter characters of God many of the more Philosophic Heathens acknowledged; and indeed they are so abundantly testified by the works of creation, that they force themselves more or less upon the acknowledgment of all—even those to whom his word has never come. But it is in his *word*, that the former characters are declared; and by his word *alone*, that they all can be discovered. For without the revelation that he has there made, it could not have entered into the heart of any creature to conceive—how all these attributes could be *consistently* exercised. Allow Him to be perfectly *righteous* and immutably *true*; and the *guilty* creature appears to be without hope. Allow the guilty creature—the sinner—to have *hope* of escaping the just recompense of sin;—and it appears to be impossible that God should be *true* to his denunciations against sin, and *righteous* to inflict its full penalty. But in the GOSPEL of GOD our SAVIOUR, “in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” and into the things of which “angels desire to look,”—in IT—*mercy and truth appear meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other*. In it—God is made known as at once *just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus*. (Rom. iii. 26.) His law is magnified, and the exceeding sinfulness of every transgression against it is exhibited—in the very way in which the chief of sinners is made a partaker of eternal life.

The man who really believes the Gospel of GOD our SAVIOUR, is brought to the knowledge of the *true* God: and knows that “justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne,” while “mercy and truth shall go before his face.” (Psal. lxxxix. 14.) The man who *disbelieves* this Gospel, may be very *religious*; but a *false* god is the object of his religion; a god neither merciful, nor righteous, nor true. He may talk much of what he calls the divine *mercy*, and may borrow many arguments from it against the Gospel. But what he calls *mercy*, is always something which stands in opposition to perfect *righteousness* and immutable *truth*;—some indulgence of what is evil,—some forbearance to execute the penalty which the law of God pronounces against sin. Such an attribute belongs not to JEHOVAH. Unbelievers vainly boast of entertaining higher ideas of God’s *mercy*, than those whom they oppose. They altogether deny his *real* *mercy*, which is indeed higher than the heavens, but—in its highest displays—harmonizes with the most awful sanctions of his law.

In their opposition to the glorious Gospel, the true character of *unbelieving religionists* is detected; and is proved to be that of *haters* of God. The pride of their souls spurns at his *mercy*; the ungodliness of their rebellious minds arraigns his *justice*, as tyrannical severity; the infidelity of their self-deceiving hearts denies his *truth*, and treats the denunciations of his law as unmeaning threats, which are not to be executed. In their zeal for their *false* gods, they often fear not to blaspheme the God of Heaven; and rather than be saved by Him, in the way which exhibits all his glories, they will choose

destruction.—If any think this picture overcharged, let them read the Letter of the ULSTER HERDMAN—(which will shortly call for a reply from me, if life be spared)—or the controversial writings of Mr. FLETCHER.

I have thus, sir, assigned two proofs in confirmation of the assertion that so much shocked you;—“that there is a greater difference between the way of a sinner’s justification and salvation which the Gospel reveals, and the most refined form of false religion which seems most like it, than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.” I have shewn—that the GOSPEL reveals the *only* way of a sinner’s justification and salvation, and that every religious system—(from the most refined to the most gross)—which proposes any *other* way, leads to destruction. I have shewn that the GOSPEL reveals the *only true* God; and that of every other religious system—(from the most refined to the most gross)—a *false god* is the object.—Those proofs of my assertion are not likely to lessen its offensiveness: though they really confirm its truth and its importance.

But it is remarkable that, in my Expostulatory Address, the assertion against which you exclaim is immediately followed by a proof, of which you take no manner of notice. I there observe—that the systems of the most professed infidel and the most zealous religionist, who disbelieves the Gospel, both “go upon this principle,—that a sinner must obtain justification in the sight of God by *something* that he is to *do*.”—I observe that “they only differ with respect to the *degree* and quantity of the work which is to be done in order to acceptance with God and eternal life;—whereas the Gospel stands removed from and opposed to *all such* systems; its language being—BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST and thou shalt be saved.” Now, sir, if these things be so—the truth of my assertion is placed beyond all controversy; and you, or the person who shall next combat it, had better forbear exclaiming against the assertion, till you overthrow the foundation on which it rests;—namely this—that IN THE GOSPEL, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ETERNAL LIFE ARE REVEALED AS THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS, WITHOUT CONDITION OR EXCEPTION, WHO BELIEVES THE DIVINE RECORD CONCERNING THE SON OF GOD. In fact, sir, in this simple principle the whole of my controversy with the Methodists and with you is centered; and I point it out, in order that it may not be lost sight of in the various trains of reasoning, in which your opposition to it and their’s have necessarily engaged me.

But I now proceed to make a few observations on the method, in which you meet that offensive assertion, which you quote from my Address. Though you acknowledge that its meaning is *obvious*, you translate it into your own words; and observe that you must think it “amounts to this—that whoever do not hold with me that justification is in every sense unconditional—and that the most poignant sorrow for sin or the most solicitous anxiety about the things of salvation that can precede it, are no more preliminary steps to it, than Murder and Adultery—however such *Christians* may agree with me in all other respects—they are no better than the grossest and most

audacious infidels.”—Such, sir, is your interpretation of my assertion: and I do not think you misunderstood it; although your expressions are certainly calculated both to involve my assertion in obscurity, and to lead our readers to a misconception of its meaning.

As the assertion stands in my Address, altogether unconnected with the question, which you have inaccurately introduced into your interpretation of it, relative to the nature of repentance—(whether it consist in any sorrow or solicitude previous to *faith*)—and as I have already discussed that question at large in its proper place; you must excuse me if I here disentangle your statement of my meaning, by laying aside that topic, and reducing your interpretation of my assertion to this—“that whoever do not hold with me that justification is in every sense unconditional, *they are no better* than the grossest and most audacious infidels.”

But even here there remain two ambiguities or indeed inaccuracies, which perplex the *obvious* meaning of my own words; and must be adverted to, before I can safely accept your statement. Where have I said, sir, that justification is IN EVERY SENSE unconditional? I have throughout maintained—that *without faith* there is no justification for any sinner: and you are aware that, *in that sense*, many have spoken of faith as a *condition* of justification; though I will never adopt their language, because it is so likely to be understood in a different and most unscriptural sense. But in that sense—of what Logicians call *a causa sine qua non*—you know that I would not deny that faith is a *condition* of justification; but on the contrary maintain it with a decisiveness, which has occasioned many of your castigatory remarks. Why then, sir, should you—in professing to interpret my meaning—represent me as holding that “justification is *in every sense* unconditional?”

But again, at the close of your statement, you represent me as asserting that such and such persons are—“*no better* than the grossest and most audacious infidels.” Now, sir, in the assertion which you profess to interpret, I expressly compare *systems* of religion, and not the *characters* of their professors. Nor did I even say that the one *system* was *no better* than the other—(for in many respects it may have a more beneficial tendency)—but I said that the difference between it and the other was *less*, than the difference between it and the Gospel. As to the characters of different men who *disbelieve* the GOSPEL,—if you speak of their characters and state in the sight of GOD, I willingly accept your statement. But when you represent me as asserting that such and such persons—“are *no better* than the grossest and most audacious infidels”—your words would probably be understood in a sense, which I never intended to convey. I am well aware that many religionists, whom I cannot admit to be Christians, except in name, are in one sense *much better* than any gross and audacious infidel; that they are often very amiable, very respectable, and very useful in civil society. And *these* distinguishing characters I am very far from undervaluing, or from not thinking it my duty to acknowledge where I meet them: though I know that they may exist, altogether distinct from what constitutes a

CHRISTIAN, or is accompanied with salvation; and I think it also my duty to warn their most eminent possessors—(however it may offend them)—in the words of that divine declaration—“that which is *highly esteemed* among men, is *abomination* in the sight of God.” Luke xvi. 15.

And now, sir, having extricated my assertion from the embarrassment and ambiguity, in which your interpretation involved it,—the assertion itself remains with a sufficiently *obvious meaning*; only that your words—“whoever do not hold *with you*,” &c. imply a *petitio principii*, which I must be excused from admitting,—namely, that the principles for which I contend, as essential to the Gospel, are *peculiar tenets of my own*, and either not true, or—(according to the word of God)—not essential to the Gospel. And what do you oppose to my assertion? Why, nothing—but the question—*whom do I not condemn?*

Far be it ever from me to usurp the prerogative of God in *condemning* any! But if you mean by the question—“Who believes the Gospel which you assert, and to the belief of which you assert salvation is annexed?” I answer—a few despised but happy followers—of a despised but glorious Saviour;—who can look without dismay at the long list of candid, wise, pious, respectable, sober, and celebrated Calvinists, whom you enumerate as “maintaining explicitly and zealously the most opposite doctrine;”—a few, who are and ever have been unacknowledged by the world, but are “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”—because they know that “it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Rom. i. 16.)

This view of the real church of Christ as “a little flock”—“a remnant according to the election of grace”—is one part of the *offence of the cross*, which has not ceased. It cuts off all hope of combining worldly interest and respectability, with the Christian character. But are we, sir, to estimate the nature of real Christianity by the Bible; or—by considering what system, under the name of Christianity, will comprehend the greatest *numbers*? If by the former, to it I have appealed. If by the latter, we must lay aside our Bibles altogether; and in order not to be *illiberal*, must lay aside from our system almost every principle—not only of religion—but of morality. For is it not, sir, a melancholy fact, that a majority of those who bear the name of Christians in this country—(to go to no other part of Christendom)—are living in the habitually indulged breach of some one *moral* duty or another. Collect from the mass of our countrymen all the swearers, the drunkards, the liars, the fornicators, the dishonest, the covetous, the murderers, and such like;—and alas! what an awful multitude will you collect!

I know, sir, that you would not be an advocate for that system, which would represent *these* as real Christians: but may they not charge you with “the sharp censure and the gloomy dogma,” which you impute to me; and as reasonably urge your own question upon yourself—*whom do you not condemn?* You would answer them from the Bible—(for to that we must after all recur)—and would be at no loss to vindicate yourself from the word of God against the imputa-

tion of *illiberality* and uncharitable judgment. Conceive the answer that you would give them; and you will find it a suitable and sufficient answer from me to you.

I know that it is only the *religious world* you would desire to comprehend within your system; and only that part of it, which combines conscientious *moral*ity with what is called *heart religion*. But observe, sir, that even this will be much the smaller part of the world; and that the majority will naturally consider—as a very “gloomy dogma”—the sentiment, that represents them in the broad road to eternal death. Whether you would mean to comprehend all of that description in the *religious world*, I am uncertain; for you have given me no sufficient clue to discover your precise meaning. If you would,—there must be included in it a great number of *very pious* and *moral* Jews, Musselmen, and Pagans,—as well as of Papists, Socinians, Arians, Pelagians, Arminians, and Baxterians. For undoubtedly it would be illiberal and untrue, to deny that there are—among all these classes,—many who are eminent for *heart religion* and strict *moral*ity. And if such of all these classes, be really in a state of acceptance with God, and in the way to eternal life,—then undoubtedly it is quite unessential what our creed is,—what we *believe*. And then, sir, pardon me for plainly saying—the Bible, which expressly attaches salvation to *faith*, and condemnation to *unbelief*, not only must be a very strange and useless book, but cannot be true. And indeed I have heard very grave and reverend gentlemen, in this Christian country, honestly declare—when pressed on this subject—that they would rather give up the Bible, than admit such a “gloomy dogma,” as appears to follow from it. You, sir,—I know—have greater reverence for the bible than this. You must therefore necessarily *narrow* your system still more; and be exposed to the charge of *illiberality* and *uncharitableness* from a still greater number.

I now suppose that you will aim at comprehending in it,—only those of the religious world, who have *true religion*. There we are agreed:—and it only remains to settle the standard of true religion. This is indeed an important enquiry; and its importance is sufficient to vindicate all the pains, that I have taken in my controversy with you, from the imputation—by which so many aim at smothering it—as if it were unprofitable and unimportant. I have stated what I conceive to be included in *true religion*; and I have stated that I acknowledge the Bible, as the word of God, to be the only standard of it. You have not yet stated what you include in *true religion*; and have argued throughout, as if you adopted a very different standard for determining it. You appear to have taken it for granted that such and such men or bodies of men—(celebrated, respectable, wise, pious, &c. &c.)—had true religion: and then, observing that they held such and such tenets, you seem to infer that opposite tenets are therefore not to be included in true religion. But the whole of this reasoning—(and the greater part of your letter is occupied with it)—falls harmless to the ground. A sensible child may see that it begs the question, and merely appeals to human prejudice and authority. For *if* any creed be essential to true

Religion, those who disbelieve that creed, have not true Religion—however celebrated they be, or respectable, or wise, or pious, &c. &c. If *no* creed be essential to true religion, then—as before—we must give up the Bible altogether: and the question recurs—what constitutes true religion? and by what is it to be estimated? If by the celebrity, wisdom, piety, &c., of religious professors,—then be assured, sir, the Jews, Turks, Pagans, Socinians, &c. will be able to produce you characters as *celebrated* among them for *wisdom* and *piety*—as any of those, whose authority you produce against me.

But I am persuaded, sir, that although your mode of reasoning *implies* the reverse, yet you will ultimately agree with me in maintaining that the word of God is the one and only criterion, by which we are to determine what *true religion* consists in.—And now I have hitherto principally considered the *truths* which it reveals, as essential to be *believed*; and you appear shocked at the consideration of the very small number, who according to this standard will be found possessed of true religion; and you urge this circumstance as decisive against me. But you must by this time perceive, that this circumstance cannot be admitted as decisive against me, without being equally decisive against your own system,—whatever it be;—nor indeed without changing the standard of religious truth altogether. But shall I own to you, that—still adhering to the Bible for my standard of true Religion, of true Christianity,—I cannot estimate the proportion of real Christians in this country at a higher number, when I look at the *practice* of professors, than when I look at their various creeds? Nay, there are several, with whose creeds I am not sufficiently acquainted to discover any falsehood in them,—and perhaps if I were acquainted with them, I should be unable to point out any falsehood in the creeds that they *profess*;—but whose *practice* affords an awful evidence against the pretensions they make to believing the Gospel.

They may *say* that they have faith; but their works disprove what they say. (James ii. 14—20. 1 John i. 6.) Very few *profess* Christian faith; and of the few who profess it, or do not openly profess what contradicts it, too many appear to *walk after the flesh*; and so manifest that they are not partakers of that precious gift. Floating notions or opinions about detached doctrines of the Bible they may have received from men; and may be very zealous for them,—often as the chief thing on which they rest their claim to the Christian character. But I know from the Bible that, if they *really believed* the glorious Gospel of the grace of God—with that discovery and persuasion of it which his Spirit gives,—it would bring forth other fruit in them than what they produce. (Col. i. 6.) It would turn them to the Lord, in a willing subjection of heart and life—not to the traditions of men—but to the precepts of his word. It would crucify them to the world. It would make them gladly take up the cross, deny themselves, and follow a despised Saviour through a despising world—as those who were not of it. It would knit their hearts together in brotherly love to his despised followers; whom these false professors are now sometimes the first to calumniate and reproach. Yes, it would produce love—*not in word and in tongue* only, but *in deed and in truth*; love, manifested in self-denying acts

of brotherly kindness and sympathy ;—love, “ without partiality and without hypocrisy ;”—love, the closeness of which the unbelieving world knows nothing of.

And when I look at the things that are substituted in the religious world, for these fruits of the spirit,—a quantity of religious talk, and a multiplicity of religious meetings, and attachment to religious leaders,—with perhaps a grave deportment, gloomy looks, and some peculiarities of dress or forms or phraseology ;—surely they seem to have laid aside the Bible, not more as the standard of *Christian faith*, than as the standard of *Christian practice*. Ah! sir, if the Bible be true, the flock of Christ is a *little flock* indeed: and it is mischievous nonsense to try to conceal this, for fear of offending the world. They will undoubtedly think our testimony uncharitable and illiberal ;—they will mistake it ;—they will attribute it to a thousand false and unworthy motives,—to pride and censoriousness, and an overweening conceit of ourselves. But shall Christians therefore betray the truths of God and deal with real uncharitableness to the souls of their fellow sinners,—in order to please them,—to conciliate their favour and esteem? Nay; let the witnesses of Christ follow the example of one of old, and “ by manifestation of the truth”—(not by disguising or corrupting it)—“ commend themselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God ;”—and then they will have, with him, “ the testimony of their own conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world.” (2 Cor. i. 12. iv. 2.)

And here, sir, permit me to take notice of a deistical objection against Christianity, which the subject I have been last considering naturally suggests ;—an objection which I have often heard stated from the pulpit, and to which I have commonly heard answers proposed—that were little less deistical than the objection, which they were brought to remove. I mean—the want of *universality* in the promulgation of the Gospel. “ If the Christian religion,” they say, “ be indeed of God, and so important as is represented, why has not the Almighty sent the Scriptures to all nations of the Earth, and in all ages of the World?” The objection,—like all objections made by men against the truths or dealings of God,—betrays at once the folly and the wickedness of those who make it. It goes upon the supposition that men, however fallible and frail—(according to the phraseology of the *vindicators of human nature*)—are yet so well disposed, that they only need to be shewn what is good and true in order to embrace it. But the falsehood of this supposition is not only declared in the Scriptures, but proved by those very objectors, —whose conduct fulfils the scriptures which they reject. Do those, to whom the word of God has come, and who reject it—amidst the multiplied evidences (internal and external) of its truth which surround them,—do *they* object against the divine procedure, in not sending it to others that they may reject it too,—and so may perish under aggravated condemnation? The total wickedness of human nature, in all men, is evinced by their *disbelief* of the GOSPEL, where it is sent ;—by this, above all other evidences of it. They are proved by this “ to love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are

evil." And those objectors afford the most decisive answer to their own objection; and put it beyond controversy, that what they proudly challenge the Almighty to send to all as a blessing, is—both that which no man can have any *right* to demand,—and that which, if only sent to all as they desire, would be perverted by the sinful rejection of all into an accumulated curse.

If they change the form of their objection, and demand—"why does He not only send his Gospel to all, but—where he sends it—accompany it with his Almighty Spirit, discovering to all men its excellency and convincing them of its truth?"—it is in this form an objection which the Arminians have long adopted into their system; and by adopting it, prove their relationship to the Deists. And the question now resolves itself into this—"Why am I so wicked?—*Why hath he made me thus?*" It is a question, by which the sinner arrogantly arraigns JEHOVAH at his bar; and at the very moment that he exhibits the strongest evidence that his wickedness is *wilful*—blasphemously attempts to transfer the blame of it to his Creator. It is a question, in which all the presumption and mad rebelliousness of the human heart appear concentrated; and to which the fittest answer is that given to it of old by the Apostle—"Nay,—but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"—Well may a believer say with the Psalmist—"Horror hath taken hold on me because of the wicked that forsake thy law:"—and, while he remembers what it is that maketh him to differ, well may he rejoice that "salvation belongeth unto the LORD," and is the work of his rich mercy and his sovereign power. For he must see that he himself *could* have no hope,—but for that "good hope through GRACE," which the Gospel reveals.

You bring forward, sir, against me—a quotation, which you "select out of eighty," taken by Richard Baxter, "from the authorized annotations written by Divines of the Westminster assembly;" and you bring it forward to prove "the sentiments of English Calvinists" to be opposite to mine. That gives me very little trouble, if it be even so: and I think it likely that any so called Calvinists, from whose sentiments Richard Baxter could derive support to his system, entertained sentiments very opposite indeed to mine, or to the Gospel. As far as I am acquainted with Richard Baxter's system, I suspect that it was one of those "refined forms of false religion," which may *seem* very like the Gospel,—but is as contrary to it as darkness to light. I am aware, sir, how Richard Baxter has been canonized. I am aware that, when his name appears in print, the epithets of *holy—pious*, &c. are commonly prefixed to it. If he believed the Gospel, he was holy indeed; but of that we have no other evidence, but what his sentiments recorded in his works afford. Of them I have four folio volumes; but they do not happen to contain that piece of his, to which you refer. It is little matter. And as to his quotation from these same *authorized annotations*, I need take little notice of it. I know how a detached quotation, separated from the context, may be employed to support a very different sentiment from what the writer ever intended. The words which he quotes are—some of them—of a very questionable tendency indeed.

But if the writers only intended by them—that the prayers and services of sinners can have no acceptance with God, while they are themselves yet the servants of sin,—they intended to convey, only what I have very explicitly asserted. If they intended to convey,—that there is any way, in which sinners can be truly *cleansed* from their sins, but in that “fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,” by the Redeemer’s obedience unto death and through the faith of the Gospel which proclaims his work;—they intended to convey what is false, and what does not become a whit less false—for being asserted by “Divines of the Westminster Assembly.”

But as “a still more direct proof of what the whole body of the English Calvinists at that time held,” you produce a quotation “from the assembly’s own confession of faith;”—in which they state that—“repentance is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.” This would be a very harmless quotation, but for what is implied in it,—an insinuation that I think sinners *may expect pardon without Repentance*;—and this insinuation, confirmed by the appeal which you immediately subjoin to the quotation—whether I “must not deem this to be precisely and literally a refined form of false religion although most like the true.” No, indeed, Sir. On the contrary, it would be a very gross form of false religion, which would represent—that any sinner may expect pardon without repentance. Yet it is that form of false religion, which is common to almost all the unbelieving world. But where, sir, have I countenanced it? To all the unbelieving world I testify, from the word of God, that—“except they repent they will perish.”

You express your persuasion that my sentiments, when *explained* by myself, “will bear a much more *liberal* appearance than they exhibit” in my Expostulatory Address. I believe, sir, you have been disappointed. The more clearly and fully those who believe the Gospel, explain their sentiments, the more illiberal must they appear to the world.

But I beseech you to consider seriously what you mean by *liberal* sentiments in Religion. I should think that the great point about which one, who receives the Scriptures as the word of God, ought to be solicitous, is—that his sentiments in religion be *true*,—that is, conformable to what is revealed in Scripture. Whether they be afterwards considered *liberal* or *illiberal* by the world, is a very unimportant matter. In short, *liberality* of sentiment here—commonly means nothing more than conformity of sentiment to the generally received notions: and it seems to be nothing more than this, that you mean by a similar and strange expression at the close of your letter, where you talk of “a more *Catholic* mode of interpreting” the sacred Scriptures. If, in examining the sacred Scriptures, I were to consider—not what God there declares—but how I might interpret the Scriptures into a coincidence of sentiment with the opinions of men,—I might *nominally* receive them as the word of God, but I should *really* reject them. Men shall yet know, whose word shall stand,—the LORD’S or theirs. (Jer. xlv. 28.)

You quote from my Address a passage, of which you approve—as containing “a truly Christian sentiment:”—and you add that *if*

I “ have *apparently departed* from it, it is this deliberate declaration of kindness, which ought to be rested in, as the pledge” of my habitual feeling. I thank you, sir, for the kindness of your expression : but I confess that I would be much more gratified, by your pointing out where I have departed—if I have really departed—from the sentiment which you quote. The opinion of any man about my *habitual feeling* can do me little good or harm : but I hope I should reckon it an important service to be shewn by any one—where I may have departed in my writings from the feelings of a Christian. But if you think I have departed from the feelings of kindness to the Methodists, only because I have told them truth which they needed to be told,—and which those among them who need it most are most unwilling to hear ;—I must consider this only as an *apparent* departure, and not a real one.

You say—that you are obliged to consider that pleasing effusion of brotherly kindness, “ as implying a necessity for materially qualifying the denunciation ”—that there is a greater difference between the religion of the Gospel and the most refined form of infidelity, than there is between the latter and the most gross. Allow me to ask you, sir, can brotherly kindness imply any necessity for telling lies ?—The assertion—or, as you choose to call it, the denunciation—in the unqualified form in which it appears in my Address,—is *true* : and I think I have proved it, in this letter, to be true and to be most important. Nor do I know how it could be *materially qualified*, so as not to convert it into a falsehood.

But you think that I am involved in *inconsistency*, by acknowledging that real Christians *may* exist in an Arminian society ;—while I certainly hold that Arminianism is but a *refined form of false religion*, and therefore little better—(nothing better as to the purposes of salvation)—than the most avowed infidelity.—If I had fallen into the inconsistency which you suppose, I hope I should not sacrifice certain and important truth to extricate myself from it. But if you read my Address with a little more attention,—you will perceive that the acknowledgment which you speak of—“ that real Christians may exist in an Arminian society ”—amounts only to an intimation—that there may be persons, in an Arminian society, who do not *really* hold Arminian tenets ; and to an assertion—that I *think* I have found a few such among the Methodists. In this, I see nothing inconsistent with my views of Arminianism.

You ask me whether it would not have been as well, upon the whole, that my “ terms of condemnation respecting *opinions* had been less dogmatic.”—I think it would not, sir. To dogmatise on matters of doubtful opinion,—upon matters which the word of God has left undetermined or uncertain,—is always bad. But a believer cannot too positively, or too plainly, protest against every opinion, which contradicts the gospel of Christ. The world, I know, would be comparatively content that Christians should hold every principle of the gospel, if they held them not as matters of indubitable certainty and infinite importance ; if, by latitudinarian scepticism in the mode of holding their opinions, they left room for the infidelity of others to be allowed as something *innocent* and *safe*. But those

who hold Evangelical principles only as matters of indifferent opinion, do not yet believe the Gospel with that faith, which is “of the operation of God.”

You propose another question: you say—“If any one can honestly think that St. Peter and I are at issue, what a necessity is implied in such a possibility for cautious and charitable judgment” on my part? Why you select St. Peter particularly, as at issue with me,—I am at some loss to conjecture. St. Peter declared the same gospel with St. Paul, and with all the Apostles. I have only to open his epistles, and I find him speaking the language which is so offensive now. I find him addressing Christians as those who are—“*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;*”—as those whom God, “according to his *abundant mercy*, hath begotten again unto a lively hope *by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead;*”—as those who are “born again by the *word of God;*”—as those who are “kept by the power of God through *faith* unto salvation:”—as those who, *believing in Jesus Christ*, “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;”—as those who have “purified their souls *in obeying the truth* through the spirit.” I find him testifying that JESUS CHRIST is “laid in Zion a chief corner-stone elect, precious,” and that “he that *believeth on him* shall not be confounded.” I find him declaring the most awful condemnation against those, who are *disobedient*—or unbelieving,—who *stumble at the word*. And I do not find him supposing any such HONESTY in the unbelieving world, as would imply a necessity for that *cautious and charitable judgment on his part*, of which you speak.

You make some remarks, sir, on a supposed difference between the ways, in which you and I have observed the Methodists. Little need be said on this subject. But I apprehend that you have not noticed the chief circumstance of difference. You seem to have observed them with the eye of a religious Philosopher; and satisfied with finding among them a great deal of *religion*—and much that was amiable—respectable—and useful—you seem to have given yourself little trouble to inquire what *kind* of Religion it was, by bringing their religious principles and practices to the test of Scripture. To that test I have endeavoured to call their attention; and that alone I acknowledge as the criterion of *true religion*.

You observe—that you would be “sorry to say one word, to lessen the corrective influence of any” of my justly-applied censures. Which of my censures you conceive to be *justly-applied*, you leave the Methodists and me uncertain. The only one that you have admitted to be just, is my brief censure of their *tumultuous assemblies*; and the corrective influence even of that you weaken, by accounting for their continuance from “the fear of repressing *pious ardours*, where they might easily be *chilled and annihilated*.” You zealously oppose the grounds of almost all my other expostulations; and what you have said tends to lessen their corrective influence, by persuading the Methodists—of what they are too ready to believe—that there is in their body “as real excellence as ever was in the Christian

world,"—by representing their monitor as a *prejudiced adversary*,—and especially by calling off their attention from the one rule of Christian faith and practice, the *word of God*, to the authority and opinions of men.

In this view, sir, I candidly confess to you, that I think your pamphlet very mischievous in its tendency. And I would therefore lament, that false charity and zeal for the *reputation* of a body, to whom you were attached, induced you to publish it,—but that it has afforded me one of the opportunities, which I looked for—not of invading their reputation—but of combating the most dangerous errors which are prevalent in their Society,—and of maintaining the most important truths, which are contradicted by their system, and indeed generally disbelieved. I have considered your remarks on my Address, merely as a favourable occasion for asserting those glorious truths.

We have had different objects, sir, in writing. Your main object confessedly was—to vindicate the character of the Methodists; mine—to vindicate the *gospel of the grace of God*. This may account for our different modes of writing;—for your dwelling so much upon the former topic;—and my losing sight of it, and bringing forward to a minute examination—the *principles* introduced into your Letter.

The same thing may account for all the advantage, which I have hitherto had over my antagonist, in this controversy;—for I would despise the false modesty, which would conceal my consciousness of having succeeded—in refuting all that is material in your remarks. Any advocate for the truths which I assert,—if he only be enabled to keep them and the Bible which reveals them steadily in view, and be not diverted from his great object by any of the subordinate questions, which will be thrown in his way to turn him aside from it,—in this case any advocate for these truths must be an overmatch for the most ingenious opposer of them.

It would ill become me to degrade the cause in which I am engaged, by intimating any doubt about the general merits of the controversy. But it would as ill become me not to acknowledge that, in particular passages, I may have fallen into errors of sentiment or of expression,—either through inadvertency or ignorance. For the detection of any such errors—by friend or foe—either in a public answer, or by private communication,—I trust I shall be truly thankful. And if I have in any respect done injustice to your remarks, or wounded your personal feelings,—beyond the necessary effect that is connected with the general offensiveness of the subject, and with the refutation of your errors,—let the instances be pointed out, and I trust that I shall be forward to make you the most ample amends. That I have studiously aimed at avoiding every thing of this kind, I can honestly declare.

The controversy, sir, is not at an end; nor can it be at an end, while Christ has a *church militant here on earth*. It is a controversy—about that “faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to *save sinners*.” Of this, I trust that those who shall succeed me in the controversy never will lose

sight. This joyful truth,—so simple that the most illiterate believer understands it,—so big with divine wisdom, that those who know it most are most sensible how little of its glory they discern,—this joyful truth is openly denied by Deists; and is as really disbelieved by the great majority of professing Christians. These, while they assent to it in words, deny the real import which is annexed to the words, throughout the scriptures. But if that saying be indeed *worthy of all acceptation*, it must be—not on account of the *sound* of the words,—(for in that view, they are of no more value than a line of the Koran)—but on account of the *meaning* of the words. And those who disbelieve the saying in that *meaning* of it, in which it is *worthy of all acceptation*, disbelieve it as effectually—as the most open Deist.

In that meaning there is no real doubtfulness. Blessed be God! there is not. The whole Bible is a luminous comment upon it. To understand that meaning, is a matter as level to the weakest—as to the most powerful intellect. It is not any intrinsic difficulty or obscurity in the truth, that occasions it to be misconceived by those before whom it is laid. It is their carnal indisposition to the truth. Well spake our Lord of old—“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because *ye* cannot hear *my* words.—Ye are of your father the Devil;—he is a liar and the father of it. And *because* I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”

Nor let it be objected against the simplicity of the Gospel, for which I contend—that some of the arguments, which I have brought forward, are beyond the comprehension of minds unaccustomed to close reasoning. Perhaps some of them may be so. But you know, sir, that a truth may be the simplest in the world, which there may yet be occasion to vindicate by arguments ever so abstruse;—and of the truth itself the unlettered peasant may have the clearest comprehension and fullest certainty;—though he be little capable of detecting the fallacy of objections, by which ingenious men oppose it,—or perhaps even of following the train of reasoning, by which others expose their fallacy.

To you, sir, the argumentative parts of my reply can have no obscurity, for which I should need to apologize; and if any of them be inconclusive, you can be at no loss to point out their weakness. Permit me to say that I think you called upon, either to do this, or to acknowledge their force. You have publicly avowed your opinion, that my “views of certain Scripture doctrines are very erroneous and pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences.” You have publicly attacked these views; and I have as publicly given—what I am bold to say is a confirmation of their truth, and a refutation of your arguments. If I be at all qualified to judge of my reply, it is not of that kind—which you can be warranted to pass by in silence.

But if, from whatever cause, *you* should decline continuing the discussion of those most important subjects,—there are many others, who may well be expected to take your place. I know what multitudes agree with you in rejecting the views of Scripture doctrines which I maintain. And among those multitudes, there are many whose profession is considered as peculiarly binding them

to the defence of religious truth ; and not a few—eminent for learning and for talents. It is not by the private inuendo, the occasional sneer, or the indignant invective, that it becomes such men to oppose what they conceive to be dangerous errors in Religion—publicly maintained ; but by a public examination of the arguments by which they are maintained. To that I invite them ; not from any vain conceit of being their equal, either in learning or in talents, —but from the confidence that my inferiority in either will be more than compensated, by the facility of defending divine truth against its opposers ;—and from a conviction that the subject is of such importance, that it deserves the most serious and full discussion.

I remain sir, with best wishes,

Your faithful humble Servant,

Trin. Coll. Nov. 1, 1803.

JOHN WALKER.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE Apostle Paul (Rom. xvi. 17.) beseeches his brethren at Rome “to mark them who caused divisions and offences contrary to the Apostolic doctrine which they had learned, and to avoid them.” He ever manifested a godly solicitude that the hearts of Christians might be “knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of *understanding*, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God—even of the Father and of Christ :” (Col. ii. 2.)—that they might be “perfectly *joined* together in the same *mind* and in the same *judgment* ;” and thus might all *speak* the same thing,—professing the same faith of the same glorious Gospel ;—so that there should be “no divisions among them.” (1 Cor. i. 10.)—The apostle knew the uniting power of the TRUTH *as it is in JESUS* ; and had no idea of any *unity* in the Christian Church, but that which was grounded on the *unity* of the Christian *faith* ;—which originated in this, that its members believed the *same* glorious Gospel. He speaks of *schisms*, or divisions ; but never in the sense in which the word is now commonly applied—as a watchword against Christians,—never as consisting in a separation from those who deny the faith, and introduce another Gospel. On the contrary, he considers all such false teachers as peculiarly *schismatics*, or authors of division ; and exhorts believers to *mark* and to *avoid* them. In the passage of his Epistle to the Romans above quoted, he declares their real character : he declares—amidst all the pretensions they often make to eminent godliness—that they “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly”—their own private ends. And he points out one of the main engines which they employed, for disturbing the real unity of the Christian church ;—“by *good words* and *fair speeches* they deceive the hearts of the simple.”

It is at this day needful to warn Christians against such characters and their seductive arts ; for the generation of them is not extinct ;

and never will be extinct, as long as Satan is allowed to exert his opposition against the Church of God. It would not answer the purpose of the father of lies, to employ no instruments but profane and open infidels. In order to corrupt the Gospel, and substitute for it something that is not the Gospel, but seems very like it,—he must employ various classes of pious Religionists; whose *sincerity* of attachment to their respective systems of infidelity I do not mean at all to question. And they make use of the same engine in his service at this day, that they used in the days of the Apostle;—*good words and fair speeches*—to “deceive the hearts of the simple.”

It would be an interesting and profitable inquiry, to examine the various *good words*, to which they have given a bad currency, in various ages of the church. But perhaps there is none that they more successively use at this day, than that which I have mentioned, (p. 164)—HEART RELIGION. It is a *good word* indeed when rightly applied; for it may well express the *inward reality* of true Religion, in opposition to the hypocrisy of mere outward profession. But by a dexterous management of this *good word*, some of the most successful opposition is given at present to the Gospel. When the truths of God are asserted, and asserted so that the enemies of them have no other answer;—they contrive to put down the subject, with the good word—HEART RELIGION. They set this *in opposition* to the BELIEF of the TRUTH; to which they give the contemptuous name of HEAD KNOWLEDGE. They put themselves forward as the champions of the former; and insinuate that the assertors of the latter are enemies to *heart-religion*; or at least contending for some *speculative* notions that, in comparison of it, are of little consequence. And thus their work is done. Their zeal for heart-religion is admired; their followers are increased;—the hearts of the *simple* are deceived;—the glorious truths of the Gospel—(the hearty belief of which alone produces true religion)—are rejected with contempt as *unimportant*;—professors of the Apostolic Gospel are decried, as raising a strife about *words* without profit; and the blinded multitude follow their admired guides in the pursuit of a *mystic something* which they call HEART RELIGION;—satisfied that the doctrine which they are taught must be the Gospel, because it is dressed up with Evangelical names;—and deterred from examining into the scriptural *meaning* of these names, because they are taught to think that such an enquiry is calculated to give them only—what their leaders call—HEAD KNOWLEDGE, and to turn them aside from HEART-RELIGION.

I cannot lay down my pen, without apologizing to my readers for many deficiencies, of which I am sensible, in the style of these letters. The circumstances under which they have been written, were in general so unfavourable, as to preclude much attention to composition. I have aimed at expressing my meaning clearly; but I fear I have sometimes expressed it with too much condensed brevity, and in sentences of an involved structure.

AN
ADDRESS TO BELIEVERS
OF
THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST,
ON THAT
CONVERSATION WHICH BECOMETH IT :
WITH
AN APPENDIX,

Containing an Account of the late Change in the Author's Sentiments,
concerning the Lawfulness of his former Connection with the Religious
Establishment of this Country ;

AND
HIS LETTER TO THE PROVOST,

WHICH OCCASIONED
HIS EXPULSION FROM THE COLLEGE OF DUBLIN.

TO WHICH IS NOW ADDED,
A BRIEF APPLICATION
OF THE PRINCIPLES ASSERTED IN THIS ADDRESS, &c.

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.—Phil. iii. 15.

Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.—Jer. xxxi. 21.

[First Published Nov. 1804.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE importance of the subject discussed in the following pages is a sufficient apology for the publication of them. The late change also in my circumstances and conduct seems to require some explanation of the grounds of it; and the more so, because I would be sorry they should be confounded with the grounds, on which *Dissenters* ordinarily stand.

My reason for accompanying that explanation with the Address on Phil. i. 27. is this, that I am certain none can truly enter into the grounds of my conduct, but those who enter into the subject of that Address. It contains the substance of a Sermon, which I preached last Summer in different places; and which, in some, gave considerable offence.

Let me add, that I would be understood as having altogether

renounced the *clerical* character; and having therefore no longer any pretensions to the usual appellation of *Reverend*: while I have no scruple about giving it to others, as I consider it only synonymous with that of *Parson*. The character of scriptural ELDERS, or OVERSEERS, of a Christian Church, is very different indeed from that of *Clergymen*. But neither do I hold such an office in that Church of Christ, with which I am connected; nor, from particular circumstances, am I ever likely to hold it.

If any ask, in what character I continue to preach, and to write on religious subjects; my answer is ready—in the character of a *disciple* and *servant* of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Paradise Row,
Nov. 14, 1804.

AN ADDRESS, &c.

Let your conversation be, as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.—Phil. i. 27.

THE Apostolic exhortation upon which I would offer some remarks, for the purpose of explaining and enforcing it, was addressed to *all the saints in Christ Jesus which were at Philippi, with the overseers and servants* of that Christian Church. v. 1. It was addressed—as indeed the very terms of the exhortation imply—to persons who *believed* the GOSPEL OF CHRIST, that Gospel which the Apostle had preached in their city; (see Acts xvi.) and who by this circumstance were distinguished from all the rest of its inhabitants. It was addressed to persons for whose *fellowship in the Gospel* he rejoiced; and concerning whom he avows his confidence that *He* who had *begun a good work* in them would *perform* (or finish) *it until the day of Jesus Christ*. v. 5, 6. The *good work begun* in them, upon which he grounds this confidence, was “the work of FAITH.” Where this was not wrought, he acknowledged no *good work* even begun. This the Apostle knew to be the “work of GOD;” and he was too well instructed in the things of the kingdom of God, to admit the idea that it might be left unfinished; that any in whom *it was begun* would fail of “receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.”

But while he views them as made partakers of “like precious faith” with himself, while he sees the high character and state to which they were thus called, even that of *saints in Christ Jesus*—or persons “*holy to the LORD*” and separated from the world, of a people belonging to the living God as his; while he traces this character and state to its proper origin, the distinguishing mercy and effectual power of God, and therefore gives to HIM the thanks which were *his* due (v. 3.); while he confidently looks forward to the completion of the divine purposes of grace towards them, and joyfully anticipates their admission into eternal glory; his heart was at the same time big with solicitude that, during their pilgrimage on earth, they might increasingly glorify Him who had called them into his kingdom, and might be “filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. v. 11.” He beholds them “trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD” (Is. lxi. 3.); and he prays that they may *abound more and more* in the corresponding *fruits of righteousness*, which none but such can bear. Upon them he therefore presses the exhortation with affectionate earnestness—LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE, AS IT BECOMETH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

To such persons was it directed of old by the Apostle ; and to such, and such alone, is it addressed in the word to this day. The name of *Christian* is now commonly adopted by men, who do not even profess to *believe* that Gospel which Paul preached, and which these Philippians had received ; by men who do not even profess to be *saints in Christ Jesus* ; by men who are “ willingly ignorant ” that this was of old the common character of all *Christians*, and that the Christian character can no more change with the lapse of ages, than *the word of our God* can fail to *stand for ever*. (Is. xl. 8. 1 Pet. i. 25.) Such persons may take the *name* of Christians, if they will ; and may be unwilling from various causes to give it up : but they have not the *thing*, and do not even profess to have it. To such persons the Apostolic exhortation cannot consistently be addressed. To them the language of Scripture is—“ repent ye and believe the Gospel ; ” for “ except ye repent, ye shall perish. ” While they disbelieve the Gospel of Christ, vain are all their attempts to imitate that *conversation* which *becometh* it. They may, and sometimes do, produce an imitation that deceives the human eye : but ’tis at most the lifeless image, borrowing the outward resemblance of an animated form, while it is not what it *seems*. If any such, however, should read these pages, let me entreat their attention while I briefly declare *the Gospel of CHRIST* ; “ if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. ” (2 Tim. ii. 25.) To ascertain what the Scriptures intend by this is altogether necessary, in order to ascertain what the *conversation* is that *becometh the Gospel*.

THE GOSPEL of CHRIST, then, is the testimony which God has borne to JESUS of Nazareth as the appointed *Saviour of sinners*. The expression—GOSPEL—marks the *joyful* import of the testimony ; and the words—of CHRIST—mark the one *subject* of it, and that in which all its joyfulness consists. It is “ glad tidings ” sent into a sinful world by Him, who alone can speak with authority “ good words and comfortable ” to creatures so circumstanced as men ; even by that God, against whom all men have sinned. It announces to all that which alone can be matter of substantial joy to such creatures : it “ publishes salvation ”—*salvation from sin*, and from all the consequences of sin ; a salvation suited to the wants and condition of a *sinner*, even of the *chief*. And this it does, in testifying of CHRIST—the great Deliverer, divinely called to the office and *anointed* for it ; (Is. lxi. 1. and Luke iv. 16—21.) in testifying of his person and of his work. It testifies that He who, as “ the Son of man, ” was crucified between two malefactors, is indeed what he avowed himself to be before he suffered on the cross—THE SON OF GOD ; and has been declared to be so by his resurrection from the dead : that He is “ the only begotten of the Father, ”—ONE with the Father—by whom “ all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth : ” that He is “ the brightness of the glory and the express image of the person ” of God, in whom alone the character of the *only true* God is fully manifested. It testifies that He *came into the world*, leaving “ the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, ” (John xvii. 5.) assuming our fleshly nature, and

taking upon him the form of a servant—the servant of JEHOVAH; (Is. xlii. 1. and Matth. xii. 17.) and this, in order that He might do the gracious will of the Father who sent him, and finish the work to which he was called. (Heb. x. 4—9.) It testifies that He, in the days of his flesh upon earth, did—by his “obedience unto death, even the death of the cross”—perform and endure all that the unchangeable and perfect law of God required to be performed and endured, for the justification, pardon, and acceptance even of the chief of sinners. It testifies that He is “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” his RIGHTEOUS SERVANT, (Is. liii. 11.) who has “magnified the law and made it honourable;” the BELOVED SON, in whom the Father is well pleased—“well pleased for his righteousness’ sake:” (Is. xlii. 21. and Matt. xvii. 5.) in so much that God can *justify the ungodly*, in perfect consistency with his essential righteousness and truth; (Rom. iii. 26. and iv. 5.) and is now made known in that character which distinguishes JEHOVAH from every idol—as “a JUST GOD and a SAVIOUR.” (Is. xlv. 21—25.) In fine, the Gospel of Christ *brings nigh his righteousness and salvation* to every man that hears the joyful sound; in testifying that all—without any difference or exception—who *believe* in Him (or believe the record concerning him) are *accepted in Him the beloved*, are justified from all things in Him who is “the Lord their righteousness;” (Rom. x. 4—13.) that they receive the character and privileges of the *sons of God*, in Him who is “the first-born among many brethren;” (John i. 12, 13. and 1 John v. 1.) and that they shall be *saved unto the uttermost* by Him who is “the Captain of their salvation,” *bringing many sons unto glory*, and highly exalted as “head over all things to his Church.” (Heb. ii. 5—11. John iii. 35, 36. and v. 23, 24. and x. 27—30.)

This is THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, or—as it is elsewhere called—*the glad tidings of the glory of Christ*: (see 2 Cor. iv. 4. in the original) that Gospel, which “whosoever believeth shall be saved, and whoso believeth not shall be condemned,” *because he believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son*. (Mark xvi. 16. and 1 John v. 10.) The avowed Deist does not more effectually reject *this record*, than the nominal Christian who believes something *else* than this under the name of a Gospel, and trusts in some *other* than this Christ under the name of a Saviour. (Gal. i. 6—9.) Whosoever are offended or “stumble at the *word*” which testifies of Christ, whether they manifest this offence by an open denial of the Scriptures, or by a perversion of them from their true meaning, stumble at Him who is the only *foundation laid in Zion*; (1 Pet. ii. 6—8.) and betray in this the hostility of their carnal minds against the true God. (John xv. 23, 24. and Rom. viii. 7.) Such indeed is the character of our common nature, which reigns in all but those who are begotten again *by the word of truth*, through the enlightening and convincing power of the *Spirit of truth* giving that word entrance into their hearts. (1 Pet. i. 3, 23. 2 Thes. ii. 13, 14.) And He is “the faithful and true witness” who has said—“Blessed is he, *whosoever shall not be offended* in me. I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And

this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which *seeth the Son and believeth* on him may have *everlasting life*." (Luke vii. 23. and John vi. 38—40.)

Having thus briefly declared what *the Gospel of Christ* is, I turn to those who *believe* it; and would urge upon their attention the Apostolic exhortation—"let *your conversation* be, as it *becometh* the Gospel of Christ." "Brethren, beloved of the Lord, chosen from the beginning unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;" "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,—that ye should *shew forth the praises* of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," walking *as children of the light*. (1 Pet. ii. 9. Eph. v. 8.) Judge ye what I shall say, while I proceed to state several characters of that conversation, or walk, which "*becometh* the Gospel of Christ."

And 1st. I say it is a *happy and comfortable* walk to which you are called. This indeed must obviously appear, if you keep in view the essential nature of the Gospel, and import of the word. Joy and gladness of heart becomes those who have heard glad tidings, and who believe what they have heard. And it is only because our faith is so weak and so unstable, that we are not abidingly comforted in degrees ever so great; or, in other words, because we are so imperfectly acquainted with the Gospel of Christ or persuaded of its truth, and so prone to forget what we have learned and been taught. For this I say, that there are no circumstances in which any sinner ever can be placed in this life, wherein the Gospel is not calculated to afford him "*joy unspeakable and full of glory*:" so great is the salvation and so unspeakable the blessings which it reveals, and which it brings near to every soul of man that hears "*the joyful sound*."

They are unacquainted with the only true Gospel, who acknowledge indeed that it reveals great blessings, but conceive that it exhibits them as still at a distance from *some* sinners;—till they do, or get something, which is supposed to bring them *within reach* of the blessings, and which is thus to become the great spring of their joy. Such a Gospel certainly would be no glad tidings to an *ungodly* sinner *without strength*: but the Gospel of Christ is. All its blessings are included in that one of *PEACE* with God; and this the Gospel proclaims as made, (Acts x. 36.) made by the work which the Lord Jesus Christ has *finished*, dying "*the just for the unjust*;" and which God has declared his acceptance of "*in that he raised him from the dead*." (Rom. iv. 25.) And this blessing of *peace* and acceptance with God the Gospel assures—not to him that *worketh*, that does or can do any thing to attain it—but to the man who *believeth* on Him "*that justificth the ungodly*." (Rom. i. 17. iii. 21. 22. iv. 4.—8. v. 1.) The mere discovery of the work and office of Christ, which the Gospel reports, will bring to the mind of *any* sinner *peace* with God; will give his conscience a sure ground of *hope* towards God, and *boldness of access* to him with confidence by the faith of Christ. And any peace or hope or boldness that springs

not from this discovery, from a view of Christ's work and office, is but delusive and presumptuous. To make that discovery is the work of the *Spirit of truth*—his continued work: and just in the same degree as he performs this work, he *comforts* our hearts.

Those who believe not the Gospel will, of course, think that the *mere belief* of it is a very dry and unproductive thing: and the more of false religion they have, and of the comforts often arising from false religion, the more they will decry the faith of Christ as a barren *speculative* notion; while they lay the great stress upon that act or exercise of mind, to which they give the name of *faith*, and on the right performance of which their hope towards God is founded. But ye, Brethren, who "know the grace of God in truth," live in the believing view of Him who is *our hope—our peace—our life*; and ye will walk comfortably "as it becometh the Gospel of Christ," rejoicing in HIM, and "having no confidence in the flesh." He being "the same yesterday and to-day and for ever," and the word of our God (which testifies of him) "enduring for ever;" we are therefore called to "rejoice *evermore*." (1 Thes. v. 16.) And as it has "pleased the Father that in him *all fulness* should dwell"—every thing that the poorest, vilest, most helpless sinner *can need* for his everlasting salvation, and for his safe conduct by the way; as in Him we see IMMANUEL—God *with us*—God *for us*—the unchangeable and all-sufficient JEHOVAH in the character of our Saviour, Redeemer, and Shepherd;—say, Brethren, are we not called to "rejoice with exceeding great joy?" Say, are there any circumstances of tribulation and distress so afflictive, that it does not well become us to rejoice, "glorying in his holy name"—in what he is to us now, and in what we shall soon fully enjoy with him in his heavenly kingdom? Those for whom "there is now no condemnation," those who have JEHOVAH for their God, who are sons of God and heirs of "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"—shall they not rejoice? Believing that Gospel, which reveals such *exceeding riches* of the *grace* of God, (Eph. ii. 7.)—if they walk "as it becometh the Gospel of Christ," must they not walk joyfully? Shall they ever, by dejection and despondency of mind, as it were say to the world that the glad tidings of the Gospel are not so great, that the blessings which it announces are not so rich and suited to their necessities, or that its testimony is not so sure and faithful,—as that they see any thing in the Gospel whereof to glory?

Indeed, Brethren, the more we enter into the grounds of the Apostolic precept, *rejoice evermore*, the more we shall take *shame* to ourselves for walking so little according to it; and shall see in this the most evil working of our corrupt nature, discrediting the testimony of God and making light of the *great things* of his word. I know indeed that there is such a thing as being "in heaviness through manifold trials:" I know that the afflictions, which form part of the fatherly discipline that our God exercises over his children, "are not for the present joyous but grievous." (Hebr. xii. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 6.) But I know also that, amidst the deepest tribulations, and the most trying exercises, the proper effect of the Gospel of Christ is to support the hope of the believer, to cheer his

heart, and to maintain in his mind that "peace of God which passeth all understanding." I know that the things revealed in the Gospel are such, that we need only to be kept walking in the clearer view and fuller persuasion of them, in order to experience what the Apostle speaks of, 2 Cor. 1, 5. "as the *sufferings* of Christ abound in us, so our *consolation* also aboundeth by Christ."

And here let it be observed that, as the joy and comfort of which I speak differs from all that the world knows, in the greatness and durability of the blessings which excite it, and therefore is infinitely superior in *degree* and in *duration* to all the joy of the world; so also, in its *quality*, it is of a kind essentially distinct from theirs. Its nature is sacred, is divine, is heavenly; corresponding with the author who communicates it, and the source from which it springs. It is thus contrasted with all the frivolity of mirth, the levity of a dissipated mind, and the intoxication of sensual gratification; so that indeed the enjoyment of the one is *inconsistent* with the indulgence of the other.

This will farther appear from the second character of the walk that "becometh the Gospel of Christ;" namely, *reverence* and *godly fear*. This *fear* of which I now speak is no less unknown to the world, and no less peculiar to the *believer*, than the joy which I was last considering. The world has no idea of any fear of God, but that which "hath torment," (1 John iv. 18.) the servile fear of his indignation. And when they hear of believers as delivered from this fear, possessing assured confidence towards God, and exempted altogether from condemnation; then the world is ready to conclude that such must walk in a hardy disregard to the divine authority, and bold indifference to his will. But why do they draw this conclusion? Because they are themselves conscious of being restrained from such a course, by nothing but the dread of punishment. And when they at other times hear of believers as walking constantly "in the fear of the Lord," they are ready to conclude that such must walk most miserably and uncomfortably. Why? Because they are conscious that their own highest satisfaction and enjoyment is connected with forgetfulness of God, and insensibility to his glorious perfections.

But in truth these two characters of a believer's walk are not only consistent with each other, but so *inseparably connected* together, that the one cannot truly be without the other; and the one must ever be just in proportion to the other: and this, because they both, equally and necessarily, result from the belief of those things which are reported in the Gospel. Accordingly, we find them both combined in the account given of the Apostolic churches (Acts xx. 31.) ---that they walked "in the *fear* of the Lord and in the *comfort* of the holy Ghost." This fear is the filial reverential awe, arising from a perception of the majesty and glorious perfections of HIM, "with whom we have to do." Its consistency with the most perfect confidence towards him, and happiness in him, must be admitted by those who acknowledge the representations given in Scripture of the heavenly world. While its inhabitants taste *the fulness of joy* that is in *his presence*, they are ever filled with the most solemn reverence;

and with faces veiled before the throne of his glory, cry "Holy! Holy! Holy!" One and the *same* cause produces in them continually *both* effects. And even so, according to the measure of faith, must it be with those into whose hearts he has shined, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.) It is that discovery which at once gives a sinner "everlasting consolation and a good hope through grace," as revealing God in the character of the Saviour of sinners; and at the same time, as a discovery of the *glory* of God, excites in him "reverence and godly fear;" detecting the falsehood of all those natural ideas, which were at once unworthy of his majesty and inconsistent with the influence of this principle. And let it be well observed that while men have many other intimations of the awful glory of JEHOVAH, as a *consuming fire*, (Hebr. xii. 29.) they all fall short of that full revelation of it which is made in the Gospel of Christ. That very Gospel, which is unspeakably joyful to sinners, not only confirms all the natural apprehensions (which men cannot wholly extinguish) of the divine holiness, and righteousness, and truth; but displays all these glories more clearly, and in a more awful exercise of them, than any of the other works of God: while at the same time it enables the sinner to give him thanks for his great glory, as discovering all these perfections in complete consistency with the hope and joy and salvation even of the chief of sinners.

Is not this therefore part of the conversation *which becometh* the Gospel of Christ, that we should walk under the abiding *fear* of the Lord? that while we rejoice before him, we should "rejoice with reverence?" that we should walk "as seeing Him who is invisible?" as those, who were indeed afar off even as others, and "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in us, because of the blindness of our hearts;" but are now brought *near* to Him, and as "children of the light and of the day" have our *fellowship* with Him, before whom angels continually bow with prostrate awe. "Holy and reverend is his name," who has "sent redemption unto his people;"—that very name which is a *strong tower* of security, and as *ointment poured forth* to those who know him. (Ps. cxi. 9. Prov. xviii. 10. Cant. i. 3.)

There is an expression employed in Scripture, to denote the walk of a believer,—*walking with God*: which at once imports the high *blessedness* to which he is called, and the solemn awe that becomes him. Nor is there a circumstance in the revelation made to us in the gospel of Christ, that is calculated to fill us "with joy and peace in believing," without being at the same time equally calculated to excite and maintain in our minds this *fear* of which I speak. Does the consideration of being "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ" speak peace to our consciences; and embolden our approach with confidence into the holiest? From the very same consideration the Apostle Peter enforces the reasonableness of our "passing the time of our sojourning here with fear." (1 Pet. i. 17, 18.) Is the consideration of the *greatness* of "the Holy One of Israel in the midst of us" calculated to make "the inhabitant of Zion cry out and shout" with triumphant joy? (Is. xii. 6.) Does the consideration of

his gracious eye, who "fainteth not neither is weary," being continually upon us, numbering *the very hairs of our head*, observing our sorrows, and watching over us with unintermitted vigilance for good,—does this view of Him "the Shepherd and overseer of our souls" dissipate every anxious care, still every rising perturbation of alarm, and diffuse over our minds a believing calm? And are not the same considerations equally adapted to make us "walk *circumspectly*" and with reverential awe, as those who are in the *presence* and under the *eye* of the living God? Do they not at all times and in all situations, as it were, speak to us with that voice—"the place whereon thou standest is *holy ground*?" And when we think in what an inadequate degree we are any of us thus influenced by the Gospel of Christ, have we not cause to acknowledge with shame that our *faith* is less than "a grain of mustard seed?" Have we not cause to rejoice that it is not *for our faith* we are saved? to rejoice that *it* does not, any more than our *works*, enter into the *ground* of our hope or the *warrant* of our confidence towards God?

I would briefly add under this head, that in proportion as we walk in that "reverence and godly fear" of which I speak, we shall walk in all *lowliness* of mind, "loathing ourselves in our own sight;" and at the same time shall be raised above that *fear of man* which "bringeth a snare." (Prov. xxix. 25.) It is when we forget the LORD our Maker," that we begin to be "afraid of a *man* that shall die:" (Is. li. 12, 13. vii. 12, 13. and Hebr. xi. 27.) and it is in proportion as we are insensible to the glory of *his* majesty, that high thoughts of *ourselves* and swelling imaginations of our own excellence take possession of our minds. (Job xlii. 5, 6. Is. vi. 5.)

The 3rd character I shall mention, of the walk and conversation that "*becometh* the Gospel of Christ," is this; that we are called to walk in an habitual unreserved consecration of ourselves and all that we have unto the LORD; that we may be devoted to his glory, employed in his service, and regulated by his will. This is a character as exclusively belonging to the walk of a *believer*, as either of the former. The false religion of the unbelieving world has led some of them to make great and costly sacrifices to their gods; yea, the sacrifice of life itself. But even then, however imposing the appearances of their zeal, they have known *nothing* of that devotedness to which a believer of the GOSPEL is called. They have been at best but diligently sacrificing to an *idol*; for the gods whom they serve are nothing more: and their stimulating *motive* has never risen above *self*—a proud expectation of "establishing their own righteousness," and of advancing some claim on the favour and reward of heaven. But mark how the Apostle enforces this character of the *Christian's* walk:—"ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: *therefore* glorify God in your body and in your spirit, *which are God's*." (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.) Observe, the same Gospel of Christ which reveals Him given for us and given to us, and which in revealing this discovers that *all things are ours*; the same Gospel shows that we are *not our own*, but his redeemed property. (1 Cor. iii. 21.—23.) The same view that assures us of our security, as *his ransomed Church*, (Eph. v. 27.) discovers also

our obligation to walk as *his* people; and at the same time furnishes the *motive* which makes his service perfect liberty. Mark how the Apostle states this motive, and urges that obligation; (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.)—"the *love* of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

Therefore, Brethren, "being made free from sin and become servants of God," (Rom. vi. 22.) let us remember that "none of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, *we are the Lord's*. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Rom. xiv. 7—9.) Let us remember that "no man can serve two masters;" that "if our eye be single, our whole body shall be full of light:" and that the language of our Lord is—"if any man serve me,—let him follow me;"—"if ye love me, keep my commandments." Let us remember that, with his glory as our one aim and his will as our one rule, we are called to take his gracious word as the one interpreter of that his will; to *search the Scriptures*, that we may be "filled with the knowledge of his will," that we may know "how we ought to walk and to please God, and may abound more and more." (1 Thess. iv. 1. Col. i. 9.) Let us remember that where the precepts or example of men are opposite to the word of our God, we are called to shew by the decision of our choice, "whose we are and whom we serve."

And this leads me to observe a 4th character of the walk and conversation that "*becometh* the Gospel of Christ:" namely, that we are called to walk as those who "are not of the world," but are "chosen out of the world," and crucified to the world; who are "*strangers* and *pilgrims* upon earth," and whose "conversation is in heaven," where our life also is "hid with Christ in God." Here also is a character peculiar to the *believer*. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our *faith*. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that *believeth* that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John v. 4, 5.) Christ has said of those who are his—"they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John xvii. 14.) And "*therefore* the world knoweth them not, because it knew him not." (1 John iii. 1) Let us therefore remember, Brethren, the solemn declaration—"if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John ii. 15.) "Whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." (Jam. iv. 4.) Let us beware of courting the admiration or esteem of those, by whom our Lord and Master is "despised and rejected." Let us beware of being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers:" let us "come out from among them, and be separate." (2 Cor. vi. 14—17.) And amidst all the obloquy, reproach, and opposition which we shall thus encounter from the world, let us "encourage ourselves in the Lord." Let us remember how it was with Him in the days of his flesh. Let us remember the blessing he has pro-

nounced upon us, when "men shall revile us, and persecute us, and shall say all manner of evil against us falsely *for his name's sake.*" (Matt. v. 11.) Let us "consider Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds." (Heb. xii. 3.) "Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach: for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Hebr. xiii. 13, 14.) Strangers and pilgrims upon earth, on our way to our Father's home—our heavenly city, let us beware of seeking to take up our rest here. Let us walk with "our loins girded and our lamps burning, like men who wait for their Lord." (Luke xii. 35, 36.) Let us manifest that we are delivered from earthly anxieties, by the persuasion that "our heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of," and will "withhold no manner of thing that is *good.*"—that we are delivered from earthly attachments, by the conviction that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but of the world;" (1 John ii. 16.) and by having in our view "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And here let us observe, Brethren, that when the Apostle exhorts the disciples—(Rom. xii. 2.) "be not conformed to this world," he marks the inward principle from which all true non-conformity must originate; by immediately subjoining—"but be ye transformed by the *renewing of your mind.*" Yes; all apparent non-conformity to the world that springs not from this, is but the unmeaning shew of outward singularity.

And again let us observe, that they altogether mistake who imagine, that by the *world*—"that world which lieth in the wicked one" (1 John v. 19.) and of which the believer is not,—we are to understand only the irreligious, immoral, and profane; those who by the very world are considered as wicked. The word of God discovers to us a *religious* world, that is just as opposite to Him as the most irreligious. In discovering to us Him who is "the *only true God* and eternal life," (1 John v. 20. John xvii. 3.) it exposes all the various gods of the *unbelieving* world as *idols*; idols equally vain whatever be the degree of *attachment* and of *service* they engage from their respective votaries, under whatever *names* they are received, and with whatever *forms* they are worshipped.

We are called, Brethren, to *come out* from the whole of this world that knows not the true God, and to be *separate*, as a *peculiar people*—a nation *holy* to the LORD: and this, not by declining the necessary intercourse of *civil* life with any; but by manifesting that we acknowledge not the gods which they serve, and that we are servants of HIM whom they do not acknowledge. Brethren, when we thus cease to be, "mingled among the heathen" (Ps. cvi. 35, 36.) when we thus walk as those who "are not of the world," as *the Lord's people*—"the *flock of his heritage* which dwell *solitarily* in the wood;" (Mic. vii. 14.) we shall find that the contemptuous hostility of the world against the Lord Jesus Christ is unabated; and that in proportion as we are known, we shall be despised and "hated of all men for his name's sake." It is not to court their opposition, that I urge on your attention our obligation thus to walk; but that our

Lord's name may be glorified, by your conversation being "as it *becometh* the Gospel of Christ."

For let it be observed, in the 5th place, that we are called to walk as *witnesses* of CHRIST, *confessing* his name before men. Our Lord speaks of this, as one of the distinguishing characters of those who are "his disciples indeed:" (Matt. xi. 32. 33.) and all the context intimates the trying consequences to which they must be exposed, in a faithful discharge of this part of their character. As the *knowledge* of his name, or "the *belief* of the truth," is pre-supposed in this part of their character; so there is included in it an open and undisguised *avowal* of that faithful record concerning him, which they believe; along with as open a *testimony against* every thing which contradicts it. Here, Brethren, beware of being carried away by the current principles of a false *charity* and a false *peace*, in opposition to the most express injunctions of the word of God. We are there called to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel;" (Phil i. 27.) to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." (Jude 3.) The unbelieving world are but consistent in deprecating *controversy* for the truth of Christ: and they will be ready enough to make peace with those false professors of the truth, who admit that it is of no essential moment whether men believe it or not; and to give them the praise of much *liberality*. But does it become those who know the Gospel of Christ, to earn that praise by giving up its certainty or its importance? And can they be said really to *confess* the Lord Jesus Christ, who—while they talk of believing his Gospel themselves—insinuate that men may be saved though they continue to disbelieve it? and that it is a matter of little consequence what we *think* of Christ, provided we be (as they say) *sincere* in our religion: or, in other words, that a man may safely reject the testimony of the true God, if he but sincerely hate it, and be sincerely attached to a false God? No, Brethren; such professors will indeed "have their reward," in escaping the odium of the cross, and passing quietly through the world, spoken well of by all. But they are in fact *denying* Christ before men, and are exposed to the awful doom of being *denied* by Him. (Matt. x. 33. Luke vi. 26.)

Yet while I would exhort you to that manly—or rather that divine—*boldness*, which "*becometh* the Gospel of Christ," in confessing the truth and testifying against every principle that opposes it; suffer me to remind you that this boldness is altogether distinct from the intemperate fiery zeal of our own spirits, which often assumes its form: that the boldness, to which we are called, is to be combined with "patience towards all men," (1 Thes. v. 14.) with all *meekness* and *long suffering* towards those who oppose themselves; and with *hope* also—not that they may be saved in any other way than that which the Gospel reveals,—but that He, who is "exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins," will yet give them "repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Wherefore, Brethren, while we observe the indispensable obligation on us to contend earnestly for that truth, let us beware of the dangers

and snares to which we are exposed from the flesh and from "the *deceitfulness* of sin." Let us beware of being soured by the opposition we shall meet with, or irritated against the persons of our adversaries. Let us look to it that we walk under the *humbling* influence of that truth, for which we contend; that so we may indeed have our conversation, as "it becometh the Gospel of Christ." And ever let us bear in mind that there are those, who "*profess* that they know God, but in their *works* deny him:" (Tit. i. 16.) and that the real confession of our Lord includes in it our *acknowledgment of his authority*, by following him according to the precepts of his word. They all bear, as it were, *his image and superscription*; and walking in them, his people present a practical exhibition to the world of Him whose they are, and of his Gospel which they have believed.

I am thus led to remark, in the 6th and last place, that if we would walk as "*it becometh the GOSPEL of CHRIST*," we must walk in the exercise of *brotherly love* towards each other; and are called to have this brotherhood of affection *manifested*, by our walking in outward union and fellowship one with another, and in separation from all other *religious fellowship* whatsoever. The *love* of which I now speak is not merely that good-will, of which all our fellow-men are objects, and according to which we are called to "*do good unto all men*" (Gal. vi. 10.)—even unto those, in whom we can have no complacency, and with whom we can have no fellowship. It is that love, wherewith those, who are Christ's, embrace all others who are *his*, for his name's sake, or "*for the truth's sake* which dwelleth in us," (2 John 2.)—that love, of which "the household of faith" are exclusively the objects. They are all of one mind and of one spirit with us; they are all one with us in Christ Jesus; they all are those whom "*HE* is not ashamed to call *his brethren*," (Hebr. ii. 11.) and whom we therefore are bound to acknowledge and regard as our brethren beloved. This is his great command, that we "*love one another*, as He has loved us;" (John xv. 12, 17.) and hereby it is, according to his own declaration, that "all men shall know that we are his disciples. (John xiii. 34, 35.)

And as this unity of heart and brotherhood of affection springs from, and is founded on, the *union* of all those that believe *with Him* on whom they have believed; so it is to be *manifested* to the world, by the outward and visible unity of the disciples in one place, walking together in *one body*, according to *one rule*—the rule of his word; and separated from all them who believe not, or who *walk disorderly* and not after the commandments delivered by the Apostles of our Lord. Brethren, upon this subject I beseech you to search the Scriptures, and to forget the traditions and example of men: for it is a subject that has been for ages obscured and perplexed by the devices of the adversary. That father of lies has too long awfully succeeded in *scattering* our Lord's flock; and in concealing from their view the importance, simplicity, and glory of the rules, by which the first Christians walked; and by which the disciples are called to walk to the end of the world.

Some of my thoughts on this subject you may see in a pamphlet,

published at the beginning of this year, and entitled "*Hints on Christian Fellowship.*"* At that time, and for some time before, my mind was opening to the scriptural view of a Christian Church. But I did not then see, as clearly as I have since, either the plain scriptural order of such Churches, or the inconsistency of our attempting to continue in any other religious fellowship. There are therefore some things in that pamphlet, which need correction and modification. Of the change in my sentiments here, I shall give a candid account in the Appendix to this address: while I shall now only urge upon your consideration, Brethren, that view which the Apostle gives of a "Church of the living God," when he calls it "the pillar and ground of THE TRUTH." (1 Tim. iii. 15.)

We know how this expression, like all the rest of scripture, has been perverted by the father of lies; as if it intimated that divine truth was to be tried and determined by the professed sentiments of nominal Churches: whereas the sentiments of all men, both individuals and bodies, are to be tried by the word of God; and those nominal churches, which are founded on agreement in any sentiments contrary to that word, are *synagogues of Satan* and not Churches of Christ. But a statement of the real meaning of the Apostolic expression is the best refutation of that antichristian perversion of it. When the Apostle uses the expression, he presupposes that the body to whom he applies it is a body of *believers*, believers of the *truth*: and when he calls such a body "the pillar and ground of the truth," he employs a figure obviously borrowed from the pillars or *pedestals*, on which *statues* are fixed, in order to be exhibited to public view.

Thus the GOSPEL of CHRIST, called by way of eminence THE TRUTH, is set up (as it were) to the observation of the world on the pedestal of the Church, or collection of disciples; who are gathered together into one body by their agreement in that Truth, who unitedly confess it, walk under its influence, and are regulated by its precepts. All the importance, glory, and true excellence of the Church is derived from THE TRUTH, and subservient to its manifestation. Take away that which is *set up to view* upon the pedestal, and you have left but a naked useless block. Take away the *pedestal* upon which it is set up to view: and THE TRUTH indeed remains in its intrinsic certainty and glory, but it ceases to be *exhibited* to the observation of the surrounding world.

Those who enter into this view of a *Christian Church*,—and none but the *believer* of the Truth can really enter into it,—will see that, in order to answer its essential design, it must be an *insulated* body, detached from every other religious society, and not intermingled with those who are not "of the Truth." They will see that such intermixture directly tends to confound with the world those who "are not of the world;" and indeed cannot be maintained, but by sacrificing the authority and importance of the precepts of God to the traditions of men.

* The "*Hints on Christian Fellowship*" are not inserted in this collection. The reason for omitting them will appear from the Author's observation that the subject, which was imperfectly treated in that article, is more clearly and extensively handled in the present "*Address to Believers.*"—ED.

If we consider the mass of professors, for instance, with whom—(I speak it to my shame, when I consider my *slowness* of heart to learn what is so plainly taught in the word)—with whom I continued for so many years in outward religious fellowship,—if we consider them as *unbelievers*: is not the precept express? (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.) “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

If we consider them as *heretics*, on account of their denial of the fundamental principles of the Gospel, in the profession of which we may suppose some of them to have been educated; is not the precept as express? (Tit. iii. 10, 11.) “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, reject: knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”

If we consider any of them as *disciples*, but at present *walking disorderly*, or contrary to Apostolic rule; is not even in that case the precept clear? (2 Thes. iii. 6. & 14, 15.) “We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us:” and this, even while “ye count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

Finally, Brethren, be not discouraged at observing how high that walk and conversation is, which “*becometh the GOSPEL OF CHRIST.*” It is all included in *living* “by the faith of the Son of God.” (Gal. ii. 20.) The whole of it indeed is always, and in every particular, *above nature*; and accordingly our Lord tells us (John xv. 4, 6.) “as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me:—for *without me*—(separate from me)—*ye can do*—(not little, but)—*nothing.*” Nay, it is not only *above nature*, but it is *contrary* to the whole course and tendency of our fleshly nature. To walk thus, we must “walk in the Spirit,” against which “the flesh lusteth,” and to which it is ever *contrary*. (Gal. v. 16, 17.) We must walk therefore *denying ourselves*, taking up the cross, and following the Lord Jesus Christ. But let us be of good cheer: He who calls us to this is *our strength*; (Is. xlv. 24.) and He is “the LORD GOD omnipotent.” His grace “is sufficient for us” and his strength is “made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor. xii. 9.) “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have *no might*, he increaseth strength.” (Is. xl. 29.) “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” (Ps. xxvii. 14.) To him that *believeth*, “all things are possible;” for—“is there any thing too hard for me?” saith the LORD. (Jer. xxxii. 27.) And just in proportion as we are kept living by the *faith* of Him, believing the *glad tidings* of his glory, we shall be influenced to “the *obedience* of faith;” and shall prove that “his yoke is easy and his burden is light.”

APPENDIX.

IN proceeding to state the grounds on which I have been lately determined to withdraw from a connection, wherein I had continued for nearly thirteen years; I judge it needful to give a view of the principles, upon which I formerly defended the lawfulness of that connection. In detailing these, my object is not to assert the integrity of the motives by which my former conduct was influenced: while truth obliges me—(mentioning the subject at all)—to disavow the influence of those worldly considerations, by which some might have been disposed to account for it. In disavowing this, I but declare the goodness of the Lord; which is so far from vindicating me from blame for having so long walked contrary to his will, that it leaves me the more without excuse, for having remained so many years in ignorance of what his word so plainly declares. They greatly mistake indeed, who suppose that ignorance in such matters is a justifiable error.

It may be asked—“why then detail the false reasoning, by which you formerly justified your conduct?” I answer—not to excuse my error, but

1st. That the reader may perceive that the subject is by no means new to my thoughts; and that it was not upon a *partial* view of it my determination has been formed.

2dly. That the Christian reader, who may yet be in such a connection as I have left, may give the more serious and candid attention to those scriptural principles, which overturn all that mass of false reasoning. In the detail of it he will perhaps see a more specious vindication of that connection, than is sometimes advanced by its advocates. To me at least the arguments of those who pride themselves in being *true Sons of the Church* never carried any weight, since I knew the Gospel; for they are obviously opposed to the plainest truths of the Bible. I state the only grounds, on which my late connection ever *seemed* to me defensible; and then proceed to shew that even upon them its lawfulness cannot be maintained.

3dly. That others of my brethren may the better see how they are called to deal with persons of the last class, for the purpose of convincing them; may the better distinguish that broad and decisive ground, on which the subject is to be treated most successfully. It will appear that many important truths are interwoven in those fallacious arguments, by which I used to reconcile my late situation to my conscience: but that the arguments themselves borrowed all their apparent force from this—that the objections, which they were brought to answer, rested upon a too narrow ground. The same principles indeed, upon which I have been led to withdraw from the religious Establishment of this country, apply with equal force to

prove the unlawfulness of connection with various bodies of *dissenters*: and therefore claim equal attention from the disciples who may be scattered among *them*. They call the attention of *all believers of the GOSPEL* to the Apostolic rules, delivered to the first Churches of Christ, as those by which we are still bound to walk: and they prove that we cannot scripturally hold religious fellowship, but with such as profess the faith of the same Gospel, and will walk according to the same rule.

Long before I was led to see this, I have been convinced of the following principles:—that our Lord's kingdom is "not of this world," is distinct from and independent of every political regulation of men; that the religious Establishment of this country is a mere political regulation, and the great mass of those connected with it persons who give no evidence of belonging to the kingdom of our Lord; that his disciples are a people altogether not of the world, but chosen out of it by Him who has "redeemed them unto God by his blood;" that, as far as they are known, they are despised and hated of all men for his name's sake; that they are called to disregard all the allurements, frowns, and example of the whole world, that would be employed to turn them aside from the onward path of following Him, whose they are: that, in whatever situation, they are called to aim in all things at his glory and at his will alone; and that no apparent usefulness of any situation can warrant a believer to remain in it a moment, if it be a situation intrinsically unlawful.

But then I did think that there was no intrinsic unlawfulness in my connection with the religious Establishment of this country; and I considered it but as a *situation*, into which I was providentially led, and in which (I can say) my main object, from the time I entered it, was to do the will of my gracious Lord, and to declare his Name. I did conceive that nothing intrinsically unlawful was required from me as the terms of my *admission* into it: and I aimed at the rule of not doing any thing, in order to retain the situation, that I ought not to do, nor forbearing to do any thing that I ought.

From the time I received ordination in the Establishment, I considered myself—not as invested with any kind of *divine* authority or rank above any other Christian,—but merely as receiving a *political* authority from men appointed by the state, to exercise certain religious acts, according to certain forms prescribed by the laws of the country. (Brief Application, &c. A.) I knew too well the character of those, by whom I was thus *recognized* as a Christian teacher, to plume myself upon their sanction of me: and from the same knowledge of them, their principles, and their views, I had no other expectation but that I should sooner or later be *removed* from the situation which I held, for the faithful discharge of Christian duty. Nor has the apprehension of that consequence been ever allowed to make me shrink from any part of Christ's will, as it was discovered to me.

Yet I *valued* the situation I was placed in, for the opportunities and facilities it afforded me in declaring the Gospel of Christ to multitudes, who would not otherwise be likely to hear it; as well as for

the explicit testimony borne to the fundamental principles of that Gospel, in many of the standard formularies of the Establishment. Besides, the more I knew of such *dissenters* as I had an opportunity of observing, the more clearly I perceived that they—as a body—were just as much of *this world*, as that body from which they professed to be separate. I saw all the great *corruptions* of the Establishment among them, as well as some corruptions peculiar to themselves; and this, unaccompanied by its advantages. I saw also the *dissenting teachers* actually more restricted from the use of Christian liberty, by *their* human regulations, than I found Christians in the Establishment were by its rulers. I confess therefore that my attachment to my situation was rather increased, than lessened, with my growing observation and experience.

And as to the character and conduct of many in the same connection with myself, as to their corruptions in doctrine or in practice,—I considered that these things *rendered* not the *situation* an unlawful one. (Brief App. B.) Viewing the Establishment as a political institution—a thing of *this world*,—I considered that all such corruptions, however to be lamented, were only what must be *expected*. And I have often of late urged, that I would as soon scruple living in Ireland, because there were so many wicked Irishmen; as I would scruple being connected with the religious Establishment of the country, merely because there were so many connected with it who were not Christians.

I knew that the political Establishment of Christianity as the religion of the state must, in the nature of things, hold out various temptations to carnal men, to make a profession of something under the name of Christianity, for the advancement of their secular interests. But I considered it not as *creating* the corruptions, which were thus produced; but as only bringing to light, in a new form, those corruptions which are natural to the human heart; and which would have equally existed, in another form, if there had been no religious establishment. And not looking upon such carnal professors as any part of the *Church* of CHRIST, I considered his Church as not at all hereby corrupted; arguing that its real members, amidst all the temptations which were thus held out to them, would yet follow Him; and conceiving that they might follow Him as faithfully in such a political connection, as separated from it. (Brief App. C.)

Thinking such a connection not intrinsically *unlawful* for a Christian, I conceived that *duty* strongly called me to remain in it, while I should be allowed to remain: and this, upon the following grounds:—1st. Upon the general principle that Christians are to be very cautious, how they change a situation in which they have been providentially placed: their business being to glorify the Lord in the post which he has assigned them; but not to quit their post, without as clear an indication of his will, as that by which they were placed in it. 2dly. Because I conceived that by my *quitting* the Establishment, a number of questions, comparatively unimportant, and not essentially connected with the great truths of the Gospel, would be presented to the attention of those who observed my conduct,—

(questions about white or black gowns, indifferent ceremonies, forms, &c. &c.): whereas if I should be *removed* from the Establishment in consequence of my faithful discharge of Christian duty, the important points of scriptural truth or practice, for adherence to which I should be put out, would immediately be brought forward to the attention of the world. (Brief App. D.)

On these accounts, while I looked forward cheerfully to the prospect of my being removed, I deprecated the idea of removing myself: and, according to the views I then had, I would not have thought it consistent with *duty* to have *left* my situation any day, though I were certain of being *put out* of it the next.

The whole of this reasoning went on the supposition, that my connection with the religious Establishment of the country was a situation *intrinsically lawful*. And upon that I was accustomed to reason thus;—"If even a heathen Emperor had taken it into his head to say to Paul—*I will feed and clothe you, I will protect and sanction you as a public teacher of religion in my Empire, and I will allow you to preach in the Capitol and other public edifices; on condition that you will subscribe such a solemn declaration of your religious tenets, wear such a garb, and observe such forms in your public religious exercises*:—in such a case, would it have been unlawful for Paul to have accepted the offer of that Emperor? on the supposition that the religious tenets, which he was called to avow, were such as he really held; and that there was nothing contrary to the precepts and institutions of Christ in the forms which he was called to observe. And what he might lawfully do, might not other Christians lawfully do on the same terms? And may we not thus *imagine* a religious Establishment, with which the first Christians might lawfully be connected; though it originated with an heathen Emperor, and though ever so many heathens might be induced, by the worldly advantages held out, to connect themselves with it? (Brief App. E.)

"But let us suppose a Christian Emperor, a real convert to the faith of Christ: may not he employ the political power that he is possessed of, for the furtherance of the Gospel? while he is sensible that no *human* power can give efficacy to any of the means which he employs, and that the kingdom of Christ is altogether independent of the kingdoms of the world. Nay—*ought* he not, as a Christian, to consider how he may employ all his authority as an Emperor, legislative and executive, with every means that his station affords him,—in the service and for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? Many ways indeed, in which earthly rulers have professed to pursue this object,—(such as any attempts to coerce the consciences of men)—he will see to be forbidden by the laws of Christ's kingdom, in which we shall suppose him instructed perfectly. But if a private Christian may build and endow a place of Christian worship; and, in order to prevent its being applied to any other purposes than those which he intends, may execute a deed of trust, by which it shall be vested in such persons as he confides in, and be managed under such regulations and provisions, as appear to him best calculated to promote the attainment of his object;—if a private Christian may do all this, may not a Christian Emperor do the same

thing, on a larger scale, throughout his dominions? And may we not thus conceive what would have all the essence of an *Establishment*, originating in true Christian zeal and wisdom? (Brief App. F.)

“Such an Establishment, however, as a human institution, and administered by a succession of human instruments, would certainly be liable to become ever so corruptly administered. But while the terms of admission into it, or of connection with it, continued *not unlawful*; would it therefore be unallowable for a Christian to serve his Lord in that *situation*, which many false professors made subservient to their carnal objects and worldly interests.

“Now, if it appear from such a supposed case that a religious Establishment is not, *per se*, a situation in which a Christian cannot lawfully be; can the mere motives of those, with whom the institution has originated, render it an unlawful situation? We have therefore nothing to do, in this question, either with the character of those who were the first authors of Establishments, or with the character of those who manage them, or of others who are connected with them. In order to determine whether a *Christian* may lawfully be connected with them, we have only to inquire whether any thing *unlawful* be required as the term of his admission. If not, he may lawfully enter into the situation: and being in it, he has only to take heed that he does nothing unlawful to retain the situation; and that he does not forbear doing every thing which the word of his Lord commands.” (Brief App. G.)

Thus speciously, but as I now see fallaciously, was I accustomed to argue, for the intrinsic lawfulness of being connected with a religious Establishment: while those against whom I argued failed of refuting me, because they conceded too much; and instead of meeting my reasoning in the outset by a firm denial of the principle assumed in the *first* step, commonly contented themselves with opposing some of the consequences.

Having once, as I conceived, decided that general question, I clearly saw that the objections usually urged by Dissenters against the *particular* Establishment in this country were of little weight; especially when the due allowances were made, for the imperfection necessarily incident to formularies of human appointment. The strongest objection which I had to encounter, was the objection against what is commonly called *mixed communion*, or the indiscriminate administration of the Lord's Supper to all who chose to partake of it. To this subject I was led to give very serious consideration, particularly within the last year, since I have been united with a few disciples, who join in the simple observance of that ordinance weekly.

The term *mixed communion*, as applied exclusively to the Lord's Supper, exemplifies the narrow and untenable ground upon which many have treated the subject. Their objection against this *mixed communion* appeared to me to go upon a false and mischievous principle; namely, the idea that the Lord's Supper possesses some mysterious sanctity, above all the *other* ordinances of Christ. I have long been aware of the simplicity of its nature, as a memorial of the death of Christ,—that ground of all a believer's hope towards

God. I have long been aware, and have taken every occasion to testify, that none but believers of the true Gospel partake of the Lord's Supper in spirit and in truth; that to all others it is an empty unprofitable and pernicious form. But I considered that the same thing is true of prayer, of praise, and of every act of Christian worship. If then, I argued, the real disciples may join together in prayer and praise, when they know that many others are imitating them in the outward acts, who have no real fellowship with them; why should they suppose that they may not under similar circumstances participate in the Lord's Supper? Is it not a *superstitious* view of the ordinance, that leads them to scruple it? (Brief App. H.)

And when it was urged that I, in my *clerical* character *administering* that ordinance to many of whose Christianity I had no satisfactory evidence, gave by this an unwarrantable sanction to their profession, which was calculated to encourage their false confidence; I have been accustomed to reply—that where the ordinance was *professedly open* to all who chose to partake of it, there was really no sanction given to the profession of any, by their admission to it;—that none who received the elements at my hands did in fact conceive, that by my act in distributing them I intended to recognize them as true disciples;—that the whole ceremony of what is called *consecration* and *administration* on the part of the priest is merely a human form, and no real part of Christ's institution; that I therefore conceived there was really no more done, than if each, coming to the table, took the bread and the wine for himself; and that to debar any from this I considered as useless, as to prevent their repeating the Lord's prayer with me;—though I felt it an incumbent duty, which I aimed at faithfully discharging, to testify against the vain religion of those who went through such forms, while they believed not the Gospel. (Brief App. I.)

Besides, I have urged—(and urged with much truth)—that *professedly mixed* communion was of much less injury to souls, than *such select* communions as I knew commonly existed among Dissenters:—that in these, by a *selection* being made of those who should participate in what they call *THE ordinance*, the profession of all who were admitted to it was indeed sanctioned; and at the same time, through ignorance or disregard of scriptural principles in making the selection, numbers were likely to be hardened in the most awful delusion.

Within the few last years of my life, various trying circumstances concurred to open my eyes on the real character of that part of the religious world, which goes under the name of *evangelical*; and brought to my observation the awful evils that reign in the majority of that class of professors; evils especially, which stand opposed to the law of brotherly kindness and sympathy with the afflicted. I saw evils of the tongue and temper and conduct, assuming in *them* forms more deadly than any, in which they appear even in the unprofessing world; and I saw few even of those, who gave most evidence of being disciples, aware of the malignant nature of these evils, or without some degree of infection from the plague. My attention was thus forced to the melancholy contrast, between the

way in which Christians were walking in these days, and walked in the days of the Apostles. I began increasingly to remark how the disciples, in the Apostolic Churches, *walked together* as brethren, closely united with each other, and separated from them that believed not.

Since the commencement also of the public controversy in which I was engaged, in consequence of my Expostulatory Address to the Methodists; I have had increasing opportunities of observing how few of those, who profess what is called *evangelical* doctrine, understand or believe the Apostolic Gospel. I saw a scriptural vindication of the truth of Christ stirring up as much irritation in their minds, as in any of the Arminian Methodists. I saw more and more clearly that *the little flock* of genuine disciples had been awfully scattered among the heathen, and had been in consequence too much "learning their works;" that they ought to be collected together as of old, and called back—both for their own profit and for the glory of their Lord—to walk together according to the Apostolic rule.

A few of us, who were in close habits of Christian intimacy, spoke often one with another upon the subject; and at the beginning of this year I published my leading thoughts upon it, in the pamphlet to which I have already referred—"Hints on Christian Fellowship." About two months after, a very small number (nine persons), who were of one mind, commenced the attempt; and united together to walk as one body—in the one character of believers of the Gospel of Christ—with the one object of following Him, and serving one another by love—and desiring to be regulated in all their course by one rule, the rule of his word; being persuaded that, in whatever way Christians were called to walk in the days of the Apostles, they must at all times be called to walk in the same way.

I mention these matters, in order to mark to the reader the gradual information of my judgment and opening of my views. I have reason to blush for my own slowness to learn; but have equal cause to look back with thankfulness to God at the steps, by which he has led me on; to praise him for his patience and long suffering towards me, as well as for his mercy in not leaving me to continue to the end in a line of conduct so dishonourable to him, as I still walked in. For while I now became daily more and more sensible of the importance of that separation of the disciples, which we had commenced, and of their close union with each other; I yet—(strange as it may appear to some)—continued to regard it as not only consistent with Christian duty to retain my connection with the Establishment, but absolutely inconsistent with my duty to withdraw myself from it.

I saw indeed that the course in which I was engaged would afford such a ground for considering me as a Dissenter, and would necessarily prove so offensive, that I could not but view my *removal* from the situation, which I held in the Establishment and in College, as morally certain. Had I considered my own indulgence, I would have at once removed myself; in compliance with the wishes and opinions of many whom I loved. But not convinced by any of the arguments which they brought in support of their opinions, and conceiving (from the views which I have stated above) that my situa-

tion was a *lawful* one, and that I therefore *ought* not to leave it, I still held the resolution to continue in it—till I should be forced to withdraw. And in thus acting contrary to the judgment of some, who were dear to my heart as brethren in Christ,—while they perhaps might suspect that my judgment was biassed by considerations of worldly interest,—I am conscious that I submitted to a more painful trial, than I have found in any sacrifices which I lately made ; and I am conscious that I acted in the habitual prospect of being called to all the same sacrifices. I trust I have learned a profitable lesson from my own past experience ;—to bear with much patience such as give evidence of being disciples indeed, though they may not yet see their Lord's will in this and similar matters : and to cherish the confident expectation that those, who are following Him, shall yet have it revealed to them, “if in any thing they be otherwise minded.” (Brief App .K.)

Some may ask how I could have reconciled it with consistency, to think of retaining the character of a Clergyman, while I deliberately pursued a course of conduct, which I myself expected would prove the occasion of my being put out of the *soi-disant* church ? It is a question that I did consider, though I am not very anxious to contend for the justice of my answer to it. If it should be proved by any, that a man connected with the Establishment cannot preserve *consistency* of character, and at the same time act—in any particular—as a Christian is bound to act ; I hope this will only contribute to prove to every Christian, that he has no business to continue in such a connection. This, I think, would have been the effect of such a demonstration on my mind ;—not to make me cease doing things which I saw the word of God commanded, but to lead me sooner out of a connection, the laws of which (on this supposition) directly contradict the laws of God.

But I would briefly mention that, at that time, taking the most favourable view of a religious Establishment *per se*, I considered it as a provision made by the state, for the religious instruction and edification of the inhabitants of the country, according to certain prescribed forms and regulations, which were to be observed by its officiating ministers in their *public* exercises, in the places publicly allotted by the state for their ministrations, and at the times appointed by public authority and usage : but this, without any design originally to abridge their Christian liberty in other respects. I conceived the state saying—“At such times and in such places, the persons, whom we recognise as teachers of religion sanctioned by us, shall do such and such things, according to such formularies :”—but I did not conceive of the state as saying—“These persons shall do no other religious acts ; and shall have no other rule, but what is contained in our formularies for their religious conduct.” And I was confirmed in the justice of this latitude of interpretation, from knowing that many, who were never accused of deviating from the propriety of the *clerical* character, were yet known to have taken such a latitude in their practice ;—a latitude of the same kind with me, though not to the same extent.

I repeat it, however that I am not anxious to maintain my argu-

ment upon this subject. If there be such a latitude allowed by the spirit of our religious Establishment, I hope at least that it will be made use of by such Christians, as may yet be in that connection. If no such latitude be allowed: if the *Rubric* must be the only directory for their religious conduct—(unless perhaps in their private devotions);—the unlawfulness of the situation to a Christian becomes obvious to every one, who is the least acquainted with the word of God. For my own part, I now see its unlawfulness,—even upon that supposition which is most favourable to our religious Establishment.

At the period to which I alluded above, (when I joined a few disciples in the attempt to walk as a Christian Church, according to the rule of Christ's word), I considered much whether I should continue to administer the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, according to the customary forms, in the Chapel where I still officiated as a Clergyman. The result of much deliberation upon the subject was, that I thought I ought not altogether to discontinue it. I considered that there were probably several disciples attending in the mixed congregation there, who were not joined with our little body; and who yet ought not to be deprived of the opportunity of observing an ordinance of their Lord. I conceived, upon the grounds which I have before stated, that there was no unlawfulness in what is called *mixed communion*. And especially I apprehended, that if the practice were laid aside just at that period, it would lead many into a very dangerous error,—into an idea that the great object of our Church-fellowship was that we might *partake of the Lord's Supper in a better way than we had done before*. I considered, that, as the disciples had prayed as truly in a mixed congregation, where the majority of those who joined in the outward form were not disciples; so they had as truly partaken of the Lord's Supper, before their union with each other, as after it. The importance of that union I saw: but I saw that they would take a very narrow view of it, who conceived that its design was merely to afford disciples an opportunity of engaging in any particular exercises of religion, or observing any particular institution of Christ, under circumstances which would prevent others from engaging at the same time in the same *outward acts*. And I perceived that in those Churches, where this was supposed to be the great end of Church-fellowship, its truly important purposes appeared to be overlooked;—the purposes of making a joint confession of that Truth on which believers are united, of building up each other in the faith, and of walking together as brethren. (Brief App. L.)

On these accounts I thought it my duty not to countenance such a mistake, by altogether discontinuing the administration of that ordinance according to the customary form; while I rejoiced in the weekly observance of it, among the little body of disciples with whom I was joined, according to the simplicity of Christ's institution. I acted throughout in this matter agreeably to the dictates of my conscience, under the imperfect views that I had of the rule of Scripture: and conceiving that such a coalition with the world, as my connection with the Establishment involved me in, was not in itself contrary to that rule. And I some time ago determined to

take the first opportunity of publishing to the world the views under which I acted, and the grounds of my conduct; particularly for the satisfaction of some dear brethren, who were much surprised and pained at my continuance in the Establishment. At that time I little thought, that such a publication was to be accompanied with a retraction of those views, and with an avowal that I now see that conduct to be altogether inadmissible. Yet I have thought it expedient to give the foregoing detail of my former sentiments. It will appear from it to every candid reader, that I have considered the general subject attentively in various bearings; and that perhaps some of the arguments, by which I used to vindicate the lawfulness of the connection which I have renounced, carry with them more appearance of strength, than those which are commonly urged in its defence. If this should add so much weight to the declaration of my change of sentiments, as to obtain a more serious consideration of the grounds on which that change has taken place,—it is all that I desire.

In stating those grounds, I have in view only such of my readers as are disciples of Christ, who know the true God and the nature of his kingdom. A *worldly* religion under the name of Christianity, answers all the purposes of the children of the world; and I do not expect that they, in their present state, will see any force in my arguments.

And now, while I maintain the intrinsic *unlawfulness* of any religious Establishment, let not my position be misunderstood. I deny not the right of earthly rulers, to make what political regulations they please. And if they choose to have a *state-religion*, sanctioned by whatever rewards or even by whatever penalties,—while they act thus according to what they think best for the state which they govern,—politicians may question the policy of their conduct; but no Christian is warranted to call in question their right to do so. A Christian is bound by the laws of Christ's kingdom to obey all the commands of his earthly governors, that are not contrary to the laws of Christ: and he is bound to submit with patient acquiescence, to all the inflictions, which he may be called to endure from them, for his adherence to the laws of Christ, whenever the commands of men interfere with the commands of God. I wish to speak out, and distinctly, upon a most important—though most unpopular—trait of the religion of Christ. Let the children of the world argue the political right or expediency of the matter: but there is no rule of Scripture more plain, than that which calls the disciples of Christ to maintain, in all cases, a course of *passive obedience and non-resistance* towards the constituted authorities of the state.

But what I assert is, that it is contrary to the nature and laws of Christ's kingdom, that his disciples should acknowledge the *state religion* as theirs, or hold any connection with the religious Establishment of the country. If—as in this highly-favoured land—they are allowed the undisturbed practice of *their* religion according to the laws of Christ; abundant thankfulness becomes them. If they should not,—*patient suffering*. But according to his laws *alone*, whose kingdom is not of this world, are they called to regulate their

religious walk ; and to stand unconnected with any religious bodies under whatever name, who walk not by that rule, but by regulations that rest on the wisdom or authority of *men*.

If this were the duty of Christians in the days of the Apostles, it is their duty now. I know that many professors think it a wild idea, that Christians should now walk as they did then. And certainly it cannot be expected of persons, who have believed something, under the name of a Gospel, different from that which the *Apostles* preached. But why those, who believe the Apostolic Gospel, should not still walk according to the Apostolic rule ; these professors will find it hard to assign any reason, unless their *indisposition* to such a walk be reckoned one.

Now let us suppose that an imperial edict had been sent to "the saints in Christ Jesus who were at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (the overseers and servants) of that Christian Church. Let us suppose this imperial edict announcing to them, that the Roman Emperor and the great officers of his court had become *Christians* ; and that, in his zeal for the Gospel, he was resolved to take the religion of Christ under his *patronage* : and that he would give a political sanction to the Christians at Philippi, and would recognize some of them as public teachers of Christianity under the warrant of the *state* ;—provided they would adopt a certain code of regulations, in their religious exercises and conduct, which he annexed to this edict :—upon such a supposition, let me ask what would have been the answer of the Church at Philippi ? Christian reader ! are you at any loss to conjecture ? What ought it to have been, but this ? " We have received from the Apostles of the Lord Jesus, *how we ought to walk and to please God*. We are bound by our allegiance to our divine Master, to *hold fast* the precepts which have been delivered to us by his inspired servants. We are taught by them indeed to *submit ourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake* ; but at the same time to know that the ordinances of *human* rulers extend only to matters of *this world* ; that Christ's kingdom is not of this world ; and that by *his laws alone* we are to be regulated in our Christian walk. If the Emperor and the officers of his court have been given to believe the Gospel, we rejoice in the grace that has been imparted to them ; although not more than we would rejoice, if we heard the same thing of his meanest subjects, inasmuch as the glory of Christ's Church consists not in the human greatness of those who are added to it. We desire that he and his believing courtiers may walk according to the same Apostolic rule, by which we desire to abide ; and in the place of which, or in addition to which, we dare not receive any other rule. We hear without any emotion, but that of surprise, that the Emperor is resolved to patronize the religion of Christ in his imperial capacity. Witnesses of Christ, we think it needful to remind him as a professing brother, that all the wealth of his treasury or the power of his kingdom cannot make one Christian ; no more than, employed in opposition to our Lord, they could defeat his counsels or overturn his government."

That such as this would have been, or that such as this ought to have been, the reply of the Philippian Church to such a proposal as I

have supposed, I am in my judgment and conscience persuaded: and I believe others will feel the same persuasion, just in proportion to the clearness with which they discern—what kind of body an Apostolic Church was.

Again, let us suppose that there had been no such thing as a politico-religious Establishment to the present day: and that, amidst ever so great corruptions of faith and practice in other professors of Christianity, there were in this country some Churches of Christ, in which the purity of the Apostolic faith was preserved, and who continued to walk according to the simplicity of the Apostolic rule—“followers of the Churches of God which in Judea were in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thes. ii. 14.) Let us suppose that a similar proposal were now made, *for the first time*, by the government of this country to such churches; and let those who are spiritual say—would they, ought they to accede to it? Ought they either to give up their existing order, for the purpose of coalescing with the religion of the state; or attempt (as I vainly did for some time) to combine the observance of their existing order with a conformity to the code of human regulations, which we suppose offered to their acceptance? Would they not say, if they replied aright?—“We are walking according to the best of our judgment by the rules, which the Apostles delivered to the first Churches of Christ; and which stand on record in their writings. We shall be thankful to you or any, who may help us to a clearer insight into those rules. But we dare not renounce submission to their authority, or countenance the idea of their insufficiency, by adopting regulations which are not even professedly derived from that source.”

Other professors, we may suppose, would readily accede to the proposal of our government? But who? Those who had never imbibed the Apostolic spirit, or walked by the Apostolic precepts; or else had awfully departed from both. And if there must have been such a departure in the professors of Christianity, before any of them could have become connected with a religious Establishment; does it not clearly follow that the few, who now believe the Gospel which the Apostles preached, and desire to come back to the rule by which they directed the first Churches to walk, are called at once to withdraw themselves from all such connection?

I am aware, that the whole of this argument must appear very uninteresting and foolish, to the great mass of professors in Christendom. They think that matters go on very well, under that easy profession of worldly religion, which goes by the name of Christianity; and which they find not only consistent with their worldly interests, but in many instances subservient to them. They will think the argument abundantly answered, by observing—“we are very well: what occasion for any change from the course, in which the *Christian world* has been walking for ages?” And to such persons, I repeat it, my argument is not addressed. It is little matter whether *they* be connected with the religious Establishment, or not. They are carnal *church-men*; and, in their present state, they *would be* just as carnal *dissenters*. To many of them also no force of argument upon the subject could carry conviction; because

they are *determined* not to be convinced. Conviction would call them to sacrifice either worldly interests, or fleshly lusts;—the one, promoted by their connection with that against which I argue; the other, attacked by those laws of Christ's kingdom, which I maintain as the only rule of his followers. With the children of the world conviction would be as hopeless, in this matter, as it would be unprofitable. It is only to disciples of Christ, that I desire to address myself on the subject. And in proportion as their attention is directed to it, and in proportion as they walk in the spirit of disciples; I do expect that *they* will discern the force of the argument.

Nor do I see any thing that can be objected to it, with the least colour of plausibility; unless it be, either 1st. that there are many *general* rules given to the Apostolic Churches, for the actual and orderly observance of which it is necessary, that various subordinate circumstances should be settled, which are left undetermined in Scripture: and that the determination of such circumstances in any Church, according to the dictates of human prudence and expediency, is not to be censured as a departure from the laws of Christ, or as an unwarrantable addition to them. Or 2dly, that the *peculiar* circumstances of the Apostolic Churches occasioned directions to be given to them, which must now be inapplicable; as there is no Church in the same circumstances, which occasioned them.

In reply to the first objection, I would observe that none can consistently urge it, who do not aim at walking according to those *general* rules delivered by the Apostles; or who continue in any Church, where they are professedly set aside, or where any regulations inconsistent with their observance is adopted. Now it is certain, not only that the established Church of this country is such; but that every political establishment of religion under the name of Christianity has ever been such, and must necessarily be such from the nature of the thing. The call therefore remains in force upon every disciple of Christ—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate;" that ye may walk in fidelity of allegiance to your Lord, and according to the laws of his kingdom. Brethren, according as you obey that call, you will find that his laws leave nothing undetermined, which it is needful or profitable should be determined by any general canon.

Upon the second objection which I have supposed, I would say—it is partly true; as where the Apostles give directions about the exercise of miraculous gifts, which do not now exist in the Church. But in this and any other instances, where the objection is true, it has no weight at all against my argument; because these directions are sufficiently distinguishable from the rules, that are of permanent application, as resulting from the permanent character of a Church of Christ.

A real Church of Christ is and must be, in its leading characters, just the same kind of thing, that it was in the days of the Apostles. It is the same in the character of its constituent *members*; men professing to believe the Apostolic Gospel, to be partakers of "like precious faith" with the Apostles, and heirs of the same great salvation. It is the same in the *object* for which they are called to walk

together in one body. It is the same, in its present *situation*; placed in the midst of the world, that must ever view believers with a mixture of surprise, indignation, and contempt;—a world that “knows them not, because it knew HIM not.” It is the same in its *trials*; the same in its *consolations*; the same in its high *destination*. And will any, acknowledging this identity of character in the Apostolic Churches and a real Church of Christ at the present day, seriously assert that the rules, which were delivered to those Churches by men divinely commissioned and inspired, are as it were *out of date*, and such as a Church of Christ has no longer occasion to attend to?

That they are inapplicable to the things called Churches now, and such as *cannot* be observed in them, I readily admit. But what are we to infer from this? That the rules are useless or abrogated? No; but that the bodies, in which their observance is impossible, are not Churches of Christ; or are not what Churches of Christ ought to be. Indeed, perceiving this in some degree long since, I used to vindicate my connection with the Established Church by urging—that it was superfluous to object against it the want of the characters of a *Christian Church*, when it was not the *kind* of thing at all, which is meant in Scripture by a *Church* of Christ, or congregation of Christians; and therefore not the *kind* of thing, in which it was fair to look for these characters. When we hear of the Established Church, we think only of a code of political regulations about religion, and of all the inhabitants of the united kingdom who approve of that code. When we read in Scripture of a Church of Christ, we think (if we think aright) of a number of Christians meeting together in one place, and associated in one body. The two things therefore, though denominated by the same *name* of CHURCH, are things essentially differing from each other in their genus.

But here let it be observed, that every congregation stately assembling in any place of worship connected with the Establishment, is precisely in profession—what the Scripture means by the word *Church*. And now, suppose we should attempt to introduce the laws of Christ, and of the Apostolic Churches, into such a congregation—such a nominally *Christian* congregation: suppose, for instance, such laws as we find in Matth. xviii. 17. and 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. Why—the very *attempt* would be impracticable: for it would be opposed by the standing code of regulations, to which such congregations and places of worship are subject; and would be inconsistent indeed with the character of perhaps every person composing that congregation.

And shall the disciples of Christ any longer coalesce, in any part of church-fellowship, with those who *professedly set aside* the laws of Christ; and from whom, even if they were disciples, an express Apostolic injunction calls us to withdraw ourselves? 2 Thes. iii. 6.

Protestants have greatly erred, in conceiving that many passages of Scripture are exclusively applicable to *Popish* corruptions; which really are pointed against the *corruptions*, in whatever body they exist, whether Protestant or Popish. In the latter undoubtedly, every Antichristian abomination has been carried to its height; but many of them remained in the reformed Churches. And wherever “the kings of the earth have committed fornication” with any

Church, by attempting to introduce *their* laws into CHRIST'S *kingdom*,—there is at least one of the *progeny* of "BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS;" concerning which the "voice from heaven" speaks—"COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, THAT YE BE NOT PARTAKERS OF HER SINS, AND THAT YE RECEIVE NOT OF HER PLAGUES." (REV. xviii. 4.) A Christian Church is espoused "to *one* husband," that she may "be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ;" (2 Cor. xi. 2.) and she walks consistently with that character, only so far as she walks in a state of *separation* from every other religious connection, disowning every other Lord, cleaving "with purpose of heart" unto Him, and following Him fully.

As soon as the view of this subject, which I have attempted to state from page 200, was presented to my mind, it was accompanied with an immediate conviction, and a clear perception of the path of duty. I found that I must myself do, what I had before conceived I ought to *let others do*; and what (it has since appeared) they were just about doing. After an interval of one day, I wrote the following letter to the Provost of Dublin-College.

Revd. Sir,

Oct. 8th, 1804.

'I long since thought it probable that many things, which I was led to do from a view of Christian duty, would eventually occasion my removal from the situation I have held in the Establishment of this country and in the University. That probability has of late appeared to me to increase into a moral certainty; from the nature of some steps, to which I have been lately led by opening views of the rule of Scripture. But until these very few days I conceived that I might, consistently with that rule, remain in my present situation, till I should be removed from it.

'On this point I have now to avow to you a change of sentiment; and to inform you, that I cannot longer conscientiously exercise any religious functions as a Minister of the Establishment.

'I suppose that, according to the constitution of our University, this avowal must involve in it the forfeiture of my fellowship. If it be so, and you think that I cannot consistently retain my Academic situation to the end of the current quarter, you will be so good to consider me as hereby *resigning* it, and to have my name taken off the college books.

'I am, Revd. Sir,

'With respect and gratitude, your, &c.

'J. W.'

That evening the Provost sent for me; and kindly offered me time for re-considering the subject. This I declined, as my acceptance of the offer would have intimated—what was not fact—that my mind was in some degree undecided. The next day the Provost expelled me; conceiving, I suppose, that he ought not to accept the *resignation* which I had offered. I briefly mention these particulars, as some misrepresentations of them have gone abroad. Some have expressed a resentment, in which I cannot at all participate, at the Provost's conduct in proceeding to remove me by *expulsion*. I have

too much consciousness of the goodness of the cause, for which I was expelled, to feel the slightest pain or shame on account of the mode of my removal from the College: while I do not wonder at all that the Provost—(as he has expressed it in the form of expulsion)—should feel my conduct in this matter *disgraceful* to the body. The situation which I held in it was one that I had earned and maintained with much labour, for more than thirteen years: but I feel too much of the importance of the object to which I sacrificed it, to allow me to reckon the sacrifice of any magnitude.

Some have expressed displeasure at me, for not having simply written to the Provost a note resigning my fellowship, without entering into any explanation of my reasons. But they also go upon the supposition, that I have been *disgraced*, by being expelled: and they forget that *my* object was, to mark that which I could not any longer conscientiously retain. This was not—the merely academic business of a tutor, lecturer, &c.—but the *clerical* office connected with it by the constitution of the University.

Let me add a few remarks, in explanation of my reasons for withdrawing myself from three Societies, of which I had been a member: the General Evangelical Society of Dublin, the Society for distributing Evangelical Tracts, and the Association incorporated for promoting Religion and Virtue. This I did by the following letter, addressed to the Secretaries of each of these Societies:—

“ Oct. 15th, 1804.

“ Sir,—Being led to see that the Scripture calls me to separate myself from all religious connections, except with those whom it authorizes me to walk with, as disciples of Christ united with me in the truth of the gospel; and being convinced that *their* body in any place is a Society for truly promoting, under the regulations of his word, every good object for which your Society has professedly been formed;—I beg to be considered as no longer a member of your body, and to have my name taken off your books.

“ I am,” &c.

Let not my withdrawing from these Societies be construed into indifference about the object, which they professedly aim at; and to which I am sensible they have each been made more or less subservient;—the object of disseminating divine truth, by sending out preachers of it, or distributing tracts which declare it, or promoting the circulation of the Scriptures. It is an object which must ever be kept in view and pursued by any Church of Christ; as long as it walks in the spirit and under the influence of that Truth, on which its members are united, and in the belief of which they are agreed. But to join in religious union with those who believe it not, or walk not according to it, in order to pursue that object,—is what at once impedes the prosecution of it, and involves the necessity of sanctioning persons, principles, and conduct, which nothing can justify a believer in countenancing.

Thus—for instance—the *Evangelical Society* is composed of persons, constituted members by pecuniary subscription; and out of

the aggregate body, the acting Committee is annually chosen at a general meeting. Is it with a body thus constituted, that disciples of Christ can consistently act, for the purpose of propagating the Gospel? With persons, who believe ever so many different things under the *name* of the Gospel? With persons who do not walk according to the Gospel?

And when we seriously consider how the same laxity of principle, according to which the members of such a Society have been originally brought together, necessarily enters into all their proceedings, into the selection of instruments employed by them, and into the regulations by which they conduct themselves; must not disciples of Christ see many additional arguments for withdrawing? When we consider, for instance, that the regulations of the Evangelical Society are professedly adapted, for enabling all the members of such an heterogeneous body to act in a kind of concert; and that, of necessary consequence, the regulations of God's word are—some of them overlooked or laid aside—and others expressly contradicted; that, in the choice of preachers, popularity of gifts and a great name in the religious world have been the grand qualifications sought after; that many persons therefore have been brought over from Great Britain at a considerable expence, to itinerate for a few weeks as Evangelists, —about whom little more was known than that they stood high in reputation as evangelical preachers:—when we consider how solemn a thing it is to give our sanction to what they may preach, as the truth of God, and to them as witnesses of the truth; when we consider how lightly we have thus implicated the interests of our Lord's kingdom, with the principles and characters of men, of whom we had no scriptural evidence that they belonged to his kingdom:—when we seriously reflect on all this, can we longer conceive that the union in such a Society may be warrantably substituted for the union of disciples in a Church of Christ, and for the co-operation of several such Churches walking according to the same rule?

Nay, brethren; every other kind of religious connection or co-operation must tend, on our part, to obscure the distinctive characters of the Church of Christ; to shade off the strong outlines of her portrait as marked in the Scriptures, and blend them into a coalescence with the various religions of the world. It thus indeed tends to attach a false respectability to the character of disciples, in the eye of the world; but a respectability which accrues to them only from the concealment of their true glory,—the image of that GLORIOUS ONE "*whom man despiseth.*" (Is. xlix. 7.)

Any of my Christian readers, who are led into the same views of this subject which I have endeavoured to put forward, will be at no loss to answer an argument that some good people propose with great earnestness, in favour of that connection with the religious Establishment of the country, which I have renounced;—namely, the wide field of *usefulness* which it affords to a servant of Christ. They deprecate the idea of all ministers of the Gospel acting as I have done; and deplore the multitudes who would thus be deprived of hearing the joyful sound. It is only necessary to reply, that—supposing the consequence to take place in the fullest extent which

they apprehend—nothing of the kind can warrant a believer's doing that, which is in itself *unlawful*. He has nothing to do with speculating about the comparative *probability* of usefulness, in two ways, one of which is the plain path of Christian duty marked in the word,—and the other a different path, to which fleshly wisdom would have him turn aside.

From my soul I hope, that the day is not far distant, when there will not be a single disciple of Christ remaining in the Established Church, nor in any similarly corrupt communion. Some of them will have to make large worldly sacrifices, in withdrawing from it. But let them remember Him who hath said—"Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 33.) And let them take good heed, that their judgment concerning this matter be not secretly biassed, by a weight of worldly interest lying on one side. I am aware that with many *professors* of the Gospel this will operate, to prevent their giving any serious consideration to the subject. But that man has no scriptural mark of a disciple, who indulges an indisposition to inquire into the will of God in any matter; or who thinks conformity to the smallest part of his will of inferior consideration to any earthly object whatsoever.

It would be superfluous to take notice of another argument, which I have heard advanced; but that there is nothing men will not advance, when they argue against Scripture. The number of eminent and useful Christians, who have lived and died in connection with the Establishment, is reckoned by some a sufficient refutation of every argument, that can be brought against the lawfulness of that connection. This objection will have some weight, when it can be proved that the conduct of men is to determine the rule of duty, and not to be tried by that rule: or that whatever some have long continued to do—through ignorance—contrary to Christian duty, may still be done, consistently with the Christian character, by those to whom its unlawfulness is demonstrated. But until one of these things be established, the objection weighs—nothing.

Finally—let every disciple, who acts in this matter according to the Apostolic rule, lay his account with having attributed to him every unworthy motive; with having his conduct and principles decried, calumniated, and misrepresented by all, especially by the evangelical professors from whom he separates. The cry of setting up a *party*, and being influenced by a sectarian spirit, will be loudly raised against us. Let us be less solicitous to refute it by argument, than to see that we give no just occasion for it.

While we walk by the rule of Christ's word, and with those alone who will walk by the same rule, we *must* carry to the world an appearance of illiberal bigotry; we must be "a sect every where spoken against:" (Acts xxviii. 22.) and those, who know nothing more of us, will know that. But, "fear ye not the reproach of men." (Is. li. 7.) "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." (1 Pet. iv. 14.)

Meanwhile, the world—if they could believe it—need not fear, that those who are regulated by the laws of a kingdom, which "is

rot of this world," will ever be able—even if they were desirous—to make any shew or head in the world, that could advance them into competition with any of its parties.

P. S. Since these sheets went to press, I have found that considerable surprise is expressed by many, at this circumstance—that the public reading and expounding of the Scriptures, in BETHESDA Chapel, is wholly unaccompanied with the singing of hymns and with prayer. And to correct some mistakes and misrepresentations of this matter, I would observe to the Christian reader—that those exercises of worship are continued *in the meetings of the Church*, to which I belong; that its meetings on the Lord's day are open to the observation of any, who choose to be witnesses of them; but that they are not held in BETHESDA Chapel; and, under the present circumstances of that house, cannot be. To declare the word there to the mixed multitude who attend in it, is therefore all that I can scripturally do: for I could no more profess to have fellowship with them, in the exercises of *Christian worship*, than in the Christian ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The Apostles and first disciples declared the word to all; but they *worshipped* only with those, whom they acknowledged as brethren.

Let it be observed, however, that it is not the *publicity* of Christian worship I object to,—not the presence of ever so many spectators and auditors in the place where the disciples are met together as a body;—but the conducting of worship under circumstances which are inconsistent with the marked *separation* of the Church of Christ;—under circumstances which *confound* that body with those who belong not to it; which present to observation,—not the body of disciples having *fellowship with each other in the worship of their common Lord*,—but the mixed communion of believers and unbelievers appearing to join together in acts, that exclusively belong to the former. For how shall the latter “call on Him, in whom they have not believed?” (Rom. x. 14.)

A BRIEF APPLICATION
OF
THE PRINCIPLES

*Asserted in my Pamphlet to the refutation of all the arguments by which
I used to vindicate my former connection with the Establishment.*

A. (page 192.)

To exercise *Christian* acts, conduct *Christian* worship, and observe *Christian* ordinances, according to rules prescribed by *human laws*, is directly contrary to the nature of Christ's kingdom and to his authority as its king. To engage to do this is a *term of admission*, which must make connection with any Establishment intrinsically unlawful; even if the rules prescribed by the human laws were in the matter of them perfectly scriptural. A Christian acting scripturally must, even in that case, decline acknowledging the interference of earthly legislators in the things of Christ's kingdom, and therefore must decline all connection with the religious Establishment of the country; even though he should be called to do *in the Church of Christ* the very same things in the very same way, which the laws of the land prescribed to be done *in their churches*. At the same time, this case, the most favourable that can be supposed for an Establishment—is one purely *imaginary*; one that neither ever has been realized, nor ever can: in as much as the *national religion*, which is nationally regulated, must necessarily require rules, not only *different* from the laws of Christ's kingdom, but in direct *opposition* to them.

B. (page 193.)

According to Scripture, the corruptions of any, in doctrine or in practice, render *religious connection* with them unlawful to the believer. And to say, that in compliance with the laws of the land I should join in all the most solemn ordinances of Christ's kingdom with those, whom his word commands me to reject as heretics—to be separated from as unbelievers—to withdraw from as disorderly walkers—and not so much as to eat with;—this is to say, that the laws of men are superior to the laws of Christ.—An Establishment *is* indeed a merely *political* institution,—a thing of this world; but it is a political institution about *religion*, and professedly about the *religion of Christ*. Therefore its being merely *political* marks it as essentially *Antichristian*. I have no *religious* connection with Irishmen, merely by living in the same country with them, or by being engaged with them in any of the *civil* intercourse of life. There is therefore no real analogy between the two cases.

C. (page 193.)

And there is certainly *no more* mischief done by an Establishment, than so far as the disciples of Christ are ensnared into connection with it. They then become partakers of its sins, unequally yoked with those who are not of them; and the distinctive glory of the Christian character and of Christ's Church is obscured from the view of the world.

D. (page 194.)

To have quitted the Establishment upon the grounds that are at issue between Church-men and the mass of Dissenters, might have had this tendency. But what is now presented to the attention of those who observe my conduct, is the whole of that walk of Christ's disciples which is essentially connected with the great truths of the Gospel,—as resulting from the belief of them, and immediately calculated to illustrate and exhibit them to the world.

E. (page 194.)

If the heathen Emperor offered this support and sanction to Paul, on condition of his doing any kind of *religious* acts different from what he did and taught, or of his observing any forms in his *religious* exercises different from those which he observed and taught; it is certain that Paul would have rejected his offer, and that it would have been unlawful for him to accept it. If he were required to observe *nothing different* from the precepts and institutions of Christ,—to do nothing in his religious conduct *different* from what he did already; he might certainly receive the Emperor's bounty. And if Nero be supposed to have issued an edict for the protection and pecuniary support of *Christians*, on condition of their walking *as the Apostles taught them to walk*,—it would be a law, (however strange the supposition) the benefits of which they might no doubt lawfully enjoy: but no farther than they did not, in order to enjoy them, admit the smallest interference of the Emperor with their religious practices. And if any choose to say that the Christians would thus have been in an Establishment, I shall not dispute about the *word*; but it is plain it would not have been the *thing*: no more than I am now in an Establishment, because the law of the land protects me—conducting myself as I do.

F. (page 195.)

If he be instructed perfectly in the laws of Christ's kingdom, he will see that such a conduct as I contended for his adopting, is among the ways of pursuing that object which those laws forbid. He will see that any attempt to act in Christ's kingdom in his *political* capacity, is contrary to the essential nature of that kingdom, and of his supposed character as a subject of it. He will see that he is called to adorn the Gospel which he professes, by a faithful and beneficial discharge of the duties which belong to *his* kingly office, within the province of action to which that extends; and by manifesting his subjection to the laws of *Christ's* kingdom, walking with his fellow disciples according to them; and by abounding in all those good

works, which his many talents afford him the means of performing. But he will see that the work which I contended for his engaging in is a bad work; and alike unsuitable either to him or to a private Christian. If a private Christian build a place of *Christian worship*, he can scripturally design it only as the place where a *Christian Church* shall assemble; and he cannot scripturally prescribe any regulations to that Church which he allows to make use of his house: and the Church that would accept any regulations prescribed by him, in its worship or religious practices, in order to obtain the use of that house, would act contrary to the duty of a Christian Church.

G. (page 195.)

It has been shewn that a Christian cannot lawfully enter into that situation: and every hour that he continues in it, he is doing what is unlawful.

H. (page 196.)

Certainly it is a superstitious view of the Lord's Supper, that leads any to scruple mixed communion in it, more than in the observance of the other ordinances of Christ, in which believers have fellowship one with another. But a scriptural view of them all will lead the believer to abstain from mixed communion in any of them,—from outward fellowship in them with those from whom they are bound to be *outwardly* separate. That it is such an *outward* separation the Apostle enjoins in 2 Cor. vi. 14 and 17, is certain; because he enforces the injunction by urging this fact—that there is *no real* fellowship communion or concord between the disciples and those with whom he exhorts them not to be unequally yoked. The *fact*, therefore, upon the certainty of which he grounds the injunction, cannot be the same with the *duty* which he enforces by the consideration of it. It is not the *presence* of unbelievers under the same roof, where believers have fellowship with each other, that renders communion *mixed*; nor even any attempt of the former to imitate the same outward acts. It is rendered mixed by that want of outward and visible separation of the believers in their fellowship with each other, in consequence of which they appear to the unbelievers present and to the world to join with them in Christian acts; and by this bear a pernicious testimony in their *conduct* against the truths which they at times testify with their *lips*. Nor is it any wonder that the world should give more ready credence to what they *do*, than to what they *say*; and be much irritated when any disciples, by the consistency of their conduct with their oral declarations, shew that they are indeed in earnest. You testify to unbelievers that their sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord, that they have never called upon his name, that they are of their father the devil: and then you bow the knee with them, and by all that you *do*, profess to join them in saying, “*our* Father which art in heaven.” The laws of the land bid you do this, and you shall be sanctioned by the state: the laws of God prohibit your doing it. Let the disciple, before whom the subject is fairly laid, look to it which he will obey.

I. (page 196.)

But when that ordinance is *professedly open* to all who choose to partake of it, believers cannot lawfully partake of it:—no more than the first Christians could have lawfully sat down to the Lord's table along with heathen idolaters. And the man who now administers it under such circumstances does give a sanction to the profession, which *all* the communicants make of being Christians;—though not certainly to the profession of any one more than of another. But he does contribute to give currency to that most deadly sentiment, which is prevalent in the world, that they are all *Christians*—all *believers*;—only some of them not as *good* Christians as they ought to be. In that ordinance indeed, especially, the *Clergyman* not only joins with all who communicate, but is the great *instrument* of their joining with him and with each other. As to the superstitious forms which he uses in connection with this ordinance of Christ, it is but an additional sin that he should thus help to obscure the nature, simplicity, and glory of Christ's institutions.

K. (page 198.)

It may be needful to observe, that in the *patience* of which I speak, I never meant to include the countenancing of their sin, by continuing to walk with them if they *continue* to reject the apostolic rule; though, I think, some time ought to be taken for calling their attention to that rule, and laying it before them. Nor do I think that a man who refuses to communicate with a brother upon the subject, gives *in this* any evidence of being a disciple.

L. (page 199.)

It is obvious that the laws of Christ's kingdom are not to be given up even to disciples, who will not walk by them with their brethren. The object of Church-fellowship is certainly not that narrow one, which I was afraid of countenancing. But whatever be its object, the ordinances in which the members have fellowship with one another, are ordinances peculiar to the Church: and it is contrary both to the nature of the ordinances and the nature of their mutual fellowship, to extend it or them to those who are without. And among the most important objects of the outward union of believers in a Church, is that of *exhibiting* to the world that unity which the common faith of the Gospel produces in those who believe, and their consequent separation from others. With the whole of *this* object, the line of conduct which I pursued was utterly inconsistent.

THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM;
 IN WHICH THE
 PRINCIPLES OF THE PERSONS
 CALLING THEMSELVES
 BAPTISTS
 ARE SHEWN TO BE INCONSISTENT WITH
 THE NATURE OF THE RITE,
 AND CONTRADICTED BY
 THE APOSTOLIC PRACTICE AND PRECEPTS.

And they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.—Acts xxi. 5.

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BAPTISM was a religious rite familiar to the Jews, and practised among them before the coming of Christ. Accordingly, when John baptized, there was no question among the Jews what he meant by that rite. Some of them indeed questioned *why* he baptized, if he were not Christ, nor Elias, nor that Prophet: but they all appear to have been acquainted with the import of the rite. And it appears from their very question to have been a form, by which those who were baptized acknowledged—for the first time—the divine commission of him whose baptism they received; and by which he who baptized claimed authority from God to make disciples or proselytes to his doctrine.

In this view we may understand our Lord's submitting to the baptism of John. He thus acknowledged John to be sent of God, and (though greater than he) stooped for the time to become his disciple; even as it became him to fulfil all righteousness in the form of the *Servant* of JEHOVAH.

In like manner we know that when Heathens became *proselytes* to the Jews' religion, or became disciples of Moses, they and their households were baptized (previous to their circumcision); and thus professed to acknowledge the divine mission of the Jewish Legislator.

And in the same way, those who for the first time acknowledged Jesus of Nazareth to be sent of God were baptized into his name, or initiated by this rite into the profession of being his disciples; and this, both during our Lord's personal ministry among the Jews, and—after his resurrection—those among all nations whom the Apostles *proselyted* to the faith of him, according to his command.

I conceive that in that commission, which Christ gave to his Apostles, many greatly misrepresent the force of his command; as if he instituted some new rite, which he directed the Apostles to observe: as if our Lord's meaning were this—"I command you to go and preach my Gospel in all the earth, and to proselyte people of all nations to the faith of me, *and to dip in water those whom you proselyte.*" Whereas, it seems to me that the direction is altogether relative to the persons whom they should proselyte, and to the faith into the profession of which they should initiate them by that rite, which was already in use for such a purpose. In so much that if our Lord had not in his commission used the word *baptizing* at all, but merely expressed his charge that they should go into all the world preaching his Gospel, and should proselyte men of all nations to the faith of him, I see no reason to doubt but that the Apostles would have practised the rite of baptism, in receiving proselytes, just as they did.

For the same reason, I cannot but think that the Apostles, in observing that rite of baptism, would be regulated by the current practice of their country, as to the circumstances of administering it; unless they received some contrary instructions from their Master: and about the rite itself we do not find that He gave them any instructions at all. Now those who are moderately acquainted with the Jewish customs know that when proselytes, taking upon them the profession of being the disciples of Moses, were baptized, all their households were baptized with them; the infant children who could make no profession, as well as the adults who could. The latter certainly were not baptized without making that profession, which was intimated by their voluntarily offering themselves to the baptism. To have baptized *adults* without this, would have been as inconsistent with the Jewish principles, as it is with the Christian. But this, we know, did not prevent the baptism of the youngest children of such proselytes; and that (as I conceive) because they would of course be educated in the profession of the religion of their parents.

Much stress has been laid upon the order of the words in our Lord's commission to his Apostles; as if because their teaching—or making disciples of—all nations is mentioned before their baptizing them, it was therefore designed to preclude their baptizing any who were not capable of being *taught*; or as if because no *adult* was to be baptized without making a profession of faith in that Christ, whose disciple he avowed himself by being baptized, therefore none were to be baptized but adults. This is one of the many instances, in which arguments on the subject appear to me to be most unwarrantably strained; while they carry an imposing colour of plausibility.

It might as reasonably be inferred that because, in baptizing proselytes to the Jew's religion, no adults were to be baptized but those who personally took on them a profession of that religion in which they were instructed; therefore *that* baptism was not to be administered to infants, who from their age were incapable of receiving this instruction, or of making this profession:—a conclusion which we know would be invalid, because we know that it is contradicted by fact.

Nor does this argument, if rightly understood, at all confound what is distinct in the Mosaic dispensation and in Christianity. I know that Jews were Jews by birth; and that—in one most important sense—Christianity is not hereditary. But I argue not from those who were Jews by birth, but from those who came over to the Jews' religion from heathenism. When they and their children were baptized as well as circumcised, it was not as descendants from Abraham according to the flesh; but the adults as professing the Jews' faith, and the children as passing into the same religious community with their parents, and as those who were to be educated in that profession.

Now though real Christianity be not hereditary, as the natural descent from Abraham was, yet I am free to say that the *profession* of Christianity (wherever their parents discharge their bounden duty) is hereditary. The child, "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," will of course grow up in the profession of assent to the Christian instructions which it receives. This is the necessary effect of Christian education: and time only can discover whether the profession be only the effect of human instruction, or be accompanied with that understanding and persuasion of the truth which God alone can give.

Accordingly it seems to me that, in the Apostolic writings, the children of those who were members of the several churches are considered as bearing that relation to the churches, which occasions the Apostles to address them with exhortations and admonitions, such as they never addressed to those whom they did not consider as disciples.

Indeed it is strange how any can for a moment harbour the idea, that the children of Christians were not originally considered as *disciples*, who recollect that the Apostles were Jews, and who attend to the numerous and solemn precepts in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, concerning the treatment of children. See Deut. vi. 7; xi. 19, &c.

I know the reply which some make,—that when the Apostle, writing (for instance) to the Ephesian Church, gives that exhortation,—"children, obey your parents in the Lord," &c. he addresses only those adult members of the Ephesian Church, whose parents were living. That such are included in the admonition I readily admit. But when I read immediately in the 4th verse, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"—I cannot but think we are to understand children in a state of childhood, under parental discipline and instruction: and it seems to me to be putting a great force upon the passage to interpret the same expression in the first verse in a sense, which excludes those whom it evidently is intended to include in the

4th verse. In fact, when that epistle was sent to the Ephesian Church, any of the parents who complied with the exhortation addressed in the latter verse to them, would necessarily lead their children to consider the admonition given in the former as directed to themselves.

I have heard it urged as an argument against the supposition that infants were baptized in the days of the Apostles, that the Scriptures acknowledge no difference between the children of Christians and the children of heathens: but consider all by nature as children of wrath. In one important sense I admit it; even in the same sense in which there is no difference between the parents. But in another, and an important one, I do not think it true. I think the Scriptures in commanding Christian parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, consider the children of Christian parents related to the Christian body as disciples. Nor does this view open any door to corruption in a Church of Christ, as long as the discipline of his house is maintained in it.

Further; when I look at that precept which enjoins Christian parents to bring up their children "in the NURTURE (or *discipline*) and ADMONITION OF THE LORD," I see them called to a duty, with the discharge of which the Baptist principles are utterly inconsistent. I see them enjoined to regard and treat their youngest children *as disciples*. "*The admonition of the Lord*" is one of the ordinances of Christ's kingdom; one of those ordinances, of which none are objects but those who are in visible connection with that kingdom. Thus—Christians are called to ADMONISH *one another*; to *warn*, or *admonish*,—(it is the same word in the original)—"them that are unruly," i. e. *disciples* walking contrary to the rule of the Gospel. See Acts xx. 31. Rom. xv. 14. 1 Cor. iv. 14. Col. iii. 16. 1 Thes. v. 12, 14. 2 Thes. iii. 15. But so far are they from being called to exercise this admonition towards any but visible disciples, that as soon as any, who have professed Christianity, cease to be regarded as disciples, it is plainly intimated that this duty towards them also ceases. See Tit. iii. 10.

I repeat it therefore that Christian parents, in being called to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," are called to deal with them from their earliest infancy as disciples; and cannot discharge their bounden duty if, with the Baptists, they refuse to consider them in that character. This view indeed of parental duty may shew many how far they have fallen short of the Christian rule, in their treatment of their offspring; how little it has been regulated by the principles of this Apostolic command; and how many evils in their children may be traced to their own neglect of it. The writer has, with others, to take deep shame on this account; while he has to admire the grace and over-ruling power of God, in making the late agitation of this subject the occasion of calling the attention of some to a long-neglected duty. But what I would urge upon the consideration of every disciple is, that the very foundation of that duty is systematically assailed by the Baptist principles.

I know that some, in order to evade the force of this argument,

would represent that the precept of bringing up our children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* imports nothing more, than laying before them instructions in the principles of Christianity; as we would declare the truths of the Gospel to the *heathens*. I shall not now urge that this interpretation falls short altogether of the scriptural meaning of the expression; and is in fact cutting down a divine command to the standard of a human system. But waving this, I say that a Baptist, according to his principles, cannot scripturally discharge even that part of the duty which he acknowledges.

For let us suppose that he declares the truths of the Gospel to his children, from the time they are capable of instruction. They assent to what they hear from their parent: yet he tells them, or gives them to understand, that they are not disciples, that he does not regard them as believers of the Gospel;—otherwise, why delay to acknowledge them as such, till they grow up? Now what does this sentiment convey to the children's minds? What but this—"We agree with all that our parent has told us: but this is not *believing* the Gospel, for he says we are unbelievers." Let the Christian reader judge, whether some of the most deadly errors of the popular religion be not thus instilled into the minds of the children.

Nor does it much matter whether the parent candidly avow to his offspring this principle; or suppress it within his mind. He will *act* upon it towards them: and there is reason to fear that the man, who harbours it within his own breast, needs himself to be taught the first principles of divine truth.

If the various workings of corrupt nature, in the tempers and conduct of children, be urged as a reason for not acknowledging their discipleship; I would ask, what *adult* would be received as a disciple, if his state were to be estimated by the same rule?

If it be urged that, however certain we may be that the children of Christian parents will grow up in the *profession* of Christianity, we have not as yet any certainty that their profession will prove sincere; and that young children, assenting to the truths which they hear, are yet not to be acknowledged as disciples, because it is doubtful whether this professed assent will continue as they grow to maturity: I would ask, in what adult disciple there is not room for similar uncertainty? And I would observe that, even in the case of adults, the Apostles never delayed their baptism, to see whether the profession of faith which they made was sincere or not. Those who for the first time professed to believe what the Apostles told them, and desired to join the Christian body, they immediately baptized and received into that body. And every instance of *adult* baptism which is related in the Bible is an instance—not of the baptism of one who had from his childhood been brought up in the profession of Christianity—but of one who had never before *professed* the faith of Christ.

If I were to be baptized now,—according to the nature of the rite as observed by the Apostles, I would avow not merely that I had not before believed in Christ, but that I had not before *professed* to believe in him. This transition, from a state in which they had not *professed* the faith of him, to the acknowledgment of the Apostolic testimony

concerning him, universally accompanied the rite, and was intimated by it in every recorded instance of *adult* baptism in the days of the Apostles. It seems to me therefore, that if I were now to be baptized, I might indeed go through the same form that the Apostolic Christians observed, and it might be called by the same name; but it would not, and could not be the same thing.

Nay, suppose one of those professors of Christianity who have but the *form* of godliness, one most evidently unacquainted with the saving truth and a stranger to its power; suppose that one of the mass of merely nominal Christians in this country should to-morrow be quickened by the word of truth, and on the unequivocal confession of it he will then make should be baptized; I conceive that even in this case the rite would have nothing of the same import, nor be really the same thing with the baptism of the first Christians. For he would be baptized on his confessing that, which he had for years before from his childhood professed to believe; and on the ground of his now being really what he had long before *professed* to be—a Christian.

But it never was on such a ground that the Apostles baptized; else they would have baptized heretics and ungodly walkers on their repentance. When they preached the Gospel of Christ orally, as they do still by their writings, they baptized all who for the first time said they believed what was told them, and who desired to avow themselves Christ's disciples. Do not all the inhabitants of this country, who profess to acknowledge the Apostolic writings as true, make just such a profession, as that upon which the Apostles baptized? If the Apostles had waited to examine the sense, in which those whom they baptized understood their doctrine and assented to it, or to see in their walk an evidence that they were sincere in professing to believe it, they would doubtless have discovered that many, whom they did not hesitate to baptize, were unacquainted with its real import.

Thus I think it demonstrable that any man, who from his infancy has acknowledged the Scriptures of the New Testament as true, and now receives adult baptism, must be baptized—not on the ground of professing to believe what the apostles testify concerning Christ; for this he had always professed to believe;—but on some other ground: and therefore not at all on the same ground on which alone the Apostles baptized adults.

It may be objected that, according to this view, any of the inhabitants of this country, who are nominal Christians, ought to be received into communion with a Christian Church on their desiring it; because those who were baptized by the Apostles were immediately so received: and it may be argued that their profession cannot be equivalent to that on which the Apostles baptized, because it is not such as would warrant a Christian Church, to receive them into its communion. I answer—that it is such as would warrant them to be baptized and received into a Christian Church, if it were a profession which they only now began to make. But they have been making it from their childhood, and it has been progressively contradicted by their avowed unscriptural sentiments or unscriptural

walk. The mass of the inhabitants of the countries called Christian are presented to my view as persons, who might indeed have belonged to any of the Apostolic churches; but who would have been put away from among them; and who therefore are not now to be received by a Christian Church, without evidence of their repentance.

That the Apostles would consider the mass of the inhabitants of Christendom as *professing* Christians, I am the more persuaded, when I consider the several passages in which they have predicted the overspreading corruptions, that should prevail in the last days, contrary to Christian truth and Christian practice. I cannot persuade myself that when Paul for instance (2 Tim. iii. 1—5.) describes the awful characters of ungodliness that should appear in men, he intends to intimate any unusual or extraordinary corruption of human nature, manifesting itself in heathens. In those who *professed not* the faith of Christ, neither Paul nor Timothy would ever look for other characters than he there enumerates. But surely the extraordinary circumstance he intends to mark is this—that men *professing* the faith of Christ should be such as he describes in that passage.

I can have no doubt that, if he were now in this country, he would deal with the mass of such professors as with *professors of Christianity*; and that he would accordingly prove against them, from the Apostolic writings, the inconsistencies with which they are chargeable; as he brought forward against the unbelieving Jews the writings of Moses and the Prophets;—what he never did against the Gentiles. Now, as sure as I am that he would testify against them as *false professors* of Christianity, so sure must I be that he would not baptize any of them, who (receiving his rebukes and exhortations and instructions) should appear to be brought to repentance. For this would be to call them then to *take upon them a profession*, which he would allow they had from their childhood made.

Again:—according to the Baptist principles, the Judaizing teachers who wanted to impose circumcision on the Gentile converts to Christianity, were chargeable with an error and departure from Apostolic principles, more striking than any which the Apostles censure them for; and yet this was passed by without any animadversion. It will be allowed by all that these teachers would have had circumcised, not only the adult disciples, but their youngest children; and this on the ground of their conversion to the faith of the Messiah. Now, if we suppose, according to the Baptist principles, that in the Apostolic churches the infant children of the adult members were not considered as belonging to the Church, there would be in this matter a radical opposition between these Judaizing teachers and the Apostles, which however is not taken the slightest notice of it. They are only reproved as imposing a burdensome and needless yoke upon the disciples. No candid and intelligent Baptist will question but these men were Pædo-baptists; yet the Gentile converts are not warned against that practice as erroneous.

Indeed I think it is plain that all the Jewish proselytes to Christianity, in professing to believe that Jesus was the Messiah in whom were fulfilled all the law and the prophets, did not consider their religion changed. But what a striking change would it have been,

if they were no longer to consider their children as of the same religious community with themselves.

As to those who will still urge the incapability of infants to know or do any thing, that should qualify them to be members of Christ's kingdom, or warrant us to consider them as of his visible body; it is to be feared that they need to be reminded of that solemn truth, that unless they receive his kingdom even as an infant, they shall not enter into it. An infant is as well qualified as they ever can be to be blessed by its King, and is as capable of being saved by Him and of receiving eternal life at his hands.

I have already mentioned the Apostolic exhortation to Christian parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Now, supposing that Baptism was practised in the Apostolic churches according to the Baptist principles, I confess I cannot account for the absolute silence of the Apostles upon this subject in all their writings. I know few matters, in which the Churches would have been more likely to need admonition and instruction than this;—admonition, for instance, either against unwarrantable precipitancy or unwarrantable delay in having their children acknowledged as professors of Christianity by baptism. And yet amidst so many and so minute admonitions and reproofs and instructions addressed to various Churches by various Apostles, and to the overseers of Churches, we find not a trace upon this subject. Nor do we find the remotest hint of such a class of persons, as must have been numerous according to the Baptist principles;—children growing up in a professional assent to the Christian instructions they received from their parents, but as yet not acknowledged to be professors of Christianity;—a middle class between professed unbelievers and professed believers.

I have heard it said that this is drawing an inference from the *silence* of Scripture, which that silence does not warrant. But the objection is made by those who do not, or will not understand the argument. I do not argue from the mere silence of the Scriptures, that the thing about which they are silent was or was not. But this I say, that so far as it is probable, from the nature of any thing, that if it were so or so, the Scriptures would not be silent about it, so far is their silence upon it a probable argument that the thing was not so. Now it appears to me that Baptism, upon the Baptist principles, is such a thing; and from the silence of Scripture on the subject, I cannot but see a confirmed probability that these principles are false.

And it is vain to say that what the Scriptures relate of the Baptism of *adult* believers is sufficient, and shews that there is not that silence of which I speak. For every instance of adult baptism related in the Bible is an instance—not of the baptism of one brought up from childhood in the profession of Christianity—but of one who had never before professed Christianity. So that there is that absolute silence on the subject, which I have asserted—so far as the Baptist principles are concerned in it.

The Baptists are fond of challenging others to produce scriptural precept or example for the baptism of infants: and in order to make

out their position that there is no scriptural example for it, they *take it for granted* that in all the instances, in which we read of entire households being baptized by the Apostles, there were none in these houses but adults. But waving this;—I may more confidently challenge them to produce either scriptural precept or scriptural example of adult baptism, under such circumstances as they practise it and desire to impose it on others;—the baptism of an adult person, who has never professedly been of any other than the Christian faith.

Again:—pædo-baptism, or the baptism of the children of Christian proselytes, was confessedly practised very early in the Churches. We have decisive historical proof that little more than 100 years after the death of the Apostles it was of general practice in them all, wherever baptism was practised at all: and that they were at that time wholly strangers to the idea of its not having been practised by the Apostles. Now I do not argue at all from the practice of the early churches, as if it had the least authority to decide what is right. But I take that historical fact; and I say that it is scarcely to be accounted for on the supposition that the Baptist principles are scriptural. For, on this supposition, there was going on in each of the Apostolic churches a thing of constant practice, which would have kept up a continued testimony against the introduction of pædo-baptism. Not only were the offspring of the disciples not baptized in early childhood; but they were baptized as they grew up—as many of them as made a *credible* profession of believing in Christ. I say that, supposing this to have been the case in the first churches, I cannot conceive how the practice of pædo-baptism should first have been introduced;—and not only so, but the very tradition forgotten that the contrary practice had prevailed a hundred years before.

Whatever church we may suppose it first to have been introduced in, there must have been in that church, and in all other churches, a known practice contrary to its introduction;—a practice of that nature, that it could not have been *lost sight of* at the time that it was laid aside. We know the solicitude with which believing parents, bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, would watch the period of adolescence, when their profession of the Christian doctrines, in which they were instructed, would be sufficient to have them acknowledged as *professors of Christianity*, and receive the ordinance of baptism. And am I to suppose that any church of a sudden laid aside this practice altogether, and adopted the contrary one of baptizing all the children—even the youngest infants—of their proselytes; and that all the other churches followed their example; and that, before the generation could be extinct in which this great innovation was introduced, it was forgotten that it was an innovation? It seems to me a very improbable supposition: and I think I can shew that any corruption of doctrine or practice, which did creep into the churches, was of a nature not at all parallel to this, but essentially different.

Finally—the Baptist principles seem to me to involve questions of inextricable perplexity. For instance—

1. How soon are children, brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to be baptized?

2. Who are qualified and authorised to baptize?

The Baptists assert that their adult baptism is a rite of divine institution, and of universal obligation on Christians. But they acknowledge that it commenced—or (as they will say) was revived—a very few centuries ago. How then did it commence? Of necessity, by some unbaptized person baptizing another: and if this be not allowable, they are none of them duly baptized to the present day. Let any candid mind compare such a farcical proceeding, with the arguments by which they enforce the importance of the rite; and then say whether the inconsistency of the matter would not be ludicrous, if its consequences were not so awful.

3. If the profession of any of them after their baptism prove insincere, are they to be re-baptized on their repentance?

4. Those who (like many in this country) have been baptized indeed when adults, but in an evidently unconverted state and by men evidently unconverted, are they to be baptized again upon their conversion? It would be easy to shew that the principles of the Baptists necessarily lead to the affirmative of both these questions; however they shrink from it in their practice.

A N E S S A Y

ON THE

DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTOLIC TRADITIONS ;

THE

NATURE AND LIMITS OF SCRIPTURAL FORBEARANCE ;

AND OTHER SUBJECTS,

CONNECTED WITH

THE WALK OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

ADDRESSED TO THE SERIOUS ATTENTION OF ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE

THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL.

Cæterum hanc admonitionem esse temporalem et localem, nostris institutis non accommodatam, recte, ut opinor, monent eruditi. Nempe hæc publica admonitio non potest habere locum nisi in cœtu minore ne speciem quidem auctoritatis civilis præ se ferente, seque ipsum e Christi præceptis liberrime gubernante. In statum ecclesiæ externum et civilem, qui apud nos est, hæc disciplinæ christianæ pars parum convenit.—ROSENMULLERI Scholia in Matt. c. xviii. v. 17.

[First Published 1807.]

INTRODUCTION.

I HAVE addressed the following pages to those, who believe the APOSTOLIC GOSPEL. They alone are competent judges of the subject, or immediately concerned in it. If any one ask, what I mean by the APOSTOLIC GOSPEL, or that Gospel of Christ which the Apostles testified ; I refer him to their writings. I refer him to those passages in the Acts of the Apostles, where we have on record the testimonies they delivered. Paul, for instance, addressing his Jewish brethren in the synagogue at Antioch, and declaring to them the *glad tidings* concerning Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, of whom all the prophets spake, sums up those glad tidings in the following words :—*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And*

by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Acts xiii. 38, 39.

This is the Apostolic Gospel—truly glad tidings to sinners: which accordingly gave peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart, of all who received it of old; and still bears the same character. This is the Apostolic Gospel; announcing to sinners *the forgiveness of sins* through Jesus of Nazareth,—through that work which He finished near eighteen hundred years ago; and assuring this blessing (which includes in it every other) to all, without distinction or exception, who *believe* the testimony concerning Him.

It is a doctrine which reveals the glory of the LORD, and confounds the pride of human wisdom and human righteousness, leaving room for *no flesh to glory in his presence.* (1 Cor. i. 29—31.) Among other characters of its divine original, is that contrariety in which it stands to every thought, and every working, of the natural mind: insomuch that, even though it be so plainly declared in the Scriptures, so abundantly confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, so solemnly enforced, and so powerfully recommended to the acceptance of sinners, yet they *will by no means believe* the report; but reject the glad tidings with scorn and abhorrence. That they are few indeed who receive this testimony, not only the conduct of the world around us, but their avowed opposition to this doctrine, evinces. And it is a spurious charity, that would consider as believers those who deny its truth. To the few, whom divine power and mercy have convinced of its truth, this Essay is addressed: and they are called, in reading it, to lose sight of every rule of judgment on these subjects, but the word of GOD; to remember that no principle or practice, opposed to that word, can be sanctioned by any weight of human authority, by any currency of reception, or by any length of usage in the religious world.

I am sensible of many defects of arrangement and composition in this publication: but it is such, as the circumstances under which I write would allow me to draw up. My necessary attention to the business of that station in life, which the Providence of God has placed me in, has delayed this publication so long: and must a little longer delay my reply to a letter, which was some time ago addressed to me from the press.

J. W.

Paradise-row, Sept. 8th, 1807.

AN ESSAY, &c.

To one who attentively reads the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles, or Letters, it will appear that Christian Churches were at first formed and regulated in a way very different from that, in which they have been in later ages, and are commonly at the present day. When the Apostles, acting under the commission which they had received from the Lord Jesus, went every where preaching the glad tidings of his kingdom, *some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.* (Acts xxviii. 24.) The latter remained as they had been before; except that they were generally excited by what they heard to indignation or contempt. But in the former a great and striking change immediately appeared. And among other circumstances of that change, we find that, upon believing what the Apostles declared concerning Christ Jesus,—whatever different courses they had walked in, or sentiments they had adopted before, they were all brought together into one body, or Church; in the closest fellowship and brotherhood with each other, and in absolute separation, as to religious fellowship, from all the rest of the world around them. Believing the one Gospel which the Apostles testified, they had one faith, one Lord, one hope: and being all alike children of the one God by adoption and grace, they were *brethren one of another*, and taught to regard and treat each other as such, and as fellow-heirs of the same glory.

Further, we find that the same Apostles who witnessed that resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *through which* these sinners *were begotten again unto a lively hope*, instructed them also, in his Name, *how they ought to walk and to please God*; (1 Thess. iv. 1.) exhorting them to *stand fast, and hold the traditions which they had been taught, whether by Apostolic word or letters.* (2 Thess. ii. 15.) And hence it appears that, as they had been brought together into one body by their being made partakers of that one faith, which the Apostles preached; so, while they walked aright, they must have walked by one rule, and in one way. No marvel therefore that we read not, in the Apostolic writings, of various Christian Churches in the same place; but of *the Church* of Christ at Antioch, Cenchrea, Corinth, Ephesus, Laodicea, Thessalonica, Cæsarea, &c. Acts xiii. 1. xviii. 22. xx. 17. Rom. xvi. 1. 1 Cor. i. 2. Col. iv. 16. 1 Thess. i. 1. And when we hear of the Churches of Galatia, the unlearned reader should observe, that Galatia was the name—not of a town or city—but of a district of country.

Now, although we no longer have the Apostles personally present with us, yet to all real intents and purposes they are still with us in their writings; and are still going into all the world, wherever their

writings come. The pretence that some men set up, of being successors to the Apostles, is nothing but an arrogant fiction, for the purpose of supporting human traditions by the claim of divine authority. The Apostles neither left any successors, nor need to have left any; for they still continue discharging the commission, which they received from the King of Zion. In their writings they are still declaring his glorious Gospel throughout all the earth; and to all, who believe their testimony, they are still addressing themselves with every precept, instruction, admonition, and reproof, needful for the regulation of their walk, both as individual disciples, and as Churches of Christ. They are still declaring, what no other men can apply to themselves without awful presumption—*He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us.* (1 John iv. 6.) *If any man think himself to be spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which we write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.* (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) Who are they, that have been invested, since the days of the Apostles, with divine authority to abrogate any of those *commandments of the Lord?* to take away from them, or add to them?

Thus we see that the first Churches, planted by the Apostles, were not left to walk according to their own several fancies; but received from the same Apostles how they ought to walk, and by the same Apostles had the ordinances of Christ delivered to them. (1 Cor. xi. 2.) The wise and merciful providence of God has transmitted unto us the apostolic writings; in which we have both the precepts they delivered to the Churches, and the recorded example of the way in which these Churches were regulated: and the latter supplies a rule, equally directive and authoritative with the former.

Now, before any set aside this rule as insufficient, in order to make room for the traditions and commandments of men,—let them try it: let them proceed to obey it fully and immediately. But if they will not do this, let them honestly avow their dislike or contempt of the rule given in Scripture; but let them not arraign it as inadequate for the purpose, for which it was designed. It never was designed for the regulation of the world, or forming a religion fitted for the world, admired by the world, and subservient to the worldly interests of men, or reconcileable with them. Nor is it any impeachment of the rule, that it is very ill adapted to that, for which it never was designed. It was simply designed for Christ's *little flock*, a people *not of the world*, but chosen out of it, and separated from it by that truth, to the knowledge of which they are called, (John xvii. 16, 17.) it was designed to instruct *them* in the knowledge of his gracious will; that they may follow him in this their Pilgrimage, to his glory and their souls' profit. Nor does he give them any encouragement to look for the countenance and friendship of the world; or to imagine that the standing maxim of his kingdom is altered;—namely, that they must enter it through much tribulation, denying themselves and taking up the cross. (Acts xiv. 22. Matt. x. 24.)

I know that what I have said upon the divine authority of the Apostolic traditions given to the churches, will seem to be approved of by many,—that many will profess to acknowledge its truth, who yet are found to mean quite a different thing; and who set themselves

in opposition to the most immediate and obvious inferences from that principle. For instance, some acknowledge it in words, who at the same time conceive themselves warranted to walk in the neglect and disobedience of those traditions. They are connected perhaps with a church, in which one or another of them is neglected and disobeyed. I will put the most favourable case. I will suppose that the church has generally *overlooked* those parts of the Apostolic writings, from which it appears (for example) that the first disciples were directed to come together into one place, on the first day of the week, to partake of the Lord's supper, and to exhort and edify and admonish one another. I will suppose the church, of which I speak, to be composed of those who confess the truth, but who are generally ignorant of this rule, and ignorantly walking contrary to it, and substituting for it some human tradition;—perhaps the traditionary rule of attending in a promiscuous assembly to hear a man preach on the first day of the week, and of meeting together once a month to eat the supper. But, by and by, two of the disciples come to perceive what is laid down in scripture on this subject. Now, if these two really acknowledge the divine authority of the Apostolic rule, what must they do, but proceed to walk by it on the next Lord's day, as those who fear the Lord and tremble at his word? But if, instead of this immediate obedience to the word, they wait in their present connection, trying to get company to join them in obeying it,—owning indeed that it would be *right* to do so and so, but themselves forbearing to do what they see to be right; what can I say of them, but that they do not really acknowledge the divine authority of the Apostolic traditions; and that their sin is of a still darker complexion, than the sin of the rest of their church? The latter are sinning ignorantly, but they against knowledge.

“But are we not called to forbear with weak brethren? and should we not wait patiently, till they get more light?” What? Wait, countenancing and taking part in their disobedience of divine precepts; which you are endeavouring perhaps to enforce on them by words, while you are yourselves walking contrary to those precepts? Strange inconsistency! But the whole of this argument about *forbearance*, of which we hear so much, is another evidence that even those, who profess to acknowledge the divine authority of the Apostolic traditions, do not really own it. For if they did, how could they represent these things as matters of forbearance? There are indeed things, in which disciples are called in Scripture to forbear one another in love, and not to suffer differences of opinion or practice to interrupt their brotherly fellowship, or prevent their keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But of what kind are these things? Matters intrinsically indifferent in their nature, in which either side of the sentiment or practice may be taken *without sin*, without transgressing any precept of God: such as the eating or not eating of a particular kind of meat; concerning which the Apostle says—*neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse.* (1 Cor. viii. 8.) Now concerning all *such* matters there is a plain and most important rule given, (Rom. xiv.) that disciples should make them matters of mutual forbearance; that *the strong*, who see their christian liberty

should *not despise the weak*, who see it not, nor even use their liberty in a way injurious to the weak; and that *the weak* should *not judge the strong*, nor use the liberty, while they have any scruple in their conscience about its lawfulness. But when this rule is transferred to things not indifferent, but determined by divine precept; when the ordinances and traditions given by the Apostles to the churches are spoken of as matters of *forbearance*; they are in fact represented as of no binding authority, and there is but an attempt to clothe an anti-christian sentiment in a garb of scriptural language. That has been an old engine of Satan; but it becomes peculiarly awful, when we find disciples employing it.

We may detect the same misapplication of the words of Scripture in the way, in which the terms *weak brethren* are employed, by those who urge this argument. In the Apostle's language, *weak brethren* are those, who scruple to do what they might lawfully do, if they saw the extent of their Christian liberty. But in the language of many at this day, the same terms are used to denote those, who do not scruple to disobey the precepts of God.

Now if any still think it a strange and hard thing to exclude out of the compass of scriptural forbearance every matter determined by divine precept, let them imagine for a moment the Apostle Paul, after delivering to a Church which he had planted some part of the rule, by which he called them to walk—suppose, for instance, the rule of meeting together on the first day of the week to break bread,—should have added an injunction, that those who were willing to obey it should *forbear* with those who would not; let them imagine that he should have expressed himself in words such as these:—“But, brethren, though we have given you this instruction as to the Lord's will, and delivered to you this precept in his name, yet we charge you to make it a matter of mutual forbearance. Neither if you do it, are you the better; neither if you do it not, are you the worse. And for my part, if eating the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week make my brother to offend, I will not eat it while the world standeth.” Why, every one, who fears God, must revolt at the very supposition. And if we cannot consistently even suppose the Apostle to use the same language upon such an occasion, as he did use when he enjoined forbearance in other matters, how comes it that any venture to talk of forbearance in these things now?

But they not only pervert Scripture in contending for such forbearance, and commonly themselves take part in the sin which they thus countenance; but, in dealing with their offending brethren, they violate a direct precept of the word, which solemnly enjoins disciples to conduct themselves in a very different manner towards those, who will not walk according to the Apostolic precepts. No injunction can be more solemn, and few can be more plain, than that which the Apostle Paul gives to the Thessalonian Church. (2 Thess. iii. 6, 14, 15.) “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition he hath received of us. Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but

admonish him as a brother." The word rendered *disorderly*, in this passage, is a military term, properly applied to soldiers not marching in line, not keeping their ranks. The word rendered *have no company* with him, is literally *be not mixed up together* with him; and is the term employed by the lxx. interpreters in Hosea vii. 8. "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people." Now the Apostle himself explains whom he means by the *disorderly* brethren; even those, who *walk not after the tradition* received from the Apostles. And his solemn command to the church for their dealing with such, if they continue to walk contrary to that tradition, is—not to make it a matter of mutual forbearance,—but to *withdraw* from them, and not to be joined in fellowship with them, that they may be ashamed. And every disciple, who will not obey this command, comes himself under the description of one that walketh disorderly, and not after the Apostolic tradition.

Nothing more would need to be said upon a passage so express, and obvious in its meaning; but that many of late have employed all their ingenuity in explaining it away. Foremost in this attempt I have seen the preachers and pastors of unscriptural churches: and I believe indeed they will generally be found at the head of all the opposition, which is made to scriptural truth or scriptural precept. Happy would it be for many of them, if they had not been taken from the trades, at which they once were earning honest bread. Those, however, who are agreed in opposing the plain meaning of this Apostolic precept, seem by no means agreed on the ground they would maintain, or on the interpretation they would substitute. Indeed, I have known the same individual change the ground of his opposition, and vary his interpretation, five or six times; laying aside one, when he found it untenable; but immediately producing another: till he generally ended by concealing himself in language so vague, that no sagacity could discover any definite meaning at all.

Thus, I have sometimes known it urged, that by *disorderly* brethren we are to understand only those, who lead idle lives, *working not at all*; and that it is only from such a Christian Church is commanded to withdraw. Now I readily admit that it was this particular instance of disorderly walking in some of the Thessalonian Church, that gave occasion to the command we are considering. But is the precept of *working with quietness, and eating our own bread*, the only tradition given by the Apostles to the Churches? or of higher authority and importance, than any of the other traditions? all of which he exhorts that Church to hold fast. (2 Thess. ii. 15.) What is there so singular in this part of Apostolic rule, that disobedience to it *alone* should constitute disorderly walking, and call for such peculiar severity of dealing against the offender? The command to *withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition received* of the Apostles, is as general as words can make it; though occasioned and exemplified by a particular instance of disorderly walking in that Church. And it would have been liable to a similar evasion, whatever other instance of opposition to Apostolic rule we can suppose to have occasioned it.

To account for this imaginary restriction of the command, I have

heard it asserted that those who continued to lead idle lives, after the plain injunction against it in the former letter, could not be considered as brethren; and *therefore* that the Church was commanded to withdraw from them. But this gloss is at once refuted by the words of the Apostle; *Yet count him not as an enemy but admonish him as a brother*. And thus it cannot be denied that we have here one case at least, in which a Church is commanded to withdraw from those, whom they are yet commanded to regard as brethren.* And before the command can be reasonably restricted to this one case, it must be shown that the Apostolic rule, to which these men refused obedience, is more obligatory than every other.

Driven from this evasion, the opposers say that, by withdrawing and having no company with such, we are to understand—not withdrawing from Christian fellowship,—but from civil intercourse with them. But how monstrous is the idea, that disciples should be one hour joining in the closest communion, and most solemn exercises of Christian brotherhood, with a person, upon whom they are commanded to turn their back as soon as the meeting of the Church is ended,—forbidden to associate with him at all in the ordinary intercourse of civil life! The supposition is sufficiently refuted, by only stating it.

After a few more interpretations, too ridiculous to be gravely considered,—(such as this, that the command only means that we are not to entertain idlers at our table, &c.)—the opposers generally bury their sentiments on the passage in a cloud. “We are not to encourage in his idleness the brother, who walks disorderly: we are to discountenance him.” And when urged to say *how* we are commanded to discountenance him, all I have been able to obtain from them, and that with difficulty, is—that ‘we are not to idle with him; but if he come to loiter and gossip in our houses, we are to send him about his business, and to apply to ours.’ Now I say, that there are plainly two distinct commands in the chapter: the one, a precept to all calling them to labour with diligence for their support, repeated from the former letter, and now enforced by reminding them of the Apostle’s example; the other command, a solemn injunction to the Church, regulating their conduct toward those, who shall continue to disobey the former. These two injunctions our interpreters confound; and take away the latter altogether, when they make it perfectly coincident with the precept against idleness: and reduce it to solemn trifling, when—without any definite explanation—they make the Apostle say: *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye—discountenance—every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he hath received of us*. Indeed, as I have before shewn, this or any interpretation is

* A view of the latter part of the precept to the Thessalonian Church is given here, which Mr. Walker did not continue to maintain. In the fifth letter on Primitive Christianity, he avows his persuasion that the command—“Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”—does not prescribe any admonition of the offender *after* his exclusion from the Church; but that it directs the conduct to be pursued towards him *previous* to that last act of discipline, and for the purpose of rendering it unnecessary.—ED.

to be rejected, which limits the application of the terms—*walking disorderly and not after the tradition received of the Apostles*—to the one particular instance of idleness.

Some may be surprised that I have dwelt so long on the exposure of interpretations, which have so little colour of truth. But I have mentioned none, which have not to my own knowledge been maintained, of late, by persons high in estimation with the religious people of this country. And it now remains to state and examine the principal objections, which they advance against the plain meaning of the passage, and against those, who (in obedience to the command) withdraw from Christian fellowship with all—even brethren—who will not walk after the Apostolic traditions, or precepts delivered to the Churches by the Apostles of the Lord Jesus.

One of the leading objections brought against us is, that we treat as unbelievers all who do not walk with us; and consider none as disciples of Christ, but those who are joined with us in fellowship. To this I reply, that I am persuaded there are many disciples of the Lord Jesus not walking with us, nor after the same rule of the word, by which we seek to walk. Such we desire to admonish *as brethren*; and it is only for the sake of such that I have penned these pages. But we dare not, for the sake even of such, disobey a divine precept: and I am persuaded that the truest expression of brotherly love to them we can make,—while they continue in their sin of walking after the traditions of men and violating the precepts of God,—is to withdraw from them, and have no fellowship with them, that they may be ashamed. They altogether mistake the nature of Christian love, who think that it should lead us to please even our brethren, except *for their good and to edification*: and they mistake the nature of the true profit of disciples, who think that it can be disjoined from their subjection to the word of God.

But I would here remark that, since the agitation of these questions, my confidence towards several as disciples has certainly been shaken, or more than shaken: and this, not merely by their continued opposition to the rule of Scripture, after it has been fully laid before them, and after repeated admonitions; but especially by the manner in which they have met the subject. When I find a man, whatever be the confession of his mouth, meeting such a subject with unfair and evasive tricks, with ridicule, with railing, or with a manifest determination to maintain every assertion, however monstrous, which he may find necessary for the support of his argument;—I cannot but leave that man with a suspicion that he is not *walking in the truth*; and that it is rather the fear of God he wants than information as to his will.

Akin to the last objection is one, which I have known put forward with imposing confidence. Shew us, say they, any warrant from Scripture for *excommunicating* one whom you consider as a brother. This is one of those dishonest tricks of argument, to which I have alluded. The whole force of the objection, in this form, turns upon the ambiguity of the word *excommunicate*. That phrase is commonly employed, to denote the casting out of a person from a Church of Christ, as one who appears to have neither part nor lot in

Christ. And it would be inconsistent indeed to deal thus with any one, whom we consider as a fellow-disciple. But if they mean by the question—(what alone it ought to mean, if intended to bear upon this subject)—“Shew us any warrant in Scripture for withdrawing from Christian fellowship with one, whom you consider as a brother;”—we readily comply with the requisition, and appeal to Paul’s express words. “We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he hath received of us. Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” When they reiterate their outcry against this as uncharitable, they abuse the term *charity*, or love. When they exclaim against it as a severity of dealing disproportioned to the smallness of the offence, they make light of the divine authority of those Apostolic precepts, which that disorderly brother violates.

Let us look again at the particular occasion which led the Apostle to give this charge to the Thessalonian Church; and let us see whether it were not marked with such awful characters of malignity, as might prepare us to expect such a severity of discipline against it. In his former letter (1 Thess. iv. 11.) the Apostle exhorted them in the following words:—“That ye study to be quiet, and do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you: that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.” Notwithstanding this plain precept, he tells them in his second letter;—“we hear that there are some which walk disorderly among you, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.” After reminding them of the contrary example, which his own conduct among them had afforded, he repeats his injunction on this subject: “them, that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread.” But, in case *any man obeyed not his word by that Epistle*, he adds a precept to the church for the regulation of their conduct towards such; and introduces the precept with the same solemn preface—*We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Now, considering the circumstances of the case, can we wonder that the precept runs thus? “that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he hath received of us:—that ye note that man, and have no company with him”—or, be not joined with him in fellowship,—“that he may be ashamed.”

“True;” some will say; “in this case there was a plain opposition to Apostolic authority. The person must have known that he was doing wrong, in not yielding obedience to the express injunction of Paul. But many, who now walk not after the traditions given by the Apostles to the Churches, yet walk conscientiously, persuaded that they are doing right. The churches in those days had the Apostles with them, or at hand to be consulted, that they might explain their meaning, if there was any ambiguity or doubt about the precepts which they gave. So that none could disobey them, without being convicted in their own consciences that they were disobeying the plain directions of Christ’s Apostles. But now these precepts

are to be collected from various parts of their writings; and there is ever so great diversity of sentiment upon their meaning, and uncertainty in their interpretations. And shall we now treat weak brethren, who do not see with us in matters of scriptural rule, with the same severity, as the disorderly brother was to be treated with of old?"

I put together, as forcibly as I can, all that I have heard urged in various forms upon this topic: and to any disciples, with whom these objections may seem to have weight, I reply distinctly to the several parts. Brethren, there is not that difference, which the objectors intimate, between these days and the period when the Apostles were on earth. We have them still with us in their writings; and divinely appointed to execute the same office still, both of declaring to all the world the glad tidings of Christ and his salvation, and instructing those who believe that testimony how they *ought to walk and to please God*. They speak on each subject a plain language, which the simplest may understand: and it is impeaching the wisdom of the great Head of the Church, to impute any such obscurity to their writings, as would be inconsistent with the end for which they were designed. That none receive their words, but those to whom it is given from above, is certain. It was so of old, when they were personally upon earth. That there are various and contradictory interpretations of their writings, among those who bear the common name of Christians, is acknowledged. There are such, no less upon the testimony they deliver as the Gospel of Christ, than upon the rule they deliver to his disciples for the regulation of their walk. You, brethren, will not say, that the certainty or authority of the former is affected, by the variety of interpretations put upon it by men. Why should you imagine, that a similar variety of interpretation affects the authority or certainty of the latter? Papists allege the supposed obscurity of Scripture, as a reason for the people's laying it aside, and submitting to the guidance of their human leaders. What is this argument, borrowed from the supposed uncertainty of the Apostolic traditions, but popery revived? When the Spirit of God has recorded in the writings of the Apostles, how the Churches were of old instructed and commanded by them to walk; shall we lay aside that directory, as of doubtful interpretation? Shall we set up another rule in its place, under the name of *conscientiousness*; and say that they walk aright, who *think* they are walking aright; though it be ever so contrary to the precepts of Christ's Apostles?

The disorderly brother among the Thessalonians did walk contrary to a plain Apostolic tradition; and in that opposed the divine authority, under which the Apostles acted. But there is no reason to suppose, that he was at the time *conscious* of sinning in this: for if so, Paul would scarcely have enjoined the Church to admonish him *as a brother*. The man, who is walking in the habitual indulgence of what he knows to be sinful, exhibits no evidence of discipleship. And it is more than probable that this disorderly brother had specious arguments, to satisfy his conscience of the propriety of his course; arguments perhaps borrowed from such words of the Lord Jesus, as—*labour not for the meat that perisheth—take no thought for the morrow, &c.* But this did not alter the intrinsic nature of his

conduct, nor make that good which was evil. The man, who now walks contrary to any tradition of the Apostles, walks in the same evil, let him be conscious of it or not: and if he persist in it after admonition, is to be dealt with by the same rule of discipline. They who apply to his case the phrase *weak brother*, pervert the language of Scripture; as I have already shewn: and they who urge his *conscientiousness*, or persuasion that he is walking aright, in justification of his sin, are attempting to substitute for the word of God another standard, by which to estimate good and evil; are applying one of those *false balances*, which are an *abomination to the Lord*.

Indeed, the unscriptural liberality, which represents divine precepts as things indifferent, by representing them as matters of mutual forbearance, has contributed more than most other circumstances to occasion the awful fact, that even disciples have so long inattentively overlooked those precepts, and remained in ignorance of what is so plainly revealed. But they must have little reverence for the word of God, who conceive that in this inattention, and the ignorance that arises from it, there is not a most evil fruit of the fleshly mind. That evil rises in magnitude, when the attention of any disciple has been called, by scriptural admonition, to any part of the Apostolic traditions which he has neglected; and he still continues to disobey it, though from slowness of heart to discern what is written. The last and highest stage of this evil is, when any do discern what is written, are convinced of the way in which the first Churches were instructed and commanded to walk by the Apostles of the Lord Jesus and in his name;—but notwithstanding forbear to walk by the same rule. Let disciples, who read this, examine themselves, whether they be not chargeable with this disregard of the Apostolic authority: and ask yourselves, brethren, whether any arguments must not be fallacious, which are brought to justify it.

It may assist us much, in examining every question upon this subject, to forget in what age of the world we live, and to carry back our imaginations to the Apostolic period. We read of those who then received the word, which they heard of the Apostles, *not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God*. (1 Thess. ii. 13.) To them the same Apostles, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and upon the same divine authority, delivered the laws of his kingdom; and taught them in their traditions, by word and by letter, how they ought to walk. Ask yourselves, brethren, in what light must they have viewed the conduct of the man who first refused obedience to any part of those traditions which they had been taught, and were commanded to *hold fast*; while at the same time he continued to profess the great truth of Christ, which the same Apostles had delivered. Would they not have looked with horror at this opposition to the authority of the delegated ministers of the King of Zion? and the more so, as appearing with awful inconsistency in one whom they regarded as a disciple. Would they not be prepared for the solemn injunction to *withdraw* from that disorderly brother, and to *have no company with him, that he might be ashamed*?

Again; let us suppose the number of such persons at Thessalonica to increase; that one and another, disliking and reasoning against

various parts of the Apostolic traditions, walked disorderly: would their number lessen the malignity of the evil in each? Let us suppose that—excluded on account of their disorderly walk from the fellowship of the Apostolic Church in that place—they proceeded to frame another church, in which they should observe the forms of several ordinances of Christ. In what light would the Apostolic Church be called to view that body, but as setting up the standard of rebellion against the king of Zion? Could it be warranted to hold any fellowship with them? much less to turn aside from the commandments of the Lord Jesus, in order to walk with them in one? Would such an attempt at unity be any thing more, than joining in the conspiracy against the divine authority, under which the Apostles had delivered to them how they ought to walk? Suppose a sinner there converted to the faith of Christ. Would he be at liberty to debate, which of these Churches he would be added to? Receiving the Apostolic doctrine and testimony concerning Jesus Christ, could he warrantably hesitate about joining the fellowship of that Church, which walked after the traditions they had received from his Apostles? Could he hesitate about rejecting the other body as a false church? If he attached himself in preference to the latter, would he not be joining in their sin of violating those traditions? Yet this is what many, at the present day, think themselves at liberty to do without scruple. If a disciple in any place could find no other disciple, who would walk with him by the rule of the word, he would be called to walk alone, rather than join the fellowship of those, who walk contrary to it. And however trying, in such a case, the path of Christian duty, it would be found (as in every other instance) the path of true profit. But if there be in that place a company of disciples, however small, manifesting obedience to the laws of Christ's Kingdom; and he prefer the fellowship of a society, combined together in opposition to those laws; how multiplied is the inconsistency and the evil which his conduct exhibits!

I have hitherto supposed the false church at Thessalonica to be made up of persons, who might be considered as *brethren* walking disorderly. But let us now imagine that there were added to their communion those, who had been *rejected* by the Apostolic Church as *heretics*, or persons holding doctrines inconsistent with the faith which the Apostles preached, and continuing *after the first and second admonition* to maintain them: others also, whom the Apostolic Church had *put away from among them*, as those who appeared to have neither part nor lot in Christ's kingdom, on account of the habitual ungodliness and sensuality of their lives. It was under the authority of Apostolic traditions (1 Cor. v. Tit. iii. 10, 11.) that the Churches of the saints were called to put away such persons: and if the disorderly brethren reject any one of their traditions, there is no reason why we may not suppose them to have rejected these also; and to have received such characters into their communion. We shall now have a false church at Thessalonica, affording a lively picture of many bodies at this day calling themselves churches of Christ. But would the Apostle, visiting Thessalonica, have acknowledged that body as a Church of Christ, composed thus of schisma-

tics, disorderly brethren, heretics, and men of immoral lives? Would he have held any fellowship with them in any of Christ's ordinances? I have heard one—whom I once thought a disciple, and regarded as a brother beloved for the truth's sake that appeared to dwell in him—I have heard him, when pressed by this argument, boldly assert that the Apostle would!—that the same Apostle, under whose express command the Apostolic Church had put away from among them and rejected and withdrawn from these persons, would himself go to their meeting, and join with them in all their religious exercises and in all the forms of Christian ordinances which they observed, and even in the Supper of the Lord! But what did I conclude from his advancing this assertion, and continuing to maintain it? Not that he believed what he said, or thought such a supposition conceivable: but—that he found it necessary to his argument to assert it; that he spoke not honestly. No man, as well acquainted as he is with the letter of scripture, could seriously entertain an opinion so monstrous. These pages will probably meet his eye. May he be given repentance! and receive the rebuke, as the truest evidence of that brotherly affection, with which I once regarded him.

To disciples, who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, I again turn, and say: Brethren, can the lapse of ages have changed the nature or laws of Christ's kingdom; or have rendered that conduct consistent with them, which would have been manifestly inconsistent with them in the days of the Apostles? Some of you would be shocked at the idea of holding communion with a church, so unscriptural as that which I have supposed. But why? Is it because you see that such a church would be violating and rejecting the precepts, which the Apostles delivered to the Churches of the saints for the regulation of their walk? How then can you without scruple hold communion with other bodies, who violate and reject any other part of the Apostolic traditions? Do they not all claim the subjection of disciples, upon the same authority of the same Lord? Some of you, for instance, are convinced from Scripture, that the mutual exhortation of disciples, in their assembly on the first day of the week, is an ordinance delivered to the first Churches. Yet you hold communion with churches, which in their wisdom reject that ordinance, and substitute for it—the preaching of a sermon to a promiscuous congregation by one man of the ministerial function. Now, if you think it allowable thus to alter and set aside the ordinances of Christ's house in one instance, why should you object to those who alter and set them aside in other instances? Why should you scruple communion with the most impure church on earth? Or why should you scruple to hold communion with them in one of Christ's ordinances, but not in others? to join their fellowship in the Supper, but not in the equally solemn ordinances of Christian fellowship—praise and prayer? Why indeed? but that, once we depart in any respect from the word of God to the traditions of men, these will involve us in every absurdity of sentiment and inconsistency of conduct.

But I have heard it objected, that this separated walk of disciples is a novel principle: and 'can it be conceived,' say they, 'that disciples would have remained in ignorance of it for so many ages, if it

were founded in Scripture?' The argument is worthy of the cause, which it is brought to support. Little indeed need here be said in reply to an argument, which was equally forcible in the mouths of the Papists at the time of the reformation, as it is now: and which was then sufficiently answered by an appeal to scripture, as the only unchangeable standard of Christian faith and Christian practice. But I would add, that the very fact, which is urged by these objectors as inconceivable, is itself predicted in Scripture. An Apostle forewarned the elders of the Church at Ephesus (Acts xx. 29, 30.) "After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Again, writing to the Thessalonians, he tells them (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.) that "the day of Christ shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." And have we not seen this prediction fulfilled, in all that mass of *human tradition*, which has been introduced into the house of the living God, the Church of Christ, (1 Tim. iii. 15.)—in all that assumption of divine authority, by which men have presumed to annul the laws of Christ's kingdom as delivered by his Apostles, and to substitute rules and regulations of their own invention? Have we not seen that *falling away*, which was predicted? And have we not every one of us to mourn, and to take shame to ourselves, for having taken part in this *mystery of iniquity*? And shall the long continuance of the evil be now gravely urged, as a reason for its continuing longer? Nay, brethren; rather let all who are *of the truth* rejoice in seeing every appearance of the accomplishment of that other prediction, which the Apostle has delivered in the same passage, against that man of sin and all his works: (2 Thess. ii. 8.) *whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming*. Let us retrace every step; by which we have been drawn away from the course, that the Churches were commanded to walk in by the Apostles: and let us be *in nothing terrified by our adversaries*; nor surprised when we find *the ministers of Satan transformed as the ministers of righteousness*. In this the Apostle tells us there is *no marvel*. 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

But there is no objection more constantly advanced, than that these principles lead to sectarian bigotry and disunion. This is the cry which the heads of the adverse party most successfully raise, and keep up with unmeaning clamour, so as to scare weak minds from the calm consideration of the subject. "How illiberal not even to join in worship, with any but your own party! not even to pray with those, whom you profess to look at with hope as fellow-disciples, if they do not adopt your singularities! And not content with maintaining these things among yourselves, you disturb the peace of the churches by the representations, with which you pursue those among them whom you think brethren. Your principles are such as disturb the tranquillity of the Christian world, and calculated to sow dissension and division."

Such is their language: and here, before I reply to the objection, I would mark how far I own its truth. I own that the thing for which we contend, the kind of Christian Churches which alone we consider scriptural, must ever carry the appearance of a narrow and illiberal sect; that never can expect to flourish in the eye of the world either religious or irreligious; never can expect to bear any comeliness in their view,—till the day in which *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven*. They who steadfastly hold fast his word, in the divine certainty of its truth and the divine authority of its precepts, may well have done with looking for favour or respectability in the eyes of the world. I own also that it is a most awful thing, that all those who are *one in Christ Jesus* should not walk together as brethren, in the closest fellowship in all his ordinances. Again, I own that the principles which we maintain do tend to divide the existing bodies called churches, to disturb their tranquillity, and to call away every disciple from among them. But truly they need not fear, but they will have enough left to flourish abundantly still;—enough who will dislike the Apostolic Gospel and the Apostolic ordinances delivered to the saints. They need not fear that the kingdom, which is *not of this world*, will ever in the present scene of things come in competition with their kingdom, or interfere with its prosperity.

And now I say that these illiberal disuniting principles, not only have the authority of the word of God to support them, but—(as might be expected from that character)—hold out the only means for *uniting* disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, prayed for his disciples *that they all might be one*: and this unity for which he prayed was certainly a visible unity, coming under the observation of men: for he adds—*that the world may believe*, or have a convincing evidence afforded them, *that thou has sent me*. (John xvii. 21.) And let us recollect how gloriously this prayer was accomplished in the first Church at Jerusalem; when “all that believed were together, and continued steadfastly in the Apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers;—of one heart and of one soul.” (Acts ii. 42, 44. iv. 32.) Confessing the same faith, even that testimony which the Apostles bore concerning Jesus of Nazareth; and walking by the same rule, even the precepts delivered to them in his name by the same Apostles;—these men, in number about five thousand, were one, outwardly and visibly one with each other, and separated from all the surrounding world. In like manner, and through the same means, were those also one, who in other places *became followers of the Churches of God, which in Judea were in Christ Jesus*. (1 Thess. ii. 14.) Now, can any thing bring back *that union*, but the return of disciples to the same course?

When we think how disciples since that day have been scattered from each other, and *mingled with the heathen*, may we not truly say that *an adversary*—the adversary—*hath done this*? And how did he effect it, but by turning them aside from the traditions they had received of the Apostles to the various traditions of men; leading them to trifle with the authority of the former, and subjecting their

minds to the domineering yoke of the latter? And does not this mark the way, in which alone the evil can be remedied?

Those men who make such an outcry about *division* and *disuniting* principles, let them say, is there union now? Are disciples of Christ now one—outwardly and visibly one, as they were of old? No; they are forced to own that disciples are separated one from another, in various bodies, and walking by various rules. And what is the most that these men aim at, but perpetuating this disunion, by contending for it as a harmless thing; and concealing the magnitude of the evil, by drawing over it a flimsy veil of *occasional* and *partial* fellowship or co-operation? The peace and tranquillity, which they are afraid to have disturbed, is a treacherous peace, in which disciples are taught *to agree to differ* about what God has determined in his word; and to compromise with each other their several departures from scriptural rule, by making these things matters of mutual forbearance.

So far from aiming to disunite disciples, I confidently expect that they will yet on earth be gathered into one, in outward union as full as that, which subsisted of old in the multitude of them that believed at Jerusalem. My confident expectation is founded on that prediction, that “the Lord will consume the man of sin with the spirit of his mouth,” or that word which is “the sword of his spirit.” (Eph. vi. 17.) For, in every departure of disciples from the prescribed course of the first Apostolic Churches, I see at once a work of the man of sin, and a device by which disciples have been disunited. However, I wonder not that we are charged with being common disturbers of the Christian world.

Let disciples, who love the true prosperity of Zion, have done with seeking it by unscriptural means. Let them break off their leagues with its adversaries; and return fully to the Lord, in returning fully to his word. Let them especially beware how they deceive themselves, by continuing in their present unscriptural connections, because their churches indeed are free from many of the grosser anti-christian corruptions; and are in but one or two particulars walking contrary to Apostolic tradition. The man who holds himself at liberty to violate, or delay obedience to, any part of their traditions, invades the divine authority of them all; and is inconsistent in professing subjection to any of them.

I know that there have been churches lately formed in Ireland, which seem to make a near approach toward scriptural rule. But let me freely say, that the more I know of them and of their origin, the more I am led to look at them with greater abhorrence, than even at those which make no pretensions to it. This may appear to many a hard and harsh saying. But let me ask, if there be two forgeries on the National Bank, the one very clumsily executed and the other very well, which of them is the more dangerous? That the churches of which I speak are, at best, but good forgeries, or imitations of scriptural churches,—and the more to be shunned and dreaded, the better the forgery is executed,—their whole origin and course convinces me. What has been their origin? In general, this:—a young man, educated for a preacher in some academy

abroad, has come over here to seek his fortune. He collects a congregation of hearers; and begins to sing hymns with them, and pray with them, and preach to them something which he calls the Gospel. I will suppose it to be the genuine Gospel of Christ, that he declares; and his conduct will prove to be only the more inconsistent. He stands up before a multitude, not one of whom perhaps he has any scriptural reason to think already acquainted with the Gospel of Christ; the great mass of whom he has every reason to know are unacquainted with it; and he calls them all to join with him in some of the most solemn exercises of Christian worship and fellowship. He then preaches to them the faith of Christ; and without knowing whether one of the multitude has received the testimony, he closes the inconsistent scene by joining with them all in the form of the same exercises of social praise and prayer. In this course he continues for some time; till he perhaps attaches a sufficient party to his so-called *ministry*, to get a meeting-house built for him. He is now half way to the formation of a church. Next comes a prayer-meeting, and some talk about the Lord's Supper, distinguished by the name of *The Ordinance*. What! A Christian *prayer-meeting*, where there is no Church of Christ; introduced as a temporary succedaneum for it! How monstrous the idea! I would ask, *how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* And if there be in the place two or three believers in his name, how comes it that they do not at once walk together as a Church of Christ, by the rule of the word? But this would not suit the object in view. The meetings therefore for singing and praying and preaching go on, in which the preacher exercises his gifts before the multitude; and the more select prayer-meeting goes on under his regulation; and the meeting-house is reared for him; and there is a high day for the *opening* of it;—(dissenters do not choose to call it *consecrating* the house:)—and in due time there comes the *forming* of a thing called a Church. Then, as soon as this young man has been *ordained* pastor of this church, by two or three other independent ministers of a like kind, next comes the *administration* of *The Ordinance*, either quarterly, or monthly, or weekly, as the prejudices of the members will admit. And this, combined with the former routine of the exercise of the young man's gifts, in preaching to the promiscuous congregation which fills his meeting-house, and leading them in praise and prayer,—this constitutes the thing put forward as the joint exercises of a scriptural Church. In this church the young preacher is, from first to last, the centre and the foundation. Let him at any period of the business be removed, and you take away the queen-bee from the hive: the swarm is scattered. These men sometimes pique themselves upon laying aside the title of *Reverend*, and the name and garb of clergymen: but they retain all the essential realities of that unscriptural character; and some of them are even forward to assume the high style and title of *Ministers of the Gospel*.

Let a church thus originating, and thus formed, undergo whatever reformatings and improvements can be imagined; it will remain an unscriptural and false church,—at most but an improved forgery.

And how are the improvements introduced? Why, in the increase of scriptural knowledge, one or another disciple entangled in the connection gets uneasy, at some plain instance of opposition between its course and the walk of the Apostolic Churches. Reformation is proposed; and reformation is resisted—as long as it can be resisted, so as to keep the body together. But at length, rather than lose some that are reckoned pillars, a concession is made: the grossness of the forgery being detected, is remedied. In place of monthly *communion* perhaps, weekly is introduced; but with an allowance in favour of the *weak* brethren, who do not choose to obey the word in this instance: and the members, that were uneasy, are satisfied. Or some substitute for an Apostolic ordinance is thrown in; and, instead of the brethren's assembling on the first day of the week to exhort one another, mutual exhortation is admitted at what is distinctively called *the Church-meeting*, on another day of the week.

There are many in this country, who well know that I have been drawing no imaginary picture; but describing the actual origin and course of what are thought the best and purest churches in it. I am not afraid that those, who know from the word what a Church of Christ is, will think that I have protested against them with too much plainness or severity. I am not afraid that they will wonder at my avowal, that I consider these churches the most dangerous, as most calculated to ensnare disciples. The Lord is so diffusing the increased knowledge of his word, that few disciples comparatively can now be expected to remain in those communions, in which all the laws of Christ's kingdom are avowedly set aside, to make room for a code of human canons. But it has been an old device of Satan, to employ imitations of scriptural truth, for the purpose of imposing them on men for the reality. He has his imitations of the Apostolic Gospel; and he has his imitations of Apostolic Churches. And according as growing light discovers the fallacy of either, he can dexterously improve. Such improvements I look at with satisfaction, only as an evidence that the light which occasions them is progressive.

That the apparent conformity of these modern churches to many Apostolic traditions is but apparent, and not real, is evinced by this: it does not spring from an acknowledgment of their divine authority. For if it did, this would not allow them to disregard or trifle with any. But it is a notorious fact, that from them, and especially from their pastors, has proceeded the bitterest and most determined opposition to the simple rule of the word. Nor is it wonderful that their pastors should signalize themselves in opposing it: for it certainly opposes that entire species of church-making, which constitutes their business. It, if they obeyed it, would bring them down from that elevated post which they now occupy, to the rank of brethren meeting with their brethren, on the first day of the week, to join together in observing the ordinances of Christ's house. Instead of *ministers of the Gospel*, exercising their gifts in prayer and speaking on the Lord's day before a numerous and respectable assembly in their meeting-house,—they would perhaps be assembled with a handful of despised disciples in a room, exhorting and admonishing one another according to the example of the Apostolic

Churches, and railed at by the religious professors around them, for maintaining the truth of the Gospel and the laws of Christ's kingdom, against all who corrupted the one or disobeyed the other.

But it will be asked—is a Christian Church to be without elders? I reply, that a Christian Church, proceeding scripturally, must for the most part be for some time without elders; because they must be for some time walking together as a Church of Christ, before it can be seen which of the brethren among them possess the scriptural qualifications for that most important office. Elders, or pastors, are among the gifts which Christ bestows upon his Churches; (Eph. iv. 11.) by raising up among them those whom he endows with the characters, which his word marks as necessary in the persons called to this work. But when, as a substitute for this gift of Christ, a church sends to an academy for a young man to be their pastor, who has never himself walked in fellowship with a scriptural Church;—that church may get all that it is looking for—a preacher, and one who will head them in their opposition to the rule of the word: but it gets not what is meant by an Elder in the Scriptures, and cannot in any such way.

A true Church destitute of elders is lacking in a circumstance most important for the edification of the body; and is called to humble and earnest waiting on the Lord, to supply that which is lacking in them. But it is a total mistake of the nature of the elders' office, to suppose that when that Church is supplied with elders—true elders, the mutual exhortation of the brethren in their assembly on the first day of the week is then to give place to a sermon, preached by an elder to a promiscuous congregation. This is confounding two things essentially distinct,—the declaration of the word of life to *those that are without*, with an instituted exercise of a Christian Church for mutual edification, when they come together into one place on the Lord's day. And it is but consistent in those, who thus substitute the one for the other in the professed meeting of their church, to blend various ordinances of Christian fellowship with the declaration of the word, where there is no professed meeting of a Christian Church. Their chief inconsistency lies, in attempting a separate communion of disciples in any one ordinance of Christ. For, if they maintain the propriety of the most mixed communion with the world in praise and prayer, no reason can be assigned for their scrupling it in the Lord's Supper;—but that they superstitiously set up the latter above every other ordinance of Christian fellowship.

And, agreeably to this superstitious view, many who acknowledge that a Church of Christ, while destitute of elders, ought yet to meet together for every other ordinance of Christian fellowship and mutual edification, are yet shocked at the thought of their breaking bread and taking wine together, in commemoration of their Lord's death, unless they have an elder to *administer* it. Some indeed, who think their Churches extraordinarily scriptural, have found out that they must have two or three elders for this purpose. But they know not the scriptural nature of a Church, or of its elders, who conceive that the elders are to enable or authorize the Church to do any thing,

which it was not bound to do before it had any elders, and without them. We may see (Acts xiv.) that the apostles left without elders Churches, which they had planted in various places; and did not ordain elders among them till their return, a considerable time after. It is plain also from the Epistle to Titus (i. 5.) that there were Churches in Crete without elders. Indeed, the thing must be manifest to any one, who takes a simple view of the way in which elders are to grow—if I may so speak—out of the Church. Now the idea of Churches of Christ existing, but not meeting together on the first day of the week to break bread, and to join in the observance of *all* Christian ordinances, is an idea the most inconsistent that can be imagined. Yet I know that I here assail one of the main pillars of unscriptural churches: and that to many the attempt will appear little short of impious. But I know also, that where the sentiment against which I contend is held, there can be no scriptural Church.

But I must return to the objections, which I have heard advanced, against the separated walk of disciples. And the next objection I would notice is, that ‘we require to the fellowship of disciples what is impossible, a perfect unity of sentiment upon every scriptural subject.’ This is not true. A unity of sentiment indeed upon the faith of the Gospel, and upon the revealed rule by which they are to walk together, I maintain to be requisite to Christian fellowship. This is not impossible. It is indeed what God alone can produce and can maintain: but true Churches are *God’s building*. (1 Cor. iii. 9.) This unity of sentiment he produced of old in five thousand disciples, when *the multitude of them that believed were together, of one heart and of one soul*: and He can effect it still, through the same means; subjecting the minds of sinners to his word, which the Apostles of Christ declare, and which holds forth at once the only true Gospel of salvation, and the only rule of Christian practice which has the authority of Heaven. When professors walk together without this unity of sentiment, their association is founded in an agreement to set aside, as of no authority, some part of the revealed will of God. But in those, to whom this unity of sentiment is given, there may be much diversity of judgment, even as to the interpretation of Scripture, in matters not affecting the common faith, or the way in which they are associated to walk. I cannot agree with many of my brethren; as to the sense in which a text of Scripture is to be understood; while at the same time we are fully agreed in respect of the two subjects I have stated.

But again it is objected that, in withdrawing even from brethren, who refuse to walk after the traditions of the Apostles, we ‘do not make the truth as it is in Jesus the sole bond of our union, but combine with it a distinct thing—the precepts of his kingdom.’ This objection is more plausible in words, than solid in substance. The Gospel of Christ and the laws of his kingdom are indeed distinct things, though intimately connected. The former alone is the bond and foundation of the union of disciples in a Christian Church: but they are united by it for certain purposes, and to walk together in a certain way, which is determined by the latter. All who are agreed in the faith, who believe what the Apostles declare concerning the

Lord Jesus, ought to walk together. But how can they walk together, except they walk by the same rule? And where is the one authoritative rule by which they are called to walk, but in the writings of the Apostles?

Again, the various and gross corruptions, which appeared in the Apostolic Churches, are urged by many as an objection against the attempt at that purity of communion, of which I treat. Now let the persons, who urge this, only take the whole fact unutilated; and I am content. Along with the appearance of those corruptions, let them take the Apostolic precepts for our dealing in such cases. There appeared men calling themselves brethren, who were fornicators, covetous, idolaters, railers, drunkards, or extortioners. But the Apostle enjoins the Churches to put away such wicked persons from among them. (1 Cor. v.) There were heretics; and the Apostle commands them to be rejected. (Tit. iii.) There were brethren that walked disorderly, and not after the tradition received of the Apostles: and he orders the Churches to withdraw from such, and to have no company with them, that they may be ashamed. (2 Thess. iii.)—Well; we know not any Church on earth, in which such evils may not break out: only let the disciples meet them in the way, in which they are enjoined in the word. But if men will take that part of the word which records the evils, and leave that which prescribes the remedy; they only shew that they are handling the word of God deceitfully. In fact, a believer may well think with gratitude of the variety and greatness of the evils, that were suffered to appear in the first Churches, while the Apostles were on earth. Had they continued as pure as we sometimes would expect, we had wanted all that directory for our guidance in such cases, which the writings of the Apostles now afford. The breaking out of such corruptions gave them occasion to pen those precepts, which are still left on record for the observance of the Churches to the end of the world.

“But is there not danger of mistake, and of men’s misinterpreting the writings of the Apostles; and so attempting to impose on the brethren traditions, which the Apostles never gave to the Churches?” Yes, much danger: and I doubt not but this is one of the devices of Satan, by which, under a mask of scriptural authority, he will endeavour to perplex and divide disciples. Let each disciple, therefore, take good heed of adding to the Apostolic precepts; as well as of taking from them. Let him take good heed what he proposes, as of divine authority. But when any, not content with this caution, tacitly infer that the traditions of the Apostles are matters which we may lay aside, as things altogether of doubtful and uncertain meaning; they should be treated rather as unbelieving sceptics, than as disciples.

There remain two other arguments, that I have often heard advanced in defence of those promiscuous assemblies, in which the exercises of Christian worship are carried on; and which are put forward as the meeting of a Christian Church,—because the members of the church compose part of the mixed congregation. Before I state these arguments, I would make a few observations on this circumstance. It is but one that arises out of the unscriptural purposes.

for which the meeting is held: it is but an offset springing out of the radical departure from Apostolic rule, as to the nature and design of the assembly of a Christian Church. Certainly, if the design of it were, that one man should exercise his gifts in prayer and preaching before others, for their common edification; this might as well be done before the most promiscuous congregation, as the most select meeting. And where this is the thing that really goes on, it matters nothing under what form the meeting is held. But if the disciples come together, as they were directed of old, to join in fellowship one with another in all the ordinances of Christ's house, and (among the rest) in speaking one to another, according to their abilities, on the things of his kingdom, to the mutual edification of the body; in this case they will and must *come together into one place*, and not be scattered up and down from one another through a congregation, of which they perhaps form not the fourth part. To talk also of a meeting of the church under such circumstances, is an abuse of language. In any meeting for any purpose, even in civil life, the persons who meet are together, apart from others who do not meet for that purpose; however others may be witnesses of their meeting. If there be an aggregate meeting of the Citizens of Dublin, this cannot, in any propriety of language, be called a meeting of the Livery of the City; though every one of the livery men may happen to be present. Again, there is a manifest absurdity in a church having to change the order and form of its meeting, in passing from one exercise of Christian fellowship to another; from the exercises of social praise and prayer to the ordinance of the Supper; as is necessarily the case, where matters are conducted in this way,—unless in the communions that are altogether *open* in this ordinance also. Nor indeed can any good reason be assigned for scrupling to join in the participation of the Supper with those, with whom they do not scruple to join in praise and prayer.

But now we come to those two arguments, by which I have known some endeavour to prove, that the first disciples met on the Lord's day in such promiscuous assemblies with the unbelieving world. And, wonderful to say, they are borrowed from the words of two Apostles! The first is derived from that passage (1 Cor. xiv. 23—25.) in which Paul describes the effect on unbelievers, or ignorant persons, who witness the Church engaged in *prophesying*, i. e. (as he explains the phrase, v. 3.) in *speaking to edification and exhortation and comfort*. Now, in that passage, there is certainly a plain scriptural precedent for warranting a Christian Church, to have its meeting open to the inspection and observation of the world. But if I wanted any additional argument for establishing, against the adversaries, that the first disciples met not in a promiscuous congregation, for their Christian exercises, this very passage would afford it. Let any disciple read the whole passage attentively; and then say, what the scene is that is described in it. Is it not this? the whole Church come together into one place, and engaged in speaking together to the edification of the Church:—one or more unbelievers coming in to the place, and witnessing the Church thus assembled and thus engaged:—that unbeliever convinced by what he hears, owning and

reporting that God is *in them* of a truth. I ask, is this the scene that *could* be witnessed by a stranger, coming into our modern meeting-houses, where he finds a promiscuous congregation listening to a man in the pulpit preaching to them all? It would be a waste of words, to attempt proving the essential difference of the two things.

But we may learn another thing from the Apostle's description. He evidently supposes the Church to go on in its mutual exercises, after the entrance of the unbelievers, exactly as it was going on before, or would go on if there were not a person in the place but themselves. He does not intimate at all that the brother, who was speaking to the edification of the Church, broke off his address to his brethren, and turned his discourse to the unbelievers who came in. Those, who are not too wise to learn from Scripture, may readily see from this, that the preaching of the word to those that are without was of old a thing wholly distinct from the exercises, for joining together in which a Church of Christ is to meet in one place on the first day of the week: and they may be led to suspect the validity of those arguments, by which they have been taught to confound these distinct things.

But the other proof adduced in support of the position, that the first disciples conducted the exercises of their Church in promiscuous assemblies, is derived from that passage in the Epistle of James, (ii. 1—4.) where he describes two men, the one rich and the other poor, coming into the Christian assembly, and variously accommodated in it according to their several conditions in the world; sharply rebuking the Church for the partiality they shewed in this matter. Now the whole of the argument from this passage proceeds on the view of these two persons, as unbelieving spectators; whereas the whole of the Apostle's language and reasoning proves, that two brethren, members of the Church, are intended. The Apostle prefaces his description and rebuke with these words, which form a comment on all that follows. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." What is the meaning of this precept? Is it that Christians, in their civil dealings with the world, should disregard the distinction of ranks in civil society? No; in this sense the precept would stand opposed to all the tenor of the Gospel, and to the precepts and example of the Apostles themselves. Its obvious meaning is this: in your religious dealings with brethren, shew not partiality to one above another, on account of any earthly distinctions between them. And then he proceeds to illustrate his meaning, by supposing the case of two persons coming to their assembly, the one a rich man in goodly apparel, the other a poor man in vile raiment. If they seated the rich brother in a good place, and left the poor brother with inferior accommodation, they *held the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons*; and forgot the principle that in Christ Jesus all are one, the rich and the poor alike,—brethren beloved of God, without any difference in the things of his kingdom. Nay, when they shewed peculiar regard to the rich brother on account of his earthly riches, they forgot that their persecutors and oppressors were commonly the rich, and that *God had chosen the poor of this world, rich*

in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him.

But indeed I might bring the whole of this question to a short issue with any disciples, who would honestly answer the following inquiry:—Why do they contend so earnestly for those promiscuous assemblies, in which they conduct their exercises of praise and prayer? Is it not to avoid offending the world? And what is it in the contrary course, that is so offensive to the world? “Why,” they exclaim—“these men will not even worship with us. That they should not admit us to the Lord’s Supper with them, would be tolerable; for perhaps we are not *good enough* for such a holy ordinance,—at least to receive it every week. But to refuse to pray with us!—that is intolerable bigotry.” Let those, who wish to avoid this offence, pursue the popular course; and at the same time cover the sin from their own consciences, by urging that they do not mean to worship with the world, though they seem to do so. That seeming will be enough to satisfy the world in this matter; but cannot honestly be incurred by the disciple.

Much of the same observations will apply to the outcry which is raised against those, who now from time to time testify the Gospel to the world, in meetings convened for the purpose, but without any exercises of social worship. The importance of such attempts, to call the attention of our fellow-sinners to the Apostolic testimony concerning Jesus Christ, I rate very high: and I am apt to think that the church, which sets aside their importance, cannot be walking in the truth; but in an indolent unconcern about the souls of others, and satisfaction in their own supposed safety. They may urge that the multitude around them have the Scriptures open to them, and that there the Apostles preach continually the faith of Christ. And it is an important truth: and it is importantly true that the Apostles alone hold that peculiar office, of authoritative witnesses of his resurrection to the end of the world. But shall those, who have been given to receive their testimony, therefore forbear to speak of it to their fellow-sinners? or to warn them of the various lies, by which the meaning of the Apostolic word is corrupted and perverted in the world? To do this to any effect, they cannot confine their language to scriptural phraseology: for almost all around us acknowledge the *words* of scripture. It is the meaning of these words, it is the truth declared in them, about which the great controversy is: and it is in this truth we are to acknowledge the scriptural mean of a sinner’s conversion to God; not in the medium through which it is laid before the mind, or the words in which it is conveyed, as some superstitiously fancy, who think there is a kind of charm in the phrases of the Bible. But while I thus maintain the importance of public testimonies concerning the way of salvation, among other means of spreading the knowledge of it; why should it be thought so strange that on these occasions I do not preface or conclude my address with giving out a hymn and prayer? Can we conceive that the Apostle so prefaced or concluded his address, for instance, to the people of Athens, when he declared to them the true God? No: he was too well acquainted with the maxim, which he himself lays

down in the words—*how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* (Rom. x. 14.) *By manifestation of the truth he commended himself to every man's conscience*; not by deceitfully confounding the God that he worshipped with the various gods of the nations, and giving unbelieving men to suppose that they were worshippers of the same God with him.

“But,” say the adversaries, “we do not worship with the people to whom we preach; but with one or two disciples, whom we know to be present.” I am well aware that believers and unbelievers *cannot* really join in worship; that the latter, denying *the only living and true God*, cannot really call upon his name; that there is no fellowship between Christ and Belial, between him that believeth and an infidel. But from this indubitable principle these men draw an inference, exactly contrary to that which the Apostle deduces from it. The Apostle, after asserting the principle, adds—*wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.* (2 Cor. vi. 17.) They say—“wherefore let us have as much outward fellowship, and apparent religious communion with them, as we please.” It is also certain from the Apostolic writings, that when the Apostles went throughout the world preaching the Gospel of Christ, they for the most part did not travel singly, but with one or more disciples in their company. But does this render it a whit more conceivable, that they introduced the accompaniments of social worship into their ministrations of the word to the world? Indeed, the fact is incontrovertible that the men, who now commonly urge this pretext, make no scruple of giving out their hymn and going to prayer with the people, wherever they go to preach, and however unattended by a single disciple.

This practice certainly is very consistent in those, whose system of doctrine represents various preparatory stages of piety, through which a sinner is led forward by the spirit of God to conversion: in those who conceive that men may seek God before they have justifying faith; and that some godly feelings and emotions are first to be excited in unbelieving sinners, the fire of which is to be fanned by the preacher, and in the progress of which they are brought to that mental *exercise or exertion*, to which the name of justifying faith is so often given. It is no wonder that men holding such a system should strenuously contend for this practice, and consider the bare declaration of the truth to sinners (without hymn-singing and social prayer) as a very dry thing, and a very inadequate instrument of conversion. But it is truly wonderful that any who believe the word, which declares every man that believes it to be justified from all things, and all who do not believe it to be dead in sins—under wrath—and their very sacrifice *an abomination to the Lord*,—it is wonderful that any, who credit and declare this, should yet inconsistently countenance a practice, which contradicts their testimony, and is only calculated to harden in their deadly delusions the multitude whom they address.

I know that they often attempt to solve the difficulty and reconcile it to their consciences, by marking in their prayers the character of those with whom they would be understood to worship, in contra-

distinction to those with whom they know they cannot worship. And some think this kind of *preaching-prayer* an eminent instrument of conversion. But I would call on disciples to consider, whether this mode of supposed worship be not very inconsistent with the reverence, which becomes us in drawing nigh to God. In every act of our social worship, there is immediately a most solemn transaction between us and the Majesty of Heaven. It is an exercise in which we hold *fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*, drawing nigh unto the holiest in praise and supplication. Every thing that would turn away or disturb our minds from the enjoyment of that high communion with God, which we profess to be engaged in, is calculated to change the exercise into an hypocritical mockery of Heaven.

I would also call on disciples to consider whether all the pains they can take, to describe whom they are praying with, can in the nature of things succeed. Does any unbelieving professor present think himself an unbeliever? No: many of them may be ready to acknowledge that they are very wicked; nay, that they are unconverted unregenerate persons. But that they do not *believe* what God declares in his word—this is what none of them, who acknowledge the Scriptures, even suspect. Yet we know, brethren, that *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*, or regenerate: and that if they believed the record which God hath given of his Son, they would also be converted, or turned to him. (1 John v. 1. 1 Thess. i. 9, 10.) That they are not pious enough, or strict enough in religion, they will own; and often will like and admire the person, who sets about stirring them up to piety and strictness. But that their very piety and strictness and fervent prayers, while they disbelieve the doctrine of Christ, are *an abomination to the Lord*, (Prov. xv. 8.) and that the doctrine they are holding under the name of the Gospel is a system of antichristian lies;—this they neither own nor can think, till given *repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth*. Not to mention that all the descriptions of character, which can be introduced into these preaching-prayers, leave the devout professors who are as unbelieving as the former, to conceive that they are the very persons with whom the preacher means to say he worships.

But the advocates for this practice urge various scriptural precedents in support of it. “Christ,” they say, “prayed in the hearing of the most mixed multitude. (Mat. xi. 25, 26. John xi. 41, 42.) Paul gave thanks to God in the presence of all the ship’s crew: (Acts xxvii. 35.) and prayed, before he laid his hands on the father of Publius and healed him. (xxviii. 8.)”—True, very true: but it is very strange, how any can confound two things so evidently distinct, as the prayer of an individual audibly uttered in the hearing of others, and an exercise of social worship with others. It is still more strange how any, to whom this plain distinction has once been pointed out, can continue to reiterate the unmeaning argument borrowed from these passages. When we read that Paul, encouraging the ship’s crew to take food, on the ground of a revelation from that God—to whom he belonged and whom he served—assuring him of the safety of their lives,—took bread and *gave thanks in the presence*

of them all; are we to understand that he went to prayer with them? Or when we read that before healing a heathen man who lay sick, he prayed, calling on that Lord in whose name he was about to work the miracle; is this account of the same import, as if we read that he joined in worship with that heathen? Or when the Lord Jesus, before raising up Lazarus from the grave, "lifted up his eyes and said, Father! I thank thee that thou hast heard me: and I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me;"—is that an instance of social worship with any? Yet these, which are none of them instances of social worship at all, are the scriptural precedents adduced by our preachers for the most promiscuous social worship, by which they recommend their public ministrations. It is a bad cause, that can need the support of such arguments. In all these instances we may easily, from the occasion, perceive a weighty reason, why the individual departed from the stated rule of privacy in individual worship; and audibly uttered the language of his soul to God, in the presence and hearing of others. Against that, under any such circumstances, far be it from me to contend.

There remains an argument which I have found the last resource of some, who are subtle advocates for the practice of disciples joining in worship with the most unbelieving and carnal. The argument is of such a metaphysical character, that plain readers may as well pass over what I am obliged to say upon the subject. "Prayer and praise," they say, "are part of the *natural* duty of all men; in which all men therefore are to be called to engage with us. And if they join us only in outward appearance, but not heartily, the sin is theirs, not ours. But partaking of the Lord's Supper is the duty of believers alone; and therefore they are not to join in it, except with those whom they consider as fellow-believers." That I may do the fullest justice to this argument, I shall state it in the words of a man, who is well able to give a specious gloss to any sentiments he maintains. In a pamphlet of *Mr. Fuller's**, which has been put into my hands within these few days, he writes thus: "Others on the same principle"—namely, confounding what he calls *moral* and *positive* obedience—"have argued thus, or to this effect: You withhold the unconverted from joining at the Lord's table, and why not also from joining in family and public prayer? Our answer is the same. The Lord's supper is the immediate duty of believers only: but prayer is binding on men in general, however far they may be from performing it in an acceptable manner. To join with unbelievers in what is not their immediate duty, is to become partakers of their sin; but to allow them to join with us in what is the duty of every one, is not so. We ought to pray for such things as both we and they stand in need of, and if they unite with us in desire, it is well for them; if not, the guilt remains with themselves, and not with us."

In examining this argument, I must claim the liberty of using the words *converted* and *unconverted*, *believers* and *unbelievers*, in their

* A Circular Letter to the Baptist Churches of the Northamptonshire Association, 1807. Page 6.

scriptural meaning. Mr. F. I have reason to fear, uses them in a different sense—in one, according to which his argument might perhaps be found to have considerable weight. Whenever I speak of *believers*, or *converted* persons, I mean those who believe, or credit, the Apostolic testimony concerning Jesus Christ. All such are converted, or turned to *the only living and true God*, whom they alone know. By *unbelievers* I mean all others, whether professed opposers of divine revelation, or professing to believe the Apostolic testimony—but in a sense different from that which the Apostles intended. And all such, however devout and zealous and earnest in their respective systems of religion, are unconverted, turned away from the only true God, deniers of his name and of his being. This also I learn from the Scripture is the natural state of all men, as sinners; in which state they are *lost, dead in trespasses and sins, ungodly and without strength*. And in this state all men continue, till “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into the hearts” of those whom he has chosen to eternal life; discovering to them the truth, as it is testified in the Scripture, concerning his Son Jesus Christ.

Now I say, that to speak of the *natural* religious duties of sinful men is altogether unscriptural; and conveys a sentiment, inconsistent with the fundamental principles of divine revelation. When we speak of the *duties* of any creatures, there is always implied a capacity in those creatures for the performance of the duties; of which capacity in this case all men are utterly destitute by nature. Why else do we never talk or think of the duties of brute creatures; but because, from the constitution of their nature, they are incapable of the performance of them?

But here an objection is made—“Men by the constitution of their nature, as intelligent and voluntary agents, are accountable creatures, justly punishable on account of sin: and how can sin be charged against them, if there be not room for its opposite—duty?” The former part of the objection is indeed most importantly true; but the inference drawn from it in the latter is utterly invalid. This will immediately appear, if we consider another class of fallen creatures, *the angels that sinned*. They, by their revolt from God, or transgression of his will, are sunk under the irremediable and righteous effects of their sin. For ever wicked, and for ever miserable, they are incapable of any thing but sin. Now what should we say of the man, who would gravely talk of the *duties* of devils? and urge that unless they be allowed capable of duty, there is no room for the just imputation of their sin? His language and sentiments would not be a whit more inconsistent with truth, and with the fear of God, than the sentiment of him who really maintains the doctrine of the *natural* religious duties of sinful man. The revelation of the grace or mercy of God, furnishes the only true groundwork of religion, or religious duty, to sinners: and till they believe that revealed doctrine, they are incapable of duty, though most justly chargeable with their sin.

If it be urged that fallen men are not fallen angels, I acknowledge the distinction with joy: for if they were, they would be without hope; *Christ* not having taken on him *the nature of angels*. (Heb.

ii. 16.) But if the objectors mean to intimate, that sin is a different thing in men and in angels,—different in the malignity of its nature, in the degree of its guilt, or in its deadly effects;—I deny their distinction, as contrary to every principle of Scripture and of right reason. And I tell them that, were it not for the revealed testimony that Christ *took on him the seed of Abraham*, that Jesus Christ *has come in the flesh* to save sinners of the human race, I would be as incapable of being the subject of any *religious duty* as Satan, and have no more of either capacity or warrant to call upon God.

Natural men, I am sensible, often have religion, ever so much of it; and do pray, ever so often and ever so earnestly. But I know what is written in the word, that their *Sacrifice is an abomination to JEHOVAH*. I know that they do not—they cannot—pray to HIM, or call upon *his* name; for they disbelieve the Revelation He has made of it, and deny that there is any such God; and the various gods that they worship are but idols. I know that their *religion* is but one form of their wickedness, arising out of the combined action of a consciousness of guilt, and a carnal delusive hope, that God may be dissuaded by something they can do from executing the wrath, which He has “revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.” (Rom. i. 18.) I know that whether they are anxiously concerned about eternal things, and earnestly seeking justification in the sight of God, or else careless and profane,—they are alike wicked and alienated from the life of God, and incapable of doing any thing acceptable in his sight. And shall I contribute to deceive the soul of such a man, by professing to join with him in worshipping God; and then urge in vindication of my conduct, that I have been but engaging him in what is the natural duty of all men in general? Pleasing to him indeed would be the idea, which I should thus countenance and sanction, that he has been *doing his duty* in prayer.

“We ought to pray,” says Mr. Fuller, “for such things, as both we and they stand in need of.” What he means by this, is not very clear: but I know what instruction the Lord Jesus gave his disciples, how they ought to pray. And shall I, according to that divine direction, bow the knee with one who denies the record of God concerning his Son, and has therefore as yet no father but the father of lies*,—shall I bow the knee with him, and join him in that language, *Our Father! which art in heaven?* “If” says Mr. F. “they unite with us in desire, it is well for them.” What! does he suppose that unbelieving men do, or can, unite with believers in such desires, as are expressed in the petitions—*hallowed be thy Name: thy kingdom come: thy will be done?* Men, who hate and despise and deny that holy Name; who are rebels against that kingdom; and blindly opposed to that will. If we pray for what they stand in need of, we shall pray that *God may give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth*: and does he suppose that they, who think that truth a lie, will unite with us in this desire?

Mr. Fuller allows that to partake of the Lord's Supper “is the

* See John viii. 41—47.

immediate duty of believers only." But why? Is it not because believers only can partake of it in spirit and in truth? Is it not because unbelievers cannot really commemorate that death of Christ, the testimony of which they disbelieve? Does he then, in considering prayer as the immediate duty of all men, mean to intimate that unbelieving men can really call on the name of the Lord? If not, if he be sensible their prayers are sin, as well as their receiving of what they call the *sacrament*; how can he say that believers "become partakers in their sin" by joining with them in the one, but not so by joining with them in the other? Mr. F. had some reason, I dare say, for changing the phrase in the second clause of the sentence;—from "joining with them," to "allowing them to join with us." But he mistakes the principles and practice of those against whom he writes, if he suppose that they either object to the presence of unbelievers, where disciples are assembled together for mutual fellowship; or that they do not *allow them* to employ themselves in any decorous manner they may please.

"But was not Simon Magus exhorted by an Apostle to pray; and that, while he was declared to be in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity?" Yes; but the exhortation was preceded by a testimony against his unbelief, and an exhortation to *repent*, or change his present thoughts;—in other words, to believe the truth. And the Apostle was excited to address the exhortation to him, by the consideration that "perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him." (Acts viii. 22.) And in like manner, in that glorious promulgation of the Gospel contained in Isa. lv. the most wicked—the most unrighteous are exhorted to "seek the LORD while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near:" but it is an exhortation preceded by, and combined with a declaration of his name or character, and a call to them to *incline their ear and hear*, or believe the testimony. That testimony is not believed by those, who pervert such calls and exhortations into a vindication of the sentiment, that sinners—while they are unbelieving—do or can call on the name of the Lord. In any of the promiscuous congregations that are seen engaged in worship, it certainly belongs not to men to say, who do call upon the true God, and who do not. But it is the manifested character, and not that which is known only to the searcher of hearts, that constitutes, according to scriptural rule, the measure of lawful Christian communion. I have yet to learn, in what part of Scripture Mr. F. has found one rule and measure for one part of Christian communion, and another rule and measure for another part of it.

And now, with those who know the truth as it is in Jesus, who indeed believe the record of God concerning his Son, I leave the serious consideration of the subject, which I have attempted to treat. Let them *take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.* (Matt. xvi. 6.) "Full well" do many, at this day, "reject the commandments of God, that they may keep their own tradition." (Mark vii. 9.) Let disciples be assured that in proportion as they give weight to the traditions of men, they will make light of the commandments of God. Brethren, remember that *it is life eternal to know Him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath*

sent. (John xvii. 3.) Remember that ye are not of the world, but chosen and called out of it, to be a peculiar people unto him, who hath redeemed you by his blood. Remember that ye are *called to be saints*, (1 Cor. i. 2.) *holy* unto Him, whose name is HOLY. Is it suitable to *his* people to be mingled in religious fellowship with the nations of the world, which *lieth in the wicked one*—in the father of lies. In that absolutely separated walk, which I have laid before you from the word, what is there that is not necessarily connected with the distinctive glory of JEHOVAH, and with your relation to him as his redeemed people? Ye are taught to pray *hallowed be thy Name!* to pray that the *holiness* of his name—the infinite distinction and separation of his glorious character from all the gods of the unbelieving world—may be manifested and acknowledged. Take heed, that your practice be not inconsistent with your prayers.

OBSERVATIONS
ON A
LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE AUTHOR
AS A
REPLY TO HIS PAMPHLET,
ENTITLED
"THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM, &c."

[First Published 1809.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

ALMOST four years have now elapsed, since a publication made its appearance in this City, entitled "A Letter to Mr. John Walker, in reply to his Pamphlet entitled Thoughts on Baptism, &c. by a late Member of the Church with which that gentleman is connected."

The questions at issue between us are of much wider extent, and of much higher importance, than the mere inquiry into the form and subjects of Christian baptism: though I am far from intending to intimate, that even that, or any similar inquiry into the revealed will of God, ought not to engage the most serious attention of CHRIST'S disciples. But the reader must not be surprised, if he find that question—so long and so ineffectually agitated—forming the least prominent subject in the following pages.

So persuaded indeed am I of the importance of the general subject, which I attempt to treat, that—had the Letter never appeared which I take as the groundwork of the following observations—I would yet have been equally anxious to call the attention of disciples to the same topics; and to handle them more at large, than it was possible to do in the very short tract, to which the Letter-writer professes to reply. And nothing, but other necessary avocations, has so long delayed the attempt. They do not know me, who were ready to conclude from the length of my silence, that I secretly considered my correspondent's reply as unanswerable. Had any such been the impression on my mind, I trust I would have been forward to avow it, and publicly to retract the errors, of which he convinced me. But, in fact, those who know my various engagements in life can be at no loss, to account for my running in arrear so much with several public antagonists.

The Letter, on which I have to remark, being anonymous, and the writer not having adopted any signature, I shall beg leave in the

following pages, in order to avoid inconvenient circumlocution, to call him PHILLO; and to express myself indifferently either in the way of direct address to him, or of observations on his work.

Another anonymous piece has appeared in this country, in the form of observations on my late "Essay on the Divine Authority of the Apostolic Traditions," &c., the author of which has, like Philo, made himself known to me in private, while he chooses to conceal himself from the public. To such writers I think it necessary to remark, that I must hold myself at perfect liberty, in my replies, to forget the communication they have made on their personality, and to address them as unknown characters, or otherwise, just as I find it expedient. The man who walks the streets in a mask cannot fairly expect that the individual whom he accosts should treat him as an acquaintance, although to that individual he should think proper to whisper his name.

I lately saw advertised another professed refutation of my principles, which has appeared in Scotland some time ago; but not yet made its way to this country. And having met with the notice of it rather accidentally, I cannot say but there may be several other productions against me on the other side of the channel, of which I know nothing. I am much out of the way of learning what passes in the religious world: and, from the bad market which this country affords to religious publications, our Dublin booksellers have very little communication in that line with those in Great Britain. I would therefore esteem it a favour, if any authors, in England or Scotland, who may think it worth their while to animadvert on my religious principles or conduct, would take the trouble of ordering their booksellers to transmit to me a copy of the work, in which such animadversions may appear; and I will cheerfully defray any expense attending it.

Since writing the above, I have obtained a copy of the piece last alluded to; which I find comes from the pen of Mr. Wm. Braidwood. I am glad to find that a writer so respectable is able to say no more, than he brings forward, in *refutation* of my principles: while it is with grief I perceive that he and those connected with him err so widely from the principles of scripture.

At the same time I got a series of Letters published in Scotland, under the signature of SIMPLEX; which I mention here, for the purpose of acknowledging my obligations to the writer. I perceive he gives me a severe castigation for the unscriptural manner in which I occasionally expressed myself of the Methodists, in my Expostulatory Address to them and Letters to Mr. Knox. His rebukes upon that subject are most just. And though I have been long sensible of the error I was betrayed into, and anxious for an opportunity of correcting it; I am not the less indebted to him, for publicly animadverting on an evil, which was publicly committed. If ever I should be able to republish the work in which it appeared, I shall express myself more fully on the subject.

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

PHILO, in his advertisement, expresses dissatisfaction at my not having *plainly intimated* whom I mean by "the persons calling themselves BAPTISTS," and what I understand by their "principles." Little need be said upon this. Had I known any plainer, and equally inoffensive, designation of the persons intended, I would have employed it. I avoided the term *Anabaptists*, because it is one to which they generally object. And I believe no one, in these countries, can be at any serious loss to know whom I intend. But if Philo, while he "disavows his being one of those who *call themselves Baptists*," had informed me what he would wish to be called, he would have found me perfectly ready to gratify him in a matter so unimportant.

As to the *principles* which I oppose, what they are is sufficiently evident in the course of my pamphlet: and indeed, even from the title-page, it must be plain to any intelligent reader, that I intended the principles held in common by all the Baptists, whether general or particular Baptists, English, Scotch, or Irish;—the principles in which they all agree, however much they differ upon other points. Philo certainly has not failed of discovering my meaning here: for the great principles, which he defends in his Letter, are the very principles which I mean to oppose.

Upon the two questions, on which he is dissatisfied that I have not avowed my opinion,—namely, the baptism of infants and their admission to the Lord's Supper,—(if indeed he can seriously question my opinion upon the latter)—he will find my opinion avowed distinctly in the following pages. I have formed no sentiment, on matters of religious faith or practice, which I desire to conceal: though in treating any question, upon which I take up my pen, I must judge for myself, whether that be the proper occasion for bringing forward other sentiments, not essentially connected with it.

He opens his letter with a triumphant flourish of commiseration, which I would willingly pass by unnoticed, in another writer, as a kind of contemptible *ruse de guerre*, which no fair polemic would employ at the outset of a public controversy. But in one who professes, like Philo, to hold most of the fundamental principles of Christianity, it involves a sentiment so very unsuitable to that profession, and so pernicious in its tendency, that I conceive a short animadversion on it may not be unprofitable to him and to others.

"In the course," says he, "of that closer investigation of your error, which I am now about to commence, I must prepare myself to *feel more than ever in your behalf*. I must now not only submit to be a *sufferer*, in common with many who know and love you, but must encounter the additional evil of being active in contributing to my own *painful sensations*." (p. 6.) All this may be very fine, Philo;

but it is very foolish; and it is worse than foolish. Your painful *feelings in my behalf* may be spared for some other occasion. You have written, no doubt, in the expectation of successfully refuting my supposed error; and I trust that I shall esteem that man my best friend on earth, who shall expose any error I may fall into, on subjects connected with revealed truth. If disciples be really desirous of knowing and practising their Lord's will in all things, how can it become them to be pained at the detection of any mistake they have made concerning it? Does it not become them rather to rejoice, with thankfulness to the Lord, and to the instrument he employs in rectifying their judgment? Or if, through the wickedness of their flesh, they give way to any feelings opposite to this thankfulness and joy, does it become another disciple to sympathize with them in any *painful sensations* thus originating? Nay, surely: if we be attached to opinions, because we have once advanced them; if we be more jealous for our own reputation, or that of our party, than for the prevalence of scriptural truth; if we be not anxious that the truth of God may be vindicated against ourselves, whereinsoever we may have ignorantly opposed it; *are we not carnal, and walk as men?*

When you took up your pen you felt as if you were writing a letter *against* me; and personal kindness made you feel pain in the attempt. But the man who attempts to support any principle of scripture, against which I may have erred, is engaged in an attempt for my highest benefit; in which I pray most heartily that God will give him success. To say that a mind opposite to this is very natural to us all, is only to say—what is an humbling truth—that our nature is most ungodly. It is: and disciples have the more need to look to it, that they *walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit*, according to that new mind of faith, in the view of which every object sinks into insignificance in comparison of the glory of the Lord. Vain is every attempt of religious professors to promote that glory, in opposition to the revelation he has made in scripture of his truth and of his will. But the feeblest advocate of any part of that revelation may well maintain his ground, with every feeling of cheerful confidence. He is engaged in a cause, which shall assuredly prevail. Let those who are seeking their own glory be painfully apprehensive of failure and defeat. Let disciples, engaged in the discussion of any principles of scripture, recollect that, in whatever way, and by whatever instruments, these principles may be successfully vindicated, they shall succeed in the objects nearest to their hearts.

In expressing these sentiments, I am happy to think that they will meet the fullest concurrence of Philo's mind; however he may appear to have lost sight of them when he penned the passage, which has given occasion to these remarks. And before I begin to treat of the points of difference between us, I wish to make some other observations, in which also I think it probable that we are agreed. Philo glances at the melancholy fact, that those, who ought to walk together in one, are kept asunder by their present difference of sentiment, on the subjects at issue between us. It is a fact deeply to be deplored on each side; and affording matter, not only of grief, but of humiliation, inasmuch as it springs from an evil of most serious

magnitude—even a resistance, on one side or the other, to the revealed will of God. Disciples, while in their right mind, cannot regard that as a small evil; nor view with indifference its effect, in necessarily interrupting the fellowship, which ought to subsist between them. While they are duly affected by the consideration of the evil, their instant prayers to the great Head of his Church for its removal ought, on each side, to be combined with a jealous examination of themselves, lest they impede the answer to their prayers; lest the evil originate in themselves; lest they pertinaciously adhere to their respective sentiments, without submitting them to the continued scrutiny of the word of God; or lest they neglect any appointed means for rectifying the judgments of their brethren. They will also faint in their prayers, unless an expectation of the answer to them be cherished, grounded on the divine word. (John xvii. 21. 2 Thess. ii. 8.) And while we deplore every remaining bar to the perfect union of those, who are agreed in the great truth as it is in Jesus, and are seriously engaged in the attempt to walk fully by the rule of his revealed will, and by that rule alone, we may observe with thankfulness how few the bars remaining are.

I know it is a hackneyed objection among those, who oppose that principle of the divine obligation on disciples to walk by that rule alone, and consequently to walk in religious fellowship only with those who do so, that the attempt must be productive of endless schisms and divisions, from the endless diversities of judgment among disciples themselves on the interpretation and application of this scriptural rule. I have lately, in another piece, treated that subject more at large, and this is not the proper place for resuming it. Yet I would here briefly offer the three following observations on the objection. 1st. It involves a *petitio principii*. If the precepts given by the apostles to the first churches, and recorded in their writings, be intended for the authoritative regulation of CHRIST'S disciples to the end of the world, we may be certain that they will be found adequate to the purpose for which they were designed: and the man, who assumes that they are not, assumes that the divine authority which they once had has ceased. 2dly. If the consequence stated in the objection were admitted in its fullest latitude, the man who fears God, and trembles at his word, would find no reason in it, or in any other supposable consequence, for refusing to yield obedience to that word, according to the best of his judgment upon its meaning. But 3dly. The assertion advanced by the objectors is false. And here I must exclude, from the number of competent witnesses or judges, all those who have never yet seriously applied themselves to walk by that rule, as of divine authority; and therefore must exclude from the number, not only those who are confessedly or obviously adopting the traditions of men for the regulation of their churches, but also all those, who (however professedly scriptural in their aim) set aside the *divine obligation* of the word. And such are all who regard it as that kind of rule, to which they may at least in some points lawfully delay obedience themselves, or who make the disobedience of others a matter of forbearance and consequent indifference. Excluding all such from judging of the question, and considering it as un-

affected by all the various shades of difference among *them*; I may confidently and joyfully appeal to others—namely, to believers of the apostolic gospel, really engaged in the attempt to walk by the apostolic rule,—I may appeal to them whether facts support the objectors in their assertion. No: blessed be GOD! They find no such number, as is supposed, of doubtful questions calculated to distract their judgments, and keep them asunder in their walk. Besides a very few matters connected with the Baptist controversy, I scarcely know any others that divide them. And while it is truly melancholy that any such points of difference among them should yet remain, it is at the same time a matter of wonder and thankfulness that they are so few: and he, who has done so much towards joining them together in one mind and in one judgment, can perfect that which is lacking in the work.

Here I would desire to mark distinctly what it is, that at present precludes me from Christian fellowship with a Baptist. If any disciple in this country thought it needful himself to be baptized, as that which he doubted whether he could lawfully omit; merely in this there would be no bar to our mutual fellowship. But if he farther insist on imposing the same observance upon me, I must resist the attempt, persuaded as I am that he calls to the practice of a religious rite, to which the word of GOD does not call me, and which is essentially different in its nature, though the same in its form and name, from the Christian baptism that I there read of. While I am thus persuaded, pertinacity on his side must disjoin us. But, in almost every instance I am acquainted with, this sentiment is embodied with another, which must bar our fellowship. I mean a sentiment, which stands opposed to the plain and solemn precepts in scripture, regulating the conduct of believing parents towards their children; a sentiment, which leads those who adopt it, not only to neglect the duty of *bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, but to live in the practical and systematic violation of it. From those who, after admonition, persist in that sentiment, whether they profess themselves Baptists or not, I find myself bound by the word to withdraw. And the more I contemplate the evil of their sentiment and practice, the more I see it connected with various errors and evils the most dangerous,—tending indeed to undermine the very faith and hope of the gospel.—Having premised thus much, I shall proceed in my remarks on Philo's letter. [See Note at the end of this article.]

In the first sentence of my THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM I did affirm, that "Baptism"—the Baptism of proselytes—"was a religious rite familiar to the Jews, and practised among them before the coming of Christ." Philo more than intimates that he disbelieves this; expressing dissatisfaction at the *decisive tone*, in which I make the assertion; and at my not having "stated the authority which allowed me to hold such language." (p. 7.) Really, if there be any decisiveness of tone in the short and simple statement I made, it arose from my considering the fact which I stated as indubitably certain; and it still requires the utmost stretch of my credulity to believe that Philo seriously questions its truth. That I did not state my authorities for asserting it, in a tract extending not quite to one sheet, and designed

for the most unlettered readers, cannot reasonably excite even surprise. In such a publication, I am rather studious to avoid the show of learning; and even now that I shall be obliged to meet some of Philo's arguments and assertions, with weapons not within the grasp of all English readers, I shall throw some of my observations on this subject into an Appendix, to which those who please will be at liberty to refer.

But Philo adds—"it of course devolves upon me to trace your opinion to—the *writings of Jewish Rabbins.*" This language and the sentiment conveyed in it—(I have printed the passage exactly as it stands in his letter)—are unworthy one, who makes any pretensions to the character of a Scholar, or to a critical acquaintance with the scriptures. If I adopted Philo's style, I might add that it is language "*well calculated*" to impose upon simple Christians a sentiment as dangerous, as it is false. But I most cordially acquit Philo of any intention to impose; as I can as cordially assure him that nothing was further from my intention.

The sentiment, which I desire to protest against, is this—that any observation or argument brought to illustrate or confirm the meaning of scripture, if borrowed from unbelieving writers or from sources inaccessible to the vulgar, is to be disregarded by the believer. I would ask Philo, from what other source should we expect to derive a knowledge of any Jewish custom, not of divine institution, but from Jewish writers? Or, at least, from what other source can we have so full and so good information? If at any time I took occasion to observe, that *crucifixion* was a punishment in use among the Romans, and to which they adjudged slaves and the lowest malefactors; what Christian of cultivated understanding would object to this assertion, that the opinion was to be traced to—the *writings of Latin classics?* Wicked heathens as these writers were, they are not a whit the worse authority for that fact.

I know that many professors of christianity pay a servile and most unscriptural deference to human learning, or to the appearance of it. But I know also, that disciples need to be guarded against the very opposite prejudice. Nor is it any uncommon thing for an unlettered Christian, who has been made *wise unto salvation* through the scriptures, and who knows that they (and they alone) are able to make any sinner wise unto salvation, to regard with aversion and contempt every aid of what is called learning, for throwing light upon their meaning: not considering that, under the merciful providence of God, he is indebted to that same learning, for possessing those very scriptures, in an English version. Philo would think me a very unfair adversary, if I were to raise a doubt whether the primitive meaning of the word *Baptism* be immersion, or dipping; and if I should ground my doubt upon the observation, that the opinion is to be traced to—the writings of Greek poets, historians, and lexicographers. Nay, I am persuaded that he would himself, in several instances, gladly and usefully avail himself of the information afforded by those very *Jewish Rabbins*, whose authority he so much decries. I need only hint to him the occasion there is for distinguishing between those called *proselytes of the gate*, and *proselytes of righteousness*, in order to take a

right view of the character of Cornelius; or for knowing something about the Jewish *proseuchæ*, in order to refute a curious misinterpretation, which I have lately known put forward, of Acts xvi. 16. Examine, Philo, why it is, that you would without hesitation avail yourself, in such instances, of information derived from the Jewish Rabbins; while you reject with scorn their concurrent testimony to the long-established practice of baptizing proselytes.

It requires indeed but little acquaintance with their writings, to know that they were "the genuine descendants of those, whom Christ, when on earth, rebuked for *rejecting the commandment of God; that they might keep their own tradition.*" (p. 8.) But let me remind you, that this their general character, with all the absurdities of ceremonial questions that abound in their writings, does not at all invalidate their evidence upon the tradition which they kept, and the ceremonies which they practised. You are mistaken when you say, that I "have assigned to them the office of ascertaining to us the sense, in which our Lord delivered a command, and the principles, upon which the apostles obeyed it." I have simply alleged, upon their authority, the existence of a practice among the Jews, which their writings abundantly authenticate: and to use their writings, or any writings, in such a way, cannot fairly expose one to the imputation of "at all looking up to them" unscripturally. It is a matter of subsequent and distinct consideration, whether what is collected from their writings can be employed for illustrating scripture. And, as in other senses *all things serve HIM*, whose will is revealed to us in his word, so there is no part of human learning—however polluted, in many respects, the source whence it is derived—which we may not lawfully and thankfully employ, in subserviency to the right interpretation of that word. I would not have dwelt so long upon the exposure of this passage in your letter, but that the sentiment it countenances is deeply mischievous; and most mischievous among that class of Christians, who are least qualified for detecting its fallacy.

But Philo has two other objections to the rabbinical testimonies upon the subject: 1st. that the earliest of them, which we have, is 150 years later than the birth of Christ; 2dly. that they agree in tracing the rite of baptizing proselytes to the time of Moses, and assert that it was practised by divine appointment: so that, as he says, "they either prove too much, or prove nothing: they lead us back to the time of Moses, or not to the time of Christ." (p. 9.)

This is most extraordinary reasoning. So, if all the writers on the British constitution should agree in attempting to trace the origin of Parliaments to the period of the Saxon Heptarchy, they could afford no evidence to posterity of the existence of Parliaments a few centuries ago. I would be ashamed to insist on the refutation of a sophism so palpable. But I would beg of Philo to consider candidly the hypothesis, in which he involves himself. He cannot seriously question the established existence of the rite of proselyte baptism among the Jews, at the period when these Rabbins wrote; and concerning that period I shall at present raise no controversy with him. The very number and absurd minuteness of their direc-

tions about the rite;—their hot disputes whether the baptism of a pregnant mother, proselyted to the Jews' religion, did or did not supersede the necessity of baptizing her child when born;—their assertion that the rite was of divine appointment, and as ancient as Moses, &c. &c. all concur to put beyond contradiction the established existence of this practice among the Jews in their day. Well; you contend, or seem to contend, against its existence among them before the time of Christ; and must therefore suppose that, in this instance, they assimilated themselves to the Christians, by adopting into their ritual a practice observed by a sect, whom they regarded with abhorrence and contempt. It is an hypothesis, which can scarcely recommend itself to any unprejudiced mind.

Philo triumphs in the discovery, that the Jewish baptism was a rite of "a cleansing nature," (p. 10.) and denoted the purification of the proselytes from the uncleanness of their former state. In this indeed he asserts what is undoubtedly true: but what I never thought of contradicting. I asserted the Jews were long familiar with the rite of baptism in receiving proselytes; and I had the uniform testimony of their own writers to support me in the assertion. It not being my object to involve the simple reader in any question about those rabbinical testimonies, I referred him rather to the evidence of the fact, which the scriptures incidentally afford, in relating the only question among them which John's baptizing occasioned—namely, by what authority *he* employed that rite, not why he employed *it* in receiving proselytes to his doctrine. I did not enter at all into the question, why this particular rite was adopted on such an occasion: but had that question occurred, so far from being disposed to deny that it was on account of its cleansing significancy, I certainly with Philo would have asserted it.

And, as this part of the subject has now been introduced, I would briefly observe that—even if we were wholly destitute of the testimony, which we possess in abundance, of the existence of this rite among the Jews in receiving proselytes,—it would to a considerate and unprejudiced inquirer appear intrinsically probable, that they were not received without it. When we reflect on the *divers washings* (or *baptisms*, as it is in the original, Heb. ix. 10.) which were imposed on the Jews in their law; the multiplication of them which we know from the scripture the tradition of the elders had introduced before the appearance of Christ; and the variety of occasions, on which they were observed with the utmost strictness; would it not be to the last degree improbable, that they should have received proselytes from the Gentile world into their community without any washing, or baptism, employed on that occasion?

Yet Philo triumphs so much in my having omitted to mention this cleansing import of the rite,—(which undoubtedly may be proved from all the rabbinical writers, if their evidence were needed)—that he addresses me in the following language. "If you choose indeed to adhere uniformly to the scriptures, you are welcome, and then—adieu to proselyte baptism: but you have in the present case preferred the Rabbins, so please to abide by them." (p. 10.) This really appears to me more smart than wise. What do you mean,

Philo, by saying—*adieu to proselyte baptism*, if we adhere to the scriptures? Is not proselyte baptism established by the scriptures, beyond question, if there were no other writings in existence? Did not John baptize proselytes to his doctrine, or those whom he made disciples? Did not the first disciples of Christ baptize others, who professed to acknowledge his divine mission? (John iv. 1, 2.) And this, near three years before that charge was given to the apostles, in which you suppose the rite of baptism to have been instituted. And after that commission, under which disciples were made from all nations, *were not all proselytes to the doctrine of Christ, whether from the Jews or Gentiles, received with baptism?* Yet you say—“*adieu to proselyte baptism*, if we adhere to the scriptures.” But perhaps you mean—*adieu* in that case to the baptism *of proselytes to Judaism*. Well, I might say, with equal force and propriety,—*Adieu* to the existence of such a man as Julius Cæsar, if we adhere to the scriptures; that is, if we reject as false, or doubtful, every fact which does not occur in the scripture. In truth, sir, such scepticism, fairly followed up, would soon land us in an—*adieu* to the scriptures.

With respect to the two “strong objections,” which Philo brings forward (p. 8 and 9.) against the testimony of the rabbinical writers on this subject, I shall refer the consideration of them to the Appendix; being unwilling to perplex the plain reader with learned quotations. But lest any of my readers should overlook the acknowledgment, I must here acknowledge myself indebted to Philo for the detection of a mistake, into which I strangely fell, either from a lapse of memory, or a slip of my pen. I had said, that when heathens became proselytes to the Jews’ religion, “they and their households were baptized *previous to their circumcision*.” (*Thoughts on Baptism*, &c. p. 214.) Now it is certain, as Philo observes, that their baptism was *subsequent* to their circumcision, i. e. with such of them as were circumcised at all: and however immaterial the mistake, I thank him for correcting it. But how he could intimate that I have drawn any inference from the mistaken order, which I accidentally assigned, or that his correction affects my reasoning in the slightest degree, I am utterly at a loss to conjecture. The intimation no doubt gives a colour of importance to his correction, which I totally deny belongs to it; while I readily admit its truth and justice.

I had accounted for the question proposed to John by the Priests and Levites, (John i. 25.) *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?* from the acquaintance of the Jews with the rite of baptism, as importing the recognition of a divine commission in him whose baptism was received: and I suggested that in the same view we may understand, why the Lord Jesus submitted to the baptism of John. With both of these observations Philo is much dissatisfied. “The true key for interpreting” that question proposed to John, he conjectures we may find in the *cleansing* nature of the rite. “It seems,” he says, p. 11, “highly probable that the Jews, habituated as they were to baptismal purifications, and accustomed to take the prophetic word in the literal sense to the neglect of the spiritual, understood (as Lightfoot on the authority of the Rabbins says they did) many of the Old Testament pro-

mises concerning the washing away of sin, as predictive of some general Baptism, or purification by water, to be administered at the appearance of the Messiah." One might smile at observing that Philo himself does not scruple, when he thinks it may answer his purpose, to borrow information from these terrible *Jewish Rabbins*, for elucidating a passage of scripture. Or has their polluted testimony, in this instance, been purified in his eyes, by passing to him through the channel of Dr. Lightfoot? But waving this; I am very ready to admit, that they expected a general baptism to take place at the appearance of the Messiah. But I say, they must have expected it as attending a general reception of proselytes, acknowledging his divine commission, and not merely as a literal "purification by water." Blind as they generally were to the spiritual sense of the prophetic word, they were not so absurdly besotted in their minds, as to conceive that mere corporeal cleanness was to be the effect of the Messiah's appearance. And is it not obvious to remark that, if they had been led into such a mistake, as Philo intimates, by "taking the prophetic word in the literal sense," it was not a purification by *baptism*, or immersion in water, that word would have led them to expect, but by the *sprinkling* of water. See Ez. xxxvi. 25. Is. lii. 15.

But "further," says Philo, p. 12, "if the Jews even had understood the New Testament Baptism in your sense, I could only infer that they were involved in your mistake: for according to your definition of the import of that rite, it was one to which the Lord Jesus could not have submitted." If Philo attach any precise meaning to the words which he here employs—the *New Testament baptism*,—he must mean the baptism which John administered to those who became his disciples; it being that baptism, to which the Lord Jesus submitted. And I am ready indeed to admit, that this rite as used by John had an import, precisely similar to the other instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament, as employed in receiving disciples to the Lord Jesus, both before and after his resurrection. But according to my definition of the import of that rite, Philo asserts it was one to which the Lord Jesus could not have submitted. This assertion we shall examine by and by. But Philo seems to have forgotten what he has just before stated, as opposed to my definition of the import of the rite;—that it is "highly probable"—nay indeed that "it seems ascertained to us by the Evangelist John, that the Jews of his day looked upon Baptism as a mode of *purification*;"—that it was a ceremony of a cleansing nature. I might much more reasonably observe to Philo that, according to *his* definition of the rite, it was one to which the Lord Jesus could not have submitted. Much more reasonably than he has proposed some questions to me on the occasion,—(one of them indeed a very strange one)—might I ask him, from what uncleanness did the Lord Jesus desire to be purified by John's baptism?

But now, to answer the only one of Philo's questions, which bears upon the subject. I had observed (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 214.) that from the very question proposed to John, it appears that baptism was a rite, "by which those who were baptized acknowledged—for the *first time*—the divine commission of him whose baptism they received;

and by which he who baptized claimed authority from God to make disciples or proselytes to his doctrine." In order to prove that in this view the Lord Jesus could not have submitted to the baptism of John, Philo demands—"Let me ask you, whose authority did Jesus, in being baptized, acknowledge FOR THE FIRST TIME?" I answer in a word—JOHN'S. To what I stated in my Thoughts, p. 214. that Jesus *thus acknowledged John to be sent of God, and (though greater than he) stooped for the time to become his disciple,*—I have no hesitation in now adding (what I thought was sufficiently implied before) that He appears then FOR THE FIRST TIME to have professed himself a disciple of John's, and to have acknowledged his divine commission.

As to Philo's next question, p. 12. "Did the Redeemer, at his baptism, avow that he had not before believed or even *professed* to believe *the truth concerning himself*?"—it would merit a severity of rebuke, which I am unwilling to employ. I shall only suggest to Philo that he may propose such a question, when he finds me guilty of the absurdity, or something worse than absurdity, of representing Christ as submitting to his own baptism, or becoming a disciple of himself.—Philo concludes this part of his argument triumphantly, with—"thus does all that you have said of the import of Christian baptism come to nought." I shall leave him to enjoy his triumph; and our readers to estimate its justice.

Philo is shocked at the idea, that the Lord Jesus should have "borrowed this rite of baptism from the very people whom he had rebuked for *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*;"—that he should have "enjoined or allowed such a rite, at the very time when he had just finished a work which abrogated all the ceremonies peculiar to that people, though instituted by JEHOVAH himself." (p. 14.) He annexes a note of admiration to his statement of the idea, in order, I suppose, to call the reader's attention to its astonishing impiety or absurdity; and earnestly entreats me to reflect on it seriously. Alas! all this will pass with many a reader for weighty argument, while it all proceeds upon a principle the most fallacious;—namely, that the rites observed by the Jews were intrinsically evil—so evil in themselves, that it would misbecome the Lord Jesus either to enjoin or to *allow* any of them. Some, who may be slow to observe the fallacy of the abstract principle, will perhaps be assisted by applying it to another case. We know that the Jews stately assembled in their synagogues every seventh day: and I believe Philo will admit that the assembling of themselves together every seventh day, and this for similar purposes, was an ordinance of Christ, delivered by his apostles to the christian churches; and that every thing enjoined by them, in his name, has exactly the same authority, as if enjoined directly by the author and finisher of our faith. Now let Philo "seriously reflect," whether there be any thing either more impious, or more absurd, in the idea of Christ's allowing the rite of proselyte baptism, which was before in current practice among the Jews, than there is in the fact of his having enjoined on his disciples the practice of coming together into one place every week,—a practice equally observed by the Jewish people. But in truth, if the religion of Jesus Christ excluded from it, as carnal, every thing used

by carnal men, it would not be fitted as it is for the inhabitants of this earth.

I had said (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 215.) concerning the commission which Christ gave to his apostles, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. that "many greatly misrepresent the force of his command, as if he instituted some new rite, which he directed the apostles to observe;" and in opposition to this view, I stated that "the direction is altogether relative to the persons whom they should proselyte, and to the faith into the profession of which they should initiate them, by that rite which was already in use for such a purpose." To this interpretation Philo objects, (p. 15.) that it "gives to the whole the sense which it would have if part of it were omitted;" and he insists that "our Lord in his commission *gave commandment* to the apostles to *baptize*:" and that the connection of the preceding clause with the word *baptizing* conveys to it "a sense strictly imperative." I am well aware that this is generally taken for granted by the Baptist writers; and has been as generally conceded by their opponents. But it may be worth while to examine the point a little; and the more so, as an author whom Philo quotes, and who is reckoned to have composed 'the best defence of the Baptists ever published,' tells me that this passage in Matt. xxviii. 19, "is indeed the main ground and foundation of the ordinance, and the sole authority and rule, even for the holy apostles themselves, in the matter;" and that "none can be true members of the Christian church, unless they are regularly received according to our Lord's direction" (in that commission) "by *dipping them into the water, and pronouncing that sacred form of words he prescribed.*" Again I find the same writer asserting, that "it has been universally allowed in the church from the beginning . . . that if the person baptized has an erroneous and not a true faith, . . . and if the baptism is not administered in that only regular form of words which *the instructor prescribed*, in the name of the holy and ever-blessed Trinity; that baptism is *ipso facto* null and vacated." Gale's (John) *Reflections*, &c. p. 247, 77. And throughout he, as well as Philo, speaks of it as confessedly certain that the Lord, in that commission, enjoined his apostles to employ the rite of baptism.

Now, I would be glad to know, whether the Lord Jesus did not give to Paul the same commission, which he gave to the eleven previous to his ascension. Yet what is Paul's language about that rite of baptism, which I am told the apostles were imperatively commanded by their divine Master to practise? "I THANK GOD THAT I BAPTIZED NONE OF YOU, BUT CRISPUS AND GAIUS." "CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE, BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL." 1 Cor. i. 15, 17. In order to expose the inconsistency of this language with the idea contended for, is it necessary to suppose an apostle speaking a similar language, about any of those things which were really *imperative* in their commission? *I thank God that I have not attempted to proselyte men of all nations to the faith of Christ:—I thank God that it was not the doctrine of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which I have taught: or, I thank God that I did not teach those, whom I was the instrument of proselyting, to eat the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.* When even the supposition of such language shocks, and

we find an apostle using the same language upon the rite of baptism; shall we admit as proof the confidence of assertion, that the apostles were commanded by the Lord to practise that rite?

Philo does not expressly assert, with Dr. Gale, that the Lord Jesus in his commission to the Apostles *prescribed* the form of words, which they should use in administering baptism. But not only is this sentiment commonly prevalent, among those who conceive that he instituted the rite in that commission; but both sentiments are closely connected together in their origin. They both originate in an erroneous translation of the passage, which might escape the observation of unlettered readers, but which ought not to have imposed either upon Dr. Gale or Philo. Upon this it is needless to enter into any learned disquisition; as there is no smatterer in Greek who can be ignorant, that the original runs—not *baptizing them in the name*—but *baptizing them INTO the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost*. The change of the preposition in our translation has contributed to the vulgar error of supposing, that Christ here enjoins his apostles to use a certain form of words in baptizing proselytes: and this has contributed to the opinion, that he here also institutes the rite of baptism. Whereas it is certain that nothing like the former is really intended by the precept; but that the words convey a command relative to the doctrine, or faith, into which the apostles should initiate men of all nations. The *name* of God, in the language of scripture, is his revealed character; or that doctrine, which declares what he is.

This observation, plain as it is, goes to establish the assertion that at least the *leading* idea, which is to be annexed in that commission to the word *baptizing*, is not its primitive sense of *dipping*; (for, fond as the Baptists are of contending for that literal meaning of the Greek verb, they will hardly attempt to render the passage—*dipping them into the name, &c.*) but that secondary signification of initiating into, or proselyting to, a doctrine, which the word derives from the rite stately attendant on such proselytism, and expressive of it. Every one, at all skilled in language, knows how frequently the radical sense of a word is absorbed in its derivative signification. Of this indeed we have many instances in the use of this very word in scripture. The apostle Paul, 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, &c. guarding the Corinthian Church against carnal confidence in their *profession* of being Christ's disciples, reminds them that—"All our fathers were under the cloud and passed through the sea, and were all *baptized unto Moses* in the cloud and in the sea: yet with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." Here he expresses the general *profession*, which all the Jewish people made, of being *Moses' disciples*, in following him through the sea, by their being all *baptized unto him* in the sea; although upon that occasion no rite of baptism can be thought of. And when the same apostle elsewhere declares, Gal. iii. 27. "As many of us as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ,—are all one in Christ Jesus;" are we to understand him as asserting this of all, who have undergone the rite of Christian baptism? Or not rather of all, who have received the doctrine of Christ, who (as he expresses it in

another passage, 1 Cor. xii. 13.) *by one spirit are all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one spirit?*

With respect indeed to the opinion, which Philo and the other Baptist writers assume to be just, that the rite of baptism was instituted by the Lord Jesus in that commission which he gave to his apostles after his resurrection; it is contradicted by the fact of not only John's having practised that rite, but the disciples of Christ also previous to his sufferings. The Evangelist tells us that "the Pharisees heard, that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John: though Jesus himself" he adds—as if to guard us against the supposition that Christ enacted the observance of the rite—"though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." (John iv. 1, 2.) Whatever then be the origin of the rite, its origin cannot with any shew of reason be derived from the apostolic commission, inasmuch as it was certainly in existence so long before, and employed before even in receiving disciples to the Lord Jesus. We have seen moreover that the words of the commission, fairly interpreted, convey a precept concerning the doctrine, into which disciples should be initiated; and from one of the apostles we have heard a language, which appears inconsistent with the notion that he considered them as at all conveying a precept concerning the initiatory rite. But even supposing the contrary of all this could be established,—supposing it even admitted that the rite of baptism was enacted in that commission by the divine authority of Christ;—I shall hereafter confirm what I advanced, that the Baptists of this day could derive no real support from the concession;—that the baptism for which they contend, however similar in name and form, is a thing essentially different in its nature and circumstances from that which any of the apostles administered.

At present, I would take notice of another assumption which they make, and which has long appeared to me unwarrantable. Besides assuming that Christ there commanded his apostles to *baptize*, and that it was in compliance with this command that they, or others under their immediate direction, employed the rite; they also assume that the rite is therefore to be employed by Christians to the end of the world. This is an inference, which I confess does not seem to me to be valid; even if the premises from which it is derived were conceded. The commission given to the apostles was given peculiarly and *exclusively* to them: and it would not follow, from *their* being commanded to baptize, that any at this day are either commanded or authorized to baptize; no more than it follows from the charge, which they received, of going into all the world to preach the gospel, that any others sustain a similar commission. This observation, I own, is rather an *argumentum ad hominem*; and applies with most force to those, who trace the institution of Christian baptism to that apostolic commission. They, in taking upon them to baptize, seem to usurp something little short of the apostolic character.

I had said (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 215.) that "much stress has been laid upon the order of the words in our Lord's commission to his apostles; as if, because their teaching—or making disciples of—all

nations is mentioned before their baptizing them, it is therefore designed to preclude their baptizing any who were not capable of being *taught*," &c. Philo (p. 15.) positively denies that he lays much stress upon that order; and says that he has little occasion to insist upon it. Yet he goes on immediately to assert, that he does "plainly observe a connection between the baptism there commanded, and the *PREVIOUS teaching* which respects the truth of the gospel." And he closes the paragraph with a remark, that the apostles could not have "adopted a practice which the command has absolutely excluded—that of baptizing any who did not profess to believe their testimony." Now it is truly surprising, not that Philo should employ this argument, an argument which the Baptists commonly put forward against the baptism of the infant children of proselytes along with their parents,—but that he should not perceive his inconsistency, in denying that he lays any great stress upon the order of the words in our Lord's commission to his apostles, while the whole of his argument proceeds on this very ground. I had observed in my *Thoughts on Baptism*, with the brevity with which I express myself in the whole of that tract, that "this is one of the many instances, in which arguments on the subject appear to me most unwarrantably strained, while they carry an imposing colour of plausibility." Philo having adopted the argument in the very passage in which he disowns it, I must now endeavour to expose its fallacy: and I believe the way in which it may be most successfully exposed to ordinary readers, is by supposing a case so exactly parallel, that the very same argument might as reasonably be advanced, while the conclusion which Philo attempts to draw by it would be confessedly false. And to give him every advantage, I will model the supposition so as to fall in with his opinion, that the word *baptizing* was intended to convey an injunction as to the rite to be employed in receiving proselytes.

Had it at any period entered into the divine economy to have the law of Moses as universally diffused as the gospel of Christ, we may well suppose that the commission to those, who should have been sent to publish it through the earth, would have run in such words as these:—*Go ye into all the world, and publish the law of Moses, making disciples of all nations—(or men of all nations)—circumcising them in the name of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; teaching them to observe all the precepts delivered in the holy Mount.* Now, under such a commission, how would they who received it have acted? Would they not have circumcised not only the adults, who professed to believe their testimony, but also the youngest children of those adults, as passing into the same religious community with their parents? That this, according to the law of Moses, would have been practised under such a commission, is indubitable: yet this practice Philo might with equal fairness arraign as "absolutely excluded" by the terms of their commission, inasmuch as those infants did not and could not at the time profess to believe their testimony; and there was (as he might say) a plain connection between the circumcision there commanded, and the *previous teaching* of the divine authority of the law of Moses. In the case I have supposed,

this argument would have confessedly been invalid. Has the same argument then, in a case perfectly parallel, any real force? Nor let any here so far mistake my reasoning, as to conceive it derived from any supposed analogy between the rites of circumcision and baptism; or to conceive it refuted by urging the peculiar characters of the Jewish economy, under which infants were circumcised. Those considerations have nothing to do with my argument. My argument is simply this: that the inference which Philo and so many Baptists draw from the terms of the apostolic commission, as if they excluded the baptism of all who were not capable of *previous* teaching, can have no weight; as in the case I have supposed we must conceive that the commission might run in a precisely similar form, while it is acknowledged that no such conclusion could be drawn.

As to the Greek criticism which Philo introduces into the same paragraph, (p. 16.) with an observation that "it cannot have escaped" me, I would briefly say that he is mistaken; and that I have no doubt I could satisfy himself, that his remark has no real foundation in the genius of the language. But as I loathe the ostentation of learning upon these subjects, I gladly dismiss the criticism, as a matter upon which we need not dispute: for I am as remote, as he can be, from the idea that the apostles were commanded to baptize *nations*. Numerous are the instances, in which the expression *all nations* is equivalent with *men of all nations*.

Philo appears in the next paragraph to admit that, at least *if* baptism were employed in receiving proselytes to the Jews' religion, the youngest children of those proselytes were baptized with their parents. But to my observation that here we have an instance of children passing into the same religious community with their parents,—and this in the case of persons who were not Jews by birth, but who came over to the Jews' religion from heathenism;—Philo rather peremptorily replies that my "distinction is an unmeaning one." (p. 17.) For that "the children of proselytes must have been admitted into the Jewish communion, *on the very same grounds* as the children of native Jews, because the parent at his admission was considered to have become as a *natural Jew*—an Israelite in *all things*." I really know not which to admire most, the assertion, or the confidence with which the assertion is made, that the distinction is an *unmeaning* one between those who were Jews by birth, as the natural descendants of Abraham, and those who passed from the Gentile world into the Jewish communion. I would ask Philo whether this distinction, which he rejects as *unmeaning*, be not a *real difference*. And observe, it is not the parity of privileges that I controvert; it is a difference of natural descent that I state: and that difference is indubitably certain in fact. You but attempt to cover its reality by the expression of—"becoming as a natural Jew—an Israelite in all things." Very true: but will you assert that he became—a *natural Jew*, an Israelite in fleshly descent from Abraham? Certainly not; and as certainly the difference was a *real one*, and the distinction is not *unmeaning*.

In truth, the Baptist writers here play a very strange part. When pressed with any arguments borrowed from the prescribed

treatment of children under the Mosaic law, they repel all with the remark that this law was given to the Jews, and that Jews were Jews by *birth*, and inherited their privileges in consequence of *natural descent* from Abraham. When an instance is adduced of their being bound to employ similar treatment towards the children of those, who were not Jews *by birth* at all, nor any *natural* descendants from Abraham;—O! then we are told that the distinction is an *unmeaning* one: these persons had become—“*as natural Jews.*” Why, yes; they and their children did pass into the same religious communion with natural Jews, and did partake of all their privileges. But is not this the very thing that I urge, as irreconcilable with the former part of the baptist argument. For how, and on what ground, did they thus become *as natural Jews*? Not by natural descent; not by a transmutation of the blood of which they were born: but (as I said, *Thoughts*, &c. p. 216.) “the adults, as professing the Jews’ faith; and the children, as passing into the same religious community with their parents, and as those who were to be educated in that profession.” This account of the fact Philo contemptuously rejects; and gravely tells me, as the true account, that they and their children had equal privileges with natural Jews, because—they “became—*as natural Jews:*” that is, that it was so—because it was so. But whatever purposes may be answered by treating my remark as an *unmeaning* one, or by confidently putting forward such a truly unmeaning reply; it is certain that we have here an instance,—and an instance sanctioned by divine authority, of infant children being regarded as connected with a religious community, not on the ground of natural descent from Abraham, but on account of the religious profession of their parents.

I have thus asserted, against Philo’s objections, the existence of proselyte baptism among the Jews, as a rite indubitably practised by them less than a century after the time of the apostles, and then considered by them to be of the remotest antiquity. As to the sense in which they understood the rite, the second thing which Philo says my argument requires to be established, I have shewn that there is no real difference between us. As a cleansing rite, it was understood in a cleansing significancy; and was employed (as he does not attempt to controvert) on the reception of proselytes from the Gentile world, themselves and their youngest children being baptized. Let me here add on the same unquestionable authority—the concurrent testimony of their own writers—that they did not think of baptizing the children born to the converts, after their transition into the Jewish communion.—That the same rite was practised on the reception of converts to the Christian faith, is unquestionable from scripture; and that it was understood in the same import, as a rite of cleansing significancy in receiving proselytes, I know not how Philo can question; though he marks it as the third thing I have to prove.—That it did not derive its origin, as Philo and so many others intimate, from the commission given to the apostles just before Christ’s ascension, I have established also from scripture; it being certain, not only that John the Baptist employed the same rite in receiving disciples, but that it was practised by the first disciples of Christ himself previous to his crucifixion.—That the rite of baptism is not the thing primarily

intended in that commission, by the words *baptizing them in the name*, &c. I have proved from an examination of the real import of the original language.— That the words were not even secondarily intended to *enjoin* the observance of that rite, I think I have shewn to be more than probable, from the language of the apostle Paul upon the subject.

And now when I said (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 215.) “I cannot but think that the apostles, in observing that rite of baptism, would be regulated by the current practice of their country, as to the circumstances of administering it, unless they received some contrary instructions from their Master;” it is evident from the following context, that by the *circumstances of administering it* I intend the persons whom they would baptize: that is, that they would baptize those who became proselytes to their doctrine, with their households, or youngest children, and no others. Against this presumption, Philo urges (p. 13.) the various *minutiæ* of observance prescribed by the Rabbins in the rite of proselyte baptism, to which the apostles confessedly did *not* conform. But it is obvious to remark, that the circumstances of which I spoke relate to the intrinsic nature and acknowledged import of the rite; while those which he brings forward are accidental and foreign from its essence—of a superstitious nature and ceremonial exactness, such as the Jewish teachers multiplied, not only in the case of baptism, but in the rite of circumcision; and such as we might expect that the apostles would alike disregard in each.

But whatever independent weight there may be in the presumption which Philo attempts to invalidate, let it be observed that the whole force of the scriptural testimony which we have upon the subject coincides with that, which I have stated as inherently probable. From the writings of the apostles we learn that the proselytes to Christianity—those who were converted to the christian faith from having never before professed it—were baptized, they and their households: and we do not find a single instance recorded there, or most remotely intimated, in which the apostles baptized any others. It is not therefore from the scripture that the practice of the modern Baptist can be derived, in which persons are baptized who have never professed any other than the christian faith, and baptized upon a supposed credibility in their profession. I wave for the present the question, whether we are to consider infant children as included in the households, said to be baptized by the apostles along with the heads of them: only observing that if they were not baptized at that time, we have no reason *from scripture* to imagine that they were baptized at any other.

Philo concludes this part of his subject with—“so much for Jewish Proselyte Baptism;”—apparently very well satisfied with his imaginary success, in overturning what I had stated upon that topic. I was very brief in my statement, and have been reluctantly forced by him to enlarge the statement, and to vindicate it against his very unreasonable attack. I shall now gladly dismiss this point, with somewhat more sobriety than he takes his leave of it; though with a full persuasion of having sufficiently repelled his objections. And I would only remind him, that whatever I have said, either in my former Pamphlet, or in this, upon the Jewish custom of baptizing

proselytes, constitutes no part of the *foundation* on which I oppose his principles; but has been introduced merely to illustrate, and afford additional confirmation to the arguments derived from scripture,—in which I shall now proceed to follow him. So that, even if he had been as successful as he thinks himself, in refuting the existence of such a custom, or its application to the questions at issue between us, he would have but succeeded in depriving the subject of an illustration, which sets it in a clearer light; but without invalidating any one of the fundamental supports, on which the opinions he opposes rest. That illustration however, or any other which throws light upon the scriptures—(from whatever source it may be derived)—I have not thought myself at liberty to surrender without cause.

Before I proceed I must correct an inaccuracy, or ambiguity, in Philo's statement of my opinions. He speaks of me (p. 18.) as maintaining, that “the *infant* children of believers ought to be considered, and are acknowledged in the scriptures, as disciples.” I have no where said any thing, which can be fairly interpreted in that extent: nor is it language that I think any one can hold, in the strict sense of the words, without absurdity. An *infant*—a mere infant—cannot certainly be justly considered as a disciple; for it is incapable of being taught. The word *disciple*, both in the Greek and Latin languages, means a *learner*,—one that is receiving instruction. And when we take the appellation of CHRIST'S *disciples*, perhaps attention to this simple and proper meaning of the word would be profitably calculated to check the vanity of present attainments in knowledge. To the *infant* children of christians the word, in this sense, is obviously inapplicable: and to apply it to them in another, as importing the connection in which the Providence of God has placed them from their birth,—(as it were in the school where, as they advance in years, they will become the subjects of christian instruction)—would be to involve the question in needless ambiguity. But to withhold it from them after they have become the subjects of christian instruction, and appear to receive it, is as strange a departure from the propriety of language, as the principle on which it proceeds is awfully opposed to the truth of scripture.

I observed (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 216.) that “although real Christianity be not hereditary, yet the *profession* of Christianity (wherever the parents discharge their bounden duty) is hereditary.” To this Philo replies, p. 18. that he “should be obliged to deny the assertion,” if he understood me as intending by the word *profession*, that which conveyed evidence to the parent's mind that the children *knew the grace of God in truth.*” What Philo might consider *evidence* of this, I am really very much at a loss to know. But in place of the word *evidence*, which is not in this connection a very suitable one, let us substitute the expression—*a scriptural ground for hope, that the children know the grace of God in truth*; or rather (in order to avoid the perverted meanings, which the various systems of popular conversion have attached to the latter phrase) let us say—“a scriptural ground for hope, that the children believe the true gospel of the grace of God.” And now I assert, what Philo denies, that wherever the parents discharge their bounden duty, such a profession of Chris-

tianity is hereditary, as does afford that ground of hope; though too many parents along with Philo may refuse to entertain the hope, for which there is a scriptural ground. For I assert that in any, whether young or old, the profession of Christianity—or the profession of admitting as true what the apostles declare in their writings concerning Jesus Christ—is *in itself* a scriptural ground of hope that the person is a child of God and an heir of glory: and that, however light Philo and others may make of that ground of hope, it is unscriptural presumption to reject it without cause. That counterbalancing causes may appear,—such as, discovered ignorance of the meaning of the apostolic testimony, and opposition to it in its true import,—which will render that profession comparatively light, and forbid the hope which it is *in itself* calculated to produce; I readily admit, and have in different passages unequivocally asserted. But unless such appear, and until they appear, the mind is not scripturally regulated which rejects that simple profession. It is obvious that in the mass of professors, by which we are surrounded, such evidences—in opposition to the hope which their professed acknowledgment of the apostolic writings would in itself excite—do too abundantly appear. And so far as I have reason to suppose their children imbibing, under domestic instruction, the false and unscriptural sentiments of their parents, my hope of them is similarly affected: while (as I shall prove more at large hereafter) it would be preposterous to deny even in them the hereditary *profession* of Christianity.

But let me now return to the case of children, whose christian parents discharge their bounden duty. It is at a very early age indeed that such a parent, watching the opening dawn of his child's understanding, and taking pains to explain the words which he employs, may direct its attention to the things of God, and declare to it the simple principles of the gospel of Christ, in language level to its capacity. From that period, I say, the child is to be regarded as a tender disciple in the school of Christ, ignorant indeed of many things, and ready to forget what it has been taught; needing to be continually put in mind and further instructed; carrying with it an evil nature, opposite to all the principles of that divine truth which it is learning: but in all these respects differing nothing from the adult christian. That which it acknowledges to be true—for we know that at the early age of which I speak children do acquiesce without question in the truth of whatever their parents instruct them in—is the everlasting word of the true God, with the belief of which he has declared salvation inseparably connected: and the man, whether intentionally or not, puts a slight upon that word, who slights that admission of its truth, which we find in the child who is brought up under the instruction of it.

Philo appears to be delivered from many of the deadly errors of the popular gospels. But let him and others seriously examine, how far some remaining leaven of them, latent in their minds, may afford origin to the sentiments and practice for which he contends. Few sentiments are more prevalent in the religious world, than that the principles of *vital* christianity are of such a mystic nature, that they can hardly be made intelligible by language: and let them appear at

times to speak ever so explicitly upon some points, it is with an intimation that there is something yet behind,—and that indeed the *essential* part of the thing,—which words cannot explain; the knowledge of which experience indeed may communicate, but of which even the person who has that knowledge can convey no idea to another. The contrary view of the gospel of Christ, as a perfectly simple truth, which any one may be made to understand by explanation, and is level to the capacity of a mere child,—this they think inconsistent with the *spiritual* nature of the gospel, and that it leaves no room for the necessary operation of the Spirit of God. Without now showing in detail how this popular sentiment strikes at the very root of the real gospel, I would observe that it is sufficiently refuted by an appeal to the history of the apostolic conduct. From the whole of that history it is manifest, that wherever the apostles had an opportunity of declaring their testimony concerning Jesus Christ, they never appear to have admitted the thought that they were not understood by their hearers. In fact they spoke a plain intelligible language: and the question was—not whether their hearers *understood* what was told them—but whether they *believed* it; two questions evidently distinct. It is obvious that a man may understand the meaning of a declaration made to him, and not be a whit nearer believing it; though it is impossible indeed that he should believe a statement, which he does not understand. In truth, it was because the apostles spoke their meaning so clearly, and were understood so well, that they were the objects of such scorn and indignation to those who rejected their testimony. But all those who professedly gave credence to that testimony were regarded by them at once as fellow-disciples, and as the dear children of God; were regarded with hope—not grounded upon any thing fine in those persons,—but derived simply from the glorious nature of that divine truth which they acknowledged: and this, notwithstanding the intrinsic uncertainty whether their acknowledgment of it was a mere professional assent to that, of which they were not really convinced, or was the effect of that persuasion of the truth, which the divine Spirit alone can produce in any. This was one of the secret things belonging to the Lord God, into which the Apostles never attempted to penetrate; though its inscrutability be considered by many now as a sufficient ground for rejecting what is manifest. And I add, that these first disciples—amidst all the errors which appeared in them, and all the evils which they fell into, (some of them errors so deep, and evils so foul, that many professors of this day would pronounce they were utterly incompatible with discipleship)—yet continued to be regarded and treated as disciples of the Lord Jesus, as long as they continued to admit the Apostolic instructions, in opposition to their errors, and the Apostolic admonitions and rebukes, in opposition to the evils of their conduct.

Now there is no question but the child, instructed from its earliest infancy by the Christian parent in the doctrine of Christ, will at least while a mere child—appear to admit the truths which it is taught. I say there is no question upon this: for the persons whom I oppose even urge the objection, that young children acquiesce in

any thing—whether true or false—which their parents take pains to inculcate. The fact is certain; while their inference from the fact is most fallacious. But this being so, upon what reasonable or scriptural ground can the parent set aside his child, at that period, from the number of Christ's disciples? Upon what ground can he refuse to regard it with hope, as a partaker of that great salvation which accompanies a belief of the truth? By what right can he take it for granted, that its apparent acquiescence in the instructions it receives is but apparent? Upon what principles can he view the actual state of that child, brought up in the doctrine of Christ, and acknowledging a truth so divinely glorious, as the same with the state of one, to whose mind nothing as ever been presented but a system of heathenish lies? When the Christian parent first succeeds in presenting to the mind of his child the simple testimony concerning Christ, in language that he conceives intelligible to its tender capacity, and the child apparently assents to what it hears; I desire to know whether Philo would immediately regard it even with the *faintest hope* as a disciple. If he would, he concedes what I contend for, and what he has hitherto opposed. If he would not, but altogether shuts out the thought from his mind, I may well ask him, why he has declared to it that truth, which he considers it a matter of course that it will then disbelieve, even while it assents to his instruction?

But it is, in various forms, objected by many, that the young child might be brought up in the profession of Mahometanism, as well as of Christianity; that if its parent told it the fables of the Koran, instead of the truths of the Gospel, they would equally obtain its credence: and this they consider a sufficient ground for regarding and treating it as if it were a Mahometan. I allow the fact in its fullest extent—I allow that the young child does not think of questioning the truth of any thing, which its parent takes pains to inculcate on it. But in this fact we have only to see with admiration, that God has not given us an impossible command, nor one inconsistent with the other principles of his word, in commanding us to bring up our children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, as his disciples: that he has so constituted our nature, that the Christian parent who aims at acting upon the precept will find in his children—at least in early life—that professed acquiescence in the doctrine of Christ, which the command supposes, and without which it would be inconsistent to proceed in that course. But the objectors forget that the view and treatment of our children, which I contend for, springs from the divine nature and truth of that doctrine, in which they are to be instructed, and from its essential opposition to every system of false religion: so that when I admit that my child, if educated by a Mahometan, would now be giving credit to the fables of the Koran, instead of the truths of the gospel, it does not follow at all that he is to be regarded as if he were a professed disciple of Mahomet, instead of Jesus Christ. Which of us, who is now rejoicing in the truth, can say that, if he had been brought up to the present hour in a pagan country far from the joyful sound of the gospel, he would not now be a benighted worshipper of dumb

idols, dead in trespasses and sins? Yet does this humbling consideration at all lessen the joyfulness of the gospel, or the preciousness of that divine seed through which he has been begotten again unto a lively hope?

But Philo goes on to urge me with the following question, p. 18. 19. "If you hold the children of believers as disciples *on account of their profession*, why do you refuse to other little children the character and privileges which *their christian profession* demands? For while you give one and the same validity to *the profession* of merely nominal christians and to that of real believers, you have no right to hold a different language with respect to *the profession* in which each of these descriptions of persons will or may bring up their children." I have already sufficiently intimated the reason, why I cannot regard the children of the merely nominal christian with the same present hope, as the children of him who appears a disciple indeed. So far as they are brought up in any system of religion, I have no reason to suppose that it will not be the false system which I see in their parent. Yet I will not hesitate to say that any of them, into whose hands the parent merely puts the scriptures, as the volume of divine truth, I am warranted by the nature of that truth to regard with more of present hope, than the children whom their pagan parent is bringing up in paganism. But when Philo talks of my "*giving the same validity* to the profession of merely nominal christians and to that of real believers;" he holds a language as mischievously ambiguous, as if it were intentionally so. What common reader would not suppose from his words, that I attribute to the profession of each class the same weight of credibility,—that I regard each class as alike *christians* in the same important sense? Yet Philo *knows* the contrary, and cannot adduce an expression of mine to support the intimated imputation. What then does he mean? Why that besides those professed Christians, who appear to be what they profess, I acknowledge and speak of other *professed* christians, who evidently are not what they profess. It is strange, that I should have to vindicate the propriety of that language, to any man acquainted with the language of scripture: but I shall have occasion to return to it in the progress of my reply.

Philo adds: "Indeed it appears plainly to me that however you would make your supposed difference between believers' children and others appear to turn upon *profession*, it must, if it subsist at all, arise from their fleshly relation to believing parents. And . . . I am not surprised at your unwillingness to speak that sentiment out." To a reader of less shrewd intelligence than Philo it might have pretty plainly appeared, that I consider the difference of which he speaks *as arising from the difference of the doctrines, in which the children of believers and of others are instructed*; a difference, the magnitude of which I cannot surrender to Philo's suspicions. But as to the *fleshly relation*, to which he has discovered that in my *secret sentiments* I attribute the difference, I do really wish to *speak out*. And I now tell Philo, that he is so widely mistaken that, if a child standing in no fleshly relation to me—if the child of a Mahometan—were committed from its infancy to my absolute care and management, I

would deem myself bound to bring it up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, exactly as if it were my own. When you next take up your pen, Philo, be not so forward to impute to your opponent sentiments which he has not avowed, or to imagine that you have succeeded in penetrating into sentiments which he is willing to conceal.

I had observed (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 216.) "that in the apostolic writings, the children of those who were members of the several churches are considered as bearing that relation to the churches, which occasions the apostles to address them with exhortations and admonitions, such as they never addressed to those whom they did not consider as disciples." Here Philo remarks, p. 19,—“Of this you give one example (from Eph. chap. 6.) and it must be confessed that the manner in which you introduce it is most *judicious*. Who would conclude from your expressions, that to this *ONE* passage you looked for your main support?” Any one, who should so conclude, would be mistaken. At the same time I must protest against the intimation that a decisive precept of scripture, harmonizing with the whole analogy of divine truth, is the less binding for not being frequently repeated. It happens indeed that the exhortation, or admonition, given to the children in Eph. vi. is repeated in almost the very same words in Col. iii. 20. But I suspect Philo intended to apply his injudicious and unfair compliment on my *judiciousness* to the subsequent argument, which I ground on the exhortation to *parents*; Eph. vi. 4.; though it be not of that he is speaking in the place. If so, he should recollect, that I expressly referred to various other coincident precepts in the scriptures of the Old Testament; the authority of which he should not so lightly overlook, and I shall hereafter have occasion to assert. In fact, the precept to christian parents in Col. iii. 21. when rightly interpreted, would be found of parallel import. For the *discouragement* of the children, against which the apostle there guards them, is really discouragement in the good ways of the Lord, in which the christian parent is supposed to bring them up; and not any thing affecting merely that moral culture and “propriety of conduct,” which Philo (p. 28.) supposes the apostle to inculcate;—a moral propriety disjoined according to his sentiments from true religion, and therefore inevitably involving in it false. But Philo should have also recollected, when he talks of my looking to *ONE* passage for my main support, that my argument proceeds not merely upon any one detached passage of the word; but is derived from the whole nature of the gospel, illustrated by all the scriptural records concerning the first christians, and confirmed by the express injunctions of the apostles;—that I prove the sentiment and practices, which he contends for, to be contradicted not by this or that passage only of their writings, but by the entire tenor of them.

In the remainder of the paragraph on which I am animadverting, Philo appears to have been so carried away by the heat of composition, that he could not attend to the plain meaning of the passage, to which he has attempted to reply. He quotes an insulated sentence, in which I observe that “it seems to me to be putting a great force upon the passage. to interpret the same expression (children) in the first verse in a sense, which excludes those whom it evidently

is intended to include in the fourth verse." *Thoughts*, &c. p. 216. And then he proceeds (p. 20.) in vehement language to propose to me a string of interrogatories, all formed on the supposition that I meant to infer the *discipleship* of the children mentioned in the fourth verse from the acknowledged discipleship of those addressed in the first: and having fabricated for me this shadow of an argument, he triumphs in exposing its weakness. The vanity of his triumph will be sufficiently manifested by adducing the entire passage, from which he has quoted a detached sentence. Having mentioned that the apostles address the *children* of believers "with exhortations and admonitions, such as they never addressed to those whom they did not consider as disciples;" I go on to observe—"I know the reply which some make—that when the apostle, writing (for instance) to the Ephesian church, gives that exhortation, *Children, obey your parents in the Lord*, &c. he addresses only those *adult* members of the Ephesian church, whose parents were living. That such are included in the admonition I readily admit. But when I read immediately in the fourth verse, *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*,—I cannot but think we are to understand children in a state of childhood, under parental discipline and instruction: and IT SEEMS TO ME TO BE PUTTING A GREAT FORCE UPON THE PASSAGE TO INTERPRET THE SAME EXPRESSION IN THE FIRST VERSE, IN A SENSE, WHICH EXCLUDES THOSE WHOM IT EVIDENTLY IS INTENDED TO INCLUDE IN THE FOURTH VERSE." Here to every attentive and intelligent reader—(I by no means intend to charge Philo with the want of *intelligence*)—two things must at once be evident; that I am contending in that passage about the meaning of the word *children* in the first verse, not (as he supposes) about its meaning in the *fourth*; and that the point I am then establishing is—not (as he supposes) the *discipleship* of the children mentioned, but their *age*. I am proving that we are to understand mere children—"in a state of childhood, under parental discipline and instruction," and not only "*adult* members of the church whose parents were living:" and this point I confirm by remarking that such are evidently intended in the fourth verse. By this time probably Philo is ashamed of his multiplied mistakes, and sensible that my argument so far is perfectly valid;—as valid as the inference would be, that the *servants* exhorted in the fifth verse to be obedient to the masters import the same kind of servants, or *slaves*, towards whom the masters are commanded in the ninth to forbear threatening.

If Philo, thus robbed of his fancied success in refuting an argument which I have no where advanced, should urge that the argument I have advanced is brought to prove a matter, which he does not controvert; I would only observe that I shall shew hereafter that, according to his principles, there could be no such thing as was confessedly in the apostolic days,—young children—in a state of childhood, and yet addressed as disciples of Christ with christian exhortation and admonition. But let me here repeat what I said at the close of that paragraph, on which Philo has so unsuccessfully commented, that "In fact, when that epistle was sent to the Ephc-

sian church, any of the parents who complied with the exhortation addressed in the latter verse to them, would necessarily lead their children to consider the admonition given in the former as directed to themselves." I said that "indeed it is strange how any can for a moment harbour the idea, that the children of christians were not originally considered as *disciples*, who recollect that the apostles were Jews, and who attend to the numerous and solemn precepts in the scriptures of the Old Testament concerning the treatment of children." See Deut. vi. 7. xi. 19. &c. (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 216.) To this Philo replies, p. 21. "I can neither see why a command given to the Jews should be more obligatory upon christians, as you intimate in page 216, because the apostles were Jews; nor how a submission on the part of christians, to such precepts as you refer to, must involve the necessity of their considering their children as *disciples*:" Now in the first place, what I have intimated is—not that these commands are the more obligatory on christians because the apostles were Jews,—but that (however lightly their authority is now rejected) they were certainly regarded as obligatory by the first christians, who were Jews, and continued to think and act as Jews. In the second place, though Philo cannot see why men might not obey these precepts without considering their children as *disciples*; yet any real discernment of the nature of the precepts, and that course of conduct to the children which they involve, would discover the two things to be utterly inconsistent, which he thinks compatible. The Israelites were solemnly enjoined *diligently to teach their children* the words which the Lord commanded them; and this "that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." Ps. lxxviii. 5—7. Now it is indeed an extraordinary assertion, to say that such a course of diligent *teaching* of their children was consistent with not considering them as *disciples*, or *learners* of the things which they were taught. Accordingly we hear the apostle thus expressing himself of one, towards whom this solemn parental duty appears to have been faithfully discharged: "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." 2 Tim. iii. 15. and i. 5. I need not observe to Philo that the words rendered—*from a child*—properly denote *from infancy*; and that the *holy scriptures* mentioned are the scriptures of the Old Testament.

But let me add that, according to the divine constitution of the law given to the Israelites, there could not lawfully remain in their body a child manifesting characters opposite to a disciple, by obstinate resistance to the parental instruction and discipline. The law made provision against the appearance of such a case, by that solemn enactment in Deut. xxi. 18—21. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our

son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: *so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.*" Such was one of the commandments of the holy and righteous law given by the LORD to that chosen people, and to which they nationally professed to be subject;—a law not the less righteous or the less holy in itself, because it was so commonly unattended to and violated by them. Let me call the attention of my Christian readers to a similar precept in Deut. xiii. 6—11. equally calculated to maintain the purity of communion in that professing people. "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him: thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die: because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God. *And all Israel shall hear, and fear;* and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you."

Wherefore do I adduce such precepts from the Jewish scriptures? To oppose an idea which I have found most prevalent, but which I deem most mischievous and profane, that the Jewish dispensation was carnal in its nature, different from and in many respects opposite to true and spiritual religion:—an idea, which those who entertain it often attempt to support by various expressions of the apostle Paul misinterpreted and misunderstood. When he speaks of the Mosaic ordinances as *carnal*, &c. he means not to derogate from the divine sanctity and spirituality of that law which, coming from the only living and true God, and grounded on the revelation of his name, could not be carnal, in the sense in which many now understand the word; and could not contain in it any regulation inconsistent with his true and spiritual worship. Indeed the connection of such phrases in the apostolic writings evidently shews them intended to mark the *typical* nature of the Jewish institutions, and the *temporal* nature of the immediate sanctions of their law: as, in the instances adduced, the rebellious Israelite and he that turned aside to the gods of the nations, was to be cut off from the congregation of Israel, by death judicially inflicted in obedience to the command of the divine lawgiver;—a penalty analogous to and typical of that putting away of offenders from the body of disciples, to which the laws of Christ's kingdom call his subjects in similar cases. But it is important to observe that, according to the law of Moses, the Jewish people—so far as they at any time walked in obedience to it—must have afforded an exhibition of a people *holy unto the LORD*, and separated worshippers of the true God, as really as any of the apostolic churches: and that the spirituality and purity of either dispensation are to be estimated by the intrinsic nature of its truths and precepts, not by the corruption and disobedience of the sinful creatures who

profess to be its subjects. Nay, against the hackneyed observation that under the law of Moses *carnal descent* brought with it the participation in Jewish privileges, I may truly assert that this was no more the case under the law of Moses, than under the law of Christ; that, even according to the former, mere carnal descent was attended with no such consequence, if distinct from the maintenance of the professed faith of the true God, and from apparent subjection to the authority of his law.

But to return : in page 220. of my *Thoughts on Baptism* I introduced an incidental observation on the narrative contained in Acts xv. of the council held at Jerusalem about the circumcision of Gentile converts. Philo appears to admit what I have there stated, that the Judaizing teachers who wanted to enforce that rite were certainly Pædo-baptists ; i. e. that they would have baptized as well as circumcised, the youngest children of those Gentiles who embraced the faith of Christ. But he pronounces the brief remark I made, on the silence of the apostolic letter concerning this, to be "childish in the extreme," (p. 21.) arguing that there is an equal silence on the inconsistency of the principles maintained by those teachers with the glorious *gospel of the grace of God* ; or that, if we are to understand them as censured, "for a denial of the essence of the gospel, then that for which they were rebuked might well absorb any concomitant errors." If I were solicitous to vindicate my observation against the charge of *extreme childishness*, I think I could effectually prove that Philo's reply, whatever manly ingenuity it may possess, is founded upon a false assumption ; and that the apostles, on that occasion, did not consider or intend to mark the principles of those Judaizing teachers, as involving a denial of the essence of the gospel, but that (as I stated it) they reprov'd them "as imposing a burdensome and needless yoke upon the disciples." However, as the subject swells upon my hands, and I introduced that remark merely as an incidental confirmation of what rests upon other broad and firm principles, I shall leave it with a—*valeat quantum*, or cheerfully surrender it to Philo's derision. But I shall not so easily surrender to him an extension of the remark,—namely, that no just doubt can be entertained, but the apostles and all the Jewish proselytes to Christianity considered their children as of the same religious community with themselves ; and, so far as baptism was employed at all to mark their passing into the christian connection, were Pædo-baptists. We have decisive scriptural evidence that they continued to circumcise their children, that they practised the other rites of the Mosaic law, and acted and spoke and thought as Jews, after their conversion to the faith of Christ. We have seen that, according to the precepts of the Old Testament scriptures, they were *bound* to regard and treat their children as disciples of Moses : and now that they were brought to the real belief of what Moses and the prophets testified, shall we suppose—contrary to attested fact and contrary to the reason of the thing—that they cast off subjection to the authority of those precepts ? Made acquainted now with that long-predicted Messiah, who *was a minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the*

fathers, in bringing up their children as disciples of Moses they would necessarily bring them up as disciples of Christ.

Philo indeed intimates great astonishment at my observation (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 220.) that the Jewish proselytes, "in professing to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, in whom were fulfilled all the law and the prophets, did not consider their religion changed." He vehemently asks me (p. 22.) "Can you indeed mean--what I think your words import--that Judaism and Christianity are the same religion?" I do, Philo: I mean to assert, what my words do indeed import, that they are the same religion,—the same in all essential respects. And I beseech you to consider the monstrous falsehood, which is implied in your denial of the assertion;—even that they had a different God for their author and their object. If they both originated in a revelation from the one living and true God, if he be the same unchangeable object held forth to the worshipper in both, they must be essentially the same religion. Nay, your denial of the assertion involves the supposition, that the apostles and first christians were of two different and opposite religions at one and the same time. For that they remained of the Jewish religion is incontrovertible from their history and their language. What says Paul? *I am a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee.—I worship the GOD of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.—I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers, &c.*

But says Philo: "Paul certainly thought his religion changed, when he was converted to the faith of the gospel; and I should give as little for the proselytism of any Jew who did not, as for the Christianity of those who say they have always been christians." (p. 22.) The former part of the observation scarcely merits a reply: it is unworthy a writer of candour and of sense. By the same argument Philo might equally prove that Christianity is not the same religion with that of the apostles, because one who had made a false profession of Christianity would find his religion greatly changed, when brought to the real faith of the apostles. Paul before his conversion to the faith of Christ was indeed professedly of the Jewish religion; but he was an unbelieving and carnal Jew,—one of those to whom Christ himself declared that they believed not the writings of that Moses in whom they trusted. And are we to estimate the intrinsic nature of a religion from those, who really have not that religion, though they profess it? But let me beg of Philo to consider, whether he will so confidently pronounce that Simeon and Anna and Nathanael, and the other believing Jews who were indeed *waiting for the consolation of Israel*, "certainly thought their religion changed," when they were made acquainted with Jesus of Nazareth as that Redeemer for whom they looked. No; their religion was essentially the same before and after: and it was the religion of believing Abel, Abraham, David, the prophets, and the apostles.

As to the latter part of Philo's declaration, I am not disposed to call in question its truth. From the leading sentiments which he contends for, I have reason to fear that he only expresses correctly

the deliberate judgment of his mind, in declaring that he "would give little" for the christianity "of those who say they have always been christians." And I know that it is a most common principle among the *evangelical* professors of this day, that none are real disciples of Christ, unless they can at least recollect a period, when they were in a carnal state and unacquainted with the true gospel. But it is a principle most unscriptural and dangerous, calculated at once to turn the view from that which is alone of essential importance—the truth as it is in Jesus,—to the circumstances of the time and way in which the sinner has been made acquainted with it. That the christianity of the great mass who now say that they have always been christians is vain, I readily admit and openly assert. But their profession is vain and to be disregarded, not because they say they have always been christians, but because they evidence that they are not now christians indeed,—that they disbelieve and oppose the only true doctrine of Christ. But the man, or the child, who now appears to believe that doctrine, affords nothing to impair the credibility of that profession in saying that he *has always been a christian*, that he cannot recollect the period when he did not believe it. Nor have I a doubt that the opposite sentiment is more closely connected, than Philo is aware, with the popular and false gospels which are not the gospel of Christ. It must indeed be owned that those have been so long and so widely current throughout these countries, that a vast majority of their inhabitants may well be supposed to have been brought up in one or another of these corrupt systems of nominal Christianity: and therefore that most of the adults of this generation, who have through mercy been brought to the acknowledgment of the truth, may well be supposed to recollect the time when they were ignorant of it. But is that a reason why any of them should fling aside with scorn the Christian profession of one, who has been *brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*; because there is not within his recollection a period, even of his earliest childhood, when his mind was left to the possession of principles opposite to the gospel of Christ? Paul might as well have questioned the unfeignedness of the faith of Timothy, because (as he himself testifies) Timothy *from his infancy had known the holy scriptures*.

But here Philo has a sweeping argument to disprove the existence or possibility of any such thing, as persons from their infancy believing the scriptures: and very confident he seems of the conclusive force of his argument; and charges the opposite sentiment with being "awfully unscriptural." Let us examine it.—"To that church [the Ephesian] the apostle says (Eph. ii. 3.) *We ALL—were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*: which could have been true only of some of them, upon your supposition, even of as many of them, as had been given *in the usual way* to profess the gospel; while the rest, I mean your supposed disciples, whether actually infants, or from infancy growing or grown up in the profession you speak of, had been disciples from their birth; and so there never was a time when they *were children of wrath*. Are you backward to own such a sentiment? Then talk not of persons being disciples from infancy." p. 24.—It is my earnest wish not to *shrink* from any part of this argument; and

that Philo and others may follow me in the cool and serious consideration of it.

In the first place then, from what I have already observed (p. 275.) we must throw off all those phrases of *infant discipleship*, &c. which Philo introduces here and so often throughout his pamphlet, as calculated only to perplex the subject, by introducing an idea intrinsically absurd indeed, but never advanced by his opponent. In the next place, let us look at the argument, stripped of every rhetorical appendage. It is this. *If there were any children of the believers at Ephesus, who had grown up from their infancy in the profession of the gospel of Christ, it could not be truly said of them that they were children of wrath by nature. But Paul addressing the Ephesian church says—we ALL were by nature children of wrath. Therefore there were no such children at Ephesus.* I believe Philo cannot object to this plain statement of his argument: and it all proceeds upon this principle, that none can be scripturally said to have been by nature children of wrath, unless they have grown up to some more or less advanced period of life in a state of nature and of natural unbelief. But is this indeed the case? We read of one, John the Baptist, who was *filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb*; (Luke i. 15.) and whatever be the precise import of that expression, it is obviously inconsistent with the idea of his having grown up in a state of nature and unbelief. We have the testimony of Paul himself concerning Timothy, that *from his infancy he knew the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation.* (2 Tim. iii. 15.) Without adducing any other instances, I would ask Philo—were these men sinners even as others, and *by nature children of wrath even as others*? If they were, then he abandons the very fundamental principle of his argument. If they were not, then he must retract the charge of an “awfully unscriptural” sentiment, which he advances against me for maintaining, that men may be from their early childhood in a state of grace and believers in the true God. Then also, according to his argument, he must hold that Paul would have been obliged to restrict his assertion in addressing the Ephesian Church, if Timothy had then happened to be at Ephesus, and to have excepted him from the number of those who were by nature children of wrath.

But, in fact, Philo takes a very confined view of that expression, when he conceives it to mark that the persons, to whom it applies, had continued for some length of time in their natural state. It marks the awful character of that natural state, not the duration of it: and when I say—of the natural state—I mean that which is the state of every man, since the fall, independent of the divine mercy, and that revelation of it which is made in the word and by the spirit of truth. In this most important sense of it, the expression was as applicable to John the Baptist and to Timothy as to any heathen; and is universally applicable to every descendant of fallen Adam. Their *natural* character is that of sinners, ungodly, dead in sins, justly exposed to wrath, without God and without hope in the world. Such are we all *by nature*: nor would it be the less true of any one that he was such by nature, although, through the divine mercy and power, he had believed and rejoiced in the truth from the

time that he was capable of having it declared to him; and in more advanced life could not recollect the period, when he had not believed and rejoiced in it. That which he believes is distinct from and opposed to all the principles of his corrupt, fallen, and benighted nature. It is a revelation of divine mercy for the recovery of creatures, whose natural state is so awful; and it is by divine mercy and divine power that he has been given to believe it, and is kept in the faith of it.

I am well aware, that to many professors of religion the case which I suppose—of a person believing the gospel from his earliest childhood—appears inconsistent with that conviction of the utter wickedness of his own heart or nature, which is certainly part of the humbling discovery included in the knowledge of the truth. Those men think, or argue as if they thought, that it is only or chiefly by a retrospect to our unconverted and unbelieving state that we can see the ungodly characters of our own nature; and of course they imagine that a case, which precludes that retrospect, must necessarily leave room for every false, and self-exalting conception upon that subject. But in truth they know little of the *plague of their own hearts*, who find the greatest evidence of its wickedness by looking back to their unconverted state. It is after a sinner has believed the truth, and according as he is kept abiding in it, that he progressively finds, *that in himself, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing*, (Rom. vii. 18.); not merely that this flesh was evil when it reigned in him, but that it is now nothing but evil,—a principle *contrary* to that spirit which is good, opposed to the truth and to all the influence of the truth, and this unceasingly. And, however contrary the assertion be to those views of the work of the Spirit which are popular in the religious world, I am bold to assert that the child of God, while led by the Spirit of God walking and rejoicing in the light, has in his daily course notices of the ungodliness of his own nature more awful, than any which its uncontrolled wickedness in the days of his ignorance and unbelief afforded.

I have met others who appear to apprehend, that the views for which I contend of the christian duty of bringing up our children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, will be found in some degree to trench upon that important truth of scripture, which declares that christians are *born of God*—are *HIS workmanship*, and not man's. This idea involves in it a very pernicious mistake, and proceeds on the opinion—either formed and avowed, or latent in the mind—that God does not work by secondary means; or that a thing in which human instrumentality is employed excludes divine agency. Nor is there any wildness of enthusiasm or superstition, which might not be traced to this imagination. I am as persuaded, as any of those whom I oppose, that without the agency of the Spirit of God the most diligent parental instruction will be ineffectual, whatever may be the temporary appearances in the child:—that here, as in the declaration of the gospel to adults, one may plant and another may water, but it is God and God alone that *giveth the increase*;—that it is *HIS exclusive work to persuade the minds of young or old, that the things declared in his words are true, and to keep them in that persuasion.*

But how is this inconsistent with his annexing that blessing to the means, which in this instance he has himself prescribed? The believer knows that it is HE, *who causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man.* (Ps. civ. 14.) Yet who but an enthusiast, or an infidel, would set this truth in opposition to the importance of human tillage? Nay, I will assert that—if it had been so ordered in the divine counsels that the conversion of sinners to the faith of Christ should follow the hearing of him from the testimony of men, as regularly and with as few exceptions as the growth and fructification of corn follows the labour of man in planting it,—faith would be no less the gift and work of GOD, than it is now when few comparatively credit the report. They take indeed a narrow view of divine agency, who think that the infrequency of its operation is necessary to ascertain its reality.

Philo appears to pride himself in the discovery that the *one important sense*, in which I do not think it true that there is no difference between the children of believers and of others, “must be that in which the parents are distinguished from unbelieving parents, namely in that they are justified in Christ Jesus;” (p. 23.) and he argues hotly to prove that this must be my meaning: while he seems to regard the sentiment as one so monstrous, that it needs only to be stated in order to be exposed. But you need not be apprehensive, Philo, that I shall shrink from the assertion of any sentiment on the subject, which I really hold: and the discovery you have made I am very willing to have brought forward to examination, with only such modification of it as is necessary to explain my meaning accurately. Laying aside, then, your talk of my “favoured *infants*,” and the “admission of *infants* into a church of Christ,” &c.—language which I have already shewn to be unfair, and only adapted to raise a cloud about the subject,—and observing that I speak not of the children of believers indiscriminately,—(who may, as any others, gainsay and oppose the doctrine of the Lord)—but of those children who *appear* to receive that instruction and admonition of the Lord, in which the believing parents are commanded to bring them up;—with this correction and restriction of your statement, Philo, I freely avow (however astonishing it may appear to you) that I do regard such children—the youngest of them—as “justified in Christ Jesus,” just as truly and just upon the same ground as their believing parents. And from the nature of the gospel of the grace of God, revealing that name in which is salvation, and which stands essentially opposed to every false god, I hold myself bound—as long as I see that apparent acknowledgment, whether in the believing parent, or in his youngest child—to regard either of them alike with the hope of the gospel, as vessels of mercy, as children of GOD, as sanctified by the truth. But when you go on to assert that “*no man* is warranted by the scriptures to make a distinction between considering or treating any persons as disciples and their *being* disciples,” you advance a very strange assertion indeed. It is absolutely false in the sense which your words would seem to bear; for I may be bound for a length of time to consider and treat as a disciple one, who shall afterwards be manifested as a child of the devil. But if (as I suspect) you intend only that no

man has a right to distinguish between *considering* or *treating* men as disciples and entertaining the hope that they *are* disciples; your meaning is indeed very innocent, but very futile: and the absurd distinction which you protest against is one that, I believe, you will no where find I have employed.

Philo proceeds to labour hard for the purpose of interpreting the precept—of bringing up our children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*—in such a way, as to shew that it does not involve the necessity of considering or treating them as *disciples*: and indeed he has undertaken a difficult task. But let us hear him. “To give the name *disciples* to any infants [children], of whom we would hesitate to say that they are BELIEVERS, is to use the word in a sense altogether unwarranted by the New Testament.” (p. 26.) Very true indeed. But the fact is, that in contending that children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord must be regarded as *disciples*, I actually mean that they must be regarded as *believers*,—believers of that doctrine of the Lord, in which they are instructed and from which they are admonished. Philo would have saved himself a good deal of writing, if he could have persuaded himself that I really mean to assert this principle, which seems to him so monstrously absurd. But he tells me (p. 27.) that “a disciple, strictly speaking, is *one who knows the Lord Jesus Christ and loves him in sincerity*.” Be it so; though I must again tell him, what I have already observed, that a *disciple*—strictly speaking—is a *learner*; as I think Philo himself will not upon consideration deny, though I fear he thinks a disciple a much finer kind of person than I do. However waving this; I allow that one who is a disciple indeed is one, who *knows the Lord Jesus Christ and loves him in sincerity*. But by *knowing* him, I understand simply knowing or crediting the true scriptural testimony concerning him: and by *loving him in sincerity*, or *incorruption*, I understand that influence which the uncorrupted gospel always has where it is received,—that new mind of attachment to the glorious object exhibited in the gospel, which is the mind of faith. But what is all this observation of Philo’s to the purpose? Is it then so incredible to him, that the youngest child who is diligently instructed in the doctrine of Christ, in simple intelligible language, should believe those things which it assents to? or that, believing them, its faith should *work by love*? I really have more confidence in the discipleship of that child, than of the adult professor to whom this appears so strange and incredible.

But when Philo goes on to say, that the terms *believer* and *disciple* “should mark the *professional character* in such a way, as to leave no scriptural room to doubt that the *real character* accompanies the professional;” he expresses a sentiment dangerously false. There may be scriptural ground for painful uncertainty, when there is no scriptural ground for rejecting the profession as false. The apostle on one occasion addresses a number of churches, as those who had *known God, or rather were known of God*, to whom he yet testifies that he *stands in doubt* of them, and is *afraid* of them, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain. (Gal. iv. 11, 20.) Upon their receiving his admonition and rebuke, undoubtedly his *confidence*

towards them would be restored; as his *doubts* would be confirmed and proceed to a certainty that their profession was vain, if they persisted in their error after his admonition and rebuke. But that confidence about the profession of others, which *varies* not in degree according to the scriptural evidences they afford of believing the truth, cannot be scripturally regulated: and it is hard to say whether it be more dangerous, when it errs on the favourable or on the unfavourable side.

What I have offered above may convince Philo, that he has no ground for his assertion (p. 25.) that "the application of the term *admonition*, in this passage is a single one;" or that "it respects persons quite different from "those whom the word calls disciples." And as to his language, when he talks of my *efforts* to remove what I think a *difficulty*, he may be assured that I do not acknowledge or think that there is any difficulty in the passage; save that difficulty which pervades every the plainest precept of the word, and arises from the indisposition of our carnal minds to submit to it. Those who endeavour to do away the plain import of this precept will certainly, like Philo, find the passage difficult; and must make hard efforts to misinterpret it.

Philo's next paragraph consists of the following words:—"I revert to the precept, *Bring up your children in the nurture (or discipline) and admonition (or instruction) of the Lord.*" And do you really think, Philo, that you can be allowed thus incidentally and without notice to palm—(I can use no fitter phrase)—to palm this mistranslation upon your readers? What right have you to substitute the word *instruction*, for that which is with perfect accuracy rendered *admonition*? I need not tell you how frequently both noun and verb occur in the Greek of the New Testament, and always in one uniform sense; a sense which cannot be more accurately expressed in the English language, than by the words *admonition* and *admonish*; unless perhaps we were to adopt the still more literal phrase of *PUTTING IN MIND*, which you cannot deny exactly expresses the meaning of the words in every other passage. I repeat it then, by what right do you attempt to throw off that meaning here? And for what purpose is it that you attempt to substitute your new and unauthorized version? Alas! for the purpose of maintaining your favourite principle, that with all the instruction in the truth which the christian parent can give his children, he must still conclude, in opposition to their acquiescence in that instruction, that they believe it not; must regard them as infidels, and beware of employing towards them the *admonition of the Lord*—in the plain and only scriptural meaning, of *putting them in mind* of that doctrine of the Lord in which they are instructed.

In fact,—as your attempt has been the occasion of my examining the passage more closely,—I must observe that the word rendered *nurture* is the only one in the precept, which would need a plainer and more accurate translation; and that its precise signification here is *teaching* or *instruction*. It is so rendered in 2 Tim. iii. 16. and the verb from which it is formed frequently occurs in that sense. See Acts vii. 22. xxii. 3. Tit. ii. 12. and Rom. ii. 20. We have thus in the precept the two things distinctly stated, in which chris-

tians are to bring up their children;—the *instruction of the Lord*, or the teaching of them his doctrine, and the *admonition of the Lord*, or the putting them in mind of that which they are taught: and it is vain for you to strive to do away one of these things, and so to confound and nullify both.

I had said (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 217.) that *the admonition of the Lord* is “one of those ordinances of Christ’s kingdom, of which none are objects but those who are in visible connection with that kingdom;” and I proved my assertion by numerous references to scripture, none of which Philo attempts to controvert: though in substituting the expression—“a church ordinance” (p. 27.)—he employs a phrase by no means equivalent. But he proceeds to argue that the *admonition of the Lord* is not, in this passage, to be explained, as such an ordinance of Christ’s kingdom, because the *nurture* (or, as he renders it, the *discipline*) of the Lord is not to be so understood. And on this he makes himself merry, observing—“it might be necessary, on your supposition, to introduce the rod into a christian church, as that would be the kind of discipline children would stand most in need of.” This is one of the flippancies, which, for Philo’s own sake, I wish he had spared; though I am aware they give to his pamphlet a zest acceptable to most readers. As to his argument, it is every way inconclusive. I might easily shew that the *nurture* or *instruction of the Lord* denotes that kind of continued teaching, which includes on the other side a continued learning, and of which therefore none but visible *disciples* are the subjects. But if I were even to concede all that Philo could desire on that point, and allow that the first of the two things mentioned in the text is not peculiar to christians; by what kind of logic does he infer that the second cannot therefore be peculiar to them? With equal reason, if I said that christians are to warn and edify one another, might Philo infer that all men are subjects of christian edification, because all men—even unbelievers—may be warned: or, that it is unscriptural to warn any but believers, because certainly none but those who are built upon Christ Jesus can be built up, or edified, in him. As to Philo’s assertion that the *rod* is that kind of discipline, “which children would stand most in need of,” I dare say it appears so in his eyes. But the child who is brought up exclusively or chiefly in that mode of instruction, is not brought up in the instruction of the Lord. Far am I however from undervaluing the use of the *rod*. But I am free to say that, if the christian parent discharge his duty, the main period of its use will be that interval, which must precede the capacity of either instruction or admonition; that earliest age of childhood which is previous to the exercise of understanding, but which affords from the principles of the animal nature a most important opportunity for establishing habitual subjection to control.

In his next paragraph Philo proceeds to state, what he holds as “the true sense” of the precept. He tells us (p. 28.) that he takes the expressions—*the nurture and admonition of the Lord*—“as synonymous with the *correction* and *instruction* which the Lord in his word has commanded parents to give their children—namely, *dispassionate* correction and *profitable* instruction.” He adds that these means

are "best fitted for conciliating that dutiful submission and *propriety of conduct*, which a Christian family should exhibit in its subordinate members." I have already observed, how utterly unwarrantable is the substitution of the word *instruction* for *admonition*; and that it is really attaching to the latter of two phrases, employed in the precept, the meaning which properly belongs to the former. But supposing for a moment that this were allowable, one would imagine that the words—*the instruction of the Lord*—could be understood in but one unequivocal meaning, namely instruction concerning the Lord, or in the doctrine of the Lord. But even this Philo appears to evade, by interpreting it—the instruction "*which the Lord has commanded parents to give their children*;" and afterwards still more vaguely—"profitable instruction"—fitted to produce "*propriety of conduct*." And certainly he had occasion to obscure the plain meaning even of his own false translation: for how a parent can BRING UP his children *in the instruction of the Lord*, without regarding them as *disciples*, or *learners* of the doctrine of the Lord; any one acquainted with that doctrine must be at a loss to say.

As to the former phrase rendered *nurture*, and by which he understands "the rod of correction," I readily admit that the word does sometimes mean *correction*, as in Hebr. xii. 5. such correction as a father employs with his child. In fact, it properly denotes the whole course of management in bringing up a child: and thence, on different occasions is used to denote specially either the *instruction* or the *correction*, which constitutes a part of that management. So that, as in other words which have a variety of meanings, the subject and context must determine the sense, in which we are to understand the term. Let the unprejudiced and intelligent reader employ this rule in the passage under consideration, and I believe he will be at little loss to determine, that we are to understand the *instruction* of the Lord, rather than the *correction* of the Lord. The latter phrase, I know, occurs in the passage of scripture above cited, but in the sense of that correction *which the Lord employs* towards his children; a sense which is inadmissible in the precept Eph. vi. 4. Besides, any one who observes the force of the expression—BRING THEM UP IN, &c. must be sensible that an *habitual course* of that nurture and admonition is prescribed; and Philo will scarcely allege that we are commanded to bring up our children in an habitual course of whipping.

When Philo observes that "Paul in this precept inculcated nothing new upon believing parents; but rather charged them to abide by directions already and copiously given in the Old Testament scriptures;"—most heartily do I agree in the truth of the remark. But, from a consideration of the directions given to God's Israel upon this subject, I have already shewn that they included all which Philo contends against; and had a much higher aim than to regulate "the education" of their offspring, so as to produce in them general "*propriety of conduct*." What he means by "a christian family" I am at some loss to conjecture; as according to his system the children of every christian, during the age of proper childhood, must be regarded and brought up as infidels.

Philo now labours to reply to an observation, in which I briefly

shewed "that a Baptist, according to his principles, cannot scripturally discharge even that part of the duty which he acknowledges,"—of laying before his children *instruction* in the principles of christianity, in the same way that he would declare the truths of the gospel to *heathens*: and the matter being of the last importance, affecting (I am persuaded) the very truth of the gospel, I must quote at length my own observation, before I notice his reply. The passage occurs in the 218th page of my *Thoughts*, &c.—"For let us suppose that he declares the truths of the gospel to his children, from the time they are capable of instruction. They assent to what they hear from their parent: yet he tells them, or gives them to understand, that they are not disciples, that he does not regard them as believers of the gospel; otherwise, why delay to acknowledge them as such, till they grow up? Now what does this sentiment convey to the children's minds? What but this—*We agree with all that our parent has told us: but this is not believing the gospel, for he says we are unbelievers.* Let the Christian reader judge, whether some of the most deadly errors of the popular religion be not thus instilled into the minds of the children. Nor does it much matter whether the parent candidly avow to his offspring this principle; or suppress it within his mind. He will *act* upon it towards them: and there is reason to fear that the man, who harbours it within his own breast, needs himself to be taught the first principles of divine truth."

Now let us hear Philo's reply, p. 29. "There never could be an opportunity for parents to instil into their offspring the deadly errors you allude to. For if the children be really *infants*, there can be NO DANGER OF THEIR REASONING IN SUCH A MANLY WAY." Let the reader observe that by *infants* here Philo intends young children, but not of that earliest age of proper infancy, which precludes even the attempt to instruct them in the truths of the gospel. This is manifest both from the nature of the case to which he replies, from his asserting only their incapacity to reason in a *manly* way, and from his own express statement in the following page. Well then, his reply is this, that there is no danger that children so young will reason *in such a manly way*, as I have supposed: and I beseech Philo, and beseech my christian readers to consider, whether this be not an admission that the reasoning would be good and valid, if the children were capable of deducing it. And is it so then, that Philo is prepared to assert the pernicious principle, while he shelters himself under the children's incapacity to discern it? Alas! I need scarcely urge the question: for the whole system, for which he contends, proves that he makes nothing of such a *child's* assenting to the truths of the gospel; that he (as I have said) harbours the principle within his own breast, and would act upon it towards his child. In that, I am bold to assert that he would act upon a principle fundamentally opposed to the truth of the gospel,—of that gospel which, without respect of persons, declares eternal life connected with the simple credence of its testimony. As to the asserted incapacity of the young child to reason in the *manly way* which I have supposed, while I readily admit that there is no probability of its drawing out the inference in that formal way, in which I have stated it, I would

tell Philo that this is not necessary at all to convey the falsehood to its mind. Many are the adults whose minds lie under a chain of erroneous principles, the links of which they have never distinctly marked, and are utterly incapable of exhibiting. And the fact is, that the *deadly error* which I have noticed must be practically forced upon the mind of any child, who is brought up according to Philo's principles; and this the more effectually, the more pains are taken to *instruct* it in the truth of the word.

“Why”—I have heard some say—“what great difference after all can there be between your treatment of the young child and ours; when we, as well as you, admit the duty of diligently instructing it in the truths of the gospel, though we cannot agree with you in regarding it as a disciple?” What great difference! Is it then no great difference, whether—after explaining and testifying to my child the simple but glorious truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—I then lead its tender mind to the nature of prayer, and encourage and assist it to call on the name of that gracious Lord, whose word it acknowledges;—or, on the other hand, (regarding it as an unbeliever, who cannot therefore call upon *his* name) I testify to it, if I should even see it engaged in the attempt, that its *sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord*? Is this no great difference? When, perhaps the hour after it has seemed to understand and acquiesce in the glorious truths which I have told it, I see the out-breaking of its evil nature, in one of those childish forms which it commonly assumes—perhaps in a fit of passionate crying for a toy, or resistance to the expression of its parent's will,—is it no great difference whether I meet this evil with *the admonition of the Lord*, taking an opportunity to put it in mind of what it was a little before instructed in, marking to it the meekness which becomes the followers of the meek and lowly One, and laying before it the declarations of his gracious will;—or, on the other hand, content myself with employing the *rod of correction* or a moral lecture on “propriety of conduct?” Is this no great difference?

I am well aware, unless the Lord give Philo another mind from that in which he has written, how ludicrous the case and treatment I have supposed must appear to him. To regard with the hope of the gospel a little child, who appeared indeed one hour to assent to what its parent told it of Christ Jesus, but who cries the next hour for a toy! To borrow admonitions from the gospel; and deal with such a wayward *infant* as a tender disciple! But ah! Philo, does the more MANLY character of the evils with which your conscience must daily charge you,—or does the more dignified appearance of the objects which excite them,—or does the better art of hiding,—so alter the case, that I should regard you with the hope of the gospel, and not that child? And as long as that child appears to receive the *christian* admonitions with which I meet its daily evils, and to yield its daily errors and mistakes to the *christian* instruction which I offer; how is it consistent with the gospel to regard it as an heathen and an infidel? The course of parental duty here is indeed a course of patient painfulness, and one that requires the parent himself to walk under the humbling influence of the truth. It is a

course of duty, to which our indolence and our pride are equally opposed.

When Philo (p. 30.) admits that "Timothy is an undoubted instance" of a child, who gave "scriptural evidence of being taught from above, at an age which in less forward children might be called infancy;" and when he adds that "a variety of narratives inform us" of many similar instances; I think his statement of the *undoubted* fact concerning Timothy as questionable, as the nature and authenticity of his *many narratives* are suspicious. From what part of scripture is it that he learns, that Timothy was an extraordinarily *forward* child,—or (as he expresses it in the preceding page) had, "at a very early age, arrived at a *considerable degree of reasoning faculty*?" The apostle simply observes concerning him, that *from a child* he had *known the holy scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation.* (2 Tim. iii. 15.) But as to any extraordinary *reasoning* powers in Timothy, or extraordinary *forwardness* of early faculties, he does not give us the slightest intimation. And after all, what is this "*considerable degree of reasoning faculty*," which Philo appears to think necessary to the belief of the truth? I know of none, but the capacity of understanding the few plain English words, in which it may simply be comprised: and let me tell Philo that it requires no extraordinary *forwardness* in a child to understand their meaning at a *very early* age, if pains be taken to explain it. He has not told us precisely what the "*variety of narratives*" are, which inform him of many other *forward* children: but from the manner in which he has introduced the passage and the whole tenor of his remarks, I fear he has in view such books as *Janeway's token for children*, and other accounts of early popular conversions, in which (as far as I am acquainted with them) I have found more of the cant of religionists, than scriptural truth. What the evidences are, on which Philo would regard a child of a very early age as taught from above, I am uncertain. He tells us indeed that it is "the same kind of evidence, on which more advanced persons ought to be recognized as believers." And if he would admit the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus such an evidence in the latter case, why should he reject it in the former? But if he will not recognize a young child as a believer, unless he find it transformed into a premature man, divested of its childish characters of playfulness and imbecility both of understanding and attention; he may think that he is looking only for "the same kind of evidence on which *more advanced* persons ought to be recognized as believers," but I am bold to say that he looks for evidences which are not scriptural.

But we have not yet done with Philo's reply to that passage, in which I shewed that his system tends to convey a most deadly error to the minds of the children. We have considered the first part of his answer, and seen it amounting to this,—that it is improbable the children will have acuteness enough to perceive the error. We now come to the second, in which we shall find equally important matter of animadversion. "As many as I have conversed with," (says he p. 30.) "of those who hold the discipleship of children, have no idea

of admitting them to the Lord's Supper; and think it would be posterous to give them a share and voice in the proceedings of the church. I know not, whether you be of that mind. If you be, your infant reasoners may employ against yourself the words you have put into their mouth against the Baptists, *We agree with all our parent has told us: but this is not believing the gospel, for,* though he speaks smoothly enough to us, it is plain from his conduct that he looks upon us either as unbelievers, or as *unqualified* believers." Well, the amount of this reply is, that my conduct and principles would afford an opportunity for inferring a falsehood as great, as that which I have shewn to follow from the conduct and principles of the Baptists. Now let it be observed, in the first place, that as any principle is effectually impeached by proving that a falsehood may fairly be inferred from it, and the objection is not a whit invalidated (as Philo has supposed) by the real or asserted incapacity of any to draw that inference;—so on the other hand it constitutes no valid objection to a principle, that some may unfairly and inconclusively deduce from it any thing ever so false. And I say that it cannot be fairly or conclusively inferred that I look upon the young child as an *unbeliever*, from my having no idea of admitting it as yet to the *Lord's Supper and giving it a share and voice in the proceedings of the church*. The scriptural consistency of this with my regarding it as a believer, I shall by and by establish.

Philo himself indeed appears to have been doubtful of the validity of that supposed inference; for he immediately subjoins—"or—he looks upon us—as *unqualified* believers." *Unqualified* believers—unqualified to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, and to be given a share and voice in the proceedings of the church. Come; we now have an inference drawn, which I acknowledge does fairly follow from my principles and my conduct. But as—of the *two* inferences which Philo supposes,—the one which would violate scriptural truth and consistency does not fairly follow; so this other, which does fairly follow, involves nothing in it inconsistent or untrue. And if any one, young or old, urge this objection against my principles and conduct,—“Why, if you otherwise regard and treat your child as a disciple or believer in Christ Jesus, do you not immediately introduce it to the Lord's Supper, and give it a share and voice in the proceedings of the church?”—my answer is ready:—Because I could not attempt to do this till its faculties are more matured, without the most pernicious effects to the young child, and without violating all the scriptural principles which regulate the proceedings of a christian church:—because a young child cannot in the nature of things be expected either to command that vigour of attention, which could be continued through the protracted exercises of the church, and must therefore be only taught hypocrisy by pretending to join in them; nor to possess that ripeness of intellect, which would enable it to take a part in the various acts and proceedings to which a christian church from time to time is called. Philo from his mode of expression appears sensible that those acts and proceedings, if the church be scripturally regulated, must be the joint acts of all its members, not of any party in the church;—acts in which the whole

body is supposed to concur in obedience to the word of the Lord, and from a common perception of its directive and authoritative rule. Now who that knows any thing of the various cases of discipline, &c. in which a church is to act, and that recollects what a child of seven or eight years (for instance) is, can for a moment seriously harbour the notion of that child's being *qualified* to take a part in these acts? But will Philo dare to avow the sentiment that such a child is unqualified to believe the glorious truth,—to be persuaded of the simple import of the testimony that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*? I shall prove indeed by and by, that his principles go directly to this awful sentiment. But before I quit the present subject, let me add upon the Lord's Supper—(the simplicity of which ordinance I have heard urged by some, and urged with truth, though to support a false inference)—upon that let me add a plain but decisive observation. The Supper of the Lord is exclusively a church-ordinance, to be observed by the church when it comes together into one place on the first day of the week: and my reason for not admitting that young child to this ordinance is, because I cannot yet call it to take a share and voice in all the proceedings of the church.

Does Philo still urge against me his ambiguous phrase of “*unqualified* believers?” Then let him say, whether an adult believer in the paroxysm of a fever is to be “admitted to the Lord's Supper,” and “given a share and voice in the proceedings of the church.” He will revolt from the idea: and why? Because, during the continuance of that disease, this disciple is an “*unqualified* believer,” unqualified to engage in those exercises and acts. What greater inconsistency then is there in the admission of a similar temporary disqualification in very young children? In each case we look for the disqualification being removed in a course of time; in the one case, by the removal of bodily disease; in the other, by the strengthening of the mental powers. It has been sufficiently proved, that the Jews were commanded to bring up their children, from their earliest infancy, as disciples of Moses: yet it was not till they attained the age of about twelve years, that they were brought to join with their parents in the observance of the Levitical feasts. (I will not provoke Philo's spleen by quoting the Rabbinical authorities, which ascertain this;—a fact indeed of which we have some traces also in scripture.) And without attempting or wishing to fix any precise limit, I am persuaded that if the parent discharge his christian duty, no very advanced period is to be waited for, before the child—growing up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—is to be called to a full participation in the fellowship of the church. I say, called to it; for if dealt with as a disciple, it is to be instructed and admonished upon this, as upon other scriptural subjects: and it is worse than nonsense to say, that the parent should wait to see whether the child will of itself discover the Lord's will in this matter, and—unadmonished on the topic—desire of itself to yield obedience to it.—It ought to be almost needless to add that, at whatever age a child may be supposed to manifest rejection of the truth, it is to be regarded and dealt with not as a disciple, but as an unbeliever: and

that if at the period, at which (if a disciple) it ought to be expected to be found in the full fellowship of the church of Christ, it refuse obedience to that instituted rule of his kingdom, the same dealing which is to be employed towards an adult in the same circumstances must be adopted towards that child. It still continues no doubt the object of other parental duties: but as it now *will not* be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that duty (like any other) ceases with the opportunity of discharging it.

But I have now to call the attention of the christian reader, and to entreat the attention of Philo himself, to a consideration which is abundantly calculated to unmask the pernicious nature of his principles. He, with other Baptists, holds at times a specious language, as if he admitted the possibility of children—even very young children—believing the gospel. But that they really and practically discard this from their contemplation, however they may impose on themselves and others by the occasional language, is manifest from their never thinking in fact of baptizing and receiving into their churches a very young child. Philo's argument indeed brings this matter still more home to him. He charges me, and—as I have proved—unreasonably, with inconsistency in regarding any children as disciples, whom I would not yet receive into the fellowship of the church. This is not only an avowal on his side that he conceives the youngest child, who ought to be regarded as a disciple, ought also to have “a share and voice in the proceedings of the church;” but also, combined with his manifest views of the nature of those proceedings, (as the joint acts in which all the members are supposed to concur) it amounts to a declaration that he does not conceive the possibility of a very young child being a disciple, or one that ought to be regarded as such. For Philo certainly is too shrewd a writer, to harbour the notion of a child of seven years old being called to take “a share and voice in the proceedings of the church.” When he therefore identifies the character of a disciple with the qualification to take such a share and voice, he affords—unintentionally indeed—a demonstrative evidence that he puts out of his thoughts all serious notion of very young children being—in any other state but that of unbelieving darkness and condemnation. It will be vain to attempt evading the force of the argument, by talking of what the grace of God *may* do even for a child of seven years old. They mistake the nature of the *grace* of God, who imagine that its work is to convert such childhood into premature manhood. I am altogether at a loss indeed to conjecture, how Philo will reply to the observation I have made; or what part of the necessary alternative he will adopt: while I doubt not but his ingenuity—if he be still allowed to exert it in a bad cause—will furnish him with specious colourings of the deadly sentiment. But may the truth rather be given to force its way upon his own mind, and to pull down the high thoughts which at present are so manifestly embodied in his sentiments, and are so awfully inconsistent with the simplicity of the gospel of Christ!

Philo proceeds to urge a difficulty which occurs to him, if on the other hand we were to give the young children “a share and voice

in the proceedings of the church." In that case, he says, (p. 31.) "may not some of the *smartest* of them (for I suppose you would not appropriate ALL the *wise children to the Baptists*) be ready to congratulate each other, or to lord it over their *unbelieving* play-fellows with—We are believers," &c. I have given the passage exactly as it is printed in Philo's Letter, that it may lose nothing of the *point* and *smartness*, which he seems to have regarded with so much complacency. But it appears, from what I have already stated, that he is here fighting a shadow, in arguing against a practice which those, whom he opposes, have as little idea of adopting as himself; though they reject it on very different grounds. It happens also that the objection, which he urges, is as weak as it is superfluous. It is borrowed from the possible operation of an evil, to which the flesh in young or old is abundantly prone, and which may lead any professor of the gospel to abuse his high profession, to lord it either in thought or in expression over his fellow-sinners; and thus indeed to think or speak most unsuitably to the humbling influence of that glorious truth which he professes. But what is fairly to be inferred from this? What, but the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart? But when Philo infers from it the danger of treating young children as believers, he appears to forget, that the very same objection might be started against admitting the credibility of his own profession: and that there is not a folly or an evil in the youngest child, for which he may not find a counterpart in his own breast. I will speak plainly: that very evil evidently appears to me to characterize the passage, in which he brings forward the objection, and indeed the whole tenor of his reasoning. Here and throughout his Letter, Philo appears to lord it sadly over the children. HE is a believer! But they—however they may assent to the same gospel which he believes—they are yet children of wrath. Truly it is not in the way of invective that I desire to mark the evil; but I would solemnly call the attention of disciples to that deadly sentiment, which is at the root of Philo's system. I call it a *deadly sentiment*: for the man who lords it over the mere child, in a conception of his superior capacity to know the truth, is in a state of mind as opposite to the gospel of Christ, as the man who lords it over the unbelieving profligate, in a conception of his superior fitness for its blessings.

I observed (*Thoughts, &c.* p. 221.) that we do not find in the apostolic writings "the remotest hint of such a class of persons, as must have been numerous according to the Baptist principles;—children growing up in a professional assent to the christian instruction they received from their parents, but as yet not acknowledged to be professors of christianity;—a middle class between professed unbelievers and professed believers." To this Philo attempts to reply (p. 32.) by retorting the objection on my principles; and confidently charges me with introducing such a middle class, because the children, whom I would yet bring up as disciples, I would not think of admitting in the early age of childhood into the full fellowship of the church. This is such a gross play on words, as neither deserves nor needs any long refutation.

As reasonably might I be charged with the absurdity of introducing a middle class between the human species and inferior animals, because I would not admit my child into all the scenes and engagements, which he will partake in if he grow up to manhood.

In the two next paragraphs Philo wastes his time, in opposing the idea of *mere infants* believing the gospel; and indeed throughout his Letter plays upon that topic, in a way "well calculated" to persuade his readers that I am an advocate for the absurd sentiment. Having already expressed myself distinctly upon that point, I shall pass over this part of his Letter; only observing the general fallacy of his reasoning. He contends that when we read in the Acts of whole *households* believing, rejoicing in God, &c. the nature of the thing related requires us to interpret the expression only of such members of the households, as were capable of believing and rejoicing in God; and therefore to the exclusion of mere infants. True; and I know not what man of common sense ever maintained the contrary. But when he infers that, when we read of those households being baptized, we must by parity of interpretation understand it as excluding any infants in the families; he altogether begs the question. What is there in the nature of that rite, which renders infants incapable of it? Or what is there in the analogy of scripture, which should lead us to introduce such a restriction here? Especially when it is proved, that the believing parents were enjoined to bring up those infants, as soon as they became capable of instruction, in the instruction of the Lord; and to deal with them, as long as they appeared to receive that instruction, as disciples of the Lord: and when we know moreover of another divinely instituted rite, circumcision, which, although it could not be administered to any adult convert but upon his confession of the faith of the God of Abraham, yet was administered to the youngest infant in his house. One thing however is abundantly certain from what I have already shewn; namely, that if the infants of those first converts to christianity were not baptized along with their believing parents, they never were baptized afterwards: for, brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they from their childhood professed the faith of Christ; and I confidently repeat the challenge which I proposed (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 222.) "to produce either scriptural precept or scriptural example—of the baptism of an adult person, who has never professedly been of any other than the christian faith."

This leads me to make a few brief remarks on Philo's detailed account of the "profession, on which the first christians were acknowledged as such." (p. 38—54.) It abounds with the sophism, which logicians call *ignorationis elenchi*. He proves at great length what is indeed very true, but what I never thought of denying: and then he triumphs as having disproved what I have asserted, but what is really in no wise inconsistent with the former. Thus, for instance, he observes (p. 51.) that "the ancient converts knew nothing of that kind of *acknowledgment*, which seems to be talked of now-a-days; the language of which is—I consider myself bound to treat you as a disciple, but to tell you the truth I do not think you a christian." Very absurd, Philo, indeed, is such language: a *disciple* of

Christ, and a *christian* being, in all propriety of speech, synonymous terms. But where have you found me talking in such a manner? Be assured, the youngest child, whom I consider and treat as a disciple, I mean to consider and treat as a christian,—a christian (however incredible the idea appears to you) in as full and proper a sense as myself.—Again, Philo labours to establish that “the profession, upon which men were received in the days of the apostles, must have been such as commended them to those, with whom they began to walk, as real christians.” (p. 51.) Undoubtedly. Who has denied it? And he adds that, “if the profession upon which the apostles gave the right hand of fellowship had been supposed to intimate nothing beyond what that of *merely nominal christians* at present intimates, it is plain that the apostles must have systematically set aside mutual confidence.” Very true indeed: for as I have shewn (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 219.) the profession of merely nominal christians at present is accompanied with circumstances which prove its insincerity,—which prove that they do not believe that apostolic testimony concerning Christ which they profess to believe; circumstances which therefore preclude scriptural confidence in them as real christians. But when Philo infers from this, that they do not even *profess* to believe what the first christians professed to believe, he draws a conclusion which has not the slightest real connection with his premises.

Indeed throughout a number of pages, containing a laboured proof of many obvious and incontrovertible truths—set in imaginary opposition against the plain fact that the inhabitants of this country generally *profess* to believe the apostolic writings,—Philo appears to pass upon himself one cheat, by which he contrives to involve himself in a cloud of fallacies. He speaks of the *profession* of christianity as synonymous with the *credible profession* of it. Thus he tells us expressly (p. 49.) that “a christian profession consists in an avowal of the gospel—so circumstanced as to intimate that the truth does indeed dwell in the person who professes.” Is not this saying in so many words, that a *profession of christianity is—a credible profession of christianity*? Nay, in the same passage he scruples not to assert, that “a christian profession does not consist in any form of words, however scriptural.” So if a man confess to me with his mouth the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ in language ever so clear and distinct, I must not consider or speak of him as *professing* to believe the gospel, unless I am scripturally satisfied that he really believes it. And thus, according to the phraseology which Philo prescribes to our use, the unbelieving Jews not only did not believe the writings of Moses, —(for asserting that we have the authority of Christ himself John v. 46, 47.)—but they did not even *profess* to believe them: they not only were not Jews inwardly, but were not even *professing* Jews. Really this is such a wanton abuse and confounding of language, as it would be superfluous to notice, were it not employed for very mischievous purposes.

The most innocent purpose to which it is applied in his system is that adult baptism, for which he contends. I had observed that, while his rite has the same form and passes under the same name

with the christian baptism of which we read in scripture, it is a thing essentially different in its nature; the latter never having been employed, as their modern baptism, in the case of those who had always professed the christian faith—upon their appearing to be really what they had professed. Philo gets over this, by roundly asserting that those whom he would now baptize, have not only now for the first time appeared really to believe the gospel, but have never before even professed to believe it;—that no man is a professing christian, but the man whose profession is scripturally credible. I confirmed my remark by observing, that we no where find the apostles baptizing heretics and ungodly walkers upon their repentance. And what is Philo's reply? Why, that such persons "would of course, on their repentance, be re-admitted to fellowship as *returning brethren*:" that is, as those who had only backslided for a time from that truth which they had really believed. Nay, Philo, will you tell me that if it had pleased God to give Simon Magus repentance, the disciples would have had to conclude that Peter was mistaken, when he pronounced him to be in the *gall of bitterness* and in *the bond of iniquity*, and to have *neither part nor lot in the matter*? No testimony can be more explicit of his unbelief; and indeed the sentiments he betrayed manifested total ignorance of that gospel which he had professed. You are forced to admit that if he had been afterwards given repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, we have no room from scripture to suppose for a moment that he would have been re-baptized. But lest this concession should affect the ground of the baptism you practise, you tell me—in the face of the apostolic testimony upon the subject—that he would have been readmitted to fellowship as a *returning brother*. Excuse me if I believe the apostle rather than you.

Paul in his epistles to Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 2, &c. 1 Tim. iv. 1, &c.) predicts, that *in the last days men shall be lovers of their own selves, boasters, proud, blasphemers, &c.* I observed on such passages (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 220.) that the apostle evidently has in view, not heathens, but persons *professing* the faith of Christ; it being nothing extraordinary that MEN—considered independent of that profession—should manifest such characters as he describes. Plain a remark as this is, Philo—determined not to allow that the inhabitants of these countries even *profess* christianity—found it in his way; and with great confidence opposes it. He tells me (p. 44.) that "the very reason upon which my judgment is grounded proves also, that his language is inapplicable to *merely nominal christians*." And does Philo then seriously conceive that such a picture, as the apostle draws, can be applicable to *real christians*? I will not urge him with the question: for I believe it was in the heat of opposition he was betrayed into the language. And indeed he seems, throughout the paragraph, to have scarcely fixed upon his own meaning. He tells us at one time, that the persons described were "Those that *did indeed* avow the faith of the truth;" that is, according to his use of the words,—*did indeed* make a *credible* profession of it. A few lines after he admits, that "a spirit contrary to the truth was beginning to discover itself" in them. And then, rising in his concessions, he immediately adds—"These were *indeed* apostates from the truth." Well then,

Philo, at that time they made no *credible* profession of the faith; they were *merely nominal christians*: and yet to them as such the apostle does apply that description, which you so boldly assert is inapplicable to merely nominal christians." And though you cannot see that there is any thing extraordinary in the appearance of such characters in merely nominal christians, or in nations of them, yet the apostle thought it sufficiently extraordinary, that any should say they believed the glorious gospel of Christ and walk so inconsistently with that profession.

I mentioned (*Thoughts*, &c. p. 220.) my persuasion that Paul, if he were now in this country, would deal with the mass of its inhabitants as with *professors of christianity*; and that "he would accordingly prove against them from the apostolic writings the inconsistencies, with which they are chargeable:" and that as surely as he "would testify against them as *false professors of christianity*," so surely "he would not baptize any of them, who should appear to be brought to repentance." To this Philo objects, that they are either not professors of christianity at all, or not *false professors* of it, "as it by no means appears that they are insincere in their profession." (p. 48.) This is indeed a very unworthy quibble. Is it not evident to every candid reader, that I use the words—"false professors of christianity"—to denote, not persons *insincere*, but persons who make a mere *profession* of Christianity, while they are not *real* christians or disciples indeed? But then, says Philo, they do not profess christianity at all. Yet in the very same paragraph he is obliged to admit my assertion, that Paul would prove against them from the apostolic writings the inconsistencies with which they are chargeable: and any one who admits that, is indeed most inconsistent in denying that they profess to believe those writings. When Paul reasoned with unbelieving Jews out of their own scriptures, proving that Jesus was the Christ, did not Paul deal with them as with men who *professed* to believe those scriptures,—who were professedly disciples of Moses? And if Philo were addressing any of the unbelieving inhabitants of this country, how could he consistently adduce the apostolic writings in proof of his sentiments and assertions, if he did not consider them as *professing* to receive those writings?

I am weary (and so probably are my readers) of the task of exposing inconsistencies and detecting fallacies. I have gone through the principal part of Philo's pamphlet. In the remainder of his work, it would be easy to point out equal fallacies and similar inconsistencies. But the topics handled in it are so subordinate that I gladly quit the field.

The more closely I look at the principles of the Baptists, the more persuaded I am that they are perniciously unscriptural; while I am well aware of the superficial plausibility, which their argument frequently assumes. This makes me heartily desirous, that the subject may be kept under patient and calm discussion: and should Philo or others put out any reply to these observations,—if it be not a mere repetition of arguments already refuted,—I shall be ready, as far as life and opportunity may be afforded, to resume the subject. Expecting, as I do, a progressive removal of anti-christian errors by the increased light of scriptural truth, I look with confidence to the final issue.

APPENDIX.

PHILO'S Letter p. 8, 9. "Indeed, independent of the general character of the Rabbinical writers, there are two strong objections to what they have said upon this particular subject: the first is, that no mention is made of *proselyte baptism* by Josephus, though he more than once speaks of persons proselyted to Judaism, and receiving circumcision; and the second is, that some even of the Rabbins seem to have looked upon John as the first proselyte baptist, as I collect from some quotations that I have lately seen. These circumstances you certainly ought not to have passed over in silence, as if the objections they afforded were unworthy of being obviated."

Lest I should incur a second reprehension for passing over these two *strong objections* in silence, I am led to notice them briefly in this place. The first of them is, that Josephus a Jewish writer, in an historical narrative which he gives of various political events, while he has to relate occasionally the circumcision of proselytes to Judaism, *does not say* that these proselytes were also baptized: and this, we are told, is a **STRONG OBJECTION** to the direct testimony of all the host of Jewish writers, who mention the practice and minutely treat of it, in works expressly composed about the ceremonial institutions of their country! It is curious to observe, in what a different balance Philo weighs authorities, according as they make against him, or appear in his view to favour his sentiments. The express testimonies of ever so many Jewish writers, who support my statement, are in his estimation lighter than vanity:—"their authority is altogether invalid." But there is one Jewish writer,—not indeed commonly called *Rabbi* Joseph, but not called so only because he wrote in Greek instead of Hebrew, and settled at Rome with the privileges of a Roman citizen;—the testimony of this Jewish writer is weighty indeed: and I am told that I "certainly ought not to have passed it over in silence." Well, and what is this testimony of his upon the subject, which affords such a strong objection to all the others? One can but smile at finding, that he gives—no testimony about it at all; he is silent; he says nothing one way or other upon the point. But this *negative* testimony, this silence of one Jewish writer about proselyte baptism, is a **STRONG OBJECTION** against all the Jewish writers who have spoken out. Well, I declare, after all the rebuke which Philo has given me for having "passed over this circumstance in silence" in my former short tract upon this subject, I have been hardly able to persuade myself that it is worthy of serious notice now.

But perhaps the reader may suspect that the passages in Josephus, to which Philo refers, are of such a nature, that the mention of proselyte baptism might reasonably be expected to occur in them, if such a rite existed; and therefore that his silence on the subject

affords some degree of probable argument against its existence. Let us try. The first of these passages is in his antiquities of the Jews, b. xiii. c. 9. sec. 1. where the historian informs us that "Hyrcanus, having subdued all the Idumeans, allowed them to remain in the country, if they would consent to circumcise themselves and use the Jewish laws. And they, through attachment to their native land, submitted both to circumcision, and to regulate themselves in other respects as the Jews. And this was the commencement of their being Jews." The second passage, c. 11. sec. 3. is one of precisely similar import. Speaking of Aristobulus, he relates that he "added a great part of Iturea to Judea; and compelled the inhabitants, if they wished to remain in the country, to be circumcised and live according to the Jewish laws." Now, that the historian should particularize the rite of *circumcision* as attending those compulsory proselytisms is very natural, and what might be expected. But that he should have inserted in his narrative an observation, that these proselytes were *dipped in water* as well as circumcised, could scarcely be expected by any unprejudiced reader, who recollects—that Josephus is not giving a description of Jewish ceremonies, but recording a history of political events;—that the one rite might well require compulsion, but that submission to the other could not be regarded as any hardship;—and that the historian in each passage expressly intimates a variety of observances connected with their proselytism. And yet we are gravely told by Philo that Josephus, in not having mentioned their baptism, affords a "strong objection" against the direct testimony of all the Jewish writers, who treat particularly of the ceremonial institutions of their nation; and that this is a circumstance, which I "certainly ought not to have passed over in silence."

If he be not yet ashamed of his *strong objection*, let me observe to him that I might urge the very same objection—and indeed with some more appearance of reason—against the idea which he puts forward from Dr. Lardner, that "John was emphatically styled the Baptist, from his being the first person who initiated by baptism:" Josephus being equally *silent* upon this, where he mentions John and his baptism, b. xviii. c. 7. But, in fact, Philo ought to know that there are instances, in which we would be landed in conclusions the most dangerous and false, if we were to infer the non-existence of a fact, from its not being mentioned by Josephus. The only apology I can offer for having taken so much notice of an argument, which really deserves none, is that it may be profitable to Philo and others, to observe how grossly his judgment has been warped by attachment to the cause which he undertook to maintain.

The second **STRONG OBJECTION**, which I "certainly ought not to have passed over in silence," is that "*some* even of the Rabbins themselves *seem* to have looked upon John as the first proselyte baptist;" as Philo "*collects* from *some* quotations that he has lately seen." Now I must be excused for saying, that this objection is brought forward in such a questionable shape, as does not indicate much real strength, while it baffles refutation. Philo **COLLECTS** from *some* quotations, which he has lately seen, that *some* Rabbins **SEEM** to have looked upon John, &c. The strong objection, introduced as a power-

ful giant, when I attempt to grasp it—proves to be but the shadow of a shade,—the collected seeming of some unknown quotations. I have examined the list of references which Philo gives in his Postscript, but cannot discover anything like what he alludes to; unless it be one quotation, which Gale adduces in his 9th letter from an *anonymous* Jewish writer, the unknown author of the *Nizzachon*. He, remarking on Matt. iii. 5. 6. demands—“Who authorized John to employ this baptism?” Little ground as this affords for inferring that the writer *looked upon John as the first proselyte baptist*, it is remarkable that Gale very confidently produces the passage as proving it; and indeed mistranslates the passage, to give it the better colour. But with all the colouring of his incorrect version, it would afford nothing to countenance Philo’s inference: so that I must suppose he draws his inference from some other passages of the Rabbinical writers, which—though he may have lately seen them—I confess I have not yet seen, and therefore must be excused for still *passing them over in silence*.

If Philo or any of my readers wish to examine the grounds, upon which I have asserted that the concurrent testimony of the Jewish Rabbins supports the baptism of proselytes, as a rite of established existence among them; he may consult a treatise on the subject by *Joh. Andr. Danzius*, in *Meuschen’s Novum Testamentum ex Talmude illustratum*. In referring to that work however, I would not be understood to adopt the author’s opinions: I only name it, as containing the most copious collection I know of Jewish authorities on the point in question, and (as I conceive) abundantly sufficient to convince the most sceptical that my assertion is well founded.

From what I have stated in the preceding work, and particularly in p. 274. it must be very evident what opinion I hold on a question, upon which Philo complains in his Advertisement that I did not avow my sentiments; namely, whether “the infants of believers ought now to be baptized.” But as he seems to think that an explicit declaration of my opinion on this subject will give him some advantage, I would here distinctly explain myself—as not seeing the slightest scriptural ground to suppose that any children of the proselytes were baptized of old, but those who passed with their parents from another religious connection into the christian. That they baptized the children born to them after their proselytism to christianity, I no where find in scripture. And while I protest against Philo’s baptism of adults who have never professed any other religion but christianity, and regard the principles on which it rests with detestation; I have no idea that the infant children of such professing christians ought to be baptized:—though I do conceive that the christian, who had any scruple about omitting the rite, would do a very innocent thing in baptizing his child.

In conformity with the plan, hitherto adopted, of giving each article in this collection as it originally appeared, two passages, the one which concludes these “Observations, &c.,” and another (page 261) of similar import, have been allowed to remain, notwithstanding the

subsequent public retraction of them by the author. However inconsistent the sentiment conveyed in them may be, the exposure of its evil does not detract in the least from the strength of Mr. Walker's arguments against the present practice of Baptism. It has indeed afforded a field for declamation to his opponents; and has enabled them, in a plausible manner, to evade encountering the arguments on which he rests his case. The replies to him, which have as yet appeared, consist principally of needlessly reiterated censures of this sentiment, with diffuse, yet equally irrelevant, disquisitions on Jewish proselyte baptism. To present Mr. Walker's correction of the sentiment into which he was unguardedly betrayed; to obviate a recurrence, by future correspondents, to topics that have no decisive bearing on the question at issue; and to recall the reader's attention to the arguments which require his serious consideration, the following remarks by Mr. Walker have been subjoined.—ED.

I cannot close these extracts (from his Observations, &c.) without retracting and protesting against a very erroneous and evil sentiment in the Pamphlet from which they are taken. I allude to the passages in which I intimate that a person in these countries, submitting to baptism himself, or baptizing his child, would merely in this do a very *innocent* thing. It never can be an innocent thing to add to the ordinances of the Lord;—to observe, as a christian ordinance, any thing which is not warranted by the revealed authority of Christ in his word. Had I duly considered this while I penned these passages, they could not have escaped me. Very soon after the publication I saw their evil; but had not till now an opportunity of publicly disavowing the sentiment. [*Postscript to Letters on Primitive Christianity.*]

If I were to expose the weakness and errors of the first part of this review, (Review of "Observations &c.") it would but afford a pretext to say again that the Rabbinical sentiments were the ground-work of my opinions. Yet when this was disavowed expressly, and the readers of my pamphlet were invited to pass over all this part of it, it is not fair to say so. But I will cut off occasion by coming at once to the foundation; that there is no scriptural precedent or precept for the thing now practised as baptism; that this thing is utterly different from the baptism in scripture; that the sentiments upon which it proceeds are in opposition to the most direct precepts of scripture, trenching on the fundamental truth of the Gospel, and originate in the popular idea of Christians having to look back to some fixed point in their former course and experience, from which they may date their conversion.

The reviewer says (Scripture Magazine for Aug. 1809. p. 340.) "Although Mr. W. does not admit it, we think that the Jewish proselyte baptism is an important part of the *foundation* of his system." What makes the reviewer willing to think so in opposition to the tenor of both my Pamphlets, and my express language in the one which he reviews, I shall not conjecture. But I can assure him that I should not regard the Baptist principles with the deep abhorrence that I do, did I not view the foundation of our controversy lying at the root of what is infinitely more important than any Rabbinical

custom: and I now say that when he, or any other, next takes up the pen to oppose what I have written, I will allow him to meet the subject as if he had effectually refuted all that I said upon *Jewish proselyte baptism*—as if he had proved that no such rite existed—or as if all the passages in which I have mentioned it were expunged. If he really wish to know what I consider fundamental in the subject, I will tell him (what I have abundantly intimated elsewhere)—its bearing on the children of disciples, and on the nature of the christian profession. The more that bearing is examined, the more will it be found to affect the nature of the gospel itself. [*Short-hand Notes on a Review of Observations, &c. Scripture Magazine for Aug. and Sep. 1809. See also Advertisement to "Remarks on certain Questions."*]

The name "Philo" must no longer be considered as marking any particular individual; the person whom it originally designated being long since of one mind with the writer, and walking with him in Christian fellowship—a brother beloved. [*Note to Letters on Primitive Christianity. 1819.*]

REMARKS ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS,

PROPOSED TO THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

OF

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST,

CONNECTED WITH

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES IN SCOTLAND :

WITH

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON ACTS IX. 31.

 [First Published 1810.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages have had their origin in a visit which I lately paid to Scotland. During six weeks spent in that country, I had many opportunities of observing with grief, how the disciples of Christ have been scattered one from another, and turned aside from the scriptural course in which the first Christians walked together : as well as of observing, how much unscriptural *forbearance* tends to strengthen and perpetuate this evil.

I had much intercourse with various professors ; received much—very much kindness ; but was unable to hold Christian fellowship with any. This, considering the number and variety of Churches existing in the city of GLASGOW alone, may to some appear strange and unaccountable. And I wish it to be observed, that—on one side or the other—on my side or on theirs—the circumstance establishes the existence of a great and very serious evil. When a Christian of old came on a visit from CORINTH, for instance, to ROME, he of course joined the fellowship of the Christians at ROME : and it was incumbent on him to do so. But before it be taken for granted that my conduct, in not having held fellowship in Christian ordinances with any in GLASGOW, was unscriptural and indefensible, let it be stated—*which* of the various Churches in that city I was bound to join. The grounds of my conduct will be found in some of the following Remarks ; the whole of which contain little more, than I had frequent occasion to urge in conversation during my stay

in Scotland. May they engage the serious attention of Christians in that and other countries!

I have prefaced them with Observations on a subject, of such fundamental and paramount importance, that it ought ever to take the lead of every other scriptural discussion. With any, whose minds are not scripturally regulated upon that subject, it is worse than waste of time to argue about the nature and course of Christian Churches.

During the same visit, I met—for the first time—a REVIEW of my late publication on the BAPTIST principles, in two numbers of the *Scripture Magazine* for August and September 1809. I would gladly reply to that production without delay, if my engagements admitted it: and if life be spared, and no other answer should appear to my publication, I fully intend some time or other to notice it;—chiefly indeed for the purpose of keeping alive the discussion of a subject, so closely connected with the GREAT TRUTH. Upon that REVIEW I shall now only say, that from the same pen I never read any thing so weak and so unfair. I speak of an unfairness, evidently arising from the writer's not having taken time to understand the piece, which he undertook to review. The pamphlet which he attacks affords abundant materials for exposing his fallacies and mistakes. Could he be engaged to give it another more attentive and more unprejudiced perusal, I should not be surprised if he anticipated me, by giving to the public a refutation of himself.

73, Lower Dorset-Street,
Nov. 6, 1810.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS, &c.

It is a short but striking account which we read in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. ix. 31. "Then had the Churches rest, throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." It is in the first place important to observe, what these CHURCHES were, and how they were formed: nor can the account given of their walk be understood by any, except those who know the answer to this inquiry.

It is obvious that the word CHURCHES is used here, and throughout the writings of the New Testament, in a sense altogether different from that, in which it has obtained a currency in modern days. One of the common meanings, in which the word has been long employed, is that of buildings, which men erect with wood and stone, devoted to purposes of religion:—a meaning in which the word never occurs in Scripture. And however innocent such an application of the word may appear to some, Christians have to remember that it has been one of Satan's grand devices, to annex unscriptural meanings to every phrase of Scripture the most important, in order to make the very Word of God subservient to the propagation and support of his most ungodly lies.—Others understand by the word CHURCH, a certain system of political religion, established throughout a nation by human authority, and varying in different nations according to the varying interests or fancies of men:—as when they talk of *the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, &c.*—And others, again, employ the phrase with an undefined *mysticism* of application, to sanctify and screen from examination the code of religious imposture, which a succession of men under the name of Clergy have put forward, usurping dominion over the consciences of their fellow-sinners.

But when the Apostles speak of a CHURCH of Christ in any place, they always mean THE COLLECTION, OR BODY, OF CHRISTIANS ASSEMBLING TOGETHER in that place. This is the one uniform and simple meaning, in which the phrase occurs in Scripture: and, in this meaning, a CHURCH is there spoken of—as a building indeed, but as *God's building* and not man's,—a *spiritual house*, composed of *living stones*, not of such perishable and earthly materials as human architects employ. 1 Cor. iii. 9. Eph. ii. 20—22. 1 Peter ii. 5.

Of old, wherever there was a *Church of Christ*, there was an exhibition of the Kingdom of God; there was a display of his mighty work; there was a congregation of persons saved by Him, called out from *the world that lieth in the wicked one*, and gathered together in one, as the sons and daughters of the living God, to be blessed

and governed by Him. Such were the CHURCHES, throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, mentioned in the passage under consideration.

But while it is declared that these Churches were formed and created by the same Almighty power, which made the world, we have to observe that God works by instrumental means: and the means employed in this case was simply the *word* of God,—that word which Jesus Christ commissioned his Apostles to preach throughout all the earth, beginning their testimony at Jerusalem. If we examine the origin assigned in Scripture to the Churches there spoken of, we shall find it commonly to have been this: where there was yet no Church of Christ, but the people were sunk in ignorance and unbelief and wickedness, the Apostles came in the exercise of their commission, declaring the simple testimony which they bore concerning Jesus of Nazareth, concerning him who had been crucified at Jerusalem between two robbers, but whose witnesses they were that God had *raised him from the dead*. By this word—reputed by the world *the foolishness of preaching*—it *pleased God to save them that believed it*. 1 Cor. i. 21. For while it was generally despised and rejected, *some believed the things that were spoken*, (Acts xxviii. 24.)—even those who *were ordained to eternal life* (Acts xiii. 48.)—(See note I. at the end.) to whom the Gospel *came not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*, in that full persuasion of its divine truth which the Holy Spirit, *the Spirit of truth*, produces, and thus fulfils his work of *glorifying Jesus*. 1 Thess. i. 5. John xvi. 13, 14. The persons thus convinced of what they heard from the Apostles were thereupon *Christians, born of God, children of the light and of the day, sanctified by the truth, and heirs of eternal life*.

God has glorified his Son Jesus, crowning Him with glory and honour. Acts iii. 13. Ps. viii. 5. Hebr. ii. 9. And this is part of the glory put upon him, that he has assured *eternal life* to every one who *believes* the testimony concerning him; every one, without difference or exception. Rom. x. 11, 12. The Apostles teach us also that the design of this constitution of God, assuring the blessedness of the promise to him that *believeth*, is in order that sinners may inherit it in such a way of absolute mercy, as *excludes all boasting*. Rom. iii. 27, 28. THEREFORE *it is of FAITH*, that it might be by GRACE. Rom. iv. 16.—(see Note II.)

The gospel which the apostles preached was *the gospel of the GRACE of God* (Acts xx. 24.)—or, in other words, the glad tidings of his *mercy*; of that mercy which is revealed as *reigning, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ*, where *sin had reigned unto death*. Rom. v. 21. This is the *essential* character of the Gospel of Christ. It is good news from heaven to sinners, as such;—to those that are *ungodly and without strength*. To such it proclaims *peace* and *the forgiveness of sins*, by JESUS CHRIST. It sends them not to search for any thing within them or without them, in order to be furnished with hope towards God; but reveals to them a sure hope, by the testimony which it bears of him who *came into the world to save sinners*. It directs them not how they may do something which God will

accept; but it exhibits *the propitiation for sin* which he has accepted, the work of righteousness for the sake of which he *is well pleased*,—that work already accomplished by his well beloved Son in his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. It attests his resurrection from the dead, as the grand evidence of the perfection of his work and the divine acceptance of his offering. It addresses all the world as *guilty before God*; and holds forth no other hope to the most admired and esteemed of human characters, than to the most infamous and profligate. It proclaims to all alike—"The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart:—if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" (Rom. x. 8, 9.) and to all alike presents the *good hope* that is *through grace*, or mercy: (2 Thess. ii. 16.) while it repels every aspiring thought, which would suggest the possibility of establishing any other ground of hope, with the declaration—*it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

Accordingly we find that Paul, who had *lived after the strictest sect of his religion, a Pharisee*, as soon as he was brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, *counted all things but loss for the excellency of it*; gloried in that Saviour, who had displayed his character in pardoning a robber expiring by his side upon the cross; and reckoned it his highest privilege to *preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*,—to proclaim to the vilest of heathen idolaters the glad tidings of the common salvation. Acts xxvi. 5, 18. Phil. iii. 7, 8. Eph. iii. 8.

The Gospel, which the Apostles preached, and by which the first Churches were gathered, must ever bear an aspect of folly and ungodliness in the view of natural men, that is, of all who believe it not; for it stands in direct opposition to all that they reckon wise and good. But none who believe it can wish, on that account, to conceal or modify its genuine character. The wise and religious of the world (ever since so large a part of the world has taken the name of Christian) dream of another Gospel, designed to advance the moral improvement of the world; exciting creatures half-good to good conduct, by holding out eternal life on certain *terms* and *conditions* which the sinner has to fulfil; and requiring various favourable qualifications and dispositions in those, to whom it speaks comfortably. But the one design of the Apostolic Gospel is, to display the glory of *the only living and true God* in the salvation of the lost; revealing the divine glory in the person of Him who *is despised and rejected of men*, but who has *put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, and has received *power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life unto all that the Father hath given him.* John xvii. 2. Isa. liii. 3. Hebr. ix. 26. vii. 27. Eph. ii. 7. i. 6.

Some indeed go very far in their preaching in asserting something like the Gospel of Christ, for they find it necessary to keep up their characters as *evangelical preachers*: but having said enough for that object in one part of their discourse, they proceed more seriously then to clear themselves from the imputation of having really meant what they had seemed to say. They are in a hurry to bring forward

the guards and qualifications of their Gospel; to prove that they did not intend to say any thing joyful to the wicked and ill-disposed; and in their solicitude for the interests of human goodness—or, as they style it, holiness,—they manifest the most lively apprehension lest what they said at first should be understood as not asserting the necessity of this. Well; such preachers deceive many; but we have the highest authority for being assured, that they shall not be allowed to deceive the elect of God. And indeed to those who know the Apostolic Gospel, it may be sufficiently evident that these men disbelieve it, however fairly they may talk at times: otherwise, they would have no uneasiness lest it should produce bad effects in men's lives. And as many of the wicked and ill-disposed, as are led by divine mercy to hear the Apostles of Jesus Christ, will have no cause to be discouraged at finding themselves excluded from the comfort of the modern Gospels: for in the old Gospel, which Christ commissioned his Apostles to proclaim, they will find *glad tidings of great joy to sinners*, even the *chief*;—the testimony of that divine Saviour, who in the days of his flesh was not ashamed to be called *the friend of publicans and sinners*.

This despised Gospel, which wrought effectually of old in those who believed it, (Col. i. 6. 1 Thess. ii. 13.) is still the only instrument, by which every *fruit of the Spirit* is produced in the people of God. It was through the power of this Gospel that those, who composed the first Churches, were made alive unto God, created anew in Christ Jesus. It was by this word those Churches were gathered. Their *edification* of which we read, was but a building of them up and establishment of them in the same faith. And when we are told that they *walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*, we are but informed that they walked under the influence of that Gospel, which they had believed. For the *fear of the Lord* and the *comfort of the Holy Ghost*, in their scriptural nature, are effects which nothing but the Gospel produces, and which it never fails to produce—so far as any sinner is kept under the persuasion of it.

But, as Satan is industrious in propagating spurious Gospels, so does he with all diligence circulate counterfeits for every *fruit of the Spirit*; and finds ready agents, in his work of lies, among the divines and preachers of the Religious world. In their *divinity*, nothing is more common than to represent the *fear of the Lord* as a principle antecedent to justifying faith, and one of the preparatory steps towards its attainment. But it may confidently be asserted, that no man has a particle of that fear but the *believer*; that it begins with faith, and grows with the growth of faith. *The fear of the Lord* is that reverential sense of his glory, which springs from a discernment of that glory; and it can be discerned only in that discovery, which he has made of it, in the testimony of his Son Jesus. *It is life eternal to know his name*, or revealed character; (John xvii. 3.) *and they, who know his name, will put their trust in him*, (Ps. ix. 10.) and will fear before him with that godly fear which characterizes his children. How indeed should they fear God, who know him not? And all are *by nature alienated from the life of him, through the ignorance that is in them*; and remain so, till he *who commanded the light to shine out*

of darkness, shine into their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Eph. ii. 3. iv. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 6. How should they fear God, who are not afraid to deny his being? This is the rash presumption of all, who discredit *the record which God hath given of his Son.* In that, they *make God a liar.* 1 John v. 10. In that, they deny that there is any such God, possessed of such a character, and dealing in such a way, as he reveals. They may abound ever so much with a religious fear; they may be votaries, ever so ardent, of a God they imagine to themselves:—but their God is an idol; and their religious fear, when highest, is a principle as essentially different from that *fear of the Lord*, in which the first Churches are related to have walked, as their idol is different from the only living and true God.

It is not therefore to be wondered at, that the religious fear of the world operates in a way altogether different from the scriptural *fear of the Lord*. The latter manifests itself in regarding the true doctrine of God, as divinely glorious and inviolably sacred: the former, despising this, sets up to admiration the characters of men for piety and goodness. The one is jealous for that truth, and views with abhorrence whatever would invade it: the other is fired with jealousy for those highly esteemed characters, and reckons it profanation to question their acceptance with God. The one prompts to an *earnest contention for the faith once delivered to the saints*; (Jude 3.) and regards as *accursed* all who hold *any other* doctrine, however eminent they be for religion: (Gal. i. 8.) the other views it as an unessential matter what doctrine men embrace,—that is, what God they acknowledge,—provided they serve their God with devout earnestness and zeal.

So far also as any are under the influence of the genuine *fear of the Lord*, they will *tremble at his word*; they will manifest this principle by a subjection to the precepts and to the intimations of his will, which are contained in that word. Acknowledging Him, who is *set as king upon the holy hill of Zion*, concerning whom the voice from Heaven testifies, and to whom it claims subjection in the solemn mandate—*Hear ye Him*;—they will turn away their ear from the fables and vain traditions of men, and receive the law from *his mouth* with filial reverence. They *hear his voice, and follow him*; and *a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him*; for they know not—or acknowledge not—the *voice of a stranger*. John x. 3—5. and 27. It is by his Apostles, in their writings, that he speaks: and *he that knoweth God heareth them*. 1 John iv. 6. On the other hand, the religious fear which animates the world, leaves them to despise and set aside as antiquated the plainest precepts, once delivered by the Apostles in the name of the Lord Jesus; while it leads them to exact the strictest obedience to the traditions of men.

Again; what they call the fear of God is a principle at variance with joy and peace. It is the uneasiness of an evil conscience, suggesting the inquiry—*what lack I yet?* and apprehensive that the ground on which their hope rests, is insecure. Whereas, the believing *fear of the Lord* is a principle so indissolubly connected with the *comfort of the Holy Ghost*, that they not only both spring from the

same source, but invariably keep pace with each other in the mind: nor can any sinner indeed fear the Lord, but the man who rejoices in him, and has *the answer of a good conscience* towards him. While a sinner is ignorant of the name of the Lord, he is necessarily a stranger alike to both. He may indeed abound with religious comfort, as well as with religious fear; the former springing from a view of something in himself, which he conceives may afford him ground of hope towards God; the latter springing from a suspicion of its insufficiency. But he is equally carnal and dead in sins, whether tormented with the latter, or rejoicing in the former.

The *comfort of the Holy Ghost*, or, that which the Holy Spirit of God communicates to his people, is imparted from the view of the glory of God, revealed in the work and character of Jesus Christ, as testified in the Scriptures. There God is discovered as *the just God and the Saviour*, as *the God of hope*. It is in *believing* the testimony, that his people are *filled with all joy and peace*, and made to *abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost*. Rom. xv. 13. There is discovered that, after which the guilty conscience busies itself in vain to search and labour;—that, which has taken away sin and made peace;—that work of perfect righteousness completed, for the sake of which Jehovah is *well-pleased*;—an effectual atonement and propitiation for sin, the sufficiency of which the God of truth testifies, and has proved his acceptance of it by raising up from the dead Him, who *died the just in place of the unjust*. The *peace of God*, in the conscience, is that peace, which the persuasion of this truth produces. The *comfort of the Holy Ghost* is that comfort which the Spirit of truth communicates in discharging his office of glorifying Jesus, by taking of the things that are his and shewing them to his people; comforting their hearts by giving them to perceive that glory and honour, wherewith the Son of God and Son of Man is crowned in his work of saving sinners. John xvi. 7, 14.

Those who are still blind to that glory,—that is, who discredit the divine testimony of it,—must naturally think this account of the *comfort of the Holy Ghost* altogether insufficient. They must have something good and hopeful shewn them of themselves and in themselves, or they cannot be comforted. And the supposed discovery of this they profanely attribute to the Spirit of truth; as the attainment of it also they attribute to—what they call—the grace of God. The more *evangelical* sort commonly dress up this secret something under the name of *faith*. How the mere belief of what is testified in the Gospel of Christ should comfort any one, they cannot comprehend: but on *the belief that they believe it* their comfort hinges, and leads them to *thank God*, with the Pharisee, *that they are not as other men*, who are destitute of faith. But any, who derive their hope towards God from a view of their faith, might as well derive it from a view of their works: and they discern not the glory of the Gospel, who discern not in *it* a sufficient ground of hope for the greatest infidel on earth.

Others will acknowledge that the *first* ground of hope and joy to a sinner must be that, which is declared in the word of God; that when the Philippian jailor, for instance, set meat before Paul and Silas, who had spoken to him the word of the Lord, and *rejoiced, believing*

in God with all his house, (Acts xvi. 34.) the sole spring of his joy was that which he had heard from the Apostle, independent of every consideration about his believing it. But then they conceive the believer must go on, to get his hope confirmed and his joy increased—on another ground,—by obtaining more satisfactory evidences that he is a believer. That is—they conceive that, having *begun in the Spirit*, he must be *made perfect by the flesh*, forgetting what the word declares, that we are *made partakers of Christ, if we hold the BEGINNING OF OUR CONFIDENCE steadfast unto the end*. Hebr. iii. 14.

The constant propensity of the human heart to turn aside from the glorious hope of the Gospel, even after having known it, and to be *corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus*, affords the most awful evidence of its unchangeable contrariety to God; and of the suitableness of that admonition of the Apostle—*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God*. Hebr. iii. 12. And the warning is the more abundantly needful at this day, from the mass of *divinity* that is current under the name of *evangelical*, calculated to foster that propensity, and sanctioning its principles. The proud heart of the sinner will be content, as it were, to set out upon the ground of mere *mercy*, if the expectation be held forth of afterwards shifting that ground, or combining some other with it. But let it be recollected, that when an Apostle cried unto the Lord in a season of great trial, he was comforted—not by having his view directed to the abundance of his labours in the Gospel, the steadfastness of his faith, or any thing else about himself;—but by that answer which stands recorded for the comfort of the publican and harlot—*MY GRACE—OF, mercy—is sufficient for thee*. 2 Cor. xii. 9. While any sinner is kept in the believing remembrance of that, he will have enough to comfort him, and assure his hope towards God.

If any man *says* that he enjoys this comfort, while he walks not *in the fear of the Lord*, but after his fleshly lusts;—he is a liar: and the inconsistent falsehood of his profession is manifest from the word. None can *walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*, but so far as they *walk in the light*,—under the persuasion of the things testified concerning Jesus Christ:—and none can walk in the discernment of that light, without being influenced to reverence and godly fear of the glorious Lord, whom it discovers. Men may *talk* indeed of the Gospel, and of its glorious hope; and yet *live after the flesh*: but they, who *live by the faith of the Son of God*, will *walk in the Spirit*.

In the awful description given of the natural state of all men, Rom. iii. 17, 18. it is declared—*the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes*. Directly opposite to this is the account given of the Churches in our text, that they *walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*. That is the character of the *new mind*, the mind of *faith*, the mind of the *Spirit*; which exists only in those, who are *born again not of corruptible seed—but of incorruptible; by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*. 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. And it is, in both its features, the mind in which believers walk, only so far as they are kept in the remembrance of that Gospel, *kept, by the power of God, through faith, unto Salvation*. 1 Pet. i. 5.

REMARKS ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS, &c.

QUESTION I. and II.

1. WHETHER a Church of Christ in any place of old was not a body, with which *all* the disciples in the place were *bound* by divine authority to walk; and whose fellowship in any Christian ordinances was confined to those who walked with them in all?

2. Whether a true scriptural Church in *Glasgow, Paisley, &c.* must not still be such a body; and whether you can honestly say that, even according to your own judgment, your society is such?

REMARKS. On the first of these questions much need not be said. Any one, who is ever so little informed from the word of God, must acknowledge that the first Apostolic Churches were planted and regulated by those, who acted in the kingdom of Christ as his commissioned *Ambassadors*,—discharging in his name that part of their Apostolic office, in the exercise of which they were to *teach* his disciples to *observe all things, whatsoever he commanded them*. It was not at their own fancies that the disciples united together, or adopted the course which they maintained as Churches of the saints; but in obedience to the word of the Lord. The Apostles *delivered unto them*, what they had themselves *received of the Lord*; (1 Cor. xi. 23.) and taught the same things *in every Church*. 1 Cor. iv. 17. All therefore, who professed allegiance to the King of Zion, were bound by that allegiance to join the body of disciples in keeping the ordinances, as they were delivered by the Apostles. 1 Cor. xi. 2. And accordingly we read, that *the Lord ADDED TO THE CHURCH daily such as should be saved*. Acts ii. 47. Nothing was left in this matter to man's discretion. *All that believed were together:—and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, (or contribution) and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* v. 42, 44.

Hence, the latter part of the question admits a most easy determination. While *all* the disciples were in one body, and continued together in *all* the ordinances of Christian fellowship,—with what *other* persons can it be supposed that they joined in *any* of them? The idea was at that day unknown—of Christian fellowship being held with any, who were not acknowledged as Christians; or of any Christians not being with the Church. In later days indeed, fellowship in Christ's ordinances has been broken into fractional parts; and disciples have been taught (for instance) to join without scruple in praise and prayer with those, whom they would scruple to join with in the Supper of the Lord. But we may confidently assert, that at the beginning it was not so; and that the disciples joined not in any part of Christian fellowship but with those, who joined with them in all.

This ought to be sufficient to decide the second Question. Any

Church now, with which all Christians in the place are not under a *divine obligation* to be joined, cannot be a body of the same nature or character with the Apostolic Churches of old: or, in other words, must be an unscriptural Church. And here let it be well observed, that the foundation of divine obligation lies in the word of the Lord,—that word which *abideth for ever*, and changes not with the varying fashions and opinions of men. None indeed but those, who perceive what that word commands, can acknowledge the obligation, or act in true obedience to it. But our *non-perception* of divine obligation invalidates not its force, nor can justify our disobedience. The same word, which regulated the Apostolic Churches, is still sent unto us; and has the same binding authority unimpaired, which it had at first. When therefore any Churches at this day are conscious—that they walk in any respect contrary to that rule, by which the first Churches of the saints were regulated: they are convicted, by the testimony of their own consciences, that they are unscriptural. Such Churches are but consistent, in not even pretending that all disciples are *bound* to walk with them: and in my remarks on the next question I shall shew, that this amounts to an absolute proof—that they are such Churches, as no disciple can remain in without sin.

It is remarkable that the Church of Rome, the most antichristian of all,—arrogating to herself the characters of the Church of Christ,—with wicked consistency assumes herself to be the *only true Church*, the *only* communion with which Christians can lawfully be connected. This is indeed blasphemous in her, in whom *the man of sin* rules with uncontrolled sway. But it appears to follow unavoidably from what has been observed, that any Church—which does not consider it *obligatory* on all Christians to walk by the same rule with them—cannot *consistently* put itself forward as a true or scriptural Church of Christ. They may think it discretionary for other Christians to be joined with them: but while they think it only *discretionary*, they are inconsistent with the plainest principles of Scripture in thinking it *lawful*.

QUESTION III.

3. WHETHER—from the *unity*, which Christ prayed might be manifest in his disciples, and the promised *consumption* of the works of the man of sin, we have not scriptural ground to *expect* that unity to be *restored*? And whether—from the nature of that unity, it can be consistent with the scriptural *duty* of any disciple, to continue in any religious fellowship, which it is not the *duty* of all disciples to join?

REMARKS. When Christ prayed (John xvii. 20, 21.) for those who should believe on him through the word of his Apostles, *that they all might be one*; and this, in order *that the world might believe* that the Father had sent him; it is plain that the unity prayed for was one, of which the world might take observation,—an outward and

visible unity. And accordingly there was a most striking accomplishment of this prayer, in the first Churches *throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria*, and the other Churches which *became followers of them*; (1 Thess. ii. 14.) when the multitude of them that believed *were together, of one heart and of one mind*, holding fast the doctrine and precepts of the Lord, as they had been delivered by his Apostles.

It is manifest also, that—as long as they continued in that word which they had been taught—they must have continued together in the same unity: and therefore, that the cessation of this unity, and the scattering of the disciples in different Churches walking by various rules, must have been the work of that *man of sin*, whose ungodly influence Paul describes, and warns the disciples that he was about to be revealed, *in all deceivableness of unrighteousness*, usurping the place of God in the temple of God. 2 Thess. ii. 3—8.

That this man of sin shall not be *destroyed*—but *with the brightness of the coming of the Lord*,—the Apostle informs us. Till that great day there shall be various *Antichrists*, or, adversaries of Christ under the name of Christian; for in that sense the term is always used in Scripture. But we have the same authority assuring us, that the Lord will—before that day—*consume him with the spirit of his mouth*; will consume the works that he has wrought in the sanctuary of God, by the influence of that word, which is the *sharp two-edged sword* that goeth out of the mouth of the Lord. Rev. i. 16. This predicted consumption has long been in progress: and perhaps there never has been a period, in which its progress was more strikingly evident, than the present period,—evident to those who can *discern the signs of the times*.

But it is equally evident, from the remaining disunion of disciples, that the works of the man of sin are not yet consumed: and many perhaps are disposed to think it impossible, that they should ever be so consumed, as to restore that unity of disciples which was manifested at first. But is any thing too hard for the LORD? He will fully make good the execution of that sentence which he has pronounced: and his people are called not to *stagger* at the promise, nor to *consider* any of the impediments to its accomplishment—however great or numerous; but to be *strong in faith, giving glory to God*. It ill becomes *them* either to lament the disturbance of that ungodly peace, in which the antichristian Churches were long at rest: or to be discouraged by the remaining differences among those, who appear to have heard the call—*Come ye out of Babylon, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*. That such should not at once discern all the good *old paths*, from which they had been turned aside, is not surprising, when we consider what man is, and how long the principles of Scripture have been obscured by the prevalence of antichristian corruptions. I know not any two things more hostile to the progress of that work which is going on, than—on the one hand—an abandonment of the prospect of its completion, and—on the other hand—an opinion entertained by any connection that they have so attained, as to have nothing more to learn of the revealed will of God.

But here let it be distinctly observed that the work, which I conceive the divine promise leads us to expect shall be completed, is the restoration of that unity which subsisted of old among those, who had one faith and one hope—the faith and hope of the Gospel. Some appear very apprehensive that this would be such a *flourishing* of Christianity, as it is inconsistent to expect on earth. But can it be inconsistent with the nature of Christ's kingdom upon earth, that it should again appear as it has *already* appeared? Can it be inconsistent with the nature of Christ's kingdom upon earth, that all the real subjects of it should be given to discern his revealed will, and subjected to the obedience of it? Let it be remembered, however, that—even if the purpose of the Lord to effect this gracious work in all his people were not discovered to us,—this would not change in the least the personal duty of each disciple. The disobedience of one cannot be vindicated or extenuated by the disobedience of others. *Nor can any course be consistent with the personal obedience of any disciple, which would be inconsistent with the obedience, and consequent unity of all.*

We may therefore with certainty proceed to the examination of the latter part of the question, as if the former were absolutely determined in the affirmative. And now I say, that the slightest examination may be sufficient to determine the second part of the question in the negative; and to conclude that—*it is not consistent with the scriptural duty of any disciple to continue in any religious fellowship, which it is not the duty of all disciples to join.* Otherwise, disciples may remain apart from each other, without any breach of duty on either side; and thus iniquity becomes sanctioned—nay established, by a law. If I be connected with a Church, from connection with which other disciples may *lawfully* abstain, it must be because the Church I am connected with is not a scriptural Church: for—with such—fellowship is *obligatory* on every disciple. It must therefore be obligatory on me to quit that unscriptural fellowship, that I may walk by the rule of the divine word with any who will obey it.

I have met with some, who vindicate their continuance in such a fellowship, from the fact of their having no more scriptural fellowship to join. But the weakness of this plea will be sufficiently obvious, if it be considered—that the obedience of one disciple cannot scripturally depend upon the question, whether others will obey the word or not. Now, according to the argument which I expose, it would only need the appearance of a few disciples walking together by the word, to mark it as the duty of others to come out from their present connections. It must therefore be the duty of each to come out, let others act as they may. How indeed can it be, that any should ever appear obeying the word, if each wait for others?

In short, the more we examine into the scriptural principles of Christian fellowship, the more it will appear that it never can be discretionary with a disciple, whether he will join it or not. If it be a religious fellowship, which it is not obligatory on him to join, he is bound not to join it. And if it be a fellowship, which he is at scriptural liberty to join, he is not at liberty to hold back from joining it. No other principles are consistent with the unity of Christian Churches: and whatever is inconsistent with that unity must be evil.

QUESTION IV.

4. WHETHER we be not continually prone, as to every other evil, so to that—of mistaking attachment to a connection, in which we have long walked, for attachment to Christ; and of mistaking the quiet, produced by keeping down scriptural discussion, for the unity and peace, in which brethren are called to dwell.

REMARKS. **GOD IS LOVE.** *No man hath seen God at any time. But the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* John i. 18. **HE is the image of the invisible God. In HIM dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;** and in him is manifested all that can be known of God. The same God—who is *Love*—is a *consuming fire*, and a *jealous God*. The love, which is of God, and which is exhibited in all its perfection in Jesus Christ, partakes of these characters. His love uniformly flowed in the direction of jealousy for the divine glory, and delight to do his Father's will. He could say—*the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up—my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.* When a mind opposite to this appeared in his most favoured disciple, he met it with—*get thee behind me, Satan.* He declared—“Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother.” Mark iii. 35. Those, who *are taught of God to love one another*, will love after this manner: while the charity of the religious world runs altogether in another course,—setting aside the commandments of God, making light of his glory, and proceeding on complimentary concessions to each other's sincerity and goodness.

If any therefore plead their love of the brethren, in vindication of joining them in their neglect and disobedience of Christ's institutions; if they urge that they cannot withdraw from those, with whom they have been long connected in Christian fellowship, although their fellowship continue not to be regulated by the word of God;—such persons betray ignorance of the essential nature of Christian love, and a mind directly opposite to true charity. Such may say—a *confederacy*; and may strengthen each other's hands in their iniquity, calling their confederacy Christian union; and may talk loudly of *charity* and *forbearance*: but they are not *sanctifying the Lord God in their hearts*, nor making HIM *their fear*. They are *calling evil good, and good evil*; perverting the meaning of the scriptural expressions—*charity* and *forbearance*. Their confederacy is a confederacy against the word of the Lord; and it shall be broken.

But here let me explain, that I do not mean to designate as an *antichristian* society every Church, which comes short in any respect of full conformity to the Apostolic rule. Where the members are joined in the profession of the unadulterated Gospel, and in the professed aim of being regulated universally by the word of the Lord, and by nothing else; there I would in the first instance—till something appear to invalidate their profession—acknowledge the leading characters of a Church of Christ: and this, notwithstanding much present ignorance, and many mistakes concerning his revealed will.

But, when they come to reject and resist plain and scriptural admonition brought to them on any point, in which they at present walk contrary to the word of the Lord; I can see in them only a combination against that word. If any of the members be led to a discernment of that, in which their common course has hitherto been contrary to the divine rule, and yet forbear to bring it forward as a matter of admonition and reproof,—lest the introduction of it should disturb the unity and peace of the body;—it is manifest that the unity he seeks is carnal. If he present the admonition faithfully, and—though it be rejected—yet forbear to withdraw from the body, he becomes a partaker of their sin, and acts under a mind that prefers earthly connections to Christ. That it is the duty of all the disciples, who see the sin and fail in removing it, to come out from that society, appears not only from the scriptural nature of brotherly love, and from the subjection due to the authority of Christ, but also from the following plain consideration. Suppose another Church should appear in that place, presenting the same characters of a Church of Christ which I have already mentioned, and also manifesting obedience to the word in that particular, in which the former transgresses it: with which of these Churches would it be the duty of a Christian, coming to the place, to seek connection? Certainly with the latter. And as certainly—every disciple in the former, who acknowledges this, acknowledges in effect that the Church with which he remains connected is unscriptural, and that his connection with it is unlawful.

But I have known it objected in various forms, that—according to these views—there can be no *permanent* existence to any Church on earth, as a Church of Christ: and I intreat the Christian reader's serious attention to my reply. A Church, which is of *man's* making, may be kept together by man: and much human ingenuity has been displayed, in many instances, in establishing such regulations and *management* of religious societies, as are well adapted for securing their stability and numbers. But a Church of Christ is *God's building*, and not man's; and can be kept together only by the same divine power and mercy, which were displayed in its first formation. The Spirit of truth, in his continued operation, can alone keep the members abiding together, under the persuasion and influence of the truth, growing up together in it, and learning together to walk in the obedience of it. To look for any *permanence* of existence in a Church, distinct from this and independent of this, is worse than vain. And the work of God, *making men to be of one mind in an house*, is truly marvellous, when we consider their own sinfulness and folly.

But while any particular society, assembling in any particular place, will lose the characters of a true Church of Christ, whenever they are left to themselves, and to the opposition of their own hearts against the word of God;—*his Church* will still be found wherever the standard of the word moves: and will therefore be found with any handful of disciples, coming out from that fallen society in obedience to the word, and following the Lord according to its rule. Around that standard—wherever it appears—the subjects of his kingdom

are called to be : and they act awfully out of character, when they refuse to *move with it*, under the idea of maintaining the *permanence* of any society. To this sin—the long-established connection between Churches and *meeting-houses* has contributed, in no small degree : and it is one of the many striking instances, in which the thoughts and ways of men are contrary to God's. But let us look at the places, in which we are most certain that there have been genuine Churches of the saints : let us look at Jerusalem, Rome, Thessalonica, &c. &c. What permanence have these Churches had ? How vain the boast of any Church, now in ROME, of being the same with that, to which Paul wrote his letter :—even supposing they were to hold their assembly in precisely the same place of meeting ! With the truth of the Apostolic Gospel, and with subjection to the Apostolic word, their character as a Church of Christ departed. And what is any modern Church, that it should affect more stability and permanence, than the original Church at Rome ? That Lord, who will allow no flesh to *glory in his presence*, will prove that his glory is independent of any place and of any people.

What then does it become me to say of the Church, with which I now assemble in Dublin, and which I acknowledge as the only scriptural Church in that city ? What ? but that—as long as the truth of the Gospel and obedience to the laws of Christ's kingdom are maintained in it—so long I desire to abide in connection with that body. But that—whenever that Church is found opposing either, and not yielding to the correction of the word,—I pray that every disciple may come out of it.

QUESTIONS V. and VI.

5. WHETHER it be not the duty of Christians, so to conduct their assembling together on the first day of the week, that any others who *witness* their meeting may have an opportunity of observing a Christian Church, acting as the Churches of the saints were directed to act of old, *meeting together in one place*, to join in the observance of *all* the institutions of Christ's House ?

6. Whether this be not rather effectually prevented, than in any degree attained, when the thing exhibited to observation is—a *promiscuous assembly* of believers and unbelievers, meeting together in one place, joining in the religious exercise of prayer and praise, and hearing a *sermon* preached ; after which, *the congregation being dismissed*, the Church gets sufficiently together to observe the Supper of the Lord ?

REMARKS. Whatever we can truly collect from Scripture of the course and order of the first Christians in their assemblies, forms an authoritative rule for their regulation to the end of the world ; a rule, to which disciples are called to conform cheerfully, universally, and in the fear of God. It is as if they heard the Lord telling them—
“ thus and thus did I order matters in the Churches by my apostles.”

When, instead of obeying such intimations, professors argue for the propriety, expediency, or innocence of changing the customs of old delivered to the saints; however plausible the arguments, and however specious the motives they put forward, they really manifest a mind contrary to the *fear of the Lord* and subjection to his word. What the intimations are, which the Scriptures give upon the subject, is a question which calls for fair and patient and serious examination. But once we have ascertained, in any particular, what was the practice of the first Churches, any subsequent doubting—whether we shall be followers of the first Churches—is evidently carnal, and strikes at the root of the divine authority of the word.

Now I write at present for those, who profess agreement with me in the main on the first topic; who acknowledge that the first Christians held their assembly on the first day of the week,—that in that assembly they *came together into one place* to do every thing, which they were commanded to observe as Churches of Christ, and in which their fellowship one with another and with the Lord was manifested and promoted. If there were any one among the various institutions of Christ's house, which formed the leading object for which they came together,—it was that of *breaking bread*, or partaking of the Lord's Supper in commemoration of his death, as the great foundation of their hope and bond of their union. See Acts xx. 7. We also have decisive information, that their assembly was commonly held with open doors, so that such unbelievers as pleased might *witness* what passed among them: while it is equally evident, that—upon the entrance of such—the exercises of the brethren went on, just as if there were not in the room any but themselves. See I Cor. xiv. 23—25.

Now is it not manifest that, when matters go on as described in the 6th question, there is a total departure from this course? What takes place at first is nothing like the meeting or exercises of a Christian Church. It is exactly that kind of thing, which is exhibited in all the places of popular religion;—the various exercises of the *Minister's* gifts for the edification of a promiscuous assembly, among which the members of the nominal *Church* may be scattered, but are not even ostensibly come together into one place—farther than the same is true of every other person in the congregation. And when at length the Church does proceed to act in some measure as a Christian Church,—then the house is cleared. Those who witnessed, and took part in, what went on before, have intimation given them—by the dismissing benediction—to withdraw. A few, perhaps, who are in the secret, understand that they may remain, if they choose. But what if all the congregation choose to remain? Why—the handful of disciples scattered through the place would be so separated from each other, that they *could not* proceed to observe the Supper of the Lord.

I write not now for the purpose of silencing gainsayers; and therefore shall not descend to the various evasions and subterfuges, by which they endeavour to vindicate this conduct. I write for the purpose of simply calling the attention of disciples, who fear the Lord, to the unscriptural course, in which they have been involved. The plainest subject men, who set themselves to perplex it, may perplex. But

enough has been said for the direction of those, who are simple-hearted, and willing to learn from the word.

Let me only add, that—in like manner as there is no scriptural warrant for supposing that the first Churches had to change their order, and remove strangers, when they passed from one ordinance to the observance of another,—no more is there any for supposing that they so divided the ordinances of Christ's house, as to observe only some at one meeting, and others at another meeting. When they *came together to break bread*, they came together to observe every other ordinance, delivered to them by the Apostles of the Lord.

QUESTIONS VII. and VIII.

7. Whether the *preaching* of the word of life to the world was not, of old, a thing perfectly distinct from—and unaccompanied with—any of the *ordinances of Christian fellowship*; and this—even although it be certain that, in many cases, more believers were present, than the one who declared the Gospel to his fellow-sinners?

8. Whether every thing which, in later days, has blended and confounded these two distinct things, does not tend to conceal the real nature and design of both,—to countenance the most pernicious falsehoods that are in the mind of the world,—and to deprive disciples of the edification which the ordinances of Christ, in their scriptural simplicity, are calculated to afford?

REMARKS. Any one, who has paid the least attention to the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, if he answer honestly, will answer the former of these questions—decisively and without hesitation—in the affirmative. When Paul, for instance, preached to the people of Lystra, that they should turn from the vanities of their idols unto the living God, Barnabas and other disciples were present. But who can seriously think, that the Apostle therefore prefaced, or concluded, his address to the unbelieving multitude with exercises of social praise and prayer? I have met indeed a few professors, who admitted that the Scriptures do not give any intimation of such a practice, but sagely added that they could not—from the *silence* of Scripture—infer that the thing was not done. With such men I would never wish to argue: they are men, who will stop at nothing to justify themselves.

I rather call upon disciples to consider, whether any thing can justify a departure from the evident practice of the Apostles and first Christians in this matter. They, when they preached the Gospel to the world, did that and nothing else; though ever so many brethren were present. When they met with brethren for observing the ordinances of Christ's house, they did that and nothing else; though ever so many of the world were present. But our modern preachers, when they are most professedly engaged in testifying the truth to the world, must shew their piety—by profaning the ordinances of Christ's house, and joining in social worship with they know not

whom : and when most professedly assembling with the Church on the first day of the week, cannot find enough to engage them in the ordinances of Christian fellowship—without turning aside to address the unbelieving world.

Having largely treated this subject in my *Essay on the divine authority of the Apostolic Traditions*, having there shewn the ungodliness of the popular practice, and exposed the various arguments which are employed to vindicate it; I shall not now enlarge on it, but refer the Christian reader to that piece.

QUESTIONS IX. X. and XI.

9. WHETHER scriptural *Elders* were not among the gifts of Christ to his Churches, designed to further and establish them in the course, which they must be supposed to have held—in obedience to the word of the Lord. *before they had received Elders*; walking in which course with the rest of the brethren, those who were fit for the office of Elders must have been previously *proved* and *manifested*:—but not designed to stop up that way, by so occupying it themselves, as to prevent the brethren from any longer walking together in it?

10. Whether the first Churches in their assembling together on the first day of the week, (the only stated and obligatory meeting of which we read in Scripture) did not—at least before they had Elders—come together, among other purposes, for the purpose of mutually exhorting, admonishing, and comforting one another, *speaking the truth in love*, according as the Lord gave to any man the gifts of utterance and knowledge? And whether scriptural Elders were not to be in this, as in every thing else, *ensamples to the flock*?

11. Whether it be consistent with this, that the Elders should so occupy the time of meeting with the exercise of their own gifts, as either to preclude altogether—or thrust into a corner—the exercise of the gifts of the brethren? Or that the Elders should speak in a way, in which the rest of the brethren are not *expected* or *allowed* to speak?

REMARKS.—The opinion—that a Christian Church cannot exist, or cannot act as a Church of Christ, without Elders,—appears to be rapidly giving way in the minds of disciples, before the light of scriptural truth. Indeed it is one, so grossly inconsistent with every scriptural view either of a Christian Church, or of its Elders, that—whatever noise may be made for a time in support of it by the heads of a party,—it cannot long stand examination by the word. Yet I observe that some Churches, who discern the falsehood of that opinion, seem to retain much of the unscriptural leaven, which it has contributed to introduce. Why else should their meeting, on the first day of the week, exhibit *less* of the appearance of what went on in the Apostolic Churches, than it would if they had no Elders? If they had no Elders, they would come together to edify one another;

but now they come together to be edified by the gifts of the Elders. Nothing but the exercise of their gifts goes on, in prayers of a length and number the most unscriptural, and in the sermon delivered from that wooden throne, where these Elders are elevated; till perhaps at the close of the meeting—after the observance of the supper—an opportunity is allowed for a brother to *exhort*.

This exhortation, it is generally understood, must be wholly *practical*; for a maxim is current, that *teaching* exclusively belongs to the Elders. There are few maxims of a more ungodly nature and tendency. Those, who lay down a law that brethren are not to speak *doctrinally*, but to exhort *practically*, establish a law that they shall exhort unscripturally; and that they shall altogether lay aside that, which it ought to be the great object of their union to keep before each other's minds,—the truth of the Gospel. No exhortation to any part of Christian *practice* can be given scripturally, unless derived from the *doctrine* of Christ, and enforced by that doctrine. To *stir up each other's minds by way of remembrance* in that doctrine,—to present it to each other's attention in its glorious blessedness, importance, truth, and influence,—to *provoke one another to the love and good works, which adorn that doctrine, and which the GRACE of God that bringeth salvation alone teaches*;—these are the things about which Elders and brethren alike are called to speak continually. And among the various characters, which the Lord declares must have been manifested in the persons, called to the Elders' office, *aptness to TEACH* is particularly specified. What opportunity there could be for the manifestation of this, if all are debarred from *teaching*, but those who fill the Elders' office, is a question which may be worth the consideration of those, who hold that Antichristian sentiment.

But let me ask others, what means that same *sermon*, which the Elders preach? From Scripture I learn nothing of a *sermon*, preached in the meeting of a Christian Church. I learn nothing of the Elders, speaking in a different way, from that in which any of the brethren are expected or allowed to speak. Indeed, if preaching a Sermon be part of the Elder's business, those Churches are but consistent, who require *trial-sermons* (as they are called) to be delivered by the person, whom they think of calling to that office. But those, whom I more immediately address, professedly discard this notion. And how do they proceed? Why—to suppose the best—a brother walks with them for some time manifesting the various characters, which are pointed out in Scripture as requisite in an Elder, and (among the rest) shewing—as a brother—*aptness to teach*, speaking the truth in love with simplicity and to edification, exhorting, comforting, and admonishing the brethren. If he be engaged in this suitably, he will commonly speak with that brevity, which is at once most profitable, and necessary to leave room for the exercise of the gifts of the other brethren. Well: proceeding thus, he is recommended to the attention of the Church as one, whom the Lord has fitted to serve them as an Elder, and is called to that office. Now it might be expected, that he would go on—the next Lord's day—to speak to the edification of the body, exactly in the same way as he had been

accustomed to speak before. But no: this mode of speaking is at an end; and he now *preaches a sermon!*

Nor let any say, that it is only a different name, by which the discourse of the elder is designated. Whence has originated the difference of the *name*, but from the difference of the *thing*? It may be expected indeed, that the example of the Elders, in this matter, will lead the brethren also into a degree of *sermonizing*, on the rare occasions when they attempt to speak. But I trust there will yet be Elders, who shall rather set an example to the flock of such *short* and *simple* addresses, as may be a model to all the brethren. This however cannot be looked for, as long as the conception remains, that the great design of Elders is—either to *dispense* ordinances—or to *conduct* the exercises of *the meeting*.

QUESTION XII.

12. WHETHER it be consistent with Christian integrity to *persist* in any course, which we *see* to be contrary to the rule of the word?

To make any Remark on this question is superfluous. May it come with force to the consciences of those to whom it is addressed!

N O T E S.

NOTE I.

THIS text speaks, in language so plain, a truth so offensive to the pride of man, that it has afforded occasion to many learned commentaries, employed—(as usual in such cases)—to subvert its meaning. It remained however for Mr. PARKHURST to lay the axe to the root, by *coining* a new sense for the Greek word rendered—*ordained*; a word, than which there is not one in the Greek language of more precise and uniform signification. Yet that gentleman, in his Greek Lexicon, has the unblushing hardihood to assign to the verb the following meaning—“*To be disposed, adapted.*” And, quoting this text, Acts xiii. 48. he proceeds to translate it—“*And as many as were disposed, adapted, or in a right disposition or preparation, for eternal life, believed.*”

That the word never had such a signification in the Greek language, it is superfluous to observe: but it is an observable instance, that there is no impudence of falsification, at which men will stop,

when it is found necessary for opposing the word of God. Such persons however would act more fairly, if they avowed that they do not believe the Scriptures, than they do in attempting to torture the language of Scripture, in order to extract from it their own unbelieving sentiments.

Mr. PARKHURST indeed must set aside the whole of Scripture, before he can either overturn the plain meaning of this passage, or establish his own comment. If salvation be *by GRACE*,—if it be *not through works of righteousness that men have done, but of his own MERCY* that God saves his people,—(and this is a doctrine which pervades the whole of the word of God)—then *the purpose of God according to election must stand*; in spite of all the murmurings of unbelieving men, and in spite of their wise objection—“*why doth he yet find fault?*” Rom. ix. 11 and 19. As to the current doctrine of right *dispositions* in sinners, preparatory to faith, and fitting them for eternal life, I have elsewhere exposed it at large. See *Letters to Mr. Knox*, &c.

NOTE II.

I HAVE lately met, and looked at, some passages of a piece written by Mr. ANDREW FULLER, entitled “*Strictures on Sandemanianism.*” That gentleman seems to take a lead in the work of perplexing and corrupting the Gospel of Christ; and seems to be well fitted for it, by knowing how to entangle truth with error. One of the most obvious remarks that may strike a simple reader of his production, is this:—if the doctrine of Scripture [Gospel] involved such metaphysical subtleties, as his book abounds with, how little fitted would it be for the poor and ignorant and *babes!* MINISTERS, as wise and prudent as Mr. FULLER, might understand it, and might bewilder their plain hearers with statements of it. But indeed their plain hearers could not, in the end, be much the wiser for their instructions.

I observe however that Mr. FULLER—amidst much put forward to prove his soundness in the faith—avows, pretty early in his work, that he means by justifying faith—*an ACT of the mind*. Now I say that the reader, whose senses are exercised to distinguish good and evil, may safely close Mr. F.’s book at that point, and conclude that the writer is contending for a sentiment directly opposed to the Apostolic doctrine.

Nothing can be more plainly taught by the Apostle than this: that *to him that WORKETH the reward is not reckoned of GRACE, but of debt*; and THEREFORE *it is of FAITH, that it might be by GRACE*. Rom. iv. 4 and 16. Now, if faith be an *act* of the mind, or a *work*,—(for I suppose Mr. FULLER can scarcely distinguish between an *act* and a *work*)—then the contrast, which the Apostle states between him that *worketh* and him that *believeth*, must be given up; and the justification, which is assured to him that *believeth*—or *doeth this mental work*—can be no longer reckoned of GRACE. For as to any doctrine that would blend and confound the two, the Apostle tells us again

(Rom. xi. 6.) “if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.”

The same Apostle teaches us, that the righteousness *which is of the law* speaketh on this wise,—*the man which doeth these things shall live by them*: (Rom. x. 5.) and contrasts with that the language of *the righteousness which is of faith*. But if we are to believe Mr. FULLER that faith is an *act* or *work*, then there is no essential contrast between the two. For, when it is said—he that believeth shall be saved, we must understand him that *doeth* this mental work.

Mr. FULLER has very respectable company in thinking, that the great difference between the law and the Gospel lies in the difference of the *work*, which the sinner must *do* that he may live: and it is no wonder, while he is of this mind, that he views the opposite doctrine with abhorrence, as subversive of love and of all good works. The unadulterated Gospel ever has been viewed so by those, who were not convinced of its truth. And those who are convinced of its truth will scarcely contend, that their being convinced of it (or *believing* it) was a mental *act*, which their minds performed.

Mr. FULLER refers to a former pamphlet of his, entitled—*The great Question answered*; written on the reply of Paul and Silas to the question of the Philippian Jailor—*What must I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30, 31. The attentive reader of that tract might perceive, that the writer of it understood the Apostolic answer—*BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*—as telling the inquirer *what he should do to be saved*. But if his meaning were ambiguous before, it is now sufficiently ascertained. One, who should treat that subject with juster views, would be more apt to entitle his piece—*The foolish and ungodly Question answered*.

T H O U G H T S

ON

RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS;

WITH A BRIEF SKETCH OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

[First Published 1810.]

THE Church of Christ is throughout Scripture spoken of as his KINGDOM, and as the HOUSE, or TEMPLE, of God. (1 Tim. iii. 15. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Eph. ii. 19—22.) In the former view of it, we are at once directed to the Lord Jesus Christ as its only *Legislator* and *King*, and reminded that His *kingdom is not of this world*, but essentially distinct from every earthly kingdom in its nature and principles and design; rejecting all interference of worldly policy or power, and stigmatizing every attempt at introducing human regulation or authority in its affairs—as an ungodly attempt to usurp the office of the KING of Zion.

The same view admonishes the subjects of his kingdom what they are to expect from the world, so far as their character is consistently manifested,—namely, hatred and contempt. While they hold their allegiance to HIM who is *despised and rejected of men*, they must be partakers of his sufferings and reproach. And every attempt to dress up the kingdom of Christ in a garb which attracts the respect and approbation of the world, is an attempt—under the mask of promoting its interests—to disguise its real character. To one that *has the mind of Christ*, nothing more ought to be necessary to detect the *Antichristian* nature of what has been long current in the world, as his Church. It is that which is accommodated to the worldly taste, to worldly interests, to worldly wisdom; and indeed one of the great engines for the advancement of worldly schemes. It is therefore, *not of God, but of the world*.

Again, viewing the Church of Christ as the HOUSE and TEMPLE of the living God, in which He dwells and walks, and of which He is the sole Architect—adding to it those *living stones* which he brings unto Him, that great foundation-stone, in whom they have redemption, and are made alive unto God—viewing it in this light, we are

admonished that *Holiness becometh his House for ever* ; that all who are of this household are called to *walk before Him and to be perfect*, to walk in his fear and in the light of his countenance ;—to walk in that *fear of the Lord* which manifests itself by a reverential regard to His WORD, and by an exemption from that *fear of man*, which *bringeth a snare* ;—to walk in that *comfort of the Holy Ghost*, which springs from the view of his *Mercy* revealed as *reigning*, in behalf of sinners, *through righteousness unto eternal life by Christ Jesus*, and which leads the partakers of it to live looking for the second coming of the Lord, as the great period of their glory and their rest. In this view, what shall we say of every attempt to turn *His House* into a *house of merchandise, a den of thieves* ?

In both views, the subjects of his kingdom, and members of his household, are presented to our attention, as standing not only in the highest relation to HIM, their GOD and SAVIOUR, their KING and FATHER,—but in the closest relation also, and the most endeared to each other. Subjects of the same King, members of the same family, children of the same father, heirs of the same glory, partakers (through common mercy) of the same great salvation,—they are called also to walk in the same way, *by the same rule, speaking the same things ; striving together for the faith of the Gospel, dwelling together in unity, building up each other in their most holy faith, comforting one another, bearing one another's burdens, serving one another in love, and seeking each other's profit and good unto edification.*

To this object all the instituted laws and ordinances of Christ's kingdom delivered in his name by the Apostles to the Churches of the Saints,—to this object they all point. In those Apostolic writings, containing the standing code of Christ's laws to the end of the world, whenever *Christians* are exhibited to our view, they are exhibited—not as detached and disconnected individuals—but as fellow-members of one body, in the most intimate fellowship with each other, and in the most absolute religious separation from all the rest of the world. Assembling themselves together, on the first day of the week, to take the bread and drink the cup, which are at once the symbol of their unity and the memorial of its ground ; they joined together also in the other ordinances which they were commanded to observe—in holding forth the Apostolic doctrine, in prayer, in the salutation with an *holy kiss*, and in the contribution for the necessities of the saints,—along with those acts of instituted discipline, by which they were to meet the evils that from time to time appeared in the body. With this agrees the plain but striking account given us of the first Church at Jerusalem, Acts ii. 42 and 44. “ALL THAT BELIEVED WERE TOGETHER :—and they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, and in the contribution, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

The discipline they were commanded to observe was, in every respect, adapted to a society of sinners saved and governed by the Lord ; of sinners in whom there was no evil too foul to make its appearance, but of sinners standing by *mercy*, and who were therefore in every case of evil to aim (in the first instance) at *gaining* their

offending brother, to *restore him in the spirit of meekness*; while, if he ultimately refused to *hear the Church*, they were bound to purge out the corrupt leaven, and put *away from among them* one, who—in resisting the admonition of the word—resisted the authority of their common Lord.

A Church of Christ, proceeding thus, was wholly of divine establishment, and divine regulation; established by the power of the Lord “reigning in the midst of his enemies,” and making sinners obedient to his word; regulated by those instructions which his Apostles gave them in his name, and in the discharge of that commission which *they* exclusively held—not only to *preach* his Gospel to all the nations—but also to *teach* disciples “to observe all things whatsoever He commanded them.” A Church of Christ, proceeding thus, was the *pillar* on which his TRUTH was set up to the view of the surrounding world,—the *candlestick* in which its light was placed;—a practical exhibition and exemplification of his kingdom, despicable indeed in the view of the world, but manifesting *the glory of the LORD* to those who had eyes to see it.

In some of the Churches, to which the Apostolic letters were addressed, we find great corruptions of doctrine and of practice noticed and rebuked. But while those evils exhibited indeed the vileness of the materials, of which the Churches were composed,—(sinners, even as others of the human race)—yet as long as the Apostolic word of admonition and rebuke was received, meeting and removing those evils, so long the kingdom of Christ was still exhibited; the authority of the great Lord of the household still appeared swaying its members, purging and correcting the disorders that broke out among them. Those who think that a real Church of Christ must be exempt from the breaking out of such disorders in any of its members, only shew the vanity of their minds, their ignorance of the Scriptures and of themselves. And those who urge the recorded appearance of such disorders in the Apostolic Churches, as an argument for their allowed continuance, and as a vindication of neglecting to employ the corrective remedies prescribed by the Apostles,—attempt to draw an inference as weak in reasoning, as it is wicked in principle.

But such is the opposition of the human heart to God, that the Churches did not long continue to hold the Apostolic word, or to exhibit any of the characters of Christ’s kingdom: but on the contrary became prime instruments in the hands of Satan for obscuring the glory of that kingdom, by overspreading the world with a mass of carnal principles and human regulations, put forward under the name of Christianity. This awful apostacy, in the course of which human authority appeared usurping the seat of Christ in his house, setting aside his laws and establishing man’s,—an Apostle predicts (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.) and describes as “that man of sin, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” Of this *mystery of iniquity* the same Apostle declares—it *doth already work*; while he notices that which then *withheld* it from being fully manifested, and would hinder this till

taken out of the way, (v. 6, 7.)—alluding, as is pretty evident, to the existing empire of heathen Rome. Another Apostle, who lived longer than any of the rest, declares (1 John ii. 18.) that even at the time of his writing there were *many Antichrists*,—or persons assuming the name of Christian, but opposed to Christ; and describes them as having gone out from the Apostolic fellowship, and as having proved by not abiding in it that they were never truly of it.

The writings of the earliest fathers (as they are called) of the Church prove, what a rapid progress this defection made after the death of the Apostles. But it was not till the Roman empire ceased to be professedly heathen, and Constantine assumed the name of Christian, that its malignity became fully developed; and that connection took place between *Church* and *State*, which completely secularized the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Then indeed the flood of corruption rapidly swept before it almost every vestige of scriptural Christianity. Then the sword of human power was considered as the great means of promoting their satanic religion. Then appeared the awful spectacle of different factions, under the name of Christian, employing that sword against each other, as they successively climbed to political greatness on the stepping-stone of their several systems. Then were introduced into the house of God the civil pains and penalties of exile, fines, imprisonment, and death; with the worldly prizes of riches and honour, and political advancement, to tempt the ambition of carnal religionists. Then advanced with hasty strides the assumptions of priestly authority and hierarchical dominion, originating that stupid and wicked cry of—*NO BISHOP, NO KING*—which continues current to the present day; till at length what they called the *Altar* overtopped the *Throne*, and the popes of Rome, under the blasphemous claim of deriving their authority by lineal succession from the Apostle Peter, and acting as the Vicegerents of Christ,—were enabled to establish themselves in universal sovereignty over the very monarchs who had aided their rise, and conferred kingdoms or deposed kings at pleasure; while Christendom was overspread with a uniformity of idolatrous superstition and impious mummery, presented to the besotted nations as the religion of Jesus Christ.

I would be far from intimating that there were not in every age, and amidst the most general corruption, some few scattered witnesses for scriptural truth and practice. Various traces of such, though branded by the name of heretics, and every other epithet of reproach, the history of the darkest periods affords us: and they were probably much more numerous than the records of history have handed down, though none of them are *forgotten before God*. But it was at the time distinguished by the name of the REFORMATION, that the more signal accomplishment began to take place of that promise, (2 Thess. ii. 8.) whereby the Lord engaged of old that *He will consume with the spirit of his mouth* that wicked one, the man of sin, who had so long and awfully wrought desolation in his sanctuary. A bold appeal was then made from human authority to the Scriptures of truth. The principle was strenuously avowed, by those called Protestants, that the BIBLE contained their religion. And this broad fundamental principle of the reformation is that, for which it was chiefly valuable:

for it is to be deplored, that those who asserted the blessed principle shewed so little consistency in its application. In this, as in every case, all that was good was the work of God; but combined with abundant manifestations of the evil and folly of the human instruments employed in it.

The Scriptures however were brought forward to attention throughout a great part of Europe. That *fire* of the Lord, which had been comparatively smothered for so many ages by the devices of the enemy, began to burn afresh; and, as the Spirit of the Lord's mouth, consumed many of the principles and practices of Antichrist. The prime instrument of the man of sin, in the *clerical* character and dominion, received a deadly wound, by the recognition of the principle that the so called *laity* had a right to examine and to judge for themselves from the word of God. This was indeed loudly exclaimed against by the papistical party, as productive of endless divisions and of consequences the most pernicious. The obscurity and uncertainty of the Scriptures were strongly urged. The reformers were charged with inventing a new religion, which had never before been heard of; and the outcry of innovation, of heresy, and of schism, was loudly raised, to supply the want of scriptural argument. In short, the very same methods of opposition were exhibited at that day by the papists against the principles of the reformation, at its commencement, which are at this day employed by nominal protestants against its progress: and it is the self-same Antichristian spirit, that has in each case animated opposers.

But if those reformers ever *began in the spirit*, they very soon *ended in the flesh*; and gave origin to a tribe of Churches as really Antichristian, as that from which they separated, though their corruptions were considerably modified, and the grossness of them in many instances removed. Professing to receive the Scriptures as the one standard of Christian faith and practice, they yet, with strange inconsistency, maintained that human authority might lawfully interfere in Christ's kingdom; and, with wicked and time-serving dishonesty, stopped short even of what they saw to be contained in the Scriptures; and this, in order to increase the numbers and strength of their party. In many instances the kings of the earth, who had groaned under the yoke of the Roman pontiff, were glad to patronize the Reformation, as opposed to that domineering power. And alas! the reformers generally fell into the snare of their patronage; and in order to avail themselves of the protection and aids of human power, abandoned the principle that *CHRIST'S kingdom is not of this world*; continued that coalition between *Church and State*, which is essentially inconsistent with scriptural Christianity; and thus proved their new Churches to be the genuine progeny of that *great whore*, with whom *the kings of the earth have committed fornication*, and who is described as the *MOTHER of harlots and abominations of the earth* (Rev. xvii. 5.) Hence, in Churches bearing the name of Christian and of Protestant, the awful spectacle was still exhibited of temporal pains and penalties introduced to enforce obedience to their mandates; acts of human legislature establishing their religious creeds, and ordering their religious observances; with every carnal inducement

held out to allure conformity, and all the worldly aids of pageantry and pomp to excite superstitious reverence.

To this *State-religion* the continued existence of the race of CLERGY was essential. And accordingly they continued,—a class of pretended agents between God and the people, tricked out in the trappings and claims of the Jewish *priesthood*;—of that priesthood which had its termination and absolute abolition in HIM, who is *the great High Priest over the House of God*, on the completion of whose work the shadows which had prefigured him passed away. And so besotted,—so drunk with the wine of this fornication—have the inhabitants of the earth been made, that the grossest and most stupid impostures, by which the Clergy have supported their pretensions, pass current among them to this day as so many sacred mysteries. A man appointed by worldly rulers to what is called the episcopal function, after some ceremonies have been gone through with him by others similarly appointed, is supposed to be transformed into a—*successor to the Apostles* in the government of the Church of Christ! And he, by putting his hands on the head of another, and repeating some words over him, is supposed to convey to this person—however infidel and profligate he may be—a sanctity of character, which is necessary for the *administration* (as it is called) of christian ordinances to the *laity*!—a sanctity of character so indelible, that nothing—not even his own renunciation of it—can efface it! That such wicked nonsense should be imposed on the people, while the Scriptures were shut against them, is comparatively little wonderful. But that it should continue to be credited in countries bearing the name of Protestant, and by persons acknowledging the Scriptures, and having access to them,—this is a marvellous instance of the prevailing influence of *the mystery of iniquity*.*

The claim of *successorship to the Apostles* is one, which the Roman pontiffs have long advanced. But it was a claim too gainful to be lightly abandoned by the reformed Hierarchy; and therefore, to retain it, they have been content to trace their right of *sucession* through the most abominable of the Popes of Rome. The idea of any *successors to the Apostles* is one admirably calculated for supporting and propagating all the Antichristian principles and practices of the *man of sin*. It at once sets aside the Apostles of Jesus Christ, as defunct,—no longer discharging their office, and their place vacant. By this sweeping sentiment having made room for the pretensions of human arrogance and imposture, it introduces in all the pomp of religious jugglery—a new set of Apostles, manufactured by men, to be at the head of a state-religion, and to give imaginary sanctity to its ceremonies and canons. But those who maintain the idea are willingly ignorant of this, that the original Apostles of Christ hold their office to the end of the world; and discharge it as they did of old—by their *word*—wherever that word is sent. *They* knew no

* IN DR. CAMPBELL'S *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*, the curious reader may see the Antichristian pretensions of the CLERGY exposed by a CLERGYMAN!—and exposed, without any forfeiture of the writer's *respectability* or *good name*; because, by retaining the Antichristian character and office, he sufficiently proved—*that he was not serious*.

other instrument of authority in the kingdom of Christ. "HE THAT IS OF GOD, HEARETH US," was the solemn sanction, by which they enforced what they declared in the name of their divine Master: and that sanction retains its validity unimpaired to this day. They knew nothing of ecclesiastical prosecutions, and bishops' courts, and fines and imprisonments, and *auto da fes*;—for all these are of the same class. The weapons of *their* warfare were not carnal, but spiritual; and yet mighty through God; mighty to influence the consciences of men, to which alone they commended themselves as in the sight of God.

Certainly, this species of authority of the fishermen of Galilee would not answer at all for a *state-religion*, which must have its civil penalties and forfeitures to enforce its mandates: and it was therefore but consistent in the framers of a state-religion under the name of Christianity, to represent the old apostles as set aside, and their office transferred to other more convenient instruments. But this only proves that every attempt to secularize the kingdom of Christ, by establishing *any* form of Christianity as a state-religion, is as vain as it is ungodly. The thing put forward is not—and cannot be—the thing which is held forth by the Apostolic word. That the governors of a state have every civil right to establish whatever religion they please,—the religion of Jupiter, or the religion of Antichrist,—I do not controvert. Whether it be politically prudent, I do not inquire. Christians, in such cases, have only to approve themselves patient and peaceable subjects, enjoying with thankfulness every degree of liberty and protection which is afforded them, submitting contentedly and joyfully to every thing which they may be called to suffer in holding their allegiance to the King of Zion; subject to the ordinances of earthly government *not for wrath only but for conscience sake*. But the same authority, which binds them to *render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, commands them also to *render unto God the things which are God's*. And when human authority attempts to interfere and legislate in the kingdom that is His, the subjects of that kingdom cannot acknowledge the interference, or even *seem* to yield to the authority, without becoming traitors to their King. But (through his power keeping them) they can suffer patiently, and not fear the wrath of man, but endure *as seeing him who is invisible*.

The religion of Jesus Christ *essentially* differs from every other,—from every system of religious lies. And one of its distinguishing characters is this, that it *cannot* possibly be made a political establishment,—*cannot* be made a national institution. Every attempt to convert it into this, or to establish it by human authority, is an attempt to change its essential nature; and is but putting forward—under the name of Christianity—what is not, and cannot be, the thing. When the Church of Christ, *espoused as a pure virgin unto Him*, becomes a common harlot, *committing fornication with the kings of the earth*, she ceases to be the Church of Christ.

It is perfectly vain therefore, and worse than vain, for Christians to object to this and that corruption in an established religion, to look for any modification of it as desirable, or to seek its reformation.

The more gross its abominations, the less adapted is it to deceive : but, under every supposable modification, it *must* bear the mark of Antichrist, in attempting to introduce human authority and worldly legislation into that kingdom, *which is not of this world*. In the prophetic language of Scripture, the Antichristian power is described as commanding that *no man might buy or sell, save he that had its mark*. (Rev. xiii. 17.) Under the image of *buying* and *selling*, we have naturally described the enjoyment of civil rights in the affairs of this world : and the enjoyment of these every Establishment must, more or less, appropriate exclusively to those who receive its mark. Accordingly, even in these countries, where the features of the Establishment are so softened, and its control so mild, it is yet notorious that men are liable to be deprived of most employments in the state, down to that of an exciseman, unless they (as it is termed) *qualify*, and profess conformity to the Establishment by receiving, at the hands of its clergy, what is called the *sacrament*, and what is profanely put forward as the same with a sacred institution of Jesus Christ for his disciples. Far be it from me to *complain*, that the Deist or the Atheist has thus an open door to advantages in the state, from which the disciple of Christ, regarding his authority with reverence, is precluded. It more becomes his disciples to bless God, that they enjoy so much peace and security and liberty of conscience. But let them leave such profanation of their Master's name to the Deist and the Atheist.

To those who enter at all into the views which I have endeavoured to advance,—and none but believers of the Gospel truly can,—it must be quite superfluous to examine, in detail, the religious institutions of the Establishment, to contrast them with the institutions of Christ and the order of his house, or to shew how his kingly authority has in every point been completely set aside by the policy of man. But it may perhaps arrest the attention of some disciples to the subject, to select one or two instances, strikingly obvious and incontrovertible.

No precept can be more positive or plain, than that which Christ has given to his disciples (Matt. xviii. 15—17.) for the regulation of their conduct, when a brother *trespasses against them*. “Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the CHURCH—(or assembly of disciples)—but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” Now what shall we say of a religious community, bearing the name of Christian, where such an injunction is not only altogether overlooked, as if the words were of no authority or meaning,—but systematically opposed? of a community so formed and so regulated, that obedience to the divine precept cannot even be attempted without absurd inconsistency; and, if attempted by any one, would issue in a beadle's being sent to turn him out of the Cathedral (for instance) where the modern *successors of the Apostles*, and their people, were assembled? Is it not time for those who *fear the Lord, and tremble at His word*, to come out from such a communion of Antichrist?

A German commentator, ROSENMULLER, was so struck by this precept in the Evangelist Matthew, that he owns "it cannot be observed in the Churches as by law established, and is suited only to a smaller assembly governing itself absolutely by the commands of Christ, and not exhibiting even the shadow of civil authority." But he has a ready way of solving any difficulty which might hence arise, telling us that "the learned are agreed, and he agrees with them, that the direction was but *temporary* and *local*." Why do these men continue to have portions read to their congregations from the antiquated Bible? Is it not time to have a new one composed by the *new apostles*? Or would it not be more suitable to read a section of the *ecclesiastical canons*, framed by clerical convocations for the government of the Church?

Is it necessary to adduce any other instance? What thinks the Christian reader of the solemn warning, given by James in his Epistle (ii. 1—4.) against the evil of making any distinction between the rich and the poor disciple in their assemblies, or affording to the former any superior accommodation in the place of their meeting above the latter? Is the passage of doubtful import? None can be more plain, none more decisive. But the authority of this also, I suppose, was but *temporary* and *local*: and a wiser rule has been discovered by those, who expose to public sale the sittings in what they call their Churches; and would think a standing in the aisle good enough for Paul himself, if Paul were not well dressed. *Shall I not visit for these things saith the Lord.*

But however plainly the word of the Lord is rejected in these and similar instances, and therein his authority set at nought, let me repeat it that I bring not these instances forward as what I denounce. What I denounce as Antichristian, is not this or that corruption in the Establishment; nor is it the religious Establishment of England and Ireland, nor the religious Establishment of Scotland, nor the religious Establishment of Canada, &c. &c. It is the generic thing of a religious Establishment under the name of Christian, under whatever modifications and specific differences. The thing *per se* cannot but be Antichristian. Nor would it be a whit the less so, if acts of Parliament or Convocation were to be made, enforcing every law of Christ's Kingdom, which (in the constitution of any existing Establishment) is now most openly abrogated. The thing is a thing of this world; it is a thing of man's framing; it is a thing of human regulation, of human policy. And when such a thing is put forward as Christianity, Christians are called to discern in it *the man of sin* usurping the prerogative of God.

But there are *dissenting* Churches; and are not they to be viewed with a more favourable eye? Not merely because they are dissenting Churches. Presbyterians, for instance, are dissenters here; and the Episcopalians of this country are dissenters in Scotland. But is not the system of the Presbyterian the same here as it is in Scotland; and the system of the Episcopalian the same in Scotland as it is here? Many dissenters would fain have their sect the Establishment, if they could; and any religion, that is capable of being established by human legislature, must be essentially different from the religion of

Christ. If we look at the various dissenting communities, we shall in general find the same *clerical* assumption as in the Establishment; the same contemptuous setting aside of the ordinances of Christ; the same introduction of a code of human traditions. And, for my part, if human interference and regulation were to be admitted at all in matters of christian faith and practice, I do not see why the Parliament of Great Britain should not regulate, as well as a dissenting Minister, or a Synod of Ministers.

Any one indeed, who examines into the origin of most of the dissenting bodies in England, will find that the ground of their dissent was—not any objection to the political establishment of Christianity in itself,—but dissatisfaction with some of the minute details of regulation in the Establishment;—some part of the mummery (for instance) of its rites and ceremonies, the vestments of its Clergy, &c. &c. A dissent originating in such principles could scarcely be expected to produce any more scriptural Churches. Yet it must be allowed, that the collision of parties, mutually appealing more or less to the Scriptures in support of their sentiments, was made the means from time to time of bringing forth to view one and another principle of the word, beyond what any of the parties, in the commencement of their controversies, thought of.

Different instances of this might be adduced; but perhaps none so important in their nature, or so extensive in their influence, as that from which a numerous body of dissenters got the name of *Independents*. They were led to discern and to assert the plain scriptural meaning of the expression—a *Church of Christ*, in opposition to the cloud of mystic nonsense by which it had been obscured. They found and proved that the assembly of disciples any where, coming together into one place for the observance of the ordinances appointed by Christ for his Churches, was a Church of Christ:—that such a body was subject immediately only to the great Head Jesus Christ; and was completely independent of all authoritative interference from every other assembly. This truth, so incontrovertible, that every attempt to shake it has only contributed to establish it more firmly, ought at once to have directed those who maintained it to return, immediately and fully, to the recorded standard of the Apostolic Churches: but, such is the slowness and hardness of the heart of man, in the things of God, that they stopped lamentably short. The unscriptural distinction between *clergy* and *laity*, in one and another form or modification of it, still continued. The instituted discipline of Christ's house was still neglected; and the divine authority of its ordinances overlooked. This indeed was the less marvellous, because in most cases they held adulterated Gospels, and had awfully corrupted the simplicity of that doctrine of Christ, to which alone his precepts and institutions are adapted.

Accordingly, the succeeding *Independents* appear to have receded farther and farther from the faith and practice of the Apostolic Christians; till about eighty years ago another blessed revival commenced in SCOTLAND;—the greater and more valuable, as it originated in a clearing of the *foundation*. The fundamental truth of the Gospel, the doctrine of a sinner's justification in the sight of God *solely* and

exclusively by that work, which Jesus Christ in his obedience unto death completed so long ago for the purpose,—the divine assurance of acceptance in HIM to every one, without distinction or exception, who *believes* the testimony delivered in the Word concerning Him;—this appears to have been discovered in much of its glory to some, who blessedly asserted it, and clearly exposed the ungodly arts and perversions of various leaders in religion, by which it had been disfigured and obscured. They were opposed, as such will ever be opposed, by all the malice of the *devout* and *honourable*; but seem to have held on their course unintimidated. Accordingly there soon appeared Churches more purged from the Babylonish corruptions, standing separate from all other religious communities; and at least proposing the object of returning fully to the standard of Apostolic faith and practice: of which object it may be said that, wherever it is not professed, there is not even the profession of obedience to the word of God.

But that the blessed object should have been at once fully attained by those who aimed at it, was scarcely to be expected, when we consider what man is: and perhaps their descendants have too much fallen into the conception, that it was in all respects attained; and have lapsed into that awful state, in which the door is closed against scriptural examination and inquiry,—a state which marks in any Churches that *the glory has departed from them*, however well they have commenced. Be this as it may, there appear to have been, in the constitution and principles of the Churches I allude to, some radical departures from the simplicity of Scripture. Against the Antichristian nature of the *clerical* order they were indeed loud in protesting: but some part of it they seem to have retained under another name. The *Elders* of their Churches, instead of being considered as aids to promote the edification and good order of the body, they conceive to be essential to its constitution: for they strenuously deny that a Church can lawfully observe all the ordinances of Christ's house,—particularly the Lord's Supper,—until it has been furnished with Elders. What they conceive to be in that ordinance especially,—either in the blessing and giving thanks which accompanies it, or in the distribution of the bread and wine among the disciples, which makes the presence of Elders more necessary in it, than in praise, or prayer, or reading, or mutual exhortation, &c. it is hard to say. But this is certain, that one of the main pillars of *clerical* assumption is the idea that men—possessing a certain function, distinct from the mass of disciples—are necessary to *administer* the Supper of the Lord.

Few principles of Scripture are more plain than this; that there is no Church of Christ, where the disciples do not meet together on the first day of the week, to break bread. Now, if they cannot lawfully do this without Elders, they never can have Elders, and never can be a Church. For scriptural Elders never were coeval with the Church, to the oversight of which they were called: but were brethren, proved in a course of previous walking together as a Christian Church, and found to be fitted for the service.

Indeed the same *clerical* leaven, under another name, appears in the

Churches alluded to, from their notion that while a Church destitute of Elders is precluded from observing the Lord's Supper, yet—if visited by the Elders of another Church—they may partake of it. Herein they forget what I believe in most other cases they assert, that Scriptural Elders have no such travelling character, brought with them wherever they go, as the *clergy* arrogate: but the Elders of one Church, coming to another, appear in the latter—not as any Elders of it,—but simply brethren. Other departures from Scripture might be noticed in these Churches. But I here dismiss the subject; having been led to throw out the preceding suggestions, only in the hope that some disciples among them may be excited to examine for themselves, to inquire into principles and practices, which they have hitherto been taught to consider as indubitable.

It would not come within the design of this Essay, to continue the sketch of Ecclesiastical History to a later period. I shall therefore conclude with some brief remarks on an objection which I anticipate, against the views put forward. It may be said, that the writer considers himself, and the contemptible party that think and act with him, as the only persons in the world who are right and scriptural. My answer is—undoubtedly: but have those men, who advance the hackneyed objection, ever thought of its absurdity? Can it without absurdity be objected to any, that they think true what they believe,—that they think right what they conscientiously practise? And if we seriously believe what we profess as true,—if we seriously think that the practice which we maintain is agreeable to the word of God,—is there not necessarily included in this an opinion, that all who differ from us are wrong? The objection, considered in itself, is unmeaning nonsense; though it form a great part of the present outcry raised by various professors against those, who consistently hold the principles and practice of Scripture.

But, in another view, the objection has a meaning; but not very creditable to those who urge it. The plain inference is, that they are conscious—or at least suspicious—that their own principles and practice are not agreeable to the word of God: that they are either floating at random in scepticism; or hypocritically professing to receive the Scriptures as of divine authority, while they secretly know that they do not believe or obey them. Otherwise, whatever be their religious principles or practice, could they advance an objection, which may evidently be retorted against them, as they must equally think all persons wrong who differ from themselves? The truth is, that the mass of professors in these countries have never seriously examined—what HE declares in his Word, whom they dishonour by calling Him LORD: and that many are afraid of the examination, from a consciousness that the result would interfere with their worldly interest, or their darling idols.

THE FAITH AND HOPE OF THE GOSPEL VINDICATED.

A LETTER

TO

A FRIEND IN GLASGOW,

CONTAINING

BRIEF REMARKS

ON

DR. CHALMERS'S LATE ADDRESS

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH OF KILMANY.

[First Published 1816.]

The References in the following Letter are made from the *first* Edition of Dr. Chalmers's Address.

A LETTER, &c.

MY dear sir,—You have more than once intimated a wish, that I should send you some remarks on Dr. Chalmers's Address to his late parishioners. I now avail myself of a little comparative leisure to comply with your desire.

You know something of the interest that was excited in me last year, by some circumstances which I heard of the writer: and I confess that I indulged hopes which I now see were no more warranted by the occasion, than they hitherto appear justified by the result. However, they led me to open his pamphlet with every favourable disposition. From my knowledge indeed of the unscriptural nature of the writer's profession and connexion,—his *clerical*

profession, and his connexion with a politico-religious body,—I was prepared to meet with much that would be censurable: but I was also prepared to make great allowances; to hail joyfully all appearances of a mind enlightened to see the Glory of the Divine Truth, and to regard many passages and sentiments of a different complexion as but some of the remaining chaff, which I might expect the fire of the Word progressively to consume.

I am sorry to say that an attentive perusal of the pamphlet forces me to discard these sanguine imaginations. I must still indeed view the writer with the same hope, of which *every sinner* is the object, as one who may yet be brought to the knowledge of the Truth: but I cannot longer conceive of him as at present discerning it. The great body of his pamphlet is in direct and unequivocal opposition to it. But I am still more painfully struck with observing that, even where he aims at being most evangelical—the real glory of the Gospel (as a divine revelation of mercy and salvation to the lost) appears out of his view: and he seems with many to prize it, chiefly, as a convenient instrument for producing some imaginary reformation in the heart and life of a sinner.

The one and only true Gospel, when perceived, does indeed produce in the sinner a *new mind* and a *new spirit*; and is, in this respect, as in every other, “the power of God unto salvation.” The people “that know righteousness,” are a people that have his “law in their hearts,” (Isa. li. 7.) even that law which hath *gone forth out of Zion*; as, in the same new covenant in which God declares “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness”—he also declares—“I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts.” But they know nothing yet of either blessing, who conceive of any fancied reformation of the heart or life as advancing the sinner towards the remission of his sins, as preparing him to receive the gospel doctrine, or placing him “in likelier circumstances than others for being brought to the belief” of it. (p. 31. & 20.) Repentance, or a new mind, and the remission of sins, are inseparably connected; and both alike accompany the belief of the Gospel. The divine testimony concerning Jesus Christ presents an object so glorious, and reveals such a view of the distinctive character of the only living and true God,—(as the *just God and the Saviour, just and justifying the ungodly*)—that whoever discerns it—whoever believes the report—has at once peace with God, and has that new mind of the Spirit which is according to the mind of God. He delights in that one object, in which alone God *is well pleased*, and abhors all the course and all the sentiments which he before most admired. Being now made “free from sin and become a servant to God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life;” in the good hope of which he rejoices, and is taught *by that grace* (or rich mercy) of God which has brought him salvation, “that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world:” and he now sees the friendship of this world to be enmity with God, as he sees that in all its most specious forms it is opposed to that revealed truth of God, in which all the divine will is manifested.

The Apostles knew nothing of favourable and hopeful circumstances, in those who did not believe their glad tidings concerning Jesus Christ. And all who did believe them, they address as children of God and saints in Christ Jesus, *made meet* "to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Their doctrine also was plain and simple, requiring no length of time to *understand* it, though none believed it but those on whom the Lord had mercy. But of those who did not receive it, who did not discern its divine certainty and glory, the Apostles speak in that decisive language—"if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded their minds, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine into them."

Not so, according to Dr. Chalmers and his "grand renewing process." (p. 9.) "The statement of the evangelical ground of a sinner's acceptance may not be comprehended all at once: it may be years—before the comfort of it is at all felt or *appropriated* by the doubting and melancholy *enquirer*." (p. 21.) "It accords with experience, that this doctrine might be addressed, without effect, for years to men *enquiring after salvation*." (p. 22.) "Months or years may be consumed, ere the purified fountain send forth its streams, or the repentance he is *aspiring* after tell on the plain and palpable doings of his ordinary conduct." (p. 12.) But in the meantime these disciples of Dr. Chalmers, who do not comprehend the evangelical ground of a sinner's acceptance, and therefore certainly do not believe the Gospel, he considers and speaks of as "enquirers," "enquiring Christians," "enquiring after salvation," "aspiring after repentance," "visited with a desire after salvation." (p. 10, 12, 17, 18, 21, 22.)

And he tells us that they "may and ought to be urged with the call of *departing from their iniquities*." (p. 21.) What he means by this he leaves us no room to doubt. He informs such of various *steps*, "without which the object they aim at is unattainable." (p. 18.) The faithful performance of their daily tasks is one step: obedience to their parents is *another step*: the adoption of just weights and measures is *another step*. Can the Gospel be more plainly contradicted than it is by this doctrine? When did the Apostles employ themselves in trying to reform the conduct of those who believed not their Gospel? But above all, when did they teach that such reformations of the outward conduct—such departures from their more palpable iniquities—would be so many steps towards their salvation? When did they consider such unbelieving hearers, however demure and serious and anxious about obtaining eternal life, as *in the way of salvation*, and *giving proof of their earnestness in it by turning them from the evil of their manifest iniquities*? (p. 21.)

Do they not on the contrary inculcate on the believers of the Gospel,—(whom alone they address as in the way of salvation)—that such unbelieving religionists are not advanced a whit towards salvation by all the "stir and diligence and doing and visible reformation," (p. 18.) which Dr. Chalmers is so anxious to produce among them? Do they not illustrate and enforce this their doctrine—(glorifying to God but confounding to the vanity of man)—by adducing the case of the Jews and Gentiles,—the religious, working, striving Jews, and

the ungodly, careless, wicked Heathens; declaring that the Gentiles, "which followed not after righteousness, had attained to righteousness," but that the Jews, who "followed after the law of righteousness, had not attained" to it, but were stumbling at that stumbling-stone and rock of offence laid in Zion, ignorant of and not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God? (Rom. ix. x.) When did the apostles aim at getting the unbelieving world to "struggle it with their more palpable iniquities?" Or when did they, succeeding in this unrighteous object, *bless God* that He wrought this effect in them, and avow that it was to such, and not to those "trenched in obstinacy and unconcern," that they should "look for an earnest desire after the offered Saviour?" (p. 25.)

If ever Dr. Chalmers be himself brought to the knowledge of that truth which he now opposes, he will see that he has been hitherto a blind leader of the blind; and that all those supposed earnest desires after the Saviour, which he thinks so hopeful symptoms in himself and others like him, have been but earnest desires after the vain imaginations of their own ungodly minds, and not after the Christ of God; whom none can desire but those who know him, and therefore have peace with God in him; He being "made unto them of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

The contrast between the Doctor and the Apostles will be still more evident, if we compare the way in which he presses practical reformation on his disciples, and they way in which they handled such subjects with the disciples of Christ. Dr. Chalmers urges his half-converts to "grapple it,"—to "struggle it" immediately "with every sin which is within the reach of their exertions," (p. 10.) that they may be "put into a state of preparation for the Saviour," (p. 17.) that a preparation of the way of the Lord may be "set agoing in their behalf." (p. 22.) that they may be "in a likelier way of receiving larger measures of truth," (ib.) or, in plain English, in a likelier way for believing the Gospel. And thus he urges "the thief to restrain himself from stealing, &c. the faithless housemaid in the family from all purloining, and all idleness;" (p. 15.) telling them that "unless they are walking in this particular line they will not reach the object they are aiming at," (p. 23.) *i. e.* the object of getting to heaven. (p. 24.)

But how did the Apostles exhort Christian servants to be obedient to their masters, not with eye-service, &c.? Why, they exhort them to this *as the servants of Christ, as unto Christ*; (Eph. vi. 5, 6.)—"knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ;" (Col. iii. 24.)—"that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed; (1 Tim. vi. 1.)—that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Tit. ii. 10.) See also 1 Pet. ii. 18.—25. Thus the Apostles view those to whom they address practical Christian exhortations as already the servants of Christ, as heirs of the heavenly inheritance: and their practical exhortations are but a reminding them of that Gospel which they had believed, and of the conversation that became it,—exhortations derived from the state of blessed relation in which they stood towards the living God, and enforced upon them as children, by the constraining consideration of the glory of his name.

But can we wonder at the difference of their exhortations and the Doctor's, when we recollect that the Apostles were shepherds of the flock of Christ; but that Dr. Chalmers avows himself a *goatherd*, training into what he considers as Christianity those whom he does not yet consider as children of God, addressing his religious exhortations—not to the Christians of his quondam parish—but to all its inhabitants, towards all of whom he stood in the relation of a pastor. He does indeed speak of them all as partakers of the same faith with himself; and it is very probable that in this he speaks the truth. For he tells us, that his prayer *for them all* is “that they may so grow in the fruits of their common faith, as to be made meet for” the eternal inheritance. (p. 3.) We have here, as throughout the pamphlet, intimated to us what his faith is. He conceives that sinners are made meet for that inheritance, by progressive growth in what he calls the fruits of faith. Whereas, according to the doctrine of the Apostles, every sinner alike who has believed their testimony *is made meet* to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints, and has a “hope laid up for him in heaven,” (Col. i. 5, 12.)—a hope that *maketh not ashamed*.

As to the good words and fair speeches about the Gospel and Christ's righteousness, which Dr. Chalmers at times employs, it is sufficiently evident from what we have already seen, that they can be but good words and fair speeches, calculated to deceive, by dressing up an antiscriptural system in shreds of scriptural language. But we need only attend to one sentence, in which he aims at being very evangelical, to be convinced that his gospel is altogether opposed to the true; that by Christ's righteousness, &c. he means something quite different from that of which the Apostles testify. After having said (p. 37.)—“let Christ, in all the perfection of that righteousness, which is unto all them and upon all them that believe, be the alone rock of your confidence;”—he adds—“your feet will never get on a sure place, till they be established on that foundation than which there is no other: and to delay a single moment **IN YOUR ATTEMPTS TO REACH IT AND TO FIND REST UPON IT**, after it is so broadly announced to you, is to incur the aggravated guilt,” &c. &c.

Here we have in a small compass the quintessence of all the anti-christian doctrine, by which the popular teachers have for ages beguiled the religious world. Grand words about the perfection of Christ's righteousness, as the only foundation for a sinner; but something remaining to be done by the sinner *to get at it*. And in this unrighteous labour *the Reverend Doctors of Divinity* are ready at hand, as guides and assistants to the *exercised* souls, whom they can prevail on “to be up and doing.” (p. 36.)

ATTEMPTS to reach it and to find rest upon it! Let Dr Chalmers know that every such attempt only manifests the unbelief of him who engages in it. That word—“not of him that willet nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy”—ought to check Dr. Chalmers's keenness of zeal on this subject. And while that maxim stands divinely true, I am warranted in telling him, that whether he be yet engaged in the strenuous effort to reach that foundation, or suppose that he has succeeded in the attempt, he is alike a

stranger to the foundation which God hath laid in Zion, and to the testimony concerning the righteousness of God. That testimony is of such a nature, that every sinner who believes its report, is on the foundation, and *has found* rest on it,—not by any attempts of his, but by the divine mercy setting his feet in the way of peace.

It is by no means therefore to be wondered at, that Dr. Chalmers pronounces that “to attempt the establishment of a perfect faith”—(whatever he means by this expression)—“by the single work of expounding the truth, is to strike out a spark of our own kindling,” &c. (p. 46.) The mere exposition of the truth must be a very trifling part in the system of a man, who conceives that the truth only exhibits a relief, which must become effectual by the sinner’s trying and attempting to avail himself of it. In this radical idea he agrees with all classes of false teachers. Yet it might be worth his while to consider, that when Paul (for instance) at Rome *expounded and testified the kingdom of God* to his Jewish brethren, “persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening,” he evidently appears to have confined himself to the one business of expounding the truth, without blending with it any of the Doctor’s calls to his hearers to “be up and doing,” or directing them to any *attempts to reach* the foundation, which he set before them. Yet such of them as “believed the things which were spoken,” had all the perfect faith that we read of in Scripture as accompanying salvation, even the faith of God’s elect, like precious faith with the holy Apostles and Prophets. They were not, like the Doctor’s “incipient and enquiring Christians,” merely “aspiring after repentance,” and in a fair way of getting at Christ and his righteousness, if they “grappled it,” and “struggled it,” sufficiently with their sins: but Christ was “made unto them of God wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”

But it is no marvel, that when Dr. Chalmers conceives of his hearers as in a state different from any recognised in Scripture, he should have a doctrine for them, different from any taught in Scripture. And though he assures us, (p. 12.) that those, who “want to begin at the beginning, form their estimate of what the beginning is, upon the arrangements of human speculation,” yet a higher authority than his teaches me that “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit:” “Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.”

With respect to those of whom the Doctor speaks, “who want to go methodically to work” *with themselves* about that cleansing, the question—*who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?*—may well stare them in the face. And I can readily conceive the *mischief* of which he complains, that “in the first prosecution of this work, months or years may be consumed ere the purified fountain send forth its streams.” (p. 12.) He might have ventured to say more, that it *never* will, in any prosecution of the work, either methodical or immethodical. He appears to have been somewhat struck by the vanity of the religion, which left these *equivokers* and *aspirants after repentance*, under the dominion even of their most palpable iniquities:

and not seeing how a sinner is made free from sin and becomes a servant of God, he naturally conceived that the interval, between the supposed commencement of the *grand renewing process* and its completion, would be turned to better account if he could get his half-converts to forsake their drunkenness and thieving and lying, &c. And truly I think, that if he can effect it, he will do more substantial service to society than his brethren, who confine their disciples to *heart-exercises*. But they will both equally fail of the ultimate object, which they propose.

Meanwhile God himself will carry on his own work by "the foolishness of preaching" in his own Word. It shall not return to him void: it shall accomplish all that, whereunto he has sent it. (Isa. lv. 11.) But his design in sending it has not been to reform or convert all the inhabitants of parishes, but to save the few here and there who believe it; to gather them to himself out of a world that lieth in the wicked one, turning them from its religion and false gods, above all its other abominations. In these the word finds them sunk, without any *preparation* for being saved but ruin and darkness and sin. It saves them by discovering to them a God, whom they knew not, and therefore could not seek: and discovering Him to them in a character so glorious, that all without exception, whose eyes are opened to discern it, rejoice in Him, and find themselves put in possession by Him in his son Jesus of all that the chief of sinners can want for present acceptance or eternal life.

Such converts of God will make a very poor figure in the eyes of the religious world; and cannot reasonably wish to be had in admiration of those who despise that Christ of God, who calleth "not the righteous, but sinners to repentance," who has stood alone in "putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself," who is exalted a Prince and Saviour "to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him," without any doings, or strugglings, or grapplings of theirs to attain it. They will, of course, be under the same opprobrium with their Divine Master, of being no friends to morality and good works. And while they are kept faithful to "contend earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints," against all the perversions of it in the corrupt doctrines of men, it must be expected that the various classes of religionists in the world will make a common cause against them, as against common foes. Trying as this is, to have the faces of all men against them, to be universally misunderstood and unknown and disliked, to be every where spoken against as disturbers of the religious world, objects of general jealousy and disgust; yet while kept in the faith, they will "count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt;" they will endure "as seeing Him who is invisible," recollecting Him who has gone before them in the way, and looking forward to the coming day, when "the righteous shall *shine forth* as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."

One word upon an argument, by which Dr. Chalmers endeavours to support his system. "By faith (he says, p. 25.) is not meant the embracing of *one doctrine*, but a reliance on the whole testimony of Scripture." In opposition to this statement, I am warranted in as-

serting, that wherever that faith is spoken of, which accompanies salvation, we are to understand the belief of *one doctrine*, even that one doctrine which the Apostles preached to Jews and Gentiles in the testimony they delivered concerning Jesus of Nazareth. (See 1 Cor. xv. 1—4.) This is the one Gospel, the one joyful doctrine, which, to all that believe it, is “the power of God unto salvation.” And sinners may have a kind of faith of various other things testified in Scripture, of the joys of heaven and the pains of hell and the necessity of a conversion to God, and may be much concerned about these matters; and yet, disbelieving the testimony of God concerning his Son, may be dead in trespasses and sins, and certainly not the less so for embracing Dr. Chalmers’s doctrine concerning the way in which they are to arrive at acceptance with God. Let me add, however, that the *one doctrine* of which I speak is the only key to the *whole testimony of Scripture*; and where that is not possessed, the whole is misunderstood; nor is it matter of wonder, that such men set the practical exhortations of Scripture in opposition to the doctrinal statements. They are alike ignorant of the true import of both, though they appear so busy and zealous about *some* of the former.

The Doctor, when he sees them “struggling it with their more palpable iniquities,” thinks he has *reason to bless God* (p. 25.) for having wrought in them a good work. But very different was that *good work*, which the Apostle acknowledges with joy that God had begun in the Philippians. (Phil. i. 6.) This was the work of justifying and saving faith, in men whom he addresses as *saints in Christ Jesus*, and for whom he expresses a suitable confidence that God, who had begun it in them, would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ; while he prays for them that they might be “filled with the FRUITS of *righteousness*, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.” If Dr. Chalmers be ever brought to know the meaning of those words—the FRUITS of *righteousness*,—his vain solicitude to gather grapes from thorns will be at an end:—and with it will terminate all his religious popularity.

Dr. Chalmers misunderstands John the Baptist’s ministry and practical directions to his disciples, as much as the doctrine of Him to whom John the Baptist bore witness. But having sufficiently shown the Doctor’s opposition to the Apostles of Christ, I shall leave him to settle matters between them and John the Baptist; for I am so straitened in time, that I must hasten to close this Letter.

I would only add, that the professed subject of the Doctor’s pamphlet is so little suitable to the persons addressed in it, that the Author is in some degree consistent in not saying a word about it from first to last. The title declares his subject to be “the business of the Christian life, and the duty of giving immediate diligence to it.” Now the business of the Christian life, according to the Apostles, is to hold fast the faith and hope of the Gospel against every thing that would make us let them slip; and in the spirit, which they produce, to live not to ourselves, but to Him whose we are, who has redeemed us to God by his blood,—in whom we have eternal life;—to glorify him by a conversation suitable to the Gos-

pei. This is a subject, upon which none can scripturally be addressed but believers of the heavenly truth. It was but natural, therefore, that the *reverend* teacher of a religion authorized and established by earthly laws, addressing—not the supposed believers—but all the inhabitants of his quondam parish, should substitute for this subject —“ a stir, and a diligence, and a doing, and a visible reformation.”

I remain, dear sir,

With best wishes,

Affectionately yours,

JOHN WALKER.

Dublin, July 19th, 1816.

S E V E N L E T T E R S

T O A F R I E N D ,

O N

P R I M I T I V E C H R I S T I A N I T Y .

*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God,
and the faith of Jesus.—Rev. xiv. 12.*

[First Published 1819.]

L E T T E R I .

Scriptural estimate of characters.—Natural religion: its wickedness.—The Apostolic Gospel.—Its simplicity, brevity, and glory.—Not designed for the reformation of the world.—As much opposed to popular Calvinism as to Arminianism.—The scriptural *fear* of the LORD inseparable from the *hope* of the Gospel.—Character of man.

Dublin, Jan. 15, 1819.

DEAR SIR,

BEFORE I can reply with any satisfaction to your inquiries, or to your proposed difficulties about the principles of Christian fellowship, by which the Churches I am connected with are regulated; I feel it necessary to come to an explanation with you on some more fundamental topics. Many are fond of agitating questions about the walk of Christians, who are wholly unprepared for the subject, and incompetent to judge of it, from not knowing what real CHRISTIANITY is.

You have been misinformed if you suppose that we imagine there are no real Christians, but those who are actually in fellowship with us. We have no such notion. And for myself I avow, that I think I had substantially the same faith and hope as I have now, for some time before I quitted the Establishment; while I walked in many respects most awfully contrary to the revealed will of God:—that my turning from those evil ways was—not what made me a Christian—but the effect (under the divine mercy and power) of that TRUTH which I before believed.

A few, who profess agreement with me in many important principles, will much dislike this avowal; but it matters not. And many

others perhaps will much approve of the avowal, because they quite misunderstand my meaning. To me it is a point of no essential concernment, to ascertain *when* I was a Christian, *when* I first believed the record of God concerning his Son. And any one, who this moment sees the glorious nature and certainty of that divine testimony, will have no anxiety to inquire whether he discerned it the moment before.—Those indeed, who see not any thing in the *Gospel itself* to afford them assured hope towards God, and filial boldness of coming into the holiest, but conceive that these things,—if ever possessed,—must be excited and warranted by the view of some good *evidences* of the soundness of their past profession;—such must naturally look with a jealous eye at that “confidence and rejoicing of hope” in a believer, which has nothing for its ground and warrant, but the divinely attested *fact* of Christ’s resurrection from the dead: and they would fain check his confidence and hope, that he might be put upon the same unrighteous search for something good, in which they are engaged themselves.

Others there are, who cherish a confidence about the soundness of their Christian profession, and seem to think that this is *faith*: while they manifest their unbelief by making light of that word of the Lord, in which he reveals his name. Multitudes of these indeed directly oppose the unadulterated Gospel, when laid before them; and such of them as profess to agree with it, profanely attempt to set it in opposition to all serious regard for the revelation of the Lord’s will, concerning the walk and conversation of his people, wherever that revelation runs counter to the maxims current in the religious world. I need no more decisive evidence than this of any man, as one not “rejoicing in Christ Jesus;” however forward he may be to speak of his confidence and joy. The “comfort of the Holy Spirit” is inseparably connected with the “fear of the Lord.” Neither *can* exist without the other; for they both spring from one source—that word of the Lord which reveals his name, abiding in the mind. I send you a short piece upon this subject, on which I shall be glad of your remarks. “Preliminary Observations,” p. 312.

I have disavowed the notion which you heard imputed to me, that the Church in Stafford Street, and the little Churches in fellowship with it, comprehend all the real disciples in this country. But let me add—what perhaps will abate the credit you were disposed to give me for *charity*—that they do comprehend all, whom I know or can acknowledge as such.

As to those who do not confess with their mouth that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” (1 John iv. 1—3.) or who combine, with their verbal acknowledgment of it, the avowal of sentiments which corrupt the *one* scriptural import of that testimony,—they bear to my view the broad and unequivocal mark of Antichrist. And I confess that these characters comprise the great mass of professors around me, of whom I have any knowledge. As to the very small remnant, I view those who walk not in fellowship with us as walking in a course manifestly ungodly; because I consider the course in which we walk, as the only one sanctioned by divine authority, by the authority of the *word* of God. Knowing the ungodliness of the flesh in

disciples themselves, it becomes me not to pronounce that none of these do believe in their hearts that TRUTH, which they confess with their lips. But it as little becomes me to acknowledge any of them as brethren, till they hear that word of the Lord, which they at present disobey.

Even among these, I confess, that I make a difference. Some of them have not—so much as others,—had their attention called to the evil of their present courses; nor have had presented to their observation the exemplified characters of a Christian Church. While I make this remark, I would not forget that these things are continually set before all in the scriptures; and that nothing but the ungodliness of the flesh accounts for our not attending to, and discerning the sufficient discoveries of the divine will that are there afforded. But some, more openly than others, resist—and set themselves in opposition to—the reproofs and instruction of the word on these subjects.

The *manner* also in which some repel the evidence of that word, and screen their evils from its force, is more plainly indicative of a mind contrary to the fear of God, to the reverence of his holy name and word. An instance which occurs to my recollection, will exemplify my meaning; and I mention it only for that purpose. A Clergyman in this country, eminent in the class distinguished by the name of *evangelical*, was some years ago assailed in conversation by arguments calculated to expose the Antichristian characters of his office and connection. Among other things it was observed, that the religious Establishment of these countries has set aside the laws of Christ's kingdom, not only by neglecting them, but by making it *impossible* to observe them. And to prove this, the precept of the Lord was adduced (from Matt. xviii. 15—17.) concerning the mode of dealing with a brother, who has trespassed against a brother. It was confidently asked, whether—in the last stage of that dealing,—a person in the Establishment *could* obey the precept, by telling the matter to the Church. “Yes” replied the Clergyman, “surely, according to our *ecclesiastical law*, he may put the man into the BISHOP'S COURT.”

Now, in such language there is manifested to me a spirit, as *profane* and *ungodly*, as I see in any drunkard or fornicator: the discovery of which would always stop me from contending with that person about the walk of disciples; and would lead me, even if he talked like an Apostle about the truth of the Gospel, to be sure that its glory was not before his view. No doubt, in thinking and speaking thus of a pious, zealous, evangelical *Clergyman*, I am exposed to the charge of great uncharitableness and bigotry. But “a false balance is an abomination to the LORD;” and his word pronounces an awful woe upon those “who call evil good and good evil.”

I have enlarged so much upon this topic, because I perceive from your communication, that we at present differ much in our estimate of characters; and that you view with a very complacent eye multitudes, in whom I see nothing but various forms of Antichristian doctrine and practice variously refined. A difference of this kind always lies deeper. I proceed therefore to offer a few remarks, which may tend to discover where its root is concealed.

There is nothing more common than to speak of *religion* in general, as a *good* thing; particularly if it be *sincere* and *ardent*. So common indeed is this, that the two phrases,—‘a *good* book,’ and ‘a *religious* book,’—are current as of equivalent import. But in this sentiment the *atheism* of the human heart is embodied;—that *atheism* which denies the very being of “the only true God,” but leaves the sinner to acknowledge a variety of *idols*, between whom there is certainly no essential difference; all of them being vanity, the fictions of man’s ungodly imagination and evil conscience. Allow me to ask, in what sense do you understand those passages of Scripture?—“The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God,”—and—“he that cometh to God must believe that he is.” I send you also a short tract, in which the true import of these declarations is asserted; and I beg you to read it with attention. (“Scripture Paradoxes, explained and vindicated.”)

I repeat it; those who think all *sincere* and *ardent religion* alike a good thing, must think all the gods who are its objects alike real existences, and do not either know or fear that “glorious and fearful Name” (Deut. xxviii. 58.) of THE LORD OUR GOD, who is One, and beside whom there is no other.

His name, or character, is made known to sinners only in his word; that word, which from first to last publishes the same Gospel to men—a Gospel, which is expressly called “the Gospel (or glad tidings) of the glory of the blessed God.” (1 Tim. i. 11.) They who believe the testimony of that word see his glory, and know his name, and have eternal life in it. They have that repentance, or *new mind*, which is unto life, (Acts xi. 18.) and which alone is accordant with the truth of God;—a mind that abhors, as abomination in the sight of God, all that evil which is most “highly esteemed amongst men,” and for which they had before most highly esteemed themselves;—a mind which sees but *one* object good and glorious, and is satisfied with it, even with the goodness of the LORD; (Jer. xxxi. 14.)—a mind which is contrary to the mind of the flesh, not only in its grosser forms, but in its most religious and refined: while their flesh, or their own mind, as opposed to it, is marked with *one* unvarying character of ungodliness and evil; as much so in those who walk not after it, as in those in whom it reigns unto death.

Philosophers may talk highly and plausibly of *natural religion*, of its discoveries, and its duties. And indeed almost all the religion, that overspreads Christendom, is but *natural religion* attired with the shreds of Christian phraseology and form. But natural religion, however dressed up, is but one of the forms of man’s natural alienation from the living God and enmity against him. He, who is “the brightness of the glory and the express image of the person” of God, addressing his heavenly Father in the days of his flesh, uttered these words: “I have manifested thy name unto the men, which thou gavest me out of the world.” (John xvii. 6.) On another occasion we read, (Luke x. 21, 22.) that “Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

All things are delivered to me of my Father : and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Accordingly, they who believe the divine testimony concerning the Lord Jesus, and they alone, are spoken of as having "the knowledge of God."

Of that testimony, or the Gospel of Christ, the APOSTLES were, and are, the great preachers, divinely commissioned and divinely qualified for their work. And what their Gospel is, whether men will hear it or whether they will forbear, we are left at no loss to ascertain. One of themselves, writing to the Corinthian Church, (1 Cor. xv. 1—4.) expressly reminds them of the Gospel which he had preached to them, and which they had received; "by which also," saith he, "ye *are saved*, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." (The word here rendered—*in vain*—more properly denotes what we express by the phrase—at *random*: and by men's *believing at random*, it would seem that the Apostle intimates their lightly giving assent to that which they do not really understand, or of which they are not indeed persuaded. Thus, Simon the sorcerer is said to have *believed*, (Acts viii. 13.) according to the appearance and profession that he made at the time; although it soon appeared that he quite mistook the nature of the things testified "concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.")—Now observe, in how few and simple words the Apostle Paul in that passage sums up *his GOSPEL*:

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures."

What think you, Sir, of *this Gospel*? This—if we will hear the declaration of an Apostle himself—this constitutes the Apostolic Gospel; that Gospel, which *whosoever believeth* shall be saved, and whoso believeth not shall be condemned. Are you saying in your heart, with many a religious professor;—'to be sure, this statement of the Gospel is very true: *but*'—*But what?*—'Is this all?' Yes: it is *all*, and it is enough. And those who do not see it divinely full and glorious, who think any thing lacking in *this Gospel* to display the glory of God, and to bring peace to the guiltiest of men,—they have their eyes yet holden, so that they do not discern, and have not believed, *this divine report*.

This Gospel indeed opens no field for the exertion of the sinner's supposed ability, or worthiness, or wisdom: but publishes the *salvation of God* to those who have destroyed themselves, who are ungodly, and without strength. It runs counter to all the *natural religion* of fallen man; and finding the sinner in utter ignorance of the true God, and opposition to him, discovers a glory of *divine* character, which it had not entered into his heart to think of. It is not suited to the good, the well-disposed, the worthy; but brings the righteousness and salvation of God to the sinful, the evil, the guilty, in announcing that *propitiation* for sin, which God himself has *provided* in the gift of his own Son, which He has *accepted* as fully well-pleasing

in his sight, and of which He has *proved* his acceptance by raising him from the dead. And whenever a professor—either in the commencement of his course, or in any subsequent period of it—takes any more complacent view of *his own* character, and looks at himself as no longer ranking “with publicans and sinners,” with the utterly vile and evil,—his eye is closed to the revealed glory of JEHOVAH, and his sacrifices are an abomination to the Holy One of Israel.

That principle, so abundantly established and variously exhibited in the law of Moses, that “without shedding of blood there is no remission,” (Heb. ix. 22.)—that “the wages of sin is death,” (Rom. vi. 23.)—is confirmed in the Gospel of Christ: while the greatness of the atonement which has *taken it away*,—the glory of that “High Priest over the house of God,” through whom alone a *sinner* can come into the holiest,—does indeed establish the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the awful holiness of the Most High, to the confusion of all the vain thoughts of man which exalt themselves against God:—but at the same time does set in the way of peace the feet of the guiltiest sinner, who *believes* the divine testimony; and puts into his mouth a new song of praise and thanksgiving to Him, “whose mercy endureth for ever,” to Him who “hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.” (2 Thess. ii. 16.)

The man, who with his lips confesses this Gospel to be *true*, but avows his apprehension that he has not *faith*,—talks but wicked nonsense. He may be very piously engaged in seeking to get whatever it is he calls *faith*, or anxiously looking for evidences to ascertain the existence of it in himself: but he indeed proves that he does *not believe* that, of which he at times asserts his faith *in saying* that it is true. And all his pious *seekings* and *strivings* for faith are in direct opposition to the revealed truth of God. The man, who says that he does *believe* this Gospel, and yet gravely enquires—*how he is to obtain* the salvation—which it displays to the lost and guilty, and assures to *every one* that believeth;—or, in the fashionable language of evangelical professors, *how he is to gain an interest* in Christ and his righteousness;—that man in like manner proves that he rejects the divine testimony, and that—under the *name* of Gospel—he believes a lie. While anxiously exercised to get Christ some way *nearer* to him, than the word of God brings him to all who hear it; and while devoutly praying for *ability to lay hold* on him; he disbelieves the record which God hath given of his Son, and has never called upon the name of the Lord. For “how shall they call on him in whom they have not *believed*?”—“Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which *doeth* those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we [the Apostles] preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,

and shalt *believe* in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 5—9.)

This Gospel, sir, never was *designed* for the reformation and improvement of the world, as politicians and philosophers dream. It was designed for the *salvation* of them that *believe*, even of all the elect of God, who have been redeemed unto him by "the precious blood of Christ." (1 Pet. i. 19.) And as the word of *ЖЕHOBAH*, "it shall accomplish" all that which He pleaseth, and "shall prosper in the thing" whereunto He hath sent it. (Is. lv. 11.) But in the unbelieving *world* it will never excite any thing, but contempt and indignation; so far as their attention is drawn to its report. And as *opposing* all the principles, upon which their so-called good works and religious strictness proceed, it must ever carry in their view an *antinomian* complexion; and appear unfavourable to the interests of their morality and piety.

The most devout of the world are commonly the quickest to discern this; and are consequently most fired with—what they consider—holy zeal against such an *abominable* doctrine. Accordingly, if I were disposed to select specimens of the keenest and most virulent blasphemy against the truth of God, I should probably select them—not from the writings of the *profane* Voltaire, but from those of the *pious* Mr. Fletcher of Madeley.—You may perhaps say, that *he* was an avowed Arminian, and contended throughout his life for a system the most openly *un-evangelical*. It is very true: but I have mentioned him as one, who carried what is called *holiness* and *spirituality* of walk at least as far as any of his opponents, and was indeed a most *fervent* worshipper of the *idol* that he served. And if the sentiments of many were examined, who profess an apparently very different system from Mr. Fletcher's, and one harmonizing wonderfully with the phraseology of the truth,—it would be found, that the distinction between them and Mr. F. is more in words than in meaning. It would be found, that—however highly they talk at times of the hope which the GOSPEL affords to a *sinner*,—they only mean a vague and precarious hope, that he *may* perhaps be saved, *if* he fulfil certain terms, by conformity with which, and observing in himself that conformity, they conceive this hope is to be bolstered up into personal filial confidence towards God. They will not perhaps speak in as broad language as Mr. Fletcher, of those terms, as an easier law of works, under which men are put on their good behaviour by the Gospel. But whosoever discerns not in the testimony of the Gospel, that which is sufficient to give *any* sinner,—at any time and at all times,—a sufficiency of assured hope and personal confidence towards God,—(I add the word *personal*, in compliance with their absurd language; though indeed there is no such thing as hope or confidence *not personal* to the man who entertains it)—they are equally aside from the TRUTH; whether they be in the highest enjoyment of a confidence otherwise derived, or be in the deepest mourning for the want of it. All the *humble fears* and *doubts*, which keep a sinner from "coming boldly to the throne of grace," and crying "Abba, Father,"—however they are masked under the

modest language of fears and doubts about *his own faith*,—will be found on examination to resolve themselves into a questioning of the veracity of God,—into a denial of the fact that Christ Jesus has died for sin, and has risen again from the dead.

But here, Sir, it may be of importance that I should make another remark. The “hope of the Gospel,” of which I speak, is not a whim more opposed to Mr. Fletcher’s, than to that of many high Calvinists. Too many of the latter seem to mean by *faith* little else than a confident persuasion of the goodness and safety of their own state,—a confident persuasion that they are among the number of God’s elect; that is, the belief of a thing nowhere declared in the word of God,—a confidence, in which a man “in the gall of bitterness” may be strong. Setting out from this principle, they talk highly and with admiration of a doctrine of election, according to which they consider themselves the distinguished favourites of heaven; and sometimes of a doctrine of atonement, according to which they are encouraged to think little of their sins. They often speak so plausibly of many scriptural truths, that it is hard to distinguish the profession which they make, from the good confession of “the truth as it is in Jesus;” except from observing, that the bare written testimony of God—in his setting forth Christ Jesus as the propitiation for sin, (Rom. iii. 25.)—has *by itself* little glory in their view; and that the bare credence of that divine testimony, in its unadulterated truth, is reckoned by them a trifling thing, in comparison of what they sometimes call the *venturesome act of faith*, by which in some mystic way they conceive themselves to have *appropriated* Christ.

Another circumstance may be observed about them, which ought to be sufficient to detect the unsoundness of their profession to the believer, even if he could not mark where that unsoundness lay;—I mean, their practically setting at variance the *fear* of the Lord and the comfort of his Holy Spirit. I speak not now of what the world calls Antinomian licentiousness, or what the world views with any disapprobation. I speak of disregard to those intimations of the divine will, concerning the course in which Christians ought to walk, that are conveyed to us *only* in the Scriptures of the New Testament, that rest on nothing for their sanction and authority but the word of God. All those who know his name, as he has revealed it in the Scriptures, assuredly “will put their trust in him,” (Ps. ix. 10.) and will “glory in his holy name.” (Ps. cv. 3.) But as assuredly they will “tremble at his word” which reveals it, (Isa. lxvi. 5.) and will “fear that glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THEIR GOD;” (Deut. xxviii. 58.)—not indeed with the fear that “hath torment,” but with that “reverence and godly fear,” which abounds so much more in heaven than even in the Church on earth. Now, when I see that all serious attention and reverential submission to the preceptive will of the Lord, as made known in his word, is considered by any as little else than *legal bondage*;—when I find that they have no ear for what comes solely on the authority of *THUS SAITH THE LORD*,—but that they harden themselves in indifference to the *precepts* of his word, by professed zeal for some of its doctrines; and go on to regulate their course by their own wisdom or the traditions of men, in

opposition to the reproof and instruction of the Scriptures:—I then need no more to detect the hollowness of that confidence, which they boast of, and to mark them as walking after the fleshly mind.

The doctrine of election, and others, which assert the sovereignty and faithfulness of JEHOVAH, are indeed so inseparably interwoven with his revealed character, as displayed in the atonement, that those who deny the former, are manifestly, in the believer's view, blind to the latter. But these doctrines altogether lose their real character, when separated from the tissue of that glorious TRUTH, with which they stand incorporated: and *then* only afford matter of lofty speculation and presumptuous confidence to the vain mind of man. That mind continually combines in it all the various forms of ungodliness, even those that might appear most incompatible. It unites the self-righteousness of the Pharisee with the hardy profaneness of the Antinomian.

After all that I have said in this letter, about the hope of the Gospel, I shall have failed of conveying to you my real meaning, unless you, sir, be a happy partaker of it from the word of Christ dwelling in you. The freedom and plainness with which I have written will, I hope, encourage you to a similarly open communication of your sentiments. After receiving that I shall be better able to judge whether it be suitable to prosecute with you the consideration of other topics. Meanwhile I remain, with best wishes, &c. &c.

LETTER II.

Faith and hope of the Gospel continued.—Personal confidence toward God essentially connected with every other character of the new mind.—This confidence not derived from the contemplation of our faith.—View of the first Christian Church at Jerusalem.—The supposed community of goods refuted.—The glory appearing on that Church nothing but the glory of God.—The Apostolic doctrine: the scriptural meaning of this phrase more comprehensive than is commonly supposed.—Antichrist.—The only true God always “a consuming fire.”—The ordinances of his house stamped with as much of divine authority under the Gospel, as under the law of Moses.—Set aside without fear in all the popular churches.—These churches as essentially Antichristian as the Establishment, and more inconsistent.—Misapplication of 1 John iii, 23. exposed.

DEAR SIR,

THE reply you have made to my last, in general affords me pleasure, from your professed acknowledgment of the great TRUTH, and your disavowal of various sentiments which stand opposed to it. I am particularly gratified by your appearing to discern something of the infinite *distinction* between the Apostolic Gospel and the doctrine, which is now generally current under the name of *evangelical*. For I own that the want of this *discriminating* perception is one thing, which, in many instances, convinces me that persons, who yield a verbal assent to what I offer, do not understand me, and therefore do not believe what they assent to.

I am neither surprised nor sorry to hear, that you have lost some of your good name amongst your former religious associates. I can promise you that you shall become “yet more vile” in their estimation, the more you are mercifully led to a consistent confession of the truth. The man who speaks of the Apostolic Gospel, as all true, but shrinks from keeping pace with the Apostle’s language—“though we or an angel from heaven, preach ANY other gospel, let him be accursed:” (Gal. i. 8.)—that man does not really confess the one great truth of the only true God. He pretends indeed to confess the name of JEHOVAH; but would set an idol beside him. No wonder that he should escape all “the offence of the cross,” and gain the praise and esteem of the religious world. But in this, he “has his reward.” Under any trials and reproaches and losses, to which you may be exposed in the profession of the faith, I have no consolation to offer you, unless you see the glory of the truth: and if you do, you will think little of any thing you may suffer for it, in the view of that coming “day of the Lord,” with the prospect of which the first disciples were directed to “comfort one another.” (1 Thes. iv. 18.)

You very truly observe, that all the Apostolic exhortations and directions to the first Christians proceed upon the idea—not of their becoming what they were not yet—but of their walking as what they already were, *children* of God and *saints* in Christ Jesus. I would add—that they all proceed upon the supposition, that the persons

addressed were not doubtful or ignorant of the blessedness belonging to them; that they were not such as many professors now, who think it almost essential to the character of a Christian to *doubt whether he be a Christian or not*: who will,—some of them,—speak very fairly of the Gospel as *indubitably true*, but in the next breath—(with an absurd inconsistency which on no other subject would be admitted)—will gravely profess themselves *uncertain whether they believe it or not*. Such men, not having “the answer of a good conscience toward God by the blood of sprinkling,” and perhaps busied in an effort to get it in a course of diligent labour and strict adherence to the divine precepts, are really at present in a state of incapacity for attending aright to any one of them. How can they “love the appearing” of the Lord Jesus,—how can they “look for and hasten unto” his coming,—how can they “comfort one another” with the words which announce the glory of that great day,—who are altogether doubtful whether he shall appear to their joy or to their confusion? How can they indeed come unto the throne of grace—in the spirit in which Christ teaches all his disciples to pray, saying, “OUR FATHER! which art in heaven,”—while they are uncertain whether they be yet the children of God, or the children of the evil one?

Such will always think the confidence and joy and peace of the believer *presumptuous*; and they only shew thereby, from what it is they are trying to derive confidence. They will conceive it to be derived from the contemplation of *his own faith*, what would be indeed a sandy foundation for it. Much as if a blind man should conceive, that the enjoyment expressed by his neighbours, in looking at a beautiful object, was derived—not from the object discerned—but from the consideration of the exercise of their visual faculty. And, no doubt, the deceitful flesh in the believer would be abundantly ready, at all times, to substitute *something in himself*—under the name of faith—in place of that glorious object which the divine word exhibits. But while his view is directed to the latter, he will see *in it* a sufficiency of shelter and security from all the plagues of his own heart; and such a *divine greatness* in the things testified in the word, as—while it exposes the faintness of *his* discernment, and weakness of *his* persuasion of them—will make him content to be nothing, that Christ may be all.

That divine declaration—“whosoever *believeth* shall be saved”—never was designed to set us on the search for something good in us, under the name of *faith*, in order to *warrant* our confidence; and, when rightly understood, has no tendency to lead the believer to the contemplation of any such thing. It was designed to exhibit the salvation which is of GOD, to the exclusion of all conditions and qualifications in the sinful objects of it; and to bring it in all its fulness to the guiltiest and most ungodly, who credits the divine report. “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be *by GRACE*.” (Rom. iv. 16.) They prove that they do not believe it, who see not in it a sufficiency of deliverance and relief, to give rest and peace to their consciences. They who *have not* this, are either resting carelessly indifferent without it, and probably at bottom comforting themselves with a reflexion

on their *modest* doubts and *humble* fears ;—or else, they are in pursuit of that, which none ever found by “ following after it ;” and are still engaged with the anxious inquiry—“ who will shew us any good ?” —to the denial of that *good* thing, which “ the LORD God hath shewed” us, HIM in whom Jehovah “ is well pleased.” (Ps. iv. 6. Mic. vi. 6—8. Matt. xvii. 5. 2 Pet. i. 17.)

Many, my dear sir, would be apt to say, that the observations I have offered form an odd preface to the subjects, which I am now encouraged to pursue with you. They would think it more suitable to stir up your attention to Christian duty, by exciting in you the disquietude of “ an evil conscience.” But such was not the way, which the Apostles adopted with the first Christians : and in fact any one, who is under that disquietude, is *incapable* of attending aright to any part of the revealed will of God concerning the walk of his children.

As far as I understand of your course, notwithstanding some late changes in your religious connexion, you are at present much astray from many important principles of the word, which bear on this subject. In the hope of your proving (through divine mercy) to have an ear for “ what the Spirit saith unto the Churches,” I would proceed to present them to your attention : but in doing this, you must allow me not to go so *directly* to your topics of inquiry, as you might expect. I wish you to follow me in the consideration of what the Scriptures teach us, concerning the course of the first disciples ;—forgetting altogether the ages that have intervened since that day.

And here, in the first place, are we not assured that *all who believed* what the Apostles preached concerning Jesus of Nazareth, *were together* ? (Acts ii. 44.) There was then no such thing thought of as a disciple standing apart from the Church, or body of disciples. Nor was there any more such a thing as *several* Christian Churches in the same place, differing from each other in either faith or practice. But let us look a little closer at the simple but glorious account, given of the first Christian Church at Jerusalem, in that day of the Lord’s power—“ Then they that gladly received the word were baptized : and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And all that believed *were together*, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts ii. 41—47.)—“ And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul : neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus : and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked : for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid

them down at the Apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." (Acts iv. 32—35.)—I would make one or two remarks on these passages, for clearing the import of the expressions.

The words rendered,—“they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and *fellowship*,”—should certainly be translated—“they continued steadfastly in the doctrine (or *teaching*) of the Apostles, and *in the fellowship*,” or “*contribution*.” On a reference to the original, you will see at once the justice of this alteration. The word rendered *fellowship* is one, from which an adjective is immediately formed, that occurs in 1 Tim. vi. 18. in Paul's exhortation to the rich believer; and that is there more aptly rendered—*willing to communicate*. It plainly denotes that *communication* of their worldly goods, to the necessities of their poor brethren, which manifested their love, “not in word nor in tongue only, but in deed and in truth;” and which is afterwards expressed by their having “*all things common*.”

But here let me observe, that there is a great and very mischievous mistake prevalent, about the so-called *community of goods* in the first Church at Jerusalem. It is generally supposed, that the disciples then threw all their property into a common fund, out of which the wants of each were supplied. And this is talked of as a thing *peculiar* to that Church; and accounted for from a certain supposed *peculiarity* of circumstances in that body, or from some kind of *will-service*—not proposed to the imitation of other Churches. But it was no such thing: there was no annihilation of individual property, nor of those inequalities in it which the Gospel never was designed to supersede. Nor does the narrative, when rightly understood, present any thing to our view, which is not to take place in *every* Christian Church walking in the truth. Indeed intrinsic absurdities might be shewn attached to the common interpretations of the passage; absurdities sufficient to expose its falsehood. But we are not left to the necessity of having recourse to any such reasoning. So far from all alike needing a daily distribution of the bounty of the Church, we find *widows* expressly mentioned, (vi. 1.) as specifying the kind of objects, for whose relief it was designed. The language also of Peter to Ananias (v. 4.)—“while it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?”—plainly marks, that, had he not sold the particular possession, (the whole price of which he pretended to bring to the Apostles, in hypocritical imitation of the liberality of others,) there would have been nothing in his conduct to draw on him the notice or the censure of his brethren. What then can be the import of the words in ch. ii. 44, 45. and iv. 34. but this? that the minds of the disciples were so enlarged to mutual love, under the influence of that Gospel which they believed, that none of them so counted any thing which he possessed his own, as to withhold what he had, and could spare, from the real necessities of his brethren: and that many, in order to meet the numerous wants in a body so numerous, turned into money particular possessions which they held; but without at all reducing themselves to a situation, in which they would equally need relief with those to whom they afforded it. Indeed that this is the thing presented to our view, is

established beyond doubt by the express mention of a particular individual, who sold a piece of land for this purpose. (iv. 36, 37.) For why should Josès be specified by name as having acted so, if even what he did were done by all in similar circumstances? much more, if there were a universal surrender of all individual property, to form a common stock?

Perhaps you ask, why I insist upon this matter so much, and so strongly? Because, in general, the most important service, in which a Christian can be engaged, is to rescue any part of Scripture from the misinterpretations current in the world. But also because the popular misinterpretation of this passage I consider, peculiarly, a device of the man of sin, for turning away disciples from that word, which is the only true “lamp unto their feet, and light unto their path.” When any idea has been suggested of their full *return* to primitive Christianity, how often have we heard it exploded by referring to the supposed *community of goods* in the first Church at Jerusalem; and by some sagacious observation on the wildness of such an attempt *now*? But let a Christian look at the account of that Church in its real character; and he now may see in it only an exemplification of the genuine features of every real Church of Christ to the end; while that exemplification does indeed abundantly expose the pretensions of modern so-called Churches and so-called Christianity. Accordingly, the other Apostolic Churches—in which we know from the Scriptures that the distinction of *rich* brethren and *poor* did continue to subsist—are so far commended by the Apostles, as they “became followers (or imitators) of the Churches of God which in *Judea* were in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess. ii. 14.)

I would gladly, my dear sir, fix your view upon the picture. But it is never contemplated aright, or discerned in its true colours, unless the one thing seen in it be the glory of GOD; of that *only true* GOD, who reveals his name to sinners in the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. There—in that first Christian Church—HE displayed his righteousness and truth, his mercy and his power. There his word “wrought effectually,” as “the sword of his Spirit:” and that was fulfilled which was spoken of old by the mouth of David concerning David’s son and lord—“*JEHOVAH* shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” (Psalm cx. 2. Matth. xxii. 41—45.) All was the work of GOD, in opposition to all the wickedness of man, overcoming by the display of his glorious goodness all that deepest malignity of evil, which had been manifested by the betrayers and murderers of the Lord of glory. And when we behold that multitude of believers—all rejoicing and praising God—and all “of one heart and of one soul,”—we behold nothing like what many dream of,—a wonderful improvement and amendment in their hearts and nature,—but the power of the LORD, causing his great truth to dwell in them richly, and to bring forth in them fruit abundantly to *his* glory;—by the sceptre of that his word swaying their hearts and consciences. There we see exemplified that, which the same inspired Psalmist holds forth to view, when he says,—“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down

upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments: as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Psalm cxxxiii.)

From the mouth of the Apostles, in whose doctrine—or teaching—they "continued steadfastly," they received all the rule of their fellowship: and both the glad tidings of salvation, in which they rejoiced, and the gracious precepts which they were called to follow, came to them sanctioned by one and the same *divine* authority. Both are alike included in the scriptural import of that phrase—"the doctrine of the Apostles." Compare for instance Rom. xvi. 17. 1 Tim. vi. 2, 3. Matt. xv. 9. xxviii. 20. But, according to the perversion of scriptural phraseology current in these days, the *doctrine* of the Apostles is considered one thing and their *precepts* another: while the former is set in contrast and opposition with the latter, as what is merely speculative is opposed to what is practical. And truly, in the minds of those who deal in this ungodly perversion of Scripture, the very truth of the glorious Gospel *is* but an empty speculation.

Well, sir; after viewing that blessed exhibition of the kingdom of God in the first Christian Church at Jerusalem, what think you of the interference of human authority or regulation in it? What think you of the appearance of opposition to the authority of the Lord, in disclaiming subjection to the things delivered by the Apostles in his name? and this, under a verbal profession of receiving their testimony concerning his death for sin and his resurrection from the dead. What think you of the introduction of will-worship and will-service into the house of God; of the exercise of human judgment, and human taste, in the affairs of his kingdom? What think you of those "desolations of many generations," by which believers themselves have been scattered from each other,—scattered among the unbelieving world, and "learning their works?" What think you of conduct exactly parallel to that of the politic Jeroboam of old, when he turned the ten tribes from their allegiance to the God of Israel, establishing idolatrous feasts of his own—"like unto the feast that was in Judah"—according to all that "he had devised of *his own* heart?" (1 Kings xii. 32, 33.) What think you of all the abominations of that "man of sin," whose *mystery of iniquity* was working, even in the days of the Apostles, in opposition to their word, but after their removal from the earth came in as a flood; of that man of sin, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God?" (2 Thes. ii. 4.)

And suppose not, that when I speak of *Antichrist*, or *the man of sin*, I am pointing to any particular individual, or body of individuals, as exclusively designated by that title. An examination of the various passages of Scripture, in which the term occurs, will evince that it always designates what stands *opposed to the word of the Lord by his Apostles*, but *under the Christian name and profession*. And wherever, under the Christian name and profession, opposition appears to that word, there *Antichrist* is manifested. Many, who have been looking for him abroad, might be led by this view to find him much nearer

home: while I do not mean to deny, that in some systems of corrupted Christianity, which have most widely overspread Christendom, all his malignity has been more fully embodied and more peculiarly developed.

But in reference to the view we have been taking of the first Christian Church at Jerusalem, may I not quote the words of the LORD to his prophet Ezekiel? (xlili. 10—12.) “Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the comings-in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the *whole* form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house. Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be MOST HOLY. Behold, *this is the law of the house.*” May I not also suggest, in connexion with this subject, the consideration of that solemn truth declared in Ps. lxxxix. 7. ? “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.” Yes: whenever the word of the Lord shall have its due influence on the minds of his people, it will produce in them the same “godly sorrow” and all the same effects, as the Apostolic letter produced in the Corinthian Church. (2 Cor. vii. 7—11.) “What carefulness, what clearing of themselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what revenge!”

Many *evangelical* professors indeed, of this day, seem to think that God is not now an object of such reverential fear, as he was to the Jews under the law of Moses; that he is no longer “a consuming fire”—“a jealous God:”—in short, that the more fully and clearly he has displayed his redeeming *Mercy*, the less room is there for regarding him with “godly fear;” that the more joyful the discovery of his Name is to a sinner, the more that sinner may be encouraged to trifle with his authority. I would need no more (as I before observed) to convince me that the man, who walks in such a mind, does not indeed believe the unadulterated “Gospel of the glory of God.” How different is the inference, which the Apostle Peter drew from the *greatness* of that redemption, by which believers are brought nigh to God! (1 Pet. i. 17—21.) They who have their “faith and hope in God,” from that propitiation through which alone a sinner can approach him, will serve him “with reverence and godly fear,” and will acknowledge that “their God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. xii. 28, 29. Deut. iv. 24.) And their godly fear is expressed and manifested by their trembling at that word, in which he reveals himself, and in all things bowing to its divine authority. In this especially is “the fear of the LORD” distinguished from, and contrasted with, the religious fear of the religious world, who are regulated by the precepts and traditions of men. And it is only from the want of that godly fear, which the belief of the truth produces, that so many now intimate, that the few and simple ordinances and institutions, delivered to the Churches of the saints by the Apostles, may be

comparatively disregarded,—altered—and modified, at the caprice and fancy of men, because they are so few and simple, in comparison with the multitude of ordinances in the tabernacle service. Are they the less *divinely* established and sanctioned?

Thus: we find in the New Testament Scriptures, that the disciples were taught to “come together into one place”—on the first day of the week—to break bread—“shewing forth the Lord’s death;” (1 Cor. xi. 20. 26. Acts xx. 7.)—to “teach and admonish one another,” to “edify one another,” “speaking the truth in love,” “speaking as the oracles of God;” (Col. iii. 16. Rom. xv. 14. Eph. iv. 15. 1 Pet. iv. 11. 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 24, 31. 1 Thes. v. 11.)—to express their mutual love and brotherhood by all saluting each other “with an holy kiss”—“a kiss of charity;” (Rom. xvi. 16. 1 Thes. v. 26. &c.)—and in the same Christian assembly to maintain the purity of the house of God by exercising its appointed discipline against such offenders, as they failed of bringing to repentance by the reproof of the word. (1 Cor. v. 4, 5.)

But as far as I know of the religious connexion, which you have joined since you left the Establishment, you seem to claim as much liberty as any of the Establishment “to change times and laws.” In place of the meeting of the brethren on the first day of the week to join together in all the instituted acts, by which they are called to shew forth the praises of their common Lord and edify one another,—in place of this, you think yourselves at liberty to substitute a promiscuous assembly on that day of believers and unbelievers—of all sorts and sizes of religious professors—met together to attend on the exercises of a man, whom you call your *Minister*, who leads the worship of them all, and preaches to them a Sermon: while you have what you call a *Church-meeting*, for some purposes peculiar to your body, on the evening of some other day.—In place of shewing forth the Lord’s death in the weekly assembly of the disciples on the first day,—(which, from the manner in which it is mentioned, was manifestly the *leading* object for which the first disciples came together)—you think it wiser to substitute what you call a *monthly communion*. (I am not sure whether *you* call it a *Sacrament*.)—The holy kiss of charity, however suitable a thing to be enjoined on the primitive Christians in those old days, you have discovered would be now an idle and ridiculous and unseemly ceremony.—As to the instituted discipline, I have no information what you practise under the name. But this I may confidently conclude, that gentlemen who think themselves so much wiser than the Apostles of Christ, and assume an authority superior to them, in annulling their regulations in his kingdom, must give themselves little trouble about the plain instructions in the word of God upon this subject. If you practise any thing under the name of discipline, I dare say you are equally unscriptural in your tolerance of some offenders, and in your precipitate hurry to get rid of others.

On the whole, I would not conceal from you, that I view what you term your *Church* as little else but an *ungodly confederacy* against the word of the LORD: in which, if any believers of the truth are taking part,—(as I know not of what ungodliness believers left

to their own minds are incapable)—this only renders it the more awful in my view. When I see persons professing a system of lies under the name of Gospel, and walking together in such an Antichristian confederacy as yours; I see what is all suitable, consistent, and of a piece; and what I feel no desire to disturb. But when I see a man making the Christian profession with his lips, and in many respects appearing to manifest attachment to the TRUTH, and yet taking part in such a league against the authority of the King of Zion;—then I see a lamentable inconsistency, and feel a desire to call his attention to the wickedness of his course, if perhaps he may prove to have an ear for the correction of the word.

I really cannot well understand, what you meant by quitting the Establishment, and sacrificing some advantages that you there enjoyed: and I have as yet reason to fear, that it was rather in compliance with some kind of religious *taste* and private *fancy*,—(which I know many professors think a sufficient rule for their conduct)—than in obedience to that divine call, COME YE OUT OF BABYLON, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (Rev. xviii. 4.) The worst that can be said of the Establishment is, that it is an Antichristian system of human regulation, attempted to be introduced into the kingdom of Christ, and substituted for his laws. But *if* the laws of his kingdom may innocently be changed at the judgment of men, what harm in this? And if they cannot, how is your present connexion less Antichristian, than that which you abandoned? Or was it the *number* of his laws which are set aside in the Establishment,—(and which must indeed be set aside in *every* politico-religious Establishment)—was it the *quantity* of Antichristian rebellion there, that you could not tolerate? The principle, that would abrogate any one ordinance of the King of Zion, invades the authority of all. And if I were not to take the word of the Lord as the only authoritative—and only lawful—rule of my Christian practice, I confess I should prefer submitting to the code of regulations made by Acts of Parliament in this country, rather than regulate my disobedience by the fancies of any private individuals.

But I have heard,—and part of the language in your letter confirms it,—that you are fond of quoting that text, (1 John iii. 23.) “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another”—as comprising all that is preceptive under the new covenant; and as releasing us from all concern about our conduct, so far as it does not openly violate the purity of the truth or the principles of brotherly affection. The father of lies is never more diabolical, than when he assumes the garb of an angel of light; never more opposed to the word of God, than when he masks his opposition under the language of Scripture. Speak out, sir; and plainly say, is it your meaning that, when the Apostle John gave this blessed summary of the divine commandment, he intended to tell the disciples—that they need not be nice about complying with any of the particular directions, which he or his fellow-Apostles gave them, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the regulation of their walk, either as individuals or Churches of the

saints? Come; let us take for an example the Apostolic injunction to one of the Churches, (2 Thes. iii. 6.) “ Now we command you, brethren, *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.” Did the Apostle John mean, in the passage referred to, that although his brother Paul had given such a solemn charge to the Churches, yet they might or might not attend to it, according to their fancies; because the only commandment of God, under the new covenant, is that of faith and brotherly love?

The question thus nakedly proposed may be sufficient, if you are indeed of the truth, to expose the profaneness of any such misapplication of the text, as altogether opposed to the scriptural fear of the Lord, and—in that—both to faith and love. But in many specious professors, who *talk* highly of faith and love, of Christ and of salvation, there is at bottom a latent leaven of Antinomian—of Antichristian—lies, congenial to all the ungodliness of their flesh: while those who are under its predominating influence are perhaps afraid to look at it, in its undisguised deformity; and go on maintaining a kind of high Christian profession, very reputable in the sight of men, with a very decent exterior in civil society, and great piety towards their god, and fond attachment to those who are like-minded with themselves; but manifesting to those whose judgments are regulated by the word, that they are destitute of real love to the truth or to its children;—manifesting this by their disaffection to the authority of the King of Zion, and to the primitive expressions of Christian love enjoined on his subjects.

In many instances of such professors, the natural *vain-gloriousness* of the human heart materially combines with all the rest of its ungodliness, to make them turn away their ear from the reproof of the word with indignation and contempt. In the religious course, which for many years—(perhaps even to old age)—they have pursued, there has been established a most high repute for Christian wisdom, experience, and zeal. They have become eminent pillars in their several connexions. They are considered, and consider themselves, as “guides of the blind, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes.” They have a daily gratification the most refined of the most refined pride and self-complacency of their hearts, in maintaining the religious character of themselves and others. And shall they listen to that instruction and correction of the word, which would tend to bring down all this Babel to the dust? which would make them “lothe themselves in their own eyes,” for all their abominations and Antichristian doings? which would make them fools and vile in the eyes of others, and thus destroy all THEIR *usefulness*?—Ah! what but that *word* of the MOST HIGH GOD, which is “quick and powerful,” can at any time “cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,” in the heart of fallen man?

I shall again suspend the prosecution of these subjects, till I find, by your next, how you appear to receive what I have offered to you in this letter. I send you a small piece on the *Divine Authority of*

the Apostolic Traditions, &c. in which some important observations occur; though mixed with others, which I now should wish to alter. The best of *human* writings need to be read with jealousy and scriptural discrimination. But "*every word of God is pure.*" (Prov. xxx. 5.) "*All the words of his mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.*" (Prov. viii. 8, 9.)—I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Supposed severity.—The flesh in believers of the same ungodly character, as in unbelievers.—Christ's rebuke of Peter.—The spirit of Christ.—Exposure of the perverted application of the precept—"judge not,"—Exercise of human judgment and taste in religion.—Illustrative anecdotes.—Rejection of the word of the LORD necessary to the preservation of our characters in the world.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE been favoured with your letter of the 20th, and though you profess in it agreement with many of the principles in my last, yet the general tenor of it conveys to me very little satisfaction.

You think me severe and rigid. I am not surprised at the charge; for the steadfastness of fidelity to the word of the Lord, and the consequent plainness of testimony against every sentiment or practice which opposes that word, must always present such an appearance to the fleshly mind. It may prevent some mistakes in our future correspondence,—(for I have no disposition to break it off, as you seem to apprehend, so long as you desire its continuance, and there appears any prospect of good from continuing it)—to remark that the gospel, which I believe, leads me to treat any manifestation of the fleshly mind, in those whom I regard with hope as fellow-disciples, with as much severity of rebuke, as I would treat it in those, in whom that mind manifestly reigns: for, in each case, I see in it just the same principle of human ungodliness, opposed to the truth and to the glory of the only living God. It was immediately after that good confession from Peter, upon which his divine master pronounced him *blessed*, that the fleshly principle appearing in him was met by the Lord with—"Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matt. xvi. 23.)

Here was displayed by the compassionate saviour of sinners—what the religious world now call a very *bad spirit*. Indeed, to the most religious of that day the spirit of Christ, as manifested in his own words and conduct, appeared so bad, that they plainly imputed to it a *diabolical* character. "He hath a devil, and is mad: why hear ye him?" was their language. (John x. 20.) And the mind of false religionists—the mind (I may say) of *man*—is just the same at this day. They "call evil good, and good evil: they put darkness for light and light for darkness." And "if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

Nor does the circumstance of my having been myself so long

walking in all the Antichristian abominations of the Establishment, nor the circumstance of my having been, even after quitting the Establishment—long disobedient to some precepts of the word for which I now contend, at all dispose me to be the less firm in asserting the abominableness of the one, and the divine authority of the other; or to be the more lenient to such instances of human opposition to the word of the most High God. If it were otherwise, I must certainly look back at these instances of my own sin with a correspondently *indulgent eye*. But I would view them as awful exemplifications of my own ungodly flesh; and would own, that it both was—and is—solely of the Lord's mercy that I am not consumed.

In one important sense, indeed, I never can be warranted to *judge* you or others. But the sense, in which you—with so many—appear to apply the precept—"Judge not," is radically opposed to the fear of the Lord and to the belief of his word. It would call me, where his word has decided what is evil and good, to discredit his declaration, in compliment to the religious character of professors. In the real import of the precept, there is *no* man whom I am left at liberty to *judge*: no—not the murderer dying at the gallows, and dying with blasphemy on his lips. While I am in a mind accordant with the truth, I shall view in him a fellow-sinner—not a whit worse than myself—my *present self*; a fellow-sinner, therefore, over whom I have no room nor right to exalt myself, in adjudging him deserving of condemnation rather than myself. And let me add—in opposition to the false *humility* which I mark in some of your language—that in an *Apostle*, finishing his course with joy, I see a fellow-sinner not one whit better than myself.

But in your application of the words, "Judge not," I think you find yourself at liberty to judge *some*, though not others. May I ask you, sir, by how many degrees in the scale of moral worth must a sinner be lower than you, or your religious friends, in order that you may think yourself warranted to *judge* him? Perhaps the question may lead a better mind in you than your own, to reject with abhorrence your perversion of the precept. And whenever you see the wickedness of what is current in the religious world under the name of *charity*, I am sure you will not think me too severe in reprobating or exposing it.

That indeed is not the only wicked perversion of Scripture which I observe in your letter. The Apostolic exhortation to believers, walking together in the fellowship of the Gospel to "keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of *peace*," (Eph. iv. 3.) you quote as warranting your tender apprehensions, lest you should disturb the tranquillity of that ungodly confederacy, in which you are engaged, by the introduction of scriptural truth. The *unity of the Spirit* indeed! Let me freely tell you, that I view the unity of the spirit which you are endeavouring thus to keep, as no other than the unity of the spirit of Antichrist. You support the justice of the same delicate fears, by a reference to Paul's caution to Timothy, that he should avoid questions that "do gender strifes." (2 Tim. ii. 23.) Really, sir, these are very profane misapplications of the divine word. And did the Apostle, in giving his son Timothy so many and so minute

directions for the regulation of the Churches, at the same time intimate to him, that these matters were "foolish and unlearned questions," which he ought to avoid? No, truly: but, on the contrary, he most solemnly *charges him in the sight of God and before Christ Jesus*, to "keep the commandment without spot." And he closes a long series of particular instructions on the subject, with these remarkable words: "These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words:—from such withdraw thyself." (1 Tim. vi. 2—5, 13, 14.) It may very well answer the purpose of a religious connexion such as yours, to quote and misapply Scripture according to the *sound* of the words, without any attention to their scriptural meaning: for the purpose is, to draw a veil of Christian phraseology and form over a thing essentially Antichristian. But indeed, sir, I know not any more awful wickedness, in which a believer can take part, than thus to assist in corrupting the very fountain of divine truth.

You tell me, that you and some others of your soi-disant church agree with me in thinking, that it would be *better* to have the Ordinance—not monthly—but on the first day of every week; and to admit the mutual exhortation of the brethren: and that you are even disposed to think that the kiss of charity *ought* to be practised. Indeed, sir, you do not agree with me at all on these subjects; or you would not use any such profane language. It would be *better!*—My dear sir, I call on you, if you know the Lord, to look at the ungodly sentiment conveyed in that word. Look it in the face: and say again, what think you of it? May I ask you, why it would be *better*? Is it because the first disciples certainly did so? and because their recorded example is equivalent to the record of an express command from those Apostles, who regulated all things in the Churches of the saints? and because *they* taught only what they were commanded of the Lord? and because HE is *with them*, sanctioning their word, "even unto the end of the world?" (Matt. xxviii. 20.) Is this your reason, for saying it would be *better* for professed disciples now, to come together *on the first day of the week* to break bread, rather than on the first or the last Sunday in the month? This is a weighty reason indeed, in the mind of a disciple. But if this be your reason, what mean you by saying that it is *better* to obey the commands of the Lord?—A *good* thing, I suppose, to disobey them, but a *better* to obey!

But no: this scarcely could be your reason. Is it then that you conceive the Scriptures decide nothing one way or another on the subject: but you think it would be more pleasant, or more conducive to edification, to observe the Lord's supper weekly? If this be your meaning, you quite mistake me in supposing that I designed to agitate any such question. I have no desire to interfere with the fancies, or tastes, or judgments of those very *good* and *pious* people, who think themselves at liberty to be regulated in their religious practices by their several judgments and tastes and fancies: and I hold it a matter of perfect indifference, whether they have what they call *the*

Ordinance weekly, or monthly, or yearly. One of them may suggest wise reasons, why it is *better* to have it monthly; and another, why it is *better* to have it weekly: but you must excuse me for declining to hold the scales between them. I should just have as bad an opinion of your church as I have at present, if—on such principles—you proceed to introduce the exterior observance of every ordinance, for which we come together in Stafford Street. I have known such *modifications* of corrupt churches; and indeed I have not viewed them as the less corrupt: though I have viewed them as the more abominably deceitful.

The subject suggests to me an account, which I heard lately, of a baptist church in N*** from one who had formerly been connected with it. They had been for some time walking together, and in the habit of *weekly communion*. But a short time ago, they imported a *minister* from England to supply them: and the minister, on hearing of their practice in this respect, told them it would not do; for that *monthly communion* was the practice of the churches in his connexion. Upon which, the good people—very goodnaturedly—accommodated themselves to the wishes of their minister; though almost all agreed that their former course would be *better*. But I suppose, that the advantages of having a *minister* more than compensated, in their view, any little disadvantages of disobeying the word of the Lord.

I myself have known a more refined sort of church in ***, where they had long professed to hold the scriptural obligation of the weekly observance of the Supper, and the duty of disciples to attend to that ordinance of the Lord—though they should have neither clergyman nor elder to *administer* it. But opening at one time a negotiation with a man, who keenly opposed the latter principle, for the purpose of engaging him as an *elder*; they thought it *better* to suspend their obedience in this matter for some weeks, till the treaty was concluded.

I have been led to give you these two anecdotes merely for illustrating the subject; and to mark how far you were from agreement with me, when you talked of thinking it would be *better* to act so and so. The sentiment, that seems embodied in that language, I do regard with unqualified abhorrence: and such conduct, as I have adduced in exemplification of it, evinces a state of mind, which is not to be corrected by the discussion of this or that scriptural precept, but which—as opposed to the fear of the LORD—marks it very unimportant what precepts the persons profess to observe, and what they professedly set aside. Nothing but the truth of the Gospel brought home to the conscience, by the mercy and power of HIM whose holy and glorious name it testifies, can correct that evil.

Perhaps you will say, as some passages in your letter intimate, that notwithstanding the wicked inconsistencies in the sentiment or conduct which I expose, the persons in whom they appear *may* yet be believers. And what then? Is the wickedness of any ungodly sentiment or conduct—in a believer—less than the wickedness of the same in an unbeliever? Or, is it to be viewed with less abhorrence? and not met with as steadfast opposition? No: but, on the contrary, it is more awful. In the unbeliever, I expect to find nothing but uniform opposition to the true God; hatred, and contempt, and

ignorance of him. But when any, who profess his truth, manifest principles or practices opposed to his glory and to the sanctity of his word, I see a display of the wickedness of the fleshly mind, fouler than the same things would exhibit in an avowed infidel; the evil of which can be only aggravated in my view by the consideration, that the persons may perhaps prove to be disciples. This, however, can scripturally be evinced, only by their yielding to the reproof and correction of the word.

I am aware that, in the false balance employed by the religious world, much depends upon the question whether the wickedness be *creditable* or *discreditable*. Murder, and adultery, and drunkenness, &c. are evils that lie under very bad repute among all men. But the rejection of the word of the Lord—though perhaps under a decent profession of submitting to it—is an evil, which cannot be avoided without forfeiting our fair repute in human society, for charity and every thing good. And then they have *characters* of established estimation among men, enveloped in their several circles (whether wider or narrower) with such a supposed sanctity, that *their* principles or conduct are not to be invaded without a kind of *sacrilège*.—Ah! sir; it is not without reason that the Scripture saith—“whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (James iv. 4.) Choose you, which you will serve: for we “cannot serve two masters.”

I had thought of proceeding to some other topics in your letter; particularly to what you call *forbearance*. But I confess, that until I learn your mind upon what I have written, I have no spirit to continue the subject with you; not knowing on what ground I am to treat it. Short therefore as my present letter is, in comparison of the former, you must allow me to conclude it here. I shall wait—not without some solicitude—for your reply.—I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Christian forbearance: its nature, importance, and blessedness.—Intrinsic ungodliness of the popular forbearance.—Every religious society, which proceeds upon it, essentially an Antichristian confederacy.—Popular arguments in support of it exposed.—Sins of ignorance.—The plea of *sincerity* and *conscientiousness* opposed to the divine authority, wisdom, and sufficiency of the Scriptures.—Nature and objects of the Apostolic vengeance.—The Apostles still with the Churches of the saints.

DEAR SIR,

It gratifies me much to hear, that you acknowledge the justice of the reproof I offered in my last. I can readily believe, that you had not a forced meaning attached to some of the expressions, on which I animadverted; or that you had not considered the wicked sentiments, couched under your application of them. May we not however own, that whoever drags forth to the view of a disciple such latent evils, is employed in an office of the truest *charity*, or love?

It is not with surprise, that I see further occasion for exercising

the—naturally ungrateful—office of a reprover. But why is it naturally ungrateful? Because we have something of *our own* to defend or vindicate, which we wish to screen from examination and exposure. So far as Christians communicate with each other in the mind of the truth, the one object before their view is the glory of LORD; and the one standard, by which they desire to try every thing, is his Word. May He be pleased to bless to his own glory, what I shall offer from that!

You still talk of a *forbearance*, about the limits of which you confess yourself perplexed: and you seem to think, that we exercise no forbearance. That would be indeed a heavy charge; and it is often brought against us: but most untruly. The fact is, sir, that what you term *forbearance* we do altogether disclaim as a thing intrinsically evil, about the *due limits* of which there is no room for inquiry. But indeed we acknowledge a scriptural forbearance, to the exercise of which we know no *limits*. It is here just as it is with respect to *charity*. While we are kept by mercy abiding in the truth, we shall inevitably carry the appearance of being most *uncharitable and unforbearing*, in the view of all who are ignorant of the true nature of Christian forbearance and Christian charity; who apply these important terms to some of the most evil things in their own religion. I invite you to join with me, in considering what we are taught about forbearance in the word.

The expression occurs in Col. iii. 13. “Put on therefore, *as* the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; *forbearing* one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” O! with what weight does this injunction to *forbearance* tell on the believing mind! And what pretensions could they make to the knowledge of the Lord, who should disclaim *this* forbearance? But let us compare this passage with the words of Christ on the same subject, in Luke xvii. 3, 4. They are addressed, like all such instructions, to his *disciples*; and they open with a solemn admonition—“*Take heed to yourselves*: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; *thou shalt forgive him.*”

Here, as I said, I find *no limit* to this forbearance: for such is plainly the blessed import of the—“seven times in a day;” and of the corresponding phrase in Matt. xviii. 22. “until seventy times seven.” Indeed we could not think of setting any limit to it, without forgetting the unlimited and unwearied mercy of the Lord, by which we live.—I would briefly notice the correspondence between this precept of Christian charity,—“if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him,”—and that delivered to Israel of old (Levit. xix. 17.)—“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” How different are the exercises of true and false charity! As different, as the principles from which they spring: the one, from that *truth* which displays the glory of the LORD; the other, from those

ungodly lies which build men up in a good opinion of themselves and of each other.

But I must still beg your attention to the parallel passage in Matt. xviii. 15—17. in which the divine direction is given to disciples more fully, for the regulation of their conduct in this matter. “If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone:—[rebuke him]—if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.—[if he repent, forgive him]—But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican”—one with whom thou shalt have no fellowship, no more than the Jews had with heathen men and publicans.

Here we see true *charity*; like—if I may so speak—to that God from whom it flows, “who is LOVE”—and at the same time is “a CONSUMING FIRE.”—And now, my dear sir, after having called you to view that *forbearance*, which *is* enjoined on disciples in the word, and which accords so blessedly with every feature of the Gospel of Christ; let me call you to view on the other hand that, which you have been disposed to contend for under the same name, as a proper and good thing; but to which indeed that name cannot without profaneness be seriously applied. For what is that so much talked of forbearance, by which you think that Christians should walk together—though disagreed about some of the precepts of the word? What is it, but a *tolerance of continued and systematic disobedience to the word of the Lord*;—a *provision* made in the society, which adopts the principle, *for the undisturbed violation of his commands*? Certainly, the two things are so utterly different and opposed, that they ought not to pass under the *same* name; and those who maintain this tolerance of disobedience ought to invent some other term to express it, than *forbearance*. For this word has its important meaning settled in the Scriptures. But it is an old device of Satan to give the best of names to the worst of things. In the present instance when that guise of scriptural phraseology is taken off, no more ought to be needful for deciding the mind of any disciple on the subject; and for leading him to reject the thing with abhorrence. Yet it may not be unprofitable to add a few remarks.

I would be glad to know from you, *what*—and *how many*—instances of disobedience to divine command are thus to be tolerated in a Christian Church; that is, to continue in the body, without disturbing its unity, though the offenders continue deaf to the reproof and admonition of the word? I repeat the question. I call on you to name the divine precepts which ought thus to be dispensed with. You speak of *some* discipline to be exercised, for purging out “the old leaven;” and therefore you do not contemplate the violation of *all* the precepts as to be thus *forborn* with. But some, you think, are of that character. I ask you, which?

Now, sir, I look for more honesty from you, than I have met with from most of the advocates of this wicked tolerance: from whom, often as I have pressed them with this question, I could never obtain

the desired catalogue.—The most they would do has been to give me an *example* or two of precepts, about which many religious people are disagreed, with an implied *et cetera* following the instances. It has reminded me of the ET-CETERA OATH formerly enacted, in which men were called to swear to such and such things,—*et cetera*. I know not that there was a whit more profaneness in such an oath, than there is in such an *undefined* reference to certain divine precepts, about which Christians should agree to differ.

But perhaps you anticipate me in the further observation, that the very idea of distinguishing some precepts of God, as of less sanctity and authority than others, is intrinsically profane. The man who deliberately entertains it, under whatever softer language he dresses it up, is not under the fear of the LORD or reverence of his holy word,—even when he appears most strict in observing it. He may be a man abounding in the natural religion, of which I spoke in a former letter; most devout; most sincere; most confident that he is a Christian indeed; and he may be a most amiable and respectable member of human society: but he has no pretensions to the character of a disciple;—he has not the spirit or mind of Christ.

But you say, that you could not but shrink from the solemn act, in which we were once engaged, of putting away a number of persons with whom we had walked as brethren, because they would not submit to the precept of the *salutation*; and this, although we ourselves had been formerly disobedient to it:—that you would tremble at the idea of cutting off from the body some, who perhaps were *better Christians* than yourself, &c.—I cannot stop at present to shake out the evil, which is concealed in that amiable modesty of the latter words: for I wish to clear our way in the consideration of the question, and to guard against some mistakes of my meaning.

You cannot assert too strongly the *solemnity* of that last act of the discipline of the house of God; or the awful wickedness committed, when any Church proceeds to it—professedly in his name—but without the sanction of his word. Indeed, I can conceive no more awful mockery of heaven than this. Nor do I wonder, in your present indecision of mind about the *salutation*, that you should shrink from the idea of breaking off from fellowship with any man, for his rejection of what you are not yourself convinced is a precept of the Lord. To do so—in your present mind—would be an act, not of Christian obedience, but of Antichristian hypocrisy. Lay aside that instance, therefore, for the present. For to consider the question fairly—whether disciples can continue to walk together in disagreement about any of the divine commands to the Churches, you should take an instance of something which you acknowledge to be commanded.

Now, I care not what instance of the kind you select. Suppose it be the weekly commemoration of the Lord's death in his Supper;—of the divine obligation of which you now profess yourself *convinced*. Others in the body, with which you are connected, do not acknowledge that part of the rule of Christ's kingdom. Now the question is—can you, according to the Scriptures, continue to walk with them? “No:” perhaps you will say,—as I have known some

say in such a case;—"for this would be inconsistent with your own personal obedience to the Lord." Aye; but let me put the case closer, in order to bring more clearly under view the point at issue between us. Let us suppose that your *minister*, and a majority of your society, either concurred with you in acknowledging the divine obligation of the thing, or acquiesced—for peace sake and to retain you among them—in the introduction of the practice: while others—upon grounds that appear very cogent to them—reject it, and join you at the table of the Lord once in every month. Now, the case thus proposed ceases to interfere with—what is called your personal obedience in the matter; that is, does not prevent your outwardly partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week. And now, what are you to do according to the Scriptures? Are you and they still to walk together in the exercise of what you call mutual *forbearance*, but what I have shewn to be the mutual *toleration of wickedness*; they tolerating you in adding—as they suppose—to the word of the Lord, and you tolerating them in taking from it?

The question is now before you in a form, in which I wish your attention closely fixed to it. None but the believer of the truth as it is in Jesus,—a partaker of the glorious hope of the blessed Gospel,—discerning in it the glory of the Lord, and rejoicing in his holy name,—"rejoicing before him with trembling,"—no other is fit for the consideration of the question; and to no other should I ever willingly present it: though—scattered as disciples are—it is often needful to agitate such topics in the most public manner; and this (I lament) will lead many to meddle with them, either in the way of attack or defence, who have really nothing to do with them, and to whom I should wish only to testify the one TRUTH of God, which they at present disbelieve.—But do you, my dear sir, pause on the question, and hesitate about your reply? Well; let me proceed to remark, that *if* you can in any such case exercise that tolerance, which I have supposed, consistently with *your own personal obedience* to the word of the Lord,—I have nothing to say against it;—the thing is a right and proper thing;—it is a Christian duty. But I say you cannot; and I proceed to point out some of the principles of his word, which in this conduct you would violate;—only premising, that from some of the admissions in your last I should hope the point will be sufficiently established with *you*, if I prove from the Scriptures—that such conduct would have been inconsistent with Christian duty *in the days of the Apostles*.

And here let me proceed to shew, in the first place, that what you would call walking together *in Christian union* would be really no such thing, but a walking together in an *Antichristian confederacy*. I may surely apply to this subject the question in the prophet Amos, (iii. 3.) "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" Can two walk *together*, and not walk in the same way? Now, what was the *Christian union*, of which we read in the apostolic age? It was essentially—the union of persons professedly agreed in the one Gospel of salvation which the Apostles preached, and their union to walk together in the one way, which was pointed out to them by the same Apostles, under the authority of Him in whose name they taught the

disciples. Such *was* Christian union; and such must it ever really be, whatever other things be put forward under the name. But what *is* your union? I shall *suppose* all of you, who are engaged in it, disciples indeed; for this will only render the wickedness of your course more glaring:—though I must incidentally observe, that I have never known your tolerance of disobedience to the *precepts* of the Lord maintained, where there was not a plentiful exercise of the same forbearance towards the corruption of his *truth*. But what is your union? You do walk together; and you therefore certainly *are* agreed. And what is the *agreement* in which you walk together? Certainly not that agreement in the word of the Lord, which formed the Christian union of old; for you are avowedly not of one heart and of one mind in these matters; and you avowedly do not here walk in the same way and by the same rule; that is, you do not *here* walk together. But the agreement in which you walk together is— an agreement to consider this precept of the Lord as of no such weight, authority, or importance, that disobedience to it should disturb your union. I now suppose, for the sake of argument, that it is only on the weekly observance of the Lord's supper, that there is any religious disagreement among you. And I say that when you, acknowledging the preceptive obligation of that, agree to walk in amiable brotherhood with those who deny it, your agreement with them is a mutual agreement to make light of that part of the divine word,—to maintain among you the standard of rebellion erected against the authority of the King of Zion; and is in this really a confederacy against the whole word of God, both in the precepts which it enjoins, and the truth which it declares. They both rest upon the same basis, and cannot be disjoined.—Call not yours a Christian union. Call it by what other name you please: but in its real nature it is, at most, a very religious combination against the word of JEHOVAH.

What think you, sir, of a number of persons—in the Apostolic days—professing to believe that Gospel of salvation which the Apostles preached, but agreeing to reject their instructions to the Churches concerning their walk—all of them—or some of them;—to reject them as of absolutely *divine* authority, while they should perhaps good-naturedly leave it to the option of individuals, whether they would obey them or not? The case is more than an imaginary one; for we know from the Scriptures that there were *heresies*, or sects, in those days. And certainly those heretics, or sectaries, made a profession of being Christians, else the disciples would not have been enjoined to *withdraw* from them and *reject* them, as they were enjoined.

“O!”—say some—“in the Apostolic days such things certainly could not have been tolerated; and such coalitions could not have been entitled to the name of Christian Churches, however they might assume it. For *then* all understood the meaning of the Apostolic precepts; or, if any were doubtful about this, the Apostles were personally present and to be referred to: so that none could then reject any precept they gave, without disclaiming subjection to their authority,—that is—subjection to Christ. But *now* disciples them-

selves are ignorant of various parts of the word: they do not see the *meaning* of this and that precept; though they are most *sincere* and *conscientious*. And shall we treat an *ignorant* brother, as *wickedly disobedient* persons were formerly treated, and are still to be treated? Shall we remove those, who—we are *sure*—are genuine disciples, though partially ignorant of the will of God? Ignorance is to be met by instruction; and not by expulsion from the school of Christ—his Church.”

I have put together, briefly but strongly, much of the ungodly and insidious argument, which I have often heard; without being sure whether you would now adopt the language or not.—Let us look at it.—There is one prominent feature in it which ought at once to detect its ungodliness to any one standing in the fear of the Lord: I mean the avowed distinction between the rule of Christian duty in the time of the Apostles, and the supposed rule of it in these days. Such and such evils, appearing in a Church of Christ, would of old have been met, and ought to have been met, in *one* way: but it seems they have now changed their character; and are to be dealt with—if dealt with at all—by *another* rule. That, I say, is enough; and ought to be enough for determining any subject of that kingdom, “which cannot be moved,” to repel the person who advances such an argument with—“Get thee behind me, Satan.” And indeed, sir, I wish you to weigh this well, before you proceed to any further observations I may make. I believe I called on you before to consider, what you meant by becoming a dissenter from the Establishment; and I again call on you to pause here, and consider it seriously. Did you mean, in obedience to the word of the LORD, to return to “the old paths—the good way” (Jer. vi. 16.) marked for his children of old, and to walk therein? Did you mean this *fully*? For I must observe, that the intention of partial obedience is absolute disobedience. If you did, proceed to the following remarks. But if you did not, and do not;—if your intention be a partial return to the recorded course of the apostolic Christians, and a stopping short of it, where it does not accord with your own fancy or judgment;—I seriously think that you may as well burn this letter, without reading further: and it is for you to consider, whether—in a prudential view—it would not be as well for you to make your peace with the daughter of the great Whore. (Rev. xvii. 5.)

But hoping “better things of you and things that accompany salvation,” I would call you to notice other black marks of radical ungodliness in the argument, which I encounter;—namely, the light account which it makes of certain instances of disobedience to the word of God,—and the broad impeachment which it conveys of the divine wisdom in giving us that word. Far be it from me to deny the ignorance of various precepts of Scripture, which beclouds the minds of disciples themselves, from the length of time during which they have been generally disregarded, and from the prevalence of the arts of “the man of sin,” acting upon the natural ungodliness of the fleshly mind. But does this ignorance weaken the authority of the precepts of God? Does their obligatory authority turn upon man’s acknowledgment and perception of it? Does a sinner’s inattention to

any command of the LORD, or denial of it in its only real import, neutralize his disobedience into a kind of innocent or venial error?

How solemnly were the people of God, under the Mosaic dispensation, admonished against any such profane sentiment! and how solemnly guarded was the *sanctity* of all the precepts delivered to them! "If a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring a ram without blemish—for a trespass-offering, unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred, and wist it not; and it shall be forgiven him. It is a trespass-offering: he hath *certainly trespassed against the LORD.*" (Lev. v. 17—19.) Blessed for ever be that great "High Priest over the house of God," who hath made atonement for all the sins of his people, by bearing them in his own body on the tree! But indeed (as I before observed) their eyes are yet closed to the glory of his work,—however highly they talk about it,—who conceive that it warrants them now to make more light of all or of any sin, than was allowed to Israel of old. And if the *ignorance* of a disciple, about what is set before him in the word as a law of the King of Zion, be still supposed by any to form a kind of apology for his violation of it;—if the sincerity and conscientiousness of his disobedience be still held by them as exempting it from the awful characters of disobedience to the word of the LORD;—I really know not with what consistency these men can deny, that the ignorance of Saul of Tarsus—the sincerity and conscientiousness of his persuasion that he was doing God service in blaspheming and persecuting Jesus of Nazareth—transformed his unbelief into, at most, a harmless infirmity. Let every one, who fears the Lord, reject with abhorrence such profanation of his holy name.

How an ignorant disciple—ignorant of any part of the revealed will of God—*ought* to be treated in such a body as yours, or any of the numerous so-called *churches* that I view as radically Antichristian,—I really have neither ability nor inclination to decide. I can only say, that no disciple *ought* to be in such a connexion; and that no law of Christ's house *can* really be observed in it. But supposing such a character to appear in a Christian Church, I have no difficulty in admitting that his ignorance is to be met by *instruction* from the word,—instruction applied with all patience, and with all tenderness, to correct his ignorance. But if, instead of receiving that instruction, he set himself against it, and persist in contradicting and opposing, and denying the authority of that part of the divine word in its only real meaning;—then it may indeed answer the purpose of the advocates of your tolerating system still to call him an *ignorant disciple*—sincere and conscientious,—but, in the view of those who hear the word of the LORD, he plainly appears as one—whom (after the failure of the effort to restore him by admonition and reproof) they are bound by that word to put away from among them, and so to "purge out the old leaven."

'What!—say they—'although he really *cannot see* the right meaning of the precept? and is most anxious to know and practise

all the LORD's will? so good a man? a man that is a better Christian than ourselves?'—I leave such to their goodness and humility, and all that they admire in themselves and others. But to you, sir, I would say—observe the contempt which they pour on the whole revelation of God. "The only wise God" has in his word revealed his will to his people. Christ not only commissioned his Apostles to teach the believers, of their day, all that he commanded them; but directed them by his Spirit to commit their instructions to writing, for the guidance of believers to the end of the world. It might perhaps be expected that all, who profess to acknowledge this, would own the *sufficiency* of the Apostolic word in the Scriptures for that end, for which it is divinely appointed and designed. But no: devout men now scruple not to charge the Almighty with folly;—to charge his word with such obscurity, ambiguity, and uncertainty of meaning, as quite vindicates in their view those who disobey it,—after all its instruction is presented to their attention: vindicates them under the plea of *inability* to see or understand what it declares; and leaves their character for godliness and every thing most fine altogether unaffected by their disobedience.

But mark the modesty of their presumptuous claims on the Most High.—'If they could but have an Apostle to rise from the dead, and explain to them the *meaning* of his recorded precepts;—O! then all their differences would be at an end; then there would be no further room for their tolerance of disobedience:—the Christians that should walk together must then be of one heart and of one mind, as they were of old.' Nay but, gentlemen,—supposing that this might settle matters in your little body,—what is to be done with all the rest of Christendom? Or—supposing that the Apostle visits every spot in Christendom, and brings to one mind all but those who expressly disclaim subjection to his word:—what is to be done with the next and succeeding generations of Christians? Must an Apostle rise from the dead to each generation, till the end of the world? I fear so. For certainly, on his appearance among you, even if he commit to writing his own *explanation* of his own precepts, that explanation—being couched in words—may be no more sufficient to settle the differences of good Christians in other parts, or in future ages, than the present Apostolic precepts in the Scriptures are considered by you now. But vain and presumptuous is every such implied impeachment of the fulness and wisdom of the divine word. It becomes those who tremble at it to say—"if they hear not Moses and the prophets,"—if they hear not the evangelists and Apostles,—"neither would they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead."

It is curious indeed to observe some of those divine precepts, which are charged by these *good* and *pious* men with such lamentable obscurity of meaning; and gravely talked of as unintelligible to the most sincere disciple. For instance, Christians are solemnly enjoined in the word—"Above all things—swear not at all—by any oath." Again, the Churches of the saints are repeatedly commanded, to "salute one another—all the brethren—with an holy kiss, a kiss of charity." I venture to say, that a Deist would find no manner of difficulty, or obscurity of meaning in these commands. He may

think them very foolish ; and make them the subject of an infidel jest. But their meaning he—or a child—will be able to explain. But says the sober professor of Christianity,—‘ for the life of me I cannot *understand* these precepts. I am, I assure you, most sincere and anxious to know all the Lord’s will, that I may do it. And O ! that we had Apostles with us, as the first Churches had, that they might explain their precepts to us : and then we should walk as the first Christians did. But who, that is not a most uncharitable bigot, will blame us now for exercising mutual *forbearance* in matters that are so *obscure* ?’ Truly all the displays of human wickedness in avowed infidels fall short of those, which are exhibited by professing Christians. While I pen the remark, I am thinking of myself, as well as others.

But say some of the most plausible advocates of your *forbearance* —‘ wherever we have the *express* authority of Scripture, for putting away any characters from the Church, we do not extend our forbearance to such instances of disobedience. But we think such *express* and *explicit* authority requisite, to warrant us in taking an act so solemn.’ That it is a most solemn act, and requires the authority of the divine word to sanction it,—(as every other act does, in which a Church joins in the name of its great Head)—I have admitted, and desire to remember. But those who pretend to require, that the Apostolic writings should specify in so many words every possible case of evil, which is to be opposed by the instituted discipline of the house of God,—seem to expect that the Scriptures should have been drawn up according to the fulness of detail, and precision of enumeration, employed in the legal instruments of men. They demand indeed, what might easily be shewn to be an impossibility. We have seen the fundamental principles of the divine word, opposed to all that tolerance of disobedience to it, for which they contend. And there is in the same word a sufficient fulness of directive precedent, for the guidance of that little flock, who are given an ear to hear, and a mind to obey it:—sufficient for their instruction how to meet and purge out every evil, that can appear among them ; though not sufficient for that, for which it never was designed—namely, to silence gainsayers.

But, what if the Apostles told us—in *express* terms—that *every* instance of disobedience to their word, persisted in after admonition and reproof, is to be opposed by that last solemn act of Christian discipline ? Would such a declaration from the mouth of an Apostle content these gentlemen ? I have found that it would not. Such an express declaration we can adduce from the Apostolic word.—In 2 Cor. x. the Apostle Paul, speaking of the “ authority, which the Lord had given him for their edification and not for their destruction,” uses this language (v. 6.)—“ having in a readiness to revenge *ALL* disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled”—when it is fully manifested who among you will obey. Mark the words—*all* disobedience:—as universally comprehensive as language can afford. And again in the same epistle he writes thus : (xiii. 2.) “ I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time ; and being absent, now I write to them which heretofore

have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare."

Now we are left at no loss, to know the nature of that threatened Apostolic vengeance, of which *all disobedience* to their word is expressly declared to be the object. We find that it was nothing like the infliction of temporal pains and penalties;—nothing like putting the offender *into a Bishop's-court*. Speaking of Hymenæus and Alexander, (1 Tim. i. 20.) the same Apostle uses this language:—"whom I have *delivered unto Satan*, that they may learn not to blaspheme." Well: is a Church of Christ without sufficient warrant from the word, to proceed to that act; for want of the *personal presence* of an Apostle? No. Let us hear his language to the Corinthian Church: (1 Cor. v. 3—5.) "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in Spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed; in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to *deliver such an one unto Satan* for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." And in the last verse of the chapter the act of discipline, which the Church was enjoined to employ, is thus explained:—"therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Thus, we are informed of the nature of the Apostolic vengeance:—we are informed, that the Churches were commanded to execute it in the absence of the Apostles, just as if they were present:—and we are as expressly informed, that it was to be executed against *all disobedience* to the Apostolic word. To that *word*,—and not to their persons as men, is the divine authority annexed of Him, in whose name the solemn step is taken. HE is *with them*, and their word is with the Churches of the saints, *to the end of the world*. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." (Rev. ii. 29.)

Though I have by no means exhausted the subject, yet I think I have said enough to present the scriptural view of it to your mind: and this letter is of quite sufficient length. Even if I had room to spare, I should decline the discussion of the particular precepts, about the consideration of which you seem to be engaged, till I ascertain your sentiments upon what I have offered. I think it a kind of profanation of the word, to agitate questions about this and that command in it with those, who—in maintaining the system of popular forbearance—invade the sanctity of the whole.—I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Prov. xiv. 9.—Brief remarks on Rom. xiv. and 1 Cor. viii. and x.—The Apostolic command in 2 Thess. iii. 6. and 14.—Discipline of a Christian Church.—Universality of the rule given in Gal. vi. 1.—MERCY.—But one ground for removing offenders from a Church of Christ.—Matt. vii. 11.

AND so, my dear sir, you have actually renounced your religious confederacy with abhorrence; and quitted your late confederates. I do indeed rejoice to hear it: and I view in it, with cheerful hope,—not any thing good in yourself,—but the goodness, and mercy, and power of HIM, who alone is glorious, glorifying his own name.

And you are at present sitting solitary, like a pelican in the wilderness. That is far better than sitting in the assembly of the wicked,—of those who “make a mock at sin.” According to the general perversion of scripture current in the world, the *fools* that *make a mock at sin* (Prov. xiv. 9.) are supposed to be only—the jolly, dissolute, irreligious folks around us: but I trust you begin to see the character in the most grave, religious, and devout of the world. These indeed go a step beyond the others. The laughing swearing drunkard makes light indeed of his drunkenness and profaneness, but will admit that they are *wrong* things. The serious conscientious religionists of the world, not only make light of their rejection of the word of the LORD, but zealously maintain the excellence and propriety of all the ungodly ways in which they walk, and of the unrighteous thoughts in which they exalt themselves against God. But indeed, my dear sir, viewing aright that and every other character given of the fool in Scripture, we shall see in it *our own*,—the character of the *flesh* in every man: and shall be led only the more attentively and thankfully to hearken to that divine voice of mercy and of wisdom, which speaketh to us in the word. We shall then understand a little of what is meant by these declarations—“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the *simple*.” (Ps. xix. 7.) “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of *wisdom*.” (Ps. cxi. 10.) “The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the *simple*.” (Ps. cxix. 130.)—How marvellous is the *grace*, that “reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Christ Jesus,” where “sin hath reigned unto death.” (Rom. v. 21.) And how does the glory of that work of the LORD stain the pride of all human glorying,—of all that we naturally look at in ourselves as innocent or excellent!

But you tell me, you expect that one or two more will shortly take the same step; as they acknowledge and contend for all the same principles, on which you have acted. Perhaps they may. Perhaps the same mercy, which I trust has led you, may yet be displayed in others of the connection. But I confess, my friend, that I should by no means have felt the same satisfaction about you, which your letter has conveyed to me, if I had heard that you were only acknowledging and contending for these principles, but not acting in obedience to them.

Some, whom you have left behind you, are contending against the fundamental principles, on which their antichristian confederacy is formed; but still remain outwardly associated with it. Strange inconsistency! if any inconsistency of wickedness in man were strange. I have often seen such things; and I used formerly to be more sanguine, than I am now, in my expectations of the result. I now see in them only a *struggle* between the ungodliness of the flesh and the word of the LORD. Which shall ultimately appear to prevail in the case of any individual, time will discover, and the sovereign purpose of JEHOVAH shall decide.

I am not surprised to hear of the manner, in which your last attempt at their *Church-meeting* to call their attention to scripture was scouted; or at the peculiar zeal of their *Minister* in putting it down. All this was only to be expected. And so it seems that you have been long dissatisfied with the doctrine which he preaches; and that he is no less dissatisfied with your avowed sentiments upon the truth of the Gospel:—and you begin to find that he does not believe, and to stand in great doubt about many others in the body. Why, you seem likely to be soon as *uncharitable*—as a Christian. I am very serious, though I smile. But mark, my dear sir, how these fundamental differences—on the very gospel of Christ—were insidiously covered up or compromised, under that tolerating system, the wickedness of which you now seem to discern.

I am pleased at your appearing to enter so fully into the distinction, stated in the pamphlet, between the popular application of the term—“*weak brethren*”—and its scriptural import in Rom. xiv. Indeed the distinction is a pretty broad one, between not scrupling to disobey the commandments of God, and scrupling to do what may lawfully be done by those who see its lawfulness. But it may be important to observe the *origin* of that difference of practice, in the Church at Rome, to which the Apostle refers in this so much perverted passage. Did it not evidently arise from the difference in the component parts of that Church—Jewish and Gentile converts? the former living according to the law of Moses, which had been divinely established, and the complete abrogation of which to them had not yet been divinely promulgated;—(as it seems not to have been generally till the epistle to the Hebrews was written)—the latter never under that law, and plainly instructed—(as in the letter to the Galatian Churches)—that any attempt in them to pass under it would be equivalent to a renunciation of Christ.

The passage in 1 Cor. viii. and x. has been often unwarrantably confounded with the former; and I believe is so in one of the pamphlets which I sent you*. But it relates to quite another subject: and the instructions given there by the Apostle left no room for any continued difference of practice in the Church. For the right understanding of the 8th chapter, it is needful to observe that the Apostle manifestly refers to a communication which he had received from the Church, or some of the Church, upon the subject which he treats; and appears to quote in the 1st, 4th, and 8th verses the language and arguments of that letter, for the purpose of answering them;

* Supposed to refer to last sentence of p. 228.—ED.

shewing the *knowledge*, of which they boasted, to be spurious, as opposed to lowliness and love. With the same reference to *their* language and high-minded sentiments, he appears to use the term—*weak brother*—in that chapter, as *weak* according to their estimation of him, in comparison of themselves.—But it is with great truth you observe, that—even if you were not able otherwise to expose the perverted application of such passages current in the religious world,—yet the decided ungodliness of the object, in support of which arguments are derived from them, ought to be sufficient to expose their perversion of the word to the view of every disciple. And indeed the subtlety of adversaries is so great, that it is very important for Christians—“wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil” (Rom. xvi. 19.)—to be established in this principle; and to bring all things to the test of the plain and certain truths of Scripture,—without thinking it necessary to pursue gainsayers into the labyrinths of their wicked sophistry, in which we might ourselves be bewildered.

I smile at the account you give me of the language and arguments of your opponents, upon the precept in 2 Thes. iii. 6 and 14. they are so like what I have been long accustomed to hear. I have found them forward in directing all their batteries against this precept, under a vain idea that—if they could but overturn the plain import of this—they would succeed in removing the only ground on which our practice rests, and on which we oppose their ungodly tolerance of continued disobedience to the commandments of the Lord. And it must be owned, that could they prove—what they never can—that the obstinate idler, persisting in his sin—in opposition to the repeated testimony and instruction of the Apostles, and in opposition to the admonition of the Church pressing upon his attention the Apostolic word,—was yet to be retained in the fellowship of the body;—they might then with perfect consistency infer, that no instance of rejection of that word (either in its truth or its precepts) was incompatible with the offender’s continuance in a Christian Church. But greatly do they mistake, who conceive that, if that precept in 2 Thes. had not come down to us, there is not abundance in all the rest of the Apostolic writings to support our practice, and to expose the wickedness of theirs. Indeed I should not think, that the man, who professed agreement with us in—what they so unjustly call—our *non-forbearance*, discerned the real scriptural grounds of the matter; if he supposed it to rest on that particular passage, or any *one* other.

However, the wicked inconsistency of the adversaries is in one point of view very strikingly manifested, in their interpretation of this precept. They commonly intimate, that the divine precepts, on which alone they would *agree to differ*, are only those which are supposed extraordinarily *obscure*, or *doubtful* in their meaning. Can they pretend to say, that the Apostle’s injunction against leading an idle life, his command to Christians “quietly to work and eat their own bread,” is of this character? Can they pretend to say that the idler among the Thessalonians—after both the Apostolic letters in which the evil is marked—could plead ignorance of Paul’s meaning

in extenuation of his sin? No: even they will not say this. Yet they say, that when the Apostle in his second letter, in reference to that idler, solemnly enjoins the Church to *withdraw* from him,—to *note* him and have *no company* with him,—Paul did not by any means intend that they should put him away from among them,—should remove him from their fellowship; but only that they should not associate with him in some kind of *civil* society, or should not idle with him. So then, after all this plausible talk about *ignorance*, and not being *able* to see the *meaning* of divine precepts, they would establish that a man is to be kept in the Christian fellowship of a Christian Church, who knowingly persists in the violation of an Apostolic precept, the meaning of which he avowedly understands, while he rejects its divine authority.

I have known some of them—annoyed by this exposure of the cloven foot—recede from their former ground, and gravely profess to admit that, if the idler at Thessalonica *ultimately* persisted in his sin—(after all that kind of *civil excommunication* which they contend for as the thing enjoined, and after all the admonition of his brethren)—‘then he certainly could not be kept in the fellowship; for then he would forfeit all the Christian *confidence* of his Christian brethren;—he would be proved a wicked man.’ They forget however to explain, what they mean by *ultimately*;—to say how many years or months he might persist in his sin, and reject all admonition, before the legitimate period of his removal could arrive. They forget also to say, what precepts of the word they are, which a professed disciple may continue to disobey *all his life*—in opposition to all admonition and instruction of the word—*without forfeiting* the Christian *confidence* of his brethren: for certainly, in many such instances, they never think of removing the offender during all his life.

As to that *extraordinary* wickedness in the idler’s sin, to the supposition of which—in their varied evasions and subterfuges—they sometimes have recourse as the ground of his *ultimate* removal; and by which *extraordinary wickedness* they mean little else than *irreligion*,—something opposite to that devout and demure and sober character which is the *one thing needful* in their view;—I really think it very conceivable that the obstinate idler at Thessalonica should have been one of the most religious, devout, and sober characters in the whole body,—one of even extraordinary religious zeal; and that he had as much of Scripture to quote and misapply in defence of his sin,—(such as the words of Christ—“labour not for the meat that perisheth,” &c.)—as any of them can bring forward in defence of theirs. And now after all, if he were such a character—(which might be proved not only conceivable but highly probable)—could these *good* men bring themselves even ultimately to put away from among them so *good* a man—for his *mistake*? They should reconsider it.

But why are these men so fond of referring to the list of characters given in 1 Cor. v. 11.—as the persons, towards whom they would not exercise their *forbearance*? Is it in subjection of mind to the word of the Lord in that passage, commanding the Apostolic vengeance to be executed against such, when they appear in a Church of Christ? No, no: if it were, they would equally bow to the authority

of the word, directing the same discipline against "*all disobedience.*" But most of the evils—there enumerated—are of that *disreputable* class, the appearance of which in their society would affect its character in the eyes of men. Often therefore in such cases, they are (as I before intimated) in as unscriptural a hurry to get rid of such offenders, as they are unscripturally anxious to retain others.

For here, my dear sir, let me remark, that whatever be the evil which appears in a Church of Christ,—(and I know not any evil that may not appear)—the brethren are never warranted by the word to meet it—in the first instance—by the removal of the offender. And indeed this is a rule of the house of God as hateful, as any other, to worldly religionists, and as opposed to the fleshly principles on which their religion proceeds;—principles which lead them to admire something in themselves or others, and to seek the admiration of surrounding observers.

In that great law of Christian discipline, given us in Matt. xviii. 15—17. and forming a rule and precedent applicable to all cases,—(bating the enjoined privacy of the two first stages there, arising from the personal nature of the offence)—we have seen the patient labour of love directed to be employed—in the first instance—for recalling the fallen brother to a mind according with the truth. We have seen, that it is not till after his rejection of repeated admonition—the admonition of the word ultimately presented to him by the Church,—that he can lawfully be removed from among them.—We find the same thing enjoined in Tit. iii. 10.—“a man that is an heretic, *after the first and second admonition*, reject.”—And I add, that the same thing is enjoined in the case of the idler at Thessalonica—(2 Thess. iii. 15.)—“If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but *admonish* him as a brother.” A false view of the latter words is given in the pamphlet which I sent you; as if they called the Church to pursue him with admonition *after* his exclusion from the body. This idea is very idle, and worse than idle. I have to take unqualified shame to myself for having put it forward. I am now satisfied, that we must understand the *previous* admonition of the offender by the Church, which the Apostle cautions them not to omit, and—in employing it—to employ it with all that tenderness of affectionate concern, and all that hope of its success, which harmonize with the principles of the truth.—Ah! I know not any thing, which more *tries* a Church—of what materials it is composed,—in what mind its members walk,—than a case of Discipline. [See Note, p. 231.]

But, blessed be God! we are not left to infer the *universality* of the rule, of which I speak, from those instances in which it is given. We have an express injunction on the subject, comprehending every possible case; though the sense of the passage has been sadly beclouded by the strange version of our translators. The Apostle thus addresses the Galatian Churches:—“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault”—or, as it should be rendered—“if a man be *taken in any transgression*, ye that are spiritual”—standing in the truth—“restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself,

lest thou also be tempted." The common version of this passage has indeed been mischievously calculated to conceal its blessed import; while you will immediately see, by a reference to the original, that it is utterly unwarranted. The expression—*fault*—conveys to general readers the idea of some venial peccadillo; and is supposed to countenance all that distinction between *trivial* offences and *heinous* wickedness, in which the ungodliness of man sports itself: while the expression—*overtaken*—encourages them to run similar distinctions between the evil, which is fallen into by a kind of *surprise*, and that which is committed with *deliberate* intention or from formed *habit*.

Yet to the mere English reader, if a believer of the truth, the consideration, by which the Apostle enforces the gracious command, abundantly establishes its unlimited universality:—"considering *thyself*, lest thou also be tempted." To the principles of those, who suppose what they call—*the work of grace*—to consist in a progressive improvement of their hearts and natures, it is indeed very suitable to restrict the precept—enforced by such a consideration—to certain slight infirmities, of which perhaps in their humility they will modestly own themselves still capable. But the man, who is kept standing "in the true grace of God," (1 Pet. v. 12.) will scarcely mark any enormity of human wickedness, to which the argument of the Apostle is not alike applicable. And loving that mercy, by which alone he lives, he will acknowledge its divine stamp on the gracious precept, which calls disciples in the first instance—to the merciful effort for *restoring* a fallen brother,—in whatever transgression he may be found;—restoring him by the admonition of that word, which is profitable "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. iii. 16.)

Yes; and if the offender *hear the Church*, and appear restored to a mind accordant with the truth, the Church—standing in the same mind—will confirm their love toward him, and rejoice over him as a *brother* whom they have *gained*: and this—as I once heard one observe in our meeting, whom at the time I could have gladly pressed to my heart for the remark)—although they should the next day have to accompany their brother to the gallows, for the expiation of his offence against civil society.—"What! and if he commit the same offence again, after his apparent restoration,—is the same dealing of mercy to be again resorted to?" O! yes: and again; and again; yea, "until seventy times seven:"—or, until the pious objectors prove, that *they*—after having fallen, and being restored from their fall by the mercy of God,—are then independent of the Most High for their own standing.

I candidly own to you, my dear sir, that I do look forward with glad expectation to an ultimate and speedy union with you, in which we shall walk together as brethren—"of one heart and of one soul." The very pleasing appearances, afforded to my view in your last, lead me to the expectation. But I am only the more anxious that you should not mistake the principles, which we have learned from the word on this most important topic. And indeed I could no more walk with those who oppose them, than with those who maintain that sage law of discipline, which some have invented, of not

receiving back into their fellowship a man, who has been *twice* removed from it,—whatever be the appearance of scriptural repentance he may exhibit. The central glory of the Gospel is in the *Mercy* which it reveals to *sinner*s, through the *propitiation for sin*: a sacred, glorious, holy Mercy indeed,—greatly to be feared and had in reverence,—the Mercy of “the only true God:” but a Mercy, unlimited like all his glories. And any human sentiment, or practice, rises in the believer’s abomination of its ungodliness, in proportion as it invades the glory of that MERCY:—and this, whatever be “the deceivableness of unrighteousness,” in which it is attired. I hope I shall not find you, on this subject, savouring the things that be of men, rather than the things that be of God: though I am sure the *forbearing* connexion, which you have lately renounced, would see—in the principles I have here avowed—what they hate as cordially, as they hate my *non-forbearance*. I know the sagacious argument, by which some, who are too wise for the wisdom of God, oppose what I have offered. But I stop not to examine them; as I wish you to be decided by the one express command upon the subject, which I have adduced.

And now I proceed to remark—that whatever be the offence, on which the discipline of a Christian Church commences,—however various the evils in which it originates,—they all—(whenever it comes to the last act of discipline, the removal of the offender)—ultimately merge in One,—his *refusal to hear the word of the Lord laid before him by the Church*. It is not till he “will not hear the Church,” that he is to be unto them “as an heathen man and a publican.” And if the evil be not purged out by the admonition of the word, the commenced discipline cannot scripturally terminate—but in the Church *putting away from among them that wicked person*, who rejects the word.

But I add, that the same character of Mercy marks this last solemn act, when scripturally taken, which pervades all the former dealing for the restoration of the fallen brother. It is marked by mercy to the body, that the old leaven may be purged out, “a little of which leavens the whole lump.” But it is marked by mercy also to the person, who is the immediate object of the discipline;—as the only and most solemn testimony that remains against his sin. How wisely does the Apostle suggest that consideration to the Corinthian Church, in the case of the incestuous person!—“for the destruction of the flesh, *that the spirit may be saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus.” And again, in the case of the idler in the Thessalonian Church—“*that he may be ashamed*.” And in the case of Hymenæus and Alexander—“*that they may learn not to blaspheme*.” And in the first of these instances, do we not see the blessing of the God of all mercy laid upon his own merciful appointment? Do we not see that incestuous person restored to the love and confidence and joy of his brethren? (2 Cor. ii.)

To close my remarks on this important subject, we may observe, that a person put away from a Church of Christ, according to his word, is—to the last—presented to the body in a view different from those of the world, who have never been connected with it. With

the latter, we are left at liberty to engage freely in social intercourse, according to our Christian discretion. But with the former, we are explicitly debarred from this needless intercourse—even in civil society. The command is express—"with such an one—no—not to eat." (1 Cor. v. 11.) A gracious prohibition; calculated at once to keep alive on our own minds the awfulness of his case, and to present it consistently before his own view. Some have urged, against this part of the Apostolic direction, a supposed incompatibility with the duties, annexed to various relations and situations in life. But if we have a mind, not to cavil against the word, but to be instructed by it,—we may be certain that with such duties indeed the precept was not designed to interfere. And it is therefore obvious to conclude, that the civil intercourse forbidden extends only to that, which would be needlessly sought on our side, and would intimate—(what it then must spring from)—some such complacency or satisfaction in the character, as would be inconsistent with our solemn sense of his evil, and merciful aim to impress it on himself.

Whenever a Church of Christ proceeds to put away from among them any one "called a brother," as a *wicked person*; it is at most but an ungodly imitation of the exterior of Christian discipline, if the solemn act be not performed in the mind of the TRUTH;—in that mind, which will lead all to view in that *wicked* person an exemplification of *their own* character,—not of what it *was*, but of what it *is*. How abasing to our pride is that language, in which disciples were addressed by Him who knew what is in man! "If ye then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts unto your children," &c. (Matt. vii. 11.) It was to his own disciples he addressed the words: and the term here rendered—*evil*—is the self-same term, which in 1 Cor. v. 13. is translated *wicked*. This may be a hard saying to those, who "trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others." (Luke xviii. 9.) But it is no harder than the Apostle's declaration about himself: (Rom. vii. 18.) "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, *dwelleth* no good thing." Well may such love the Mercy, that "rejoiceth against judgment." (James ii. 13.)

I have been led in this letter to enlarge so much on topics connected with my last, that I must again reserve for a future occasion the other subjects, to which you invite me. You seem impatient that we should arrive at *Baptism*; and intimate that you cannot conceive why I am not baptized, asserting as I do the divine obligation on disciples of returning fully to the course of the Apostolic Christians. But have patience with me, my good friend; and entertain no apprehensions that I mean to decline that subject. I hope soon to find you of one mind with me there; as you appear to be on so many other matters.

I remain, with affectionate interest,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

Ferment occasioned by Divine Truth.—Dishonest arts of its adversaries.—Cautions suggested to its friends in maintaining the controversy.—Prayer.—Future prospects of the Church on earth.—Distinguished from the popular expectations of a *flourishing* Christianity.—The full return of disciples to Apostolic Christianity included in the promised consumption of the man of sin.—The Author of that consumption; its instrument, and its tendency.—The salutation with a kiss of Charity.—The early fathers of no authority in the matter.—Oaths.—Literal, figurative, and spiritual meanings of scripture; popular abuse of these phrases.

COPIES OF LETTERS REFERRED TO IN THE PRECEDING.

- A. Letter to the Rev. Mr. * * from * *.
- B. Letter from the Church assembling in Stafford Street, Dublin, to the sister Churches, on the salutation with a kiss of charity.
- C. Letter from ditto to ditto, on Christ's prohibition against swearing.
- D. Letter to * * on the mode of observing the salutation.
- E. Letter of admonition to * * on the Baptist principles.

YOUR letter, my dear friend, affords me increased satisfaction. I have not the same backwardness in avowing this to yourself, which some would feel: for I think you understand, that I do not mean to express the slightest good opinion of yourself. Where I see appearances of the Lord's mercy teaching a fellow-sinner, why should I be afraid to speak well of *his* work?—No doubt, it is always needful to bear in mind the words of Christ to some, in whom there were at the time very pleasing appearances:—"If ye *continue in my word*, then are ye my disciples indeed"—(John viii. 31.)—and to remember, that it is only *his* mercy can maintain and finish that work, which his mercy begins. (2 Thes. i. 11.)

The continued and increasing ferment, which you describe in the religious world of your neighbourhood,—and the increasing manifestation of various religious characters, since you have been led to speak a more clear and decisive language for the truth,—is only what I have long and often witnessed; and what I view as a symptom indicating, that some more probably are to be brought out of that *religious world* around you;—the worst part of that world, the whole of which "lieth in the wicked one." (1 John v. 19.) I trust you will see more and more of the import of those words of the Prince of Peace,—“I am come to send fire on the earth.” (Luke xii. 49.) “Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” (Matt. x. 34.) How is the religious peace of a religious neighbourhood disturbed, when that despised *truth* of GOD—in which He reveals his glory, and which is the sword of his Spirit, begins to break in upon the mind of one and another poor sinner! Then appears the struggle between “the power of darkness,” and the Light that has come into the world. Where all had been at ease, in amicable brotherhood of Antichristian lies—however diversified;—all are roused, all are in arms against—what is viewed as a common enemy to all that is good, and excellent,

and glorious in men: and (as has been observed most truly) the very hubbub raised *against* it is overruled into the occasion of drawing the attention of others to the object, which is so generally gainsayed and opposed.

In such circumstances, I sometimes think of the language of the LORD, addressed to Pharaoh of old, as if it were now addressed to Antichrist:—"Let my people go, that they may serve me. Else if thou refuse to let them go, I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people." (Ex. ix. 13, 14.) And as it was in the case of Pharaoh, the very opposition made by "the man of sin" eventually results in the fuller exposure of his ungodliness, renders his kingdom more "full of darkness" and dismay, (Rev. xvi. 10.) and more clearly manifests the glory of the LORD. Indeed I have sometimes known the *wisest* of Antichrist's servants—like those of Pharaoh—very anxious to get rid of those, who were for going, as *quickly* and *quietly* as possible.

You complain of the insidiousness of some of your bitterest opposers, in holding a plausible language to yourself—as if they professed the same faith with you, and meant substantially the same thing that you contend for; while they yet manifestly regard your sentiments with deep-rooted antipathy, and are industrious in raising a general outcry against them, even by the falsest misrepresentations. This is no new thing; and when you are longer in the Christian warfare, will excite neither surprise nor complaint. I send you the copy of a letter, (A.) which I happen to have written long ago to a very pious *minister* on this very subject. The writer was at that time himself a Clergyman; though he soon after renounced the character. I mention this, only that in reading it you may make the necessary allowance for some of his language.

Suffer me to suggest to you one or two cautions, that may be needful in your present situation. You seem much engaged in argument with your former religious associates and others. I would by no means repress your ardour in the vindication of truth; if you be but kept maintaining the contest in the spirit of the truth, and regulated by its wisdom. By and by, if the Lord raise up a few to walk with you in it according to the Scripture, there will be a constant public testimony—and exhibition—of the kingdom of Christ, so annoying to the religious folks around you, and so despicable in their eyes, that you will probably find it hard to gain the ear of,—even of those who are now most forward to encounter you. But in the interim, it will be your wisdom to repel many discussions, which they will attempt to obtrude. Why should you ever willingly open your lips on the laws of Christ's kingdom, to those who do not confess the unadulterated Gospel,—who do not acknowledge the only true God and our Lord Jesus Christ? Such will often be eager to represent, that the only difference between you and them is about some *trifling* matters, of antiquated or doubtful practice; and to agitate these points with you. I do not deny, that you may sometimes be forced to correct their mis-statements, or briefly to expose the ungodliness of their arguments, even on these topics. But aim immediately at dismissing them, and turning the subject to that one

glorious TRUTH, which they especially wish to keep out of view, and to confound with their Antichristian lies.

From some circumstances also which you communicate, I apprehend that you need to be much on your guard against those few, who hold the fairest language of agreement with you on the faith of Christ; but who seem—like many professors that I have known—to treat the subject, as affording to the human mind curious and subtle topics of metaphysical speculation. You seem, through mercy, to see something of the glory of the Gospel, as bringing a sinner to the living God, and setting his feet in the way of righteousness and peace and eternal life. But what a *profanation* is it of the truth, when those who *talk* about it—instead of “speaking of the glory of HIS kingdom and talking of HIS power,”—instead of “uttering the memory of HIS great goodness, and singing of HIS righteousness,” (Ps. cxlv. 11.)—pervert it into a theme for discussions of philosophical subtlety, and inquiries of lofty speculation. The wickedness of your own heart will be prompt enough to participate in their evil. But remember the Apostle’s admonition, (2 Tim. ii. 23.) “Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.” Read also the following verses of that chapter, with Tit. iii. 2, 3. and you will see most weighty cautions, of which from the pride and naughtiness of our hearts we evermore have need:—while they are indeed quite mistaken and perverted by those, who see in them something inconsistent with the most steadfast and plain testimony against their ungodliness.

And in all the controversies that seem to engage you, forget not, my dear sir, forget not WHOSE is the *kingdom* and the *power*, as well as all the *glory*. The real remembrance of that will lead you to be more engaged in *prayer*, than in *argument*;—in prayer that HE may “glorify his Name;” that HE may cause it to be *hallowed*. Whenever HE clothes that truth of the Gospel, which reveals his holy Name, with the same power to his people, with which he clothed it of old; that will put an end to all their controversies with each other; that alone will cause them to walk, as disciples did of old,—“of one heart and of one soul”—“in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the holy Spirit.”

But shall that day ever return upon earth, when all believers of the *one* Gospel shall every where walk together in *one* way, even as they did in the Apostolic age? To that question I answer confidently—YES. And I am convinced, that it is one of the devices of Satan at this day, to persuade disciples themselves that such an expectation is groundless and delusive,—by confounding it with the really delusive expectations of popular religionists, about some unscriptural *flourishing* of Christianity upon earth.

But here I must candidly observe to you, that a writer who takes the signature of AMICUS, remarks that I do not myself seem “*fully* awake from this dream” of the popular religionists. To what principle of divine truth,—or from what dream of Antichristian lies,—I am *fully* awake, would ill become me to say. But is it a *dream*, to expect what the God of truth has promised in his word? Or did Christianity, in the days of the Apostles, exhibit any thing like—

what the religious world dream of, and hanker after, in their expectations of a *flourishing* kingdom of Christ—previous to his second coming? Far from it. The Christians were then a despised “sect, every where spoken against;”—“a little flock—dwelling solitarily, and not reckoned among the nations:”—the glory of the Lord indeed resting upon them; but that, the glory of “Him whom *man despiseth*.” (Isa. xlix. 7.)—Ah! the religious world have little stomach for *such* a flourishing of Christianity, as was in that day of the Lord’s power. The flourishing of religion, which they look for, is as essentially different in kind from that, as it is in their eye superior in degree, and more desirable to their carnal taste:—a flourishing, in which supposed Christians shall be kept in countenance by the number and respectability of their religious associates!—in which they shall have no more to do with the reproach and offence of the cross; and shall amicably make a common cause against the few *irreligious*—(if any should remain)—by a liberal compromise of their differences,—of the *various* Antichristian lies current under the garb of evangelical phraseology. There is indeed abundance of such so-called Christianity, abundantly flourishing in the present day. And how much more and wider it may be allowed to flourish, it becomes not me to decide.

But is that to be deceitfully confounded with the Apostolic Christianity, of which I speak? Or is the expectation of that to be confounded with the expectation, which I avow, that the few disciples of Christ shall yet—by the mercy of the Lord—be *brought back* to that recorded course of the apostolic Christians, from which they have so generally for ages been turned aside? And by what have they been turned aside, but by “the man of sin?” May not the subjects of the King of Zion,—as they contemplate each of “the desolations of many generations” in his sanctuary,—exclaim—“An adversary hath done this?” But let them remember the words—“*whom the LORD shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming.*” (2 Thes. ii. 8.) They are the words of Him, whose word “liveth and abideth for ever;” (1 Pet. i. 23.) and with whom “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (2 Pet. iii. 8.)

That predicted consumption of “the man of sin” is indeed the work of the Lord? and the work which He is progressively accomplishing “by the spirit of his mouth,”—by that *word* which he “hath magnified above all his name.” (Ps. cxxxviii. 2.) And as his mercy effects it in any of his people, it becomes them—instead of putting down with a sneer the idea of its wider and further accomplishment,—to be engaged with Daniel (ix.) in “confessing their sin and the sin of their people” before the Lord; and pleading with him, “to whom belong mercies and forgivenesses,” that he would “cause his face to shine upon his sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord’s sake.”—“PRAY for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee.” (Ps. cxxii. 6.) “Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.” (Zech. x. i.) “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles, that can cause rain?

or *can the heavens give showers?* Art not thou he, O LORD our God? Therefore we will wait upon thee:"—upon thee, "from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted." Jer. xiv. 22. Is. xxxi. 6.)

None will be thus engaged, but those who see and mourn over the desolations which the man of sin has occasioned: who see how the LORD's flock have been "scattered in the cloudy and dark day,"—"wandering through all the mountains and upon every high hill"—the various *high places* in which they have corrupted their ways;—"eating that which their false shepherds have trodden with their feet, and drinking that which they have fouled with their feet"—by their lying comments adulterating the pure word of God. (Ezek. xxxiv.) None will be thus engaged, but those who see—in all these Antichristian departures from primitive Christianity—the *common ungodliness of man*,—of themselves and of all the Israel of God,—“profaning the holiness of the LORD.” (Mat. ii. 11.) None also, but those who see that HE alone can heal all the backslidings of his people, that HE alone can “restore to them the years which the cankerworm hath eaten:” (Joel ii. 25.)—and who see the sovereign purpose of his mercy declared, in that word which pronounces, that “the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth” the adversary, “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God.” None finally, but those who—believing that faithful declaration—*expect its full accomplishment*; and overlook all apparent impossibilities in the way, under the solemn consideration suggested by the prophet—(Zech. viii. 6.) “Thus saith the LORD, If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.”

What striking words are those sent to the house of Jacob by the prophet Isaiah! (xlvi. 4.) “Because I *knew* that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning *declared* it to thee; before it came to pass, I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol hath done them; and my graven image and my molten image hath commanded them.”—They quite mistake my view of the promised consumption of the man of sin, who look for it from any supposed improvement or change in the character or dispositions of *man*. But surely those who see in the Church of the living God—*his* building, in which he displays *his* sole glory,—that people whom he hath formed for himself, that they should shew forth *his* praise,—may suitably “sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” (Ez. ix. 4.) And they, in pleading the Lord's gracious and faithful promise, do but put up that prayer, which becomes his children—“Father! glorify thy Name:” Father! “forgive us our trespasses—and deliver us from evil.”

It is indeed very certain, that whatever has a real tendency to divert the believer's mind from “looking unto Jesus,”—to divert it from the one glorious truth of his Gospel, as the only unchangeable and sufficient spring of all a sinner's hope,—or from the prospect of his second coming in his glory, as the only period when his people “shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;”—that thing—whatever mask it wears—is evil, is ungodly. But in truth,

the expectation, which I avow, has no such tendency; but the reverse. How it may be abused, or perverted, by unbelieving men, is quite another matter. There is nothing, however divinely true and glorious, which the mind of man will not pervert. And greatly do they mistake that which I look for, who conceive that it will present the Churches of the saints in any colours more attractive to the world; or that it will change that standing maxim of Christ's kingdom upon earth—"strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Mat. vii. 14.) His people will be in every age "a little flock." And the more they are—by the power of his truth—gathered from among the heathen whose works they have been learning,—the more he purifies them by his word from all their uncleannesses, and "purges them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, —as in the days of old, and as in former years," (Mal. iii. 3, 4.)—the more he revives that work which he wrought gloriously in the Apostolic days;—so much the more will they be a people hated and despised by all men—for the Son of man's sake; and needing for their comfort all that prospect of the glory that shall be revealed at his second coming—which cheered the hearts of the first disciples.

It is too plain what the effect has been—on many professors—of their discarding the idea of a *full return* to the course of the Apostolic Christians, as impracticable and visionary. "Setting their abominations in the house, which is called by the name of the Lord, to pollute it,"—their language is as that of Israel of old—"we are delivered to do all these abominations." (Jer. vii. 10, 30.) It is plain also, that the duty of *each* believer in this respect depends not on the obedience of *others*. The only consistent language of each, for himself, is that of Joshua:—"as for me, and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Josh. xxiv. 15.) "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever." (Mic. iv. 5.)

But this interesting subject has led me to digress too long from the subjects of your letter. To them I now return.—You tell me, my dear sir, that you are now fully agreed with us on the question of the *salutation*; and strongly suspect that we are right, in our view of the prohibition against all *oaths*. I send you copies of two letters on these topics, (B. and C.) which we had occasion to address to the sister-churches in the country, at the time when our own views were at length corrected on them. You will find more stated in them, in the way of argument, than ought to be necessary for deciding the mind of a disciple. But in the course of the discussions, which the introduction of each topic originated among us, there was a great display indeed of the wicked ingenuity of our hearts—in finding out various pretexts for evading obedience to the plain word of the Most High; and we thought it expedient briefly to expose the fallacy and ungodliness of these to our country brethren.

If disciples were walking more as they ought, in the clear light and under the powerful influence of that truth, which displays the glory of God;—in short, if they "had faith as a grain of mustard-seed,"—they would be found more "doing all things without murmur-

ings and disputings,"—submitting themselves as little children to the simple authority of his word. And as to those very painful discussions, which these subjects occasioned in our body for a time, it is important to observe, that they had their origin in our former *common disobedience* to the precepts; and that whenever *discussion* and *debate* appear in a church of Christ, though they may be unavoidable for a time,—they always intimate the existence of a most serious evil.

But let me own to you, my friend, that although you profess agreement with us on the *salutation*, I am yet considerably jealous of your reference to *Justin Martyr's Apology*, as confirming that our practice in this matter coincides with that of the Apostolic Churches. Early as Justin Martyr lived, and explicit as his testimony is of this observance in the Christian assemblies of his day; yet this would be indeed a poor ground for our now adopting it; and would equally support various departures from the simplicity of the Apostolic word. If that word enjoin not the thing, we are sinfully adding to the ordinances of the Lord. On the other hand, if that be the thing enjoined in the Apostolic precept, we need not any confirmation of its authority from *any man's* testimony: and they, who even professedly acknowledge the preceptive character of the passages, and the observation of a practice in obedience to them—but different from what we observe,—really disobey the precept. Do we need any of the *early fathers* to tell us the meaning of such words, as "salute one another with an holy kiss?" or to convince us, that the occasional salutation of some brethren—in circumstances which may or may not occur—cannot meet the import of words, in which the mutual salutation of "*all the brethren*" is expressly enjoined upon a Christian Church? 1 Thess. v. 26.

You mention a cavil, which you have heard from some adversaries, against our mode of practising the prescribed salutation, as if—after all our professed subjection to the precept—the interchange of that token of love amongst us were not as *universal*, and as *indiscriminate*, as the word enjoins. It is not new to me: and though you profess to see no weight in the objection, yet I have an unpleasant suspicion that your judgment may there also be in some degree determined by that same testimony of *Justin Martyr*, concerning the practice of the Churches in his day. I should in general decline the subject altogether with those objectors, who bring forward their wise reasons in defence of their own disobedience, by an attempt at *recriminating* upon us. But with you, as I cherish the hope that you are mercifully led to look at the precept with the eye of a disciple,—and as the objection to our practice has come in your way,—I think it safer to meet it: and as I happen to have among my papers a letter (D.) on the very subject, I send you a copy of it. It was addressed some years ago to a person then in connexion with us in another country, whose mind appeared perplexed and uneasy on the matter: though the same person has since manifested a mind very different from *scrupulosity* of obedience to the word. Indeed the cavil exposed is much on a level with that other, alluded to in the letter, which would represent the salutation as not universal, unless *each saluted every other*. Upon this it is sufficient to observe, that any indifferent spec-

tator, witnessing our assembly, and afterwards describing the strange things he saw, would certainly in the enumeration of our practices relate—that *we all saluted each other with a kiss*.

In closing my remarks on the subject, a reflexion forces itself on my mind: how *laughable* all this fuss about *such* a divine precept must appear to the wise and religious of the world!—if it should meet their eye. But I hope you are aware, that you must inevitably forfeit all the character you have established for *good sense*, if you would follow the Lord fully.

As to *oaths*, there is very little that I should wish to add to the observations in the paper which I send. But let me say a few words on some passages in your letter. I am glad that you seem sensible of the *worldly* bias influencing your judgment on the question; and apprehensive of its effects. Yet there may be a kind of *perturbed apprehension* there, which would only *entangle* your conscience, and perhaps lead to a precipitate acquiescence with our view. It would be a lamentable thing, to be involved in such trying consequences, as a decision on that side will probably involve you in,—and under the pressure of them not to find the decision of your judgment firmly supported by the word of God. While I caution you, my friend, against such precipitance, you will not confound that with the most prompt and immediate decision of judgment and of conduct, produced by the divine authority of the precept coming home to the believer's mind, in a clear perception of its plain import.

I am satisfied indeed that its import would appear very plain except for its contrariety to all our interests in life, and to the established principles current in the world. Yet such contrariety certainly ought not—of itself—to stagger or surprise any one, acquainted with the nature of Christ's kingdom. If the truth of Christ dwell in you, I am sure it will make you ready “to suffer the loss of all things” for him: and it is in the view of that glorious and soul-satisfying *truth*, and in the *peace* which it brings to the conscience of the sinner who sees it—even under the deepest apprehension of the deceitfulness and incurable ungodliness of his own heart; it is in that view, and in this peace, that I hope you will be given to consider the subject. It is so alone, that any divine precept can be truly considered, or truly obeyed.

Some of your language, about the “*literal* meaning” of this and that precept, leads me to offer to your attention a general remark, which I think it very important that a disciple should bear in mind. I have been long accustomed to the language of Antichrist's active agents, defending all their grossest departures from the principles of Scripture, by referring to one and another precept of the word, which they intimate *no one thinks of obeying*. For that is what they really intimate; though they wrap up their ungodly sentiment under a vague talk about—*literal* and *figurative* and *spiritual* meanings. *Their* character,—as persons altogether destitute of the fear of God or reverence for his sacred word,—is clearly manifested by the arguments of this kind which they employ, and the object for which they employ them. But what does it become a *disciple* to attend to, in considering *any* precept of the word? What? but its *real* meaning;

—the real mind of the Spirit in that precept. When the adversaries therefore raise against us that common clamour,—‘Why, if you hold the obligation of *literally* saluting one another with a kiss—of *literally* swearing not at all,—why do ye not equally hold the obligation of the *literal pedilavium*—of washing one another’s feet in your meeting,—and the obligation of literally going two miles with every man who forces you to go one, &c.?’—we have a ready answer—not to them—(to whom I would make no reply beyond a testimony against their ungodly principles)—but to our own consciences. We see, that if we practised their supposed *pedilavium*, for instance, we should not *really* be obeying the divine precept. We see that it *really means* a much more blessed and important thing;—a blessed lesson to disciples, to be forward to every the *LOWEST service of love* to their brethren: while indeed we own that the *literal* act—of washing a brother’s feet—is included, whenever that is really a *service of love*. So that, in the fear of the Lord, we would acknowledge all the precepts he has given us in the New Testament Scriptures—*all* of them alike—as possessing an unchangeable claim to the obedience of his people. But surely these gentlemen cannot reasonably quarrel with us, for regarding them *in their true meaning*,—not in a false misinterpretation. What the meaning is, in which *they* understand and profess to obey—(if they profess it at all)—these precepts, to our obedience of which they object;—this is a question, to which they are seldom willing to give any distinct answer. Nor should I wish indeed to press *them* upon the point.

I smile at finding, that you have had to encounter the stale objection against us, that we all *lay claim to be Apostles*, in attempting to say what is the meaning of this and that precept of the word. Your reply to it was very just; that the objection is founded in absolute *Scepticism*, and in that profane impeachment of the divine revelation as unintelligible, which—legitimately followed up—would land the objectors either in avowed Deism, or in all the delusions of Popery. But it is well to remark also, that these *modest* objectors—against our decisive maintenance of the divine precepts which we see—are themselves the very persons, who really assume authority superior to the Apostles of Christ. For certainly, in taking upon them to pronounce any of their precepts abrogated, these men do advance that Antichristian claim.

On the prohibition against all oaths, I shall only add, that before you read a line of the paper which I send, I wish you to reconsider the plain language of Christ and his Apostles on the subject; to recollect that the Scriptures are written for plain people;—and to think whether—from the use of the terms—*oath* and *swearing*—in other passages of the word,—you have any particular reason for supposing that the scriptural meaning of them here is different from the meaning of the same words in ordinary language.—Put out of view altogether what you have hinted at—the profaneness and subversion of all moral principle, produced by the nature and multiplicity of our oaths, among the people of this *Christian* country;—to a degree certainly, which would strike with amazement and horror the *heathens* of the old Roman republic. You remark, that there is more gross

perjury committed in our Custom-house in a week, than there was in ancient Rome in a century. That is all very true; and might be worthy the consideration of politicians. But it has nothing to do with the *Christian* consideration of the subject.

This letter is already so long, that I cannot now notice what you say on the question of *Baptism*. Only—I am not displeased at your appearing so sanguine about my becoming a convert to your sentiments. That is but consistent with your own present persuasion of their truth; and with your view of me as a disciple. But I perceive that you are not at all aware of our sentiments on the subject; or of the scriptural grounds on which they rest. I regret that I am unable, at present, to send you two pamphlets which I published on the question, but which are out of print.* However, the real grounds of it lie in a narrow compass; and I send you a brief statement of them in a letter (E.) of admonition, which at one time we had occasion to address to an absent member of our Church. This letter will suggest the leading topics, which I wish you to consider; and I shall perceive by your reply, on what points it may be needful for me to enlarge.

Meanwhile I remain,

Dear sir,

Affectionately yours, &c.

LETTER (A.)

*Copy of a Letter from * * * to the Rev. Mr. * * * : referred to in page 397.*

DEAR SIR,

April, 1804.

I SIT down to undertake the task, which I told you I have intended for some time; and which indolence, selfishness, and various other fleshly principles would rather prompt me to decline. Though I do not say that some of them might not also lead me to the present attempt, or influence me in it, if they were allowed. But I have the testimony of my conscience, that it is in fidelity to my Lord, and in the discharge of what I conceive Christian duty towards you, that I undertake it, and desiring to write as under those eyes which are "as a flame of fire." The views with which I take up my pen must give me a boldness, which—if you enter into them—you will readily pardon. I shall briefly state the occasion of my writing to you.

When you came to this city, I can truly say that from what I had heard of you I was prepared to honour you as a father, to love you as a brother, to rejoice in your settlement here as a witness of the glorious Gospel, and to see with satisfaction those, who had attended on my ministry with little profit, sitting under yours with much. But various circumstances have long been forcing themselves upon my attention, in opposition to the prejudice I had fondly cherished about your character as a believer. I can truly say that I resisted their impression, while I could consistently with my adherence to the rule of Scripture. Contrary to this rule, I hope I

* "Thoughts on Baptism," and "Observations on a Letter," &c.

shall never venture to entertain a favourable judgment of the state of any man; and for some time past I find myself obliged by it to relinquish the favourable judgment I had formed of yours. Lately also, in my intercourse with other disciples, I have found myself obliged to avow that change in my opinion:—I mean, to this degree, that I confess I discern no scriptural reason to acknowledge you as a believer of the truth, and see some things which strongly indicate that you disbelieve and hate it. Ever since I have been called on to declare this opinion of you to others, I have felt uneasy at not communicating it and the grounds of it to yourself. And in doing this I think I act a more Christian part, than if I were to adopt that course which I fear you have in some degree pursued towards me and others; than if, without expressly calling in question the credibility of your profession, I were to propagate dark and general insinuations against your principles, as dangerous and antinomian. If we believe not the same Gospel, I must be as certain that you believe a lie, as I am persuaded that the Gospel which I believe is the truth of God. And according to my views of that Gospel, I arrogate nothing to myself above you in avowing that I believe it; and detract nothing from its glorious joyfulness to you, in avowing my fears that you have not yet believed it.

I touched in our late conversation upon one of the reasons, on which those fears are founded;—the irritation of mind you have manifested against a few disciples of this city, who make the most unambiguous profession of the one and only true Gospel:—an irritation which has repeatedly broken out to the observation of many besides myself, in spite of the retired quietness of the n character. Now, dear sir, every one who knows the truth loves it, and loves those who confess it; and loves them the more, the more unequivocally they confess it, and the more boldly they maintain it against every principle that would obscure its glory, or corrupt its purity.

I am far from adopting that unscriptural idea of calling in question the Christian character of all, who do not confess the same faith *with equal clearness*. But this I am taught from Scripture to expect, that all those who are partakers of that precious faith, though in the weakest degree, will be glad to hear the most explicit confession of it from others, and not be vexed by their testimony. I am thankful for having been in any measure an instrument of bringing its principles into a little more notice and discussion by public controversy:—(I am not backward to use that obnoxious word)—but I have seen with grief many, from whom I had expected better things, exerting themselves to smother that discussion, and even ranging themselves on the contrary side. Among them I have seemed to see you; and it appears clear that you have not been influenced by any of that general aversion to *controversy*, which you have put forward;—(though it is utterly unsuitable to the character and duty of a believer to give way to any such general aversion)—for while you commonly put forward this, you were far from backward in starting and maintaining points of subtle argument, in a very controversial spirit, against the controversy that a few were maintaining for the truth.

In short, it appears too strikingly to me, that the peace you would have is a peace with all evangelical professors, except those who give a plain testimony to the hated and despised truth: a peace with those who are agreed in using evangelical *expressions*, and in throwing a veil over their meaning; but opposition to those who boldly assert their scriptural import:—peace, therefore, with various and numerous classes of respectable religionists, but war with the few faithful but contemned witnesses of Christ.

For these there has ever been a name of reproach, varying according to the various circumstances of the Church: and against these the charge of *antinomianism*, in one form or another, has ever been brought forward by the religious world; who, according to their unbelieving views, must think that the law is made void by faith, and must be jealous for the interest of that morality and piety, which they conceive cannot be promoted by the true Gospel. The present name to which, I think, you have helped to give currency, as a watchword against the disciples, is—*SANDEMANIANISM*: and in the connexion which you have been industrious to state between the Sandemanianism, which you attribute to them, and the decay of practical godliness or experimental religion, you seem to stand forward in reviving the old charge. From the name of Sandemanianism, considered as a name of Christian reproach, I am far from anxious to vindicate myself or others. It is needless to observe, that I attribute no weight to the authority of that writer, except so far as he writes agreeably to the oracles of truth. But I gladly avow that—upon the nearer inspection of his book, to which the outcry raised against him has led me and others—I consider him as superior in most parts of his work to any writer I have met, in clearly stating the Apostolic Gospel, and boldly detecting the various lies of men by which it has been opposed. At the same time, I would be far from sanctioning in a lump all that his book contains; a copy of which indeed I have never yet been master of. But I know that it contains enough to make the memory of the author dear to every lover of the true Gospel, and peculiarly odious to professors of the false.—As to the imputation of antinomianism, I trust the walk of those against whom it has been brought will ever continue to contradict it. But on this point to *put to silence* unbelieving men, is the most that can be expected.

And now, dear sir, you may perhaps be ready to ask—‘What is that Gospel, which this man conceives I do not believe?’ That, *which reveals an adequate and sure foundation of the fullest hope and confidence towards God alike to any sinner whatsoever in the world*; which therefore, only believed by any sinner whatsoever, will give him peace and joy in believing it: that, which all to whom it is sent are commanded to believe; which therefore requires not that a sinner should find any thing good in himself—either naturally possessed or supernaturally communicated—to warrant his believing it and taking the comfort and joy of it: that, which till he believes, he is dead in sin and fighting against God; which none believe but those to whom it is given from above; which *brings nigh* to all that

r'ghteousness, which none ever did or ever will attain unto, who continue to seek and follow after it; and reveals a complete salvation for the lost, which is sure to all those who believe the word that reports it.

Such is the true Gospel, which I fear you have not yet believed; but in place of it have received one which is not the Gospel; one which some sinners might believe ever so firmly and fully, without finding in it any thing immediately joyful for them, without immediately finding that peace with God and righteousness, which every sinner needs:—a false gospel, which requires that a sinner find some good change wrought in him, to make what it reports joyful to him; which verbally annexes justification and salvation to *faith*, but really means by *faith* a variety of good dispositions or inward works. The mere believing of *such* a gospel must certainly be of small importance, in comparison of the means by which a sinner is to *attain* its blessings; and those who hold such for the gospel naturally make little of the *mere believing* of its report,—(for *its* report indeed is in itself nothing joyful to a sinner)—and naturally dwell upon what is in their system mainly important, the previous exercises of mind by which a sinner is to be prepared for their gospel's becoming eventually good news to him, and that final exercise—which they call *faith*—by which he is to become possessed of the blessings that are till then only exhibited at some distance from him. These exercises they may attribute to the Spirit of God, and call *a work of grace*; and the various emotions of mind, through which their disciples are led in such a system, they may describe minutely as *Christian experience*. But they are deceiving themselves and their hearers, and attributing to the Spirit of truth the work of promoting a system of lies, of pouring contempt upon the Lord Jesus and his work.

If you, my dear sir, be (as I much fear you are) among the many who have adopted such a system, I do not wonder that you should be irritated against the true Gospel and its witnesses. They must testify against all that, in which you are rich;—against all that supposed preparatory work of grace, by which you conceive you are warranted to trust in Christ;—against all that body of supposed Christian experience, which has sprung up from such a confidence. Yet, while they must bear this testimony against all that you have viewed with the greatest satisfaction, and the destruction of which—according to your present supposition—would destroy all your hopes;—while they must address you as on a level with the most hardened infidel; they really declare to you and to him the most joyful tidings. And, for my part, I cannot say which would be the greater miracle, their report gaining credence from the most hardened infidel, or from the zealous supporters of such a spurious gospel as I have attempted to describe. But I know that, in either case, it would be only the same miracle of divine power and mercy that has been wrought in me, and in all them that believe.

I have thus candidly stated to you my fears and the grounds of them. If you knew the reluctance with which I admitted those fears, you would be persuaded of the joy which it will afford me to have

them removed. *If* they be unfounded, I have no apprehension that you will be offended at the freedom of this communication. Whatever be the issue of it, I am thankful that I have been so far enabled to discharge—what I have considered—a Christian duty.

And am, dear sir, with affectionate concern,

Your real well-wisher,

J. W.

LETTER (B.)

Copy of a Letter referred to in page 401.

The Church of Christ, assembling in Stafford Street, Dublin, to the Church in _____ wish grace and peace to be multiplied, through the knowledge of God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.

BRETHREN,

As we trust that ye are kept by the divine Mercy holding fast that faith once delivered to the Saints, which discovers the glory of the only true God; so we trust that ye will receive the subject of this letter in that mind, which becomes those who know his name, and therefore reverence his word;—a mind inconsistent with the disregard of his precepts, or the light estimation of any of them.—Brought ourselves through his great mercy to see our past sin, in long overlooking and neglecting a plain precept of his word, we at once desire to take shame to ourselves for such an instance of our natural ungodliness, and solemnly to call the attention of our brethren to that part of the revealed will of God.

We allude to the five passages of the Word,—Rom. xvi. 16. 1 Cor. xvi. 20. 2 Cor. xiii. 12. 1 Thess. v. 26. 1 Pet. v. 14.—in which believers are expressly enjoined to *greet*, or *salute*, one another,—to *salute all the brethren*,—*with an holy kiss*, or *with a kiss of charity*. Injunctions so plain ought to command the immediate obedience of those who are called to “do all things without murmuring and without disputing:” and the tenor of them (like that of every precept enjoining *all* disciples to engage in any *mutual* act) ought to be seen at once pointing to that season, when all are assembled together in one, as the occasion when these precepts are specially to be obeyed, and when Christians are called to this expression of their common brotherhood.

But plain as this now appears to us, the consciousness of our own slowness to learn it, and the knowledge of the various vain janglings by which these precepts have awfully been opposed, lead us to offer some enlarged observations on them to your attention:—though we should rather hope, that in many instances—indeed in all where the mind is led with childlike simplicity to the word of Truth—any detailed arguments will be unnecessary.

Brethren, when these passages of the divine Word engaged our consideration in Dublin about three years ago, and at the time when we seemed almost unanimously about to acknowledge them as designed to regulate the conduct of disciples to the end of the world;

we were turned aside by the introduction of a vain gloss, at which our vain minds too readily caught, as if they all imported only the conveyance of *the writer's salutation* to the Christians whom he addressed, and therefore marked a thing quite *temporary* in its nature. This strange notion so long operated on all our minds, and has been of late so obstinately contended for by some, that we think it expedient briefly to expose its monstrous fallacy.

In the first place then, it is contradicted by the plain import of all the four passages, in which Christians are desired to *greet one another with an holy kiss*: in conformity to which the fifth must undoubtedly be interpreted. However there may have been rare instances, in which the writer of a letter has desired an individual to salute another, or (we can conceive) several others, with a kiss in his name; yet it never has been heard or thought of that he should desire a number of persons to salute *one another* with a kiss in his name. Indeed, that even the former was not customary with the Apostles, appears manifest from all the numerous instances of salutations sent to individuals, and of others to be conveyed by individuals—as Timothy, Titus, Gaius)—in no one of which is the salutation desired to be conveyed *with a kiss*. But the interpretation is absolutely refuted by 1 Cor. xvi. 24. where the Apostle expressly sends his own love to all the brethren *after* having enjoined them to *greet one another with an holy kiss*. It would be superfluous to waste further arguments on an interpretation so obviously unfounded; so contradictory to the plain import of all the passages, so inconsistent with every known usage, and directly opposed by another part of the word. Any of you, whose minds have not been previously infected by the sentiment we have exposed, may rather be surprised that we have taken so much pains to refute it.

But when that sentiment is refuted, what remains, brethren, but to acknowledge that the Apostles did literally (as the words express) command all the Christians to testify their mutual love by mutual salutation with an holy kiss; and therefore that, according to the abiding authority of the word, disciples are to be regulated by the same precepts now, just as at the day when they were written or first received? This is the conclusion, which ought at once to force itself on every mind, influenced by the scriptural fear of God.

Yet against this conclusion it has been urged, that the directions always occur in one connexion, namely, at the close of the Apostolic letters, in the midst of salutations that were temporary in their nature;—and that the direction is *repeated* in *both* the letters to the Church at Corinth, without any intimation of the first direction having been neglected or disobeyed:—that by these characters therefore it is distinguished from precepts of abiding authority.—To all this it might be sufficient to reply, that it ill becomes those who reverence the word of God, to reject an otherwise most plain precept of the word, because it does not occur in the part, which our vain wisdom might think most proper: and that, while the salutations sent to or from *individuals* are evidently temporary in their nature, because those individuals are long since dead, the mutual salutation enjoined on *the whole Church* cannot be temporary, as long as *there*

is a Church of Christ on earth. But we may add a remark, which further shows the vanity of the objection. None of those precepts are to be considered as establishing the practice *for the first time* in the Churches; but as referring to a practice of previously established existence among them. Now, in this view, there is no *more natural* connexion, in which we can conceive them to be reminded of the stated expression of their mutual love, than where the Apostle is conveying expressions of his affection to them. And if he had written twenty letters to the same Church, and concluded each of them with—"I salute you in the Lord: salute one another with an holy kiss"—the repetition of this would be no more justly surprising, than if he had closed them all with—"My love be with you in Christ Jesus: Brethren, love one another."

Some indeed have maintained that these passages only prescribe the holiness and charity, or *the spirit of mind*, in which Christians should salute each other. But the presumptuousness of thus cutting down the word of God to our own fancies is truly awful. The passages do prescribe that spirit of mind, which alone corresponds with the mutual salutations of Christian brethren. But they do as expressly prescribe that they should mutually salute *with a kiss*. And is it not ungodly presumption to reject one part of the precept, under an appearance of insisting on the other.

Most of the other arguments, which have been brought forward in opposition to the precept,—as that the language is merely *metaphorical*—or that it was only the *customary* salutation of the several countries, (a thing absolutely false in fact)—or that it was but a *Jewish* custom, which with other practices peculiarly Jewish has passed away,—are scarcely worthy of a serious refutation. It is sufficient to say, that there is no other practice delivered to the Churches of the Saints, which may not equally by the same assertions be set aside: and that the Apostolic word, which is here explicit in its rule, forms the one unvarying standard of divine authority, by which alone Christians can lawfully be regulated to the end of the world.

Finally it has been urged that, if the passages be acknowledged as of preceptive authority, we shall be left wholly at a loss how, and on what occasions, to obey the precept; and that here therefore a door will be opened either for endless diversity of sentiment, or for the interference of *human regulation*. We were ourselves, brethren, very slow to learn the decisive answer to this objection; and were too long referring to some *rare occasions* for observing the practice,—as, the return of a brother after long absence,—his taking leave of the brethren with the prospect of long absence, &c. But we now ask, and without any doubt of the answer that must scripturally be given,—would its observance merely on any such rare occasions (however suitable in themselves) meet the plain import of the Apostolic precept—"Salute *one another*—salute *all the brethren* with an holy kiss?" Or is it to be supposed, that the Church of Rome or at Corinth (for instance) waited perhaps for a year after the receipt of the Apostle's letter before they obeyed the direction,—waited for one of those rare occasions to practise it? No: must it not be evident, upon a very little consideration, to all who seriously acknowledge the

divine authority of the command, that it must have been obeyed *by all*, and obeyed *without delay*.

Now, when a *mutual* act is enjoined on *all* the brethren, in a letter written to the collective body, ought we to be at any loss for the time and occasion when it is to be practised? Ought we not to conclude with certainty of decision, that the precept refers immediately to that time, when all are assembled together in the name of the Lord for joining in the several instituted exercises of mutual fellowship?

Accordingly, we now in our meeting on the first day of the week, after rising from the last prayer, and before the dismissal of the Assembly with the Apostolic benediction by the brother who leads, salute each other with a kiss of charity,—each brother the brethren next him, and each sister the sisters. And, in thus practising, we have a full conviction from the word of conforming to the Apostolic precept.

We have been called to the severe trial of parting from several, with whom we had walked as brethren, in consequence of their continued resistance to the precept, after every scriptural mean had been patiently employed for calling them to repentance. But we are cheered under the trial by the confidence that the same rich mercy, which has at length shewn us our own long-continued sin in disobeying it, will also restore to us any of them, who are led to “fear the Lord and tremble at his word.”

Trusting that we shall have joy in hearing of your ready obedience, dear brethren, and commending you to the rich mercy of God our Saviour, we remain your affectionate brethren in Christ Jesus.

Signed in the name and on behalf of the Church.

LETTER (C.).

Referred to in page 401.

BRETHREN,

WE address you on a subject, to which the Lord has mercifully directed our attention of late, after many years of carnal inattention to his will; the subject of OATHS, and their absolute unlawfulness to a Christian.

No words can be conceived more strongly and plainly prohibiting them, than the words of Christ in Matt. v. 33—37. *Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.* So also the corresponding precept in James v. 12. *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the*

earth, neither by any other oath : but let your yea, be yea ; and your nay, nay ; lest ye fall into condemnation. Nothing more would be necessary, for determining the minds of disciples, than a mere reference to these plain passages of sacred writ, if our minds were suitably simple, and uninfected by the leaven of human traditions and worldly practice. But knowing from our own humbling experience how little this is the case, we proceed to notice some of the vain arguments, by which we ourselves formerly, as well as others, have endeavoured to evade the force of this divine precept.

Some would represent the words of our Lord as applying only to swearing in *common conversation*, or on trivial occasions. But this gloss is sufficiently refuted, when we remark the reasons by which He enforces the prohibition ; reasons derived not from the nature of the *occasion* on which the oath is taken, but from the nature of the *oath* itself ; reasons which—to any who acknowledge their divine cogency and force—will appear in perfect harmony with the absolute language of the precept, “*Swear not AT ALL ;*” and must stamp with unlawfulness *all oaths alike*, for whatever purpose or on whatever occasion they may be employed.

The same remark exposes the fallacy of those, who have wished to confine the application of the words to *religious vows*, such as those by which the Jews bound themselves to some of the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic Law :—not to add, upon this head, that we find the apostle Paul did take on him such a religious vow. Acts xviii. 18.

We need not say much for the purpose of proving to Christians that, if our LORD forbids all oaths in the passage referred to, the requisition of a magistrate, or the enactment of human laws, cannot justify his disciples in employing them. We are indeed called to *submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake* : but while we are really subject, *from this principle*, to earthly rulers, we shall obey God rather than man, when their ordinances oppose each other ; patiently suffering whatever penalties the laws of our country may impose on us, for maintaining our allegiance to the King of Zion.

Against this, it has commonly been urged by those great corrupters of the word of God, the commentators and divines, that the Lord himself answered upon oath, when *adjured* by the High Priest. Matt. xxvi. 63. It would be an inference more consistent with reverence for the divine word, to conclude that the High Priest's *adjuration by the Living God* could not have in it the essence of an OATH, seeing that our Lord submitted to answer under that appeal, while he has forbidden all Oaths. And the justice of this inference is confirmed, by observing the import of the word *adjure* in other parts of the New Testament. In Acts xix. 13. we are informed that the exorcist Jews employed this language: *We ADJURE you BY JESUS whom Paul preacheth.* Here, certainly, all idea of an oath is excluded : and it is evident that the word means nothing more than, *We CHARGE you by the authority of Jesus.* It is the very same word, which is employed by Paul, in 1 Thess. v. 27. where our translators justly render it, *I CHARGE you by the Lord.*

Again, it has been urged by some, that the Jews were commanded to *swear by the name of JEHOVAH*, (Deut. x. 20.) and that we therefore must not understand our Lord as prohibiting all Oaths. To this we reply, that those words appear, in their real import, to contain an injunction to the professing people of God to direct to JEHOVAH alone all those acts of homage wherein the Godhead is acknowledged: (compare Psalm lxiii. 11. Isa. xlv. 20—23. and Rom. xiv. 11.) and that, while we admit oaths to have been allowed to the Jews under the Law, we must nevertheless assert that they are plainly forbidden to us under the Gospel. Indeed, the whole context of the precept in Matt. v. proves that the Lord is marking to his disciples how much higher the rule is, by which they are called to walk, than the rule which was given to the disciples of Moses. Others have referred to the words of the Apostle in Heb. vi. 16. as sanctioning the use of Oaths. But they wrest the passage altogether contrary to the design of the writer. That design was—evidently—not to express approbation or disapprobation of the practice among men, to which he incidentally refers; but to illustrate from it the manner in which God condescended to confirm his promise to Abraham. But upon this, and every similar argument, it is important to remark in general, that they are ungodly attempts to set some passages of Scripture in opposition to the plain words of Christ, and so to nullify the divine authority of both.

We have now to expose an argument, which some still bring forward, and that connected with a subterfuge, by which we too long imposed on our own minds. ‘An Oath,’ say they, ‘is essentially *nothing but a solemn affirmation*; and we find the Apostle Paul repeatedly employing affirmations the most solemn; (Rom. i. 9. 2 Cor. i. 23. &c.) which therefore cannot be unlawful for a Christian on a suitable occasion.’ That a *mere affirmation*, the most solemn, is not unlawful for a Christian on a suitable occasion, we readily and distinctly admit. But, brethren, is this becoming those who *fear the Lord, and tremble at his word*, to say that an OATH, which he universally forbids, is essentially nothing more than what his Apostle practises? Are we not rather bound to draw the very contrary conclusion? To say, that the Apostle’s solemn affirmation is in effect an OATH, is to say, that our Lord’s precept either has no meaning, or is of no authority.

We are aware that some writers, expressing themselves on the subject in vague generalities, have described an oath merely as the most solemn of all appeals to God; but others, more accurate or more honest, leave us at no loss to discover in what its peculiar solemnity consists, and enable us to draw a plain line of distinction between every *oath* and any *mere affirmation*, however solemn. An *oath*, along with an appeal to God as the witness of what we say, includes “an imprecation of his vengeance, or a renunciation of his favour, if what we affirm be false, or what we promise be not performed.” (See Encyclopedia Britannica, Article OATH.) This character is decisively stamped upon the Oath, as administered in this country. The words, *So help me God*, are thus interpreted by a writer, whose authority on such a subject is unquestionable: “*Só, i. e. hæc lege, upon condition*

of my speaking the truth, or performing this promise, may God help me, *and not otherwise.*" (See Encycl. Brit. as above.) And certainly the juror cannot, without prevarication, put any other meaning on the words, than is their plain and acknowledged sense. But how awful is it, brethren, for a Christian man to bind himself to any thing under the forfeiture of that divine favour, which is extended to sinners independently of every circumstance in its objects, according to the good pleasure of God! How awful to concur in the expression of a desire, which it would be profane to feel, that the mercy of God towards him may rest, not on the foundation on which his word places it, but upon some character in his own conduct!

Opposed, as such an Oath appears, to the general principles of the Gospel, let us further bring it to the test of our Lord's particular precept, already cited. According to that, he who swears by *any thing*, even by *his head*, swears by that of which he is not the sovereign, over which he has no power, and which therefore he has no right to pledge. How then shall we reconcile, with this divine prohibition against swearing, the conduct of a disciple swearing by, or pledging, that "*eternal life*," which is "*the gift of God through Jesus Christ?*" And if to swear by the head be impious, *because* it implies an assumption of that sovereignty over the head, on the part of the creature, which belongs only to the Creator, how deeply evil, in the lips of a disciple, must be that oath, wherein contradicting the record of mercy, upon which in his right mind he professes all his hope to rest, he proclaims himself *the Lord of his soul's salvation!*

Some indeed pertinaciously contend that the words, "So help me God," do not import any conditional imprecation, but are to be understood as a *prayer for the divine help* to enable us to speak the truth or perform the promise. This evasion, however, is contradicted by the propriety of the English language; by the ordinary use of the phrase in such a connexion as precludes that interpretation, (as when a person confirms the truth of an antecedent assertion, by saying 'So help me God, it is true:') and we add—disclaiming, however, either ability or inclination to enter into any legal argument—it is contradicted by the known fact, that our laws distinguish between a *solemn affirmation* and an *oath*; admitting, in civil cases, the solemn affirmation of persons, whose evidence they reject in criminal, for want of the confirmation of an OATH.

But it is important to add, that we should be quite misunderstood, if it were supposed that we object only to the form of oath prescribed by the laws of this country, but conceive some other admissible. All oaths alike are plainly prohibited by our Lord; and every such confirmation of our words is marked as *proceeding from evil*. He elsewhere teaches us, (Matt. xxiii. 20—22.) that whoever swears by the creature, in effect swears by the Creator, whose every creature is, and by whom all things subsist. When HE is represented as swearing by himself for the confirmation of his promise, and thus, as it were, *pledging* its own being and glorious perfections to the heirs of promise for its accomplishment, He appears but in his rightful character of the sovereign and immutable JEHOVAH. The language, AS I LIVE, saith the LORD, is but suitable to his glory. What-

ever form of oath could be proposed to us, even though divested of all direct imprecation, would be found to resolve itself ultimately into that, *As the LORD liveth*. And for us to confirm what we assert or promise, by presuming to *pledge HIS BEING* for its certainty, is awfully inconsistent with every scriptural view of our character, derogatory to the sanctity of his Name, and in direct violation of the divine command, *Swear not at all; neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but let your language be Yea, yea, Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*.

We have thus, dear brethren, laid before you the important subject, with as much brevity as distinctness will admit. We are aware ourselves, and would wish you to be aware, of the serious trials which are connected with the scriptural determination of our minds on the subject. It exposes not only to the forfeiture of various situations of trust and profit, in which oaths are made necessary, but to that indefinite insecurity of person and property, which an inability to avail ourselves of the laws involves. But we trust that you will not *consult with flesh and blood*: we trust that you will be delivered from that worldly bias on your judgments, to the influence of which our minds are always prone, and from which nothing but the persuasion of the glorious Gospel can at any time deliver us. It becomes us all to rejoice that our Lord is able to control or modify all the trials, which we may apprehend: and so far as we may be called to suffer for our adherence to his revealed will, it becomes us to *commit the keeping of our souls to Him, in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator*; and even to *take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing that we have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance*.

We commend you to God, dear brethren, and to the word of his grace, praying that ye may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Signed in the name and on behalf of the Church.

LETTER (D.)

Copy of a Letter, written by direction of the Church, to M— T—, referred to in page 402.

MY DEAR * * *

April 13, 1816.

WHEN your letter of February 26th reached me, we happened to be engaged in one of those trying cases of discipline, which from time to time appear in our body; and which—from the imperfectness of our knowledge and slowness to discern the things of Christ's kingdom—sometimes produce considerable discussion, before they are terminated. This prevented my communicating to the Church the matter of your letter, till a few weeks ago; when I was commissioned by them to reply to it, in their name.

We rejoice to hear of your standing fast in the blessed *truth* of our God and Saviour, and evidencing your knowledge of his name by a

filial regard to every intimation of his will. We have—with you—to acknowledge the continued propensity of our ungodly hearts to backslide from Him; and to manifest this wickedness by adding to—or taking from—some of his most gracious precepts.

But we do conceive, that your objection to our mode of salutation on the first day of the week, proceeds upon a mistaken view—either of our intentions—or of the import of the precept—or perhaps both. In the first place, we have no thought or wish of laying down a *rule* here for others; while we have stated our own practice. Each person in our meeting gives the salutation to each next them, without any distinction or respect of persons: and we know not in what other way the salutation could be exchanged among all in our meeting, suitably to the general direction that all things should be *done decently and in order*.

If that be admitted, your objection must lie against the way, in which we take our seats in the assembly;—the sexes not sitting *promiscuously*, but the brethren at one side of the room, and the sisters at the other. Here also we are far from wishing to prescribe a *law* to others: but in a matter—at least—indifferent, we must assert our own liberty to act as appears to us most expedient. And we should hope, that when you reconsider the subject, you will shrink from the idea of imposing a law upon *us*, which is certainly unsupported by the divine word. For can you say that we violate, or weaken, any direction of that word, in sitting as we do?

But in the second place, we apprehend that you regard the salutation, as a thing to be practised when the meeting is dissolved, and not as one of the divine ordinances to be observed by us all while it continues. We apprehend, that from this mistake another naturally arises: namely, that you conceive, that this appointed token of Christian love is limited to those, between whom the kiss is *actually* interchanged; and so think our mode of practice objectionable, as not allowing it to be *universally mutual*. If this be your idea, we are persuaded it is erroneous. When I salute with an holy kiss the brethren next me, whoever they happen to be, it is a token of *mere Christian love*, and not an expression of any peculiar affection for *them* individually: so that I *virtually* salute all there, standing in the same Christian connexion with me,—brethren and sisters; though the accidental distance of their sitting prevents the *actual* interchange of the same token between us:—and so, to all real intents and purposes, the salutation passes from each to all, without any difference.

Can you, dear * * *, conceive that, in order to make the salutation as universally mutual as the precept directs it to be, it ought to be actually given by each to every member? Surely even in our body, consisting of about one hundred persons, the attempt would be worse than absurd: and much less can we suppose it to have been so observed in some of the first Churches.

But is it not the same way in the ordinance of the supper? Is it only with the individuals, to whom I pass the bread and wine, or from whom I receive them, that I profess to have fellowship in that ordinance? and not rather with every one of the assembly alike, however remote from me?

We trust that these considerations will remove the uneasiness of your mind; and satisfy you that we have not—in this matter—been allowed to depart from that simplicity, with which we are called to receive all the precepts of our gracious Lord.

LETTER (E.)

Copy of a Letter of admonition from the Church to G— M—, on the Baptist principles: referred to in page 405.

DEAR BROTHER M—.

IT is with much concern we find that you have fallen into the snare of the people called Baptists, and have proved deaf to the private means employed for your recovery. We are now deputed by the Church to present to you in their name the admonition of the word; and we would do it in the cheerful hope of the Lord's blessing on his own appointment. We beseech you not to turn away your mind from the consideration of what we offer.

We conceive that we take off nothing from the decisive weight of the scriptural principles we adduce, by admitting that the Baptist argument has *on the first surface* of it an ensnaring plausibility. When it is urged that all the first proselytes to the profession of the Christian faith were baptized, and that we are called (as professed followers of the first Churches of God which were in Judea) to be dipped in water after their example; the argument urged is dressed in a garb, which must ever claim the serious consideration of every real disciple. We have seriously considered it, and confidently reply—that we are not proselytes to the profession of the Christian faith; that we have been born of parents who professed that faith—professed to believe all things testified by the Apostles concerning Jesus of Nazareth; that we have been brought up from our infancy in the same profession; and that if we were now to be baptized, we should (according to the evident import and connexion of the rite as recorded in Scripture) avow that we had found some other faith, some other Gospel, some other Christ, than we had before *professed to believe in*; that is, some other than the Apostles testify.—Of the baptism therefore that you contend for,—the baptism of those who never have professed but to believe the Apostolic testimony concerning Jesus, we are bold to say that not a single *precedent* (any more than a single precept) can be adduced from the word of God. And it is idle, and worse than idle, under the pretence of guarding against the disuse of what the Apostles practised, to call believers to do what the Apostles never did.

But while we mention this in the first instance, to take off that plausibility from the Baptist argument which often entangles the conscience, and closes the mind against the scriptural consideration of the subject; there are much higher bearings of the question, immediately affecting the faith of Christ itself, to which we would mainly call your attention.

The baptism with water, confessedly practised by the Apostles,

always marked (as we have intimated) the transition of the persons baptized into the profession of the Christian faith; what it cannot be employed to mark in any of us. What then is this modern baptism—independently of the farcical imitation of Apostolic practice—necessarily employed to mark? A certain *transition in the Christian profession* of one who has always professed himself a Christian;—an epoch, at which it is supposed that he passes from a spurious to a genuine profession of the Christian faith. In this view, the practice is ultimately connected with all the Antichristian leaven in the popular systems of conversion; and of a consistent piece with all their false gospels and false hopes. We must fear, dear brother, that your mind has been more or less tainted with that leaven, when you would point to any period of your course as that, at which you ought to have been baptized into the Christian faith. There *must be* in that idea a turning away of your eye from the glory of the Divine Truth itself, to the glory of this supposed change in your view and profession of it. And while you, or any, put forward a profession about their state, or character, or the genuineness of their faith, in place of professing the Truth as it is in Jesus;—we must scripturally more than doubt their soundness in the faith.

Will you speak a plain language here, brother? and tell us, on what day, on what week, month, year, you ought to have been baptized, as one who was then this *real* Christian. Alas! how must you have fallen from the truth, if you do not shrink from the idea with abhorrence! For ourselves, we have nothing to profess, but that which we ever *professed to believe*, even when we were most blind to its glory,—that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and is risen again from the dead.

As to the notion sometimes put forward, that baptism is to mark the era of connexion with a scriptural Church, it is both inconsistent with the existence (or re-appearance) of any scriptural Church since the time of the Apostles: and is directly contradicted by the history of the believing eunuch; who was baptized just at the time of his being separated from outward fellowship with all his brethren.

Pursuing this modern baptism through its further influence on those who adopt it, we find that abundant harvest of ungodliness which we might expect from its ungodly commencement. No precept of the word is plainer than that which calls the believer to “*bring up* his children in the instruction and in the admonition of the Lord.” (Eph. vi. 4.)—diligently instructing them in the doctrine of the Lord, and admonishing them from that blessed truth in which they are instructed. No precept can more plainly present his children to his view,—while subjects of this instruction and admonition,—as *disciples*, lambs of Christ’s flock, of the household of faith, of the holy seed sanctified by that holy truth, in the instruction and admonition of which they are brought up. But what says the baptist, who has got this grand dipping in water at his supposed *conversion*? ‘My little children Christians! *Their* infantile *prattling* about the doctrine, which I occasionally set before them, a scriptural profession. A fig for such Christianity, and for such profession.’ Truly has it been declared of such professors, that “*except they be*

converted, and become as little children, they shall not enter the kingdom of God."

And the insidious talk, which some specious baptists now adopt, is but the greater "*deceivableness of unrighteousness*" in them. 'They, forsooth, would be far from setting limits to the power and grace of God:—they have known *instances* of very early conversion:—and at whatever period, however early, the child appears to understand and *really* to believe the Gospel, they would call it to be baptized, and would present it to the Church to be joined with them in full communion.'—(They would do in this a very preposterous and a very mischievous thing.) But what is this in the doctrine of Christ, which they doubt the ability of every believing parent to make all his very young children *understand*? Some *mystic* thing which cannot be explained in words?—And what are these evidences of the *reality* of faith which they wait for, in any young child properly brought up under Christian control; and previous to which its assent to the simple and holy truth goes for nothing in their view?—But indeed the very *instruction* they offer under such principles cannot be instruction in the unadulterated Truth. That man who intelligibly explains the Gospel of Christ to his youngest child, but—notwithstanding the child's assenting to it—delays to regard and treat it as a fellow-disciple,—that man pours contempt upon the Gospel which he professes to teach, and appears himself to derive his hope and standing from something quite aside from it.

Such are briefly the grounds on which we must consider every Baptist as a corrupter of the Truth. And we would not take off from the solemn weight of the considerations we have offered you, by permitting ourselves at present—(even if the compass of a letter allowed it)—to be diverted to the discussion of any curious or doubtful questions, which may be started on matters not immediately affecting us. We again beseech you, dear brother, to receive the word of admonition, which we pray the God of all grace to bless: hoping ever to be able to subscribe ourselves

Your affectionate brethren in Christ Jesus,

* *

P. S. On reverting to your last letter, we think it expedient to add one brief remark. You assume, with all the baptists, that Christ in his last commission to his Apostles *commanded* them to baptize with water. If we even conceded this, your inference would by no means follow; as that commission was peculiarly *Apostolic*; and we could no more acknowledge any now as holding a commission to baptize, than as holding a commission to go into all the world, preaching and teaching in his name. But we utterly protest against the assumption itself. It is contradicted by all the passages, in which Christ's baptism is *contrasted* with baptism in water; and it is expressly contradicted by Paul's *thanking* God that he had baptized so very few,—a thankfulness which it would be profane to have expressed or felt as to any thing really *commanded by the Lord*. No one who attends to the import of the word *baptize* in 1 Cor. x. 2. needs to be at a loss for its meaning in the Apostolic commission. The play of baptist writers about that passage in Corinthians, to make out a *literal* water baptism, is too ludicrous to deserve notice.

LETTER VII.

Baptism.—The practice of the Baptists wholly unsupported by scriptural precept or precedent.—Supposed knowledge of the era of our conversion.—The Author's account of his *experience*.—Christian profession.—Numerous unbaptized persons in the Apostolic Churches.—The Baptist principles closely connected with the popular gospels, and opposed to the Christian treatment of children.—Eph. vi. 4.

You tell me, my dear friend, that *baptism* is now the only bar to our union in Christian fellowship. I am glad to see that you consider it a bar, as long as the difference between us on that subject continues. But I confess to you, that *if* it should ultimately continue, after a full and patient discussion of the question,—I shall be certain that there is some further and deeper difference between us;—whether it may be specifically discovered or not.

After the great TRUTH itself and the general principles of *Christian fellowship*,—there is no subject, which I think more vitally important in its bearings, than this. You have been a keen Baptist: but not more keen than several were, who are now walking with us, and who view with abomination the evil of their former principles. Were it not so indeed, I should fear that they had given up their baptism on some grounds, as ungodly as those, on which they had before maintained it.

Before I proceed, my dear sir, I must make one preliminary remark. I am apt, on any scriptural subject, in the view of which my mind is clear, to express myself plainly and strongly. But do not allow any strength of decisive language, in which I may avow my own views, to *overbear* you,—beyond the conviction of your own judgment.

The candid acknowledgments you make of the evils, into which you have been betrayed by your Baptist zeal,—the evils of obtruding the subject upon those who had nothing to do with it,—of looking with such a favourable eye at the profession of any man, whom you could proselyte to your baptism, &c. &c.—these acknowledgments are but consistent with the present views, to which you seem led, of the Gospel and kingdom of Jesus Christ. But there is one very wicked sentence in your letter; where you talk of *wishing that you could think with us* on the subject. You think us wrong; that is, opposing the word of the Lord; or at least you suspect that we are so;—and yet you *wish*—to think with us! I believe it is needless for me to enlarge on the exposure of the sentiment. It came from your *flesh*; and when I say that, I say as bad of it, as if I said that it came from the *devil*.

But you tell me that, although not convinced by the letter which I sent you, yet you are perplexed: and you seem shaken about your baptism, particularly by the consideration that, at the time you were

dipped in water, you cannot say that you believed the unadulterated Gospel. I shall not take advantage of that. Let us suppose, that your faith had been then just what it is now. Or, let us suppose, that you were yet unbaptized, and contemplating the question—whether you ought to be dipped in water, or not, to-day. I ask,—on what scriptural grounds do you conceive that you ought? You probably reply—‘We read that all the first disciples were baptized, as soon as they believed what they heard from the Apostles concerning Jesus of Nazareth.’ Yes; and we do not read of a single instance of Christian baptism under any other circumstances. You would not hesitate to mark it as a perversion of scripture, and a thing essentially different from what was done in the Apostolic day, if any professors of Christianity should employ a *weekly* dipping in water, under the pretence of imitating the Apostolic practice, and perhaps under a notion of the *edifying* tendency of the rite;—according to the language which I have heard from some Baptists. You would sharply testify against the imitation, as a profane mockery, and as a real departure from the word. And why? Because you would justly take into account *all* that is recorded in Scripture of the Apostolic practice in this matter:—not merely the fact of the first Christians being baptized, but the fact that they received this baptism but once. And how comes it that—although it is a fact as plainly authenticated in Scripture, that none were baptized but on their *first believing* what they heard concerning Jesus of Nazareth,—you do not see a similarly profane mockery of their practice, in your baptism on an occasion and in circumstances altogether different?

‘But,’ you will say, ‘your having neglected what you ought to have done formerly—does not warrant your continuing to omit it.’ O! very true. And *if* you can make out from scripture that you ever *ought* to have done it, I shall admit that the maxim applies, and argue no more against your baptism.

Well: when ought you to have done it? I have known some disposed to say in reply, ‘when they first *saw* it a Christian duty.’ But I hope we understand one another sufficiently, for you to own, that what we *ought* to do cannot turn upon *our perception* of the duty. Besides, the question is—whether your baptism at *any* period of your life was a *Christian duty*, or indeed consistent with Christian duty: so that it is plain, the reply would involve a *petitio principii*.

Certainly, in a matter which you confess ought to be done by a Christian but *once*, you should know *when* it ought to be done: particularly, where the Scriptures mark so clearly *when* the first Christians did it. Yet I rather conjecture that you will hesitate, and be at considerable loss about your reply to my question. Most of the popular professors, I know, would not: but I fancy, that *your* views of the TRUTH embarrass you here. Well: consider the question maturely, and answer it deliberately. I shall readily allow you to change your answer, as often as you please. We do not argue for victory: and I am sure, that how often soever you change, you will not find any ground tenable, according to Scripture, for your baptism at *any* period of your life.

Do you say then, that you ought to have been baptized when you

first became a Christian? I must ask an explanation of that reply. Do you mean by it—when you first *really* believed the *unadulterated* Gospel? or do you mean—when you first *professed* to believe the Gospel? With what subtlety of endless subterfuge, have I known baptists endeavour to evade that plain inquiry; and persist in confounding the two ideas! But from the mind in which you seem to meet the subject, I do not expect such dishonesty from you. Would that I were by your side! and then I think, in the course of one hour's conversation on this point, I should know more of your real mind, than I can by the interchange of letters for a year. Yet I certainly have found nothing in your late communications, which would lead me to apprehend, that you will deliberately adopt the *former* meaning of the words, which I have proposed;—that you will not reject it with abomination.

However, lest I should leave any ground behind us uncleared, let me *suppose* that your meaning is—that you ought to have been baptized at the time, when you first actually became a *real* Christian,—a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ.—And so, you know when that change took place in you. Indeed, sir, if you say this, I must fear that you are yet unacquainted with what real Christianity is: and that—after all the pleasing appearances in you at which I have avowed my satisfaction,—we have quite misunderstood each other; and there is still a leaven in your present profession, which adulterates the whole. The idea is no doubt very consistent with the false gospels of those numerous, devout, respectable, and *evangelical* professors, in whose system the *mere believing* of what is declared to *all* in the word of God is a trifling matter, but the grand thing is some mystic *appropriating act*, by which they are supposed to *lay hold of* Christ and view the blessings of his salvation as theirs;—the first moment of which important *act of faith* they often can refer to, and speak of with raptures, in describing their experience. Or, it may be very consistent with the enthusiastic nonsense of those deluded people, who date their supposed conversion from the moment, when an imaginary voice from heaven spoke to them, or *applied*—as they call it—to their souls some words of Scripture, announcing to them that their sins were forgiven. But indeed, sir,—under the profession of Christianity that I know you have ever made,—the idea is inconsistent with the *unadulterated* Gospel of Christ. And if you really entertain it, I am satisfied that all the peace and joy, which you have spoken of as derived *from that Gospel*, is really bottomed upon your supposed conversion.

Let me put a question to you, which I beg you will attentively consider. *Suppose* that a *conviction* should in any way flash upon your mind, that you had been to the last hour an unconverted man, deceiving yourself and others;—that your hope had been “the hope of the hypocrite;”—I say *supposing* this conviction to strike you—(without meaning at all to assume that it does, or to assume that such has really been your character)—how would that conviction affect your hope towards God this moment?—Would it not be shaken? Would it not be gone? If so, I tell you in plain fidelity, that you *are* at this moment a stranger to the hope of the Gospel, and “without

God in the world;”—notwithstanding all the Christian profession that you make. And, while you may perhaps be thinking with a sad heart that in this case *all the work is to begin again*; I have really no work to set before you—but that one glorious work which *is done*, and was pronounced to be so when Jesus of Nazareth upon the cross cried—IT IS FINISHED; and which was *proved* to be perfect, and well pleasing in the sight of God, when he was raised from the grave.

But do you say—‘Why, is not this the very truth that I *believe* and contend for? And how can this man so confidently pronounce, that I am a stranger to the hope of the Gospel?’ My friend, if you believed *this* Gospel,—if your hope were derived from *this* Gospel,—nothing could shake it but what would shake the evidence of the *fact*, that Christ rose from the dead. But it appears, that if the certainty of *your past conversion* be shaken in your mind, your present hope totters, or tumbles to the ground: and I therefore clearly see, that it is not built on that one foundation, which Jehovah “hath laid in Zion.” But indeed I despair of making such professors of Christianity—while they continue such—see the difference between their hope and “the hope of the Gospel.” Nor am I at all surprised that many of them should be very angry with me;—and suspect that I *deny the work of the Spirit*;—and charge me with being a foe to all *Christian experience*. For in fact, the Gospel that I believe does cut up—root and branch—all that *they call* the work of the Spirit; and proves all that they value, as Christian experience, to come from the spirit of delusion—from the father of lies.

For myself, I must explicitly own to you that I know nothing at all about the era of my first acquaintance with the Gospel; and have no more desire, than thought, of ascertaining it. I was born of parents professing Christianity; and was brought up from my infancy in the acknowledgment of the Scriptures as the word of God,—a professing Christian. Easily indeed can I look back to periods of my course, when I am now certain that my profession of the faith was merely *profession*; when I held, under the name of Gospel, what was not the Gospel of Christ,—what gave not peace to my conscience nor joy to my heart,—what left me “wearying myself in the greatness of my way” to attain unto righteousness, and walking after the imaginations of my own ungodly heart; though often in a very *religious* form. I was once *darkness*; but now am I *light in the Lord*. I am certain, that wherever such a transition takes place, there must really *be* a first moment in which it takes place. But I am no more able to distinguish that *first moment* in my past life, than to *mark* the first moment of the morning dawn—though certain that there *is* such. Every retrospect also, which I can take of my course *to the present hour*, presents to view but one character in *myself*,—continued rebelliousness and contrariety to the only true God: while his continued mercy appears on that dark ground, “leading the blind by a way that they knew not;”—gradually forcing on my view one and another principle of his blessed word, and discovering to me—in its progressive light—more and more of *my own* evil and of *his* satisfying goodness:—while to this hour, if I were to turn for hope to the consideration of my *discernment* of the glorious Gospel of his grace,

or to any *evidences of my* having fulfilled the character of a believer,—nothing but despair could legitimately meet my eye:—while to this hour *every motion* of my own heart is as opposed to his TRUTH, and I am as dependent on his mercy and power for keeping me in adherence to it, as at any former period of my life.

To the ears of the religious world, this is no doubt a poor account to give of—*my experience*. And in opposition to the false modesty—the “voluntary humility,” in which they may suppose I mean to be understood, let me add—what if they attend to the plain meaning of my words, they must certainly think very *impious*;—that I neither *expect*, nor *DESIRE*, ever to have any other or better account to give of *my experience*—till I die. Perhaps you have another and a finer kind of story to tell of yours. Perhaps you can mark some period, to which you can look back with complacency, as that from which you have been a genuine believer. No wonder, that so many of this mind should wish to *distinguish the happy epoch* by their BAPTISM.

But no! my friend: though I have been *supposing* all this, for the purpose of calling your attention to the idea; yet, after what you have written to me, I shall not believe that this is your meaning, till you intimate it yourself.

And now, to afford your baptism every vantage ground that you can desire; I shall suppose a case, the existence of which I have no reason to admit. I shall suppose a person, brought up from infancy under that profession of Christianity, which is general in these countries:—I shall suppose his profession, as he grows up, nullified both by his conduct and his avowed sentiments,—by his adherence to all those Antichristian lies, which go to the subversion of the truth, and introduce another Gospel which is not the Gospel of Christ:—I shall *suppose* that person—under the reading or hearing of the divine truth—suddenly brought to a perception of it, in its purity and glory, with a clearness, and consequent fulness of rejoicing *in it*, equal to what an Apostle ever experienced; miraculously delivered in an instant—which he then *could* mark—from the influence of *all* those Antichristian lies:—so that not only as great, but as *striking*, a revolution shall take place in his mind, as appeared when the blaspheming Saul of Tarsus became the blessed disciple and Apostle of that Jesus whom he had persecuted. Let us *suppose* such a case; though observe, that according to all my views of the truth, and of the manner in which the mercy of God employs his word for guiding a sinner into the way of peace,—I consider the case as one altogether imaginary. But let us suppose it:—and now I ask, ought this believer, according to the word, to be thereupon baptized? I answer with a decisive negative,—no. Are you disposed to take the contrary side? On what scriptural ground? Have you any instance *there* of Christian baptism being employed to mark *such* a change?—the change in one, who had before *professed* to believe in Jesus of Nazareth, but is now for the first time given to see the *real import* of the divine testimony concerning him. The professor, whom I have supposed, had been no more “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,” than Simon the sorcerer, and many others, who *professed* to believe the Apostles. But would any of these, if brought to repentance, have been *re-baptized*?—Perhaps

you say—‘O! no: for they had been baptized on their first profession.’—Very well. But then you admit, that baptism was not employed—in the days of the Apostles—to mark such a transition—from a vain to a genuine profession of Christianity,—as many dream it ought to be employed for now.

And indeed it might tend to cool the ardour of many Baptists, if they would notice well this indisputable fact:—that in the days of the Apostles many received baptism—Christian baptism with water,—who were quite blind to the real import of the Apostolic Gospel;—who were at and after their baptism merely *professing* believers, but *really* dead in sin:—and that they never were baptized a second time, even though any of them—in the course of their profession—were given repentance unto life. This consideration might at least check the confidence, with which they quote,—and apply to their baptism with water—various passages of Scripture, in which indeed the word *baptism* does occur, but a much higher matter is concerned, than they dream of.

I should hope you are, by this time, willing to abandon that ground—of maintaining your baptism as distinguishing the period of your becoming a *real* disciple of Christ. Do you then choose to occupy the other? Do you now say, that you ought to have been baptized *when you first professed* to believe the Gospel? And pray, my friend, when was that? For my part, I cannot carry back my recollection to that time in myself. I have from my infancy professed it: and I know that so have you.—Now do not attempt to pass the trick upon me, or upon yourself, which I have known Baptists commonly employ. Do not say, that you never *professed* to believe the Gospel, till you really believed it,—till you saw the true import of that which you professed to believe. Is it not plain, that this would be but—slipping back to the ground, from which I hope you have just now been driven?—that it would also be confounding a *profession* of the faith with the *faith itself*?

But I must add, that it would mark the importance and necessity of inquiring—what you mean by your present *profession*? I am aware that the great mass of *serious professors* in this country mean—a profession of something good about themselves;—a profession of the genuine nature of *their faith*;—a profession—*of the soundness of their profession*. Are you, after all, one of these? If so, I have been quite mistaking your meaning: and would here desire to drop the question of baptism with you; and all the matters which I have agitated, since I dispatched my first letter: and I would tell you very plainly, that I think it a matter of the utmost indifference, whether you retain or renounce your *Baptist principles*. But until I receive a confirmation of this painful surmise from under your own hand, I must hope better of you.

And now, my friend, understand me. I distinctly say, that all the Christian profession—which I make *at this hour*—I have made ever since I can remember:—*I have made from my infancy*. For what is my Christian profession at this hour? Merely, the profession of *believing what the Apostles tell all men*,—that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified at Jerusalem, is the Son of God;—that he died for sin,

and rose again, according to the Scriptures. And as to this profession, I never remember the time when I did not make it. It was upon that *profession*—made for the *first* time by those who had before professedly not believed this—that people were baptized in the Apostolic days;—whatever were their real views, and real character in the sight of God. But certainly there is no room for my baptism—or yours—on *this* ground. And when a rite is now practised in these countries, under the same *name* and *form*, I view it,—in many of its aspects indeed,—as most profane and ungodly,—but in others, as no less puerile, than if I saw children proposing to *play Philip and the Eunuch*.

Before you proceed to the reading of what follows,—go back, my friend; and overhaul the observations I have made. Re-examine them deliberately; and freely mark any thing you may think questionable. If any of the ground, from which I may have seemed to drive you, still appear to you tenable,—occupy it again, and maintain it as long as you can.—Many Baptists, with whom I have communicated, express their surprise at the language which I hold about the mass of inhabitants in these countries, as *professing Christians*; and think it strangely at variance with all the rest of my sentiments about the faith of the Gospel and the kingdom of Christ. But this, I have no doubt, is only because they have not *understood* my sentiments on these fundamental topics, in which they profess to agree with me.

Let me now pass to the point, on which you seem to think yourself most strong; and cannot conceive what reply I can make against your appeal to Scripture. ‘It is admitted’—you say—‘that all the members of the Apostolic Churches were *baptized* persons,—persons who had received Christian baptism with water: and yet I, contending for the obligation of a *full return* to the Christianity of the Apostolic days—remain *unbaptized*; and walk in fellowship with Churches, none of whose members have been baptized,—except those who have renounced their baptism, and join me in opposing the practice.’ This, you say, appears to you inexplicably inconsistent; and you think warrants you to conclude, that there must be some error in our view.

Now, supposing for a moment that your premises were true, yet your inference from them would be fallacious. Should we—under the idea of returning to Apostolic practice—do what I have shewn the Apostles and Apostolic Christians *never* did? and gravely say that we conformed to scriptural rule, because we call the thing we do by the same *name* with a thing they did,—though we have not in all the Scripture a single precedent or a single precept for our act.

But I must come closer to your strong hold; and tell you that I do not admit the fact, which you talk of as confessedly existing in the Apostolic days. But on the contrary, I assert that there were *many* disciples in those days—walking in connexion with the Apostolic Churches,—about whom we have no *scriptural* reason for thinking that they ever were baptized. Indeed, in one part of your letter, you seem to distinguish *John’s* baptism with water from *Christian* baptism with water. And if you will maintain that distinction,

I must positively say that some at least of the Apostles themselves never had Christian baptism with water. Look again at John i. 35. & *seqq.* and you will see, that some of them *straightway followed* Jesus, when John the Baptist pointed him out to them as the Lamb of God: and these were plainly the first disciples that Jesus of Nazareth made. But why am I so confident, that they did not receive any further Christian baptism with water? Why;—who was to baptize them? Jesus? No. We are expressly, though incidentally, informed that “Jesus himself baptized not.” (John iv. 2.) It was by the wisdom of God the Evangelist was directed to give us that information.—But I waive this.—I see you are perplexed about the twelve disciples of John at Ephesus. (Acts xix.) I cannot now stop to give you my views on that subject: but perhaps you will shortly see them in one of my pamphlets, of which I hope to obtain a copy for you.—I hasten to more important matter.

I have asserted, that *many* unbaptized persons were connected with the Apostolic Churches. For instance; have you any reason from Scripture, for thinking that *Timothy* ever was baptized? I say—any reason *from Scripture*: for I set aside the popular superstitious notions about baptism, which rest on nothing but the currency of their general reception throughout Christendom,—the artifices of the Clergy,—and the vain traditions of men handed down from one generation to another. Do you say—‘Why should we not suppose Timothy was baptized, as well as the three thousand who believed on the day of Pentecost?’ For a very plain and cogent reason. *They* were baptized on their taking upon them the Christian profession, from having not made it before. But Timothy’s Christian profession plainly appears to have been hereditary,—(yes, *hereditary*)—like my own and yours.

Paul addresses the young Timothy in this language:—“when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in these also.” (2 Tim. i. 5.) He was a disciple, “the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed.” (Acts xvi. 1.) Not only his mother, but his grandmother, had been Christians:—probably, his father also. And that Timothy had grown up from his infancy under the profession of Christianity, is more than probable from the Apostle’s language; (2 Tim. iii. 15.) “that from a child [the original is, *from an infant*] thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Now I ask it only to be admitted,—(what no man will deny, who is not more zealous for a system than for truth)—that from all we read of Timothy it is to the last degree probable, that he was born after his mother’s conversion to the faith of Christ:—and then I say, that we have in Timothy an instance—(of what must indeed have been a *numerous* class in the Apostolic days)—of a Christian—not a *proselyte* to Christianity as the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, and so many others, were,—but born in connexion with the household of faith, and *brought up* from infancy as a disciple “in the instruction and in the admonition of the Lord.” (Eph. vi. 4.) But have we a single example recorded in Scripture of the Baptism of

any such Christians? Not one. Or any command for it? Not one. Or any reason *from Scripture* to suppose, that such were ever baptized? No: but on the contrary, every reason to conclude that they never were; from the plain difference of import which *their* baptism would have—at whatever period of their lives we could suppose them baptized—from the import, which the rite had in all the recorded instances, in which it *was* employed, and in which *the washing with water* marked the *transition* of the person baptized into outward connexion with the Christian body.

If indeed I supposed Timothy to have been born just before the time of his mother's proselytism to the Christian faith, I confess I should have no doubt, that her infant son was baptized along with his believing parents. But this is a point, which I find no occasion to argue with the Baptists; and which I therefore will not discuss with them. All I insist on is, that if he were born after his mother became a Christian, we have no scriptural ground for thinking that he ever was baptized; but sufficient ground for drawing the contrary conclusion:—and that whatever may be said of this particular instance, we are sure that there were *numerous* disciples in the Apostolic days of this class.

But here—O! how the thorough Baptist is up in arms against a principle, from which all the high-minded ungodliness of his religion revolts,—the ostensible discipleship of the little children of a believing parent! Why,—of what avail would be all the religious *experience* which he contemplates in himself,—all the soul exercises and workings through which *he* has become such a fine professor;—if his *little child* were to be viewed and treated as professing the faith of Christ, as much as himself?—a child too, which perhaps has never heard of the divine *decrees*, and is quite incapable of following the profound speculations of its parent upon that and other subjects:—a little child, which acknowledges (to be sure) the simple things it has been told, about Jesus Christ's having died for sin and risen from the dead;—but absolutely exhibits no extraordinary *seriousness* or *piety*,—shews more *delight* in its childish play than in *spiritual* exercises—in the long prayers and long readings of its parent;—and is often probably very bold! [naughty]—THE HYPOCRITE!—Do you start, and ask—whom I mean? the little child, or the parent?—O! which, *think you*, could I mean?

Well: I confess that it is not without some anxiety I shall wait to hear your mind upon this important subject. You seem to have avoided the topic in your last.—And do not mistake me. When I speak of the *Baptists* as rejecting and opposing the solemn duty of Christian parents, as enjoined in Eph. vi. 4, I would not insinuate that they are a whit more disobedient to that divine command, than the mass of *Pædo-baptist* professors—or (as they might be more justly called) *Pædo-rantists*. (Infant-sprinklers.) But the principles of the Baptists are *systematically* opposed to it. The duty indeed cannot be at all discharged, but by the believer of the Apostolic Gospel, kept through mercy in the view and under the influence of the uncorrupted truth.

I do not deny that many Baptists and others may give their chil-

dren a very *religious education* ; but upon their principles it is, and *must be*, in Antichristian lies. Let me ask you, my dear sir, what think you of the religious training of unbelieving adults, which goes on so flourishingly under the popular *preachers* and *ministers* of the day? that religious training, by which those false teachers attempt progressively to form into Christians persons, whom they do not consider as Christians already, and to engage them in Christian exercises and Christian acts. From the sentiments you have expressed upon the TRUTH, I should expect that you would view all this as I view it,—as a training of them in a system opposed to the truth. And what difference does it make, whether the person under this religious training be an adult or a child?

It is indeed well worthy your serious consideration, whether any believing parent can possibly BRING UP his child “in the instruction of the Lord,” and not view that child as a disciple of the Lord? But that is only half of the command; and most consistently followed by the injunction, that the Christian parent should BRING UP his children “in the admonition of the Lord.” You perhaps can say, whether an unbeliever be a subject for that admonition. But no:—the Baptist, or any religious professor acting on the Baptist principles, while engaged in the *religious education* of his children, views them commonly neither as believers of the Gospel nor as unbelievers: but just in that *middle* kind of character, in which the religious teachers view a great part of their flock,—as not yet converted, but in some stage of hopeful progress towards it. I shall be glad to know your mind distinctly upon that idea.

That the children of these religious professors,—even of those who speak the fairest language about the truth,—generally exhibit very little of the character of real disciples, and often manifest their ignorance and unbelief of the truth,—I am ready to admit. And it would be very marvellous, were it otherwise; considering that they are not brought up as the word of the Lord commands. But this I boldly affirm; that wherever the child—during the period of proper *childhood* in which it is under the parental care—does manifest decisive characters opposite to that of a disciple, and therefore inconsistent with its being treated as a disciple;—the evil may be traced to the *parent's disobedience and neglect*. Those who maintain the contrary, must charge the word of God with folly.

I shall not swell this letter beyond bounds, by enlarging further on this momentous topic. Whenever I receive your reply, I shall see what points and bearings of the subject may call for any additional remarks.

Meanwhile I remain, &c.

P. S. Just as I had concluded this letter, I received your note by * * *. I rejoice to find, that we are likely so soon to have an opportunity of personal communication. However, I dispatch this, that you may weigh what I have offered, against we meet; and that our conversation may take a more definite shape, from your being more fully in possession of my sentiments.

The brief account you give me of your friend A—— is pleasing;

that is, the present appearances seem hopeful. As to your *very serious* friend Mr. F——, who has left indeed your late body, but gone to the other meeting-house, what does it exemplify, but the lightness with which professors choose a religious connexion,—just as they would choose a suit of clothes. Antichrist finds it expedient to have a great variety and assortment of *churches* in his ware-room, to suit the *fancies* of all customers: and if the reasons were examined, which determine the various choices of different individuals—all alike eminent in the religious world,—they would indeed form a very curious catalogue. If you be ever connected with a Christian Church, you will find that it cannot enter into any competition of *attractiveness* with “the synagogues of Satan.”

But I cannot close this letter, without again suggesting to you a caution upon the earnestness of argument, with which you seem to be pressing upon others the subjects, on which conviction has lately been brought to your own mind. Remember, my dear friend, that *you* cannot carry conviction of any scriptural principle to the mind of another; no more indeed than you could either produce or maintain it in your own. And guard against the *continuance* of controversy with any, who continue to gainsay and oppose, after you have fully presented the subject to their attention, and have once plainly answered their objections. To continue it longer, would be but a gladiatorial exercise of disputation,—most unprofitable to them, and most injurious to yourself. You will meet with many religious characters, towards whom the wisest rule you can follow is “LET THEM ALONE.”

Dublin, March 31, 1819.

A SUFFICIENT REPLY
TO
MR. HALDANE'S LATE STRICTURES
UPON THE
AUTHOR'S LETTERS
ON
PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

— *As we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say.*—Rom. iii. 8.
Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake.—Luke vi. 22, 23.
I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.—Zeph. iii. 12.

[First Published 1821.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME time elapsed after I read Mr. Haldane's *Strictures*, before I could decide whether I should make any reply. When I, at length, determined on taking up my pen, I rapidly committed to paper the thoughts which suggested themselves, as I turned over the pages of his pamphlet, with little or no attention to order or connexion. What I then wrote I designed but as the rude materials, which should be afterwards digested and methodized: but I confess that, ultimately, I have done little more than transcribe them for the press.

In consequence of my absence from town, the printing of the following pages has been postponed for many months. They are now sent into public, with a full conviction that any offence excited by my *Letters on Primitive Christianity* will only be increased by the progressive development of my sentiments;—except with the few individuals who may be convinced of their truth, in opposition to all the workings of their own minds.

Such need to be continually kept in mind, that the doctrine of CHRIST is the same odious thing at this day, in the eyes of all the world, as it was of old. There is a day approaching, when all who believe shall be partakers of his glory. Let them, in the interim, be content to be partakers of his sufferings and reproach.

I have entitled this little piece—not—A Reply to Mr. Haldane's Strictures—but—A *Sufficient* Reply: because the major part of his work is occupied with subjects, on which I must decline all controversy with him. Indeed, it has been my study in general, to keep out of view every thing but that one fundamental topic, upon which Mr. H. has at length discovered that he and I are at issue; and upon which I am persuaded that he is at issue with the word of God.

London, January 4th, 1821.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO

J. A. HALDANE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

IN *thus* addressing you, I but express the friendly interest and concern which I feel for you, as one whom I have had the pleasure of knowing long, and from whom I have received kindness; but without designing to intimate the existence of the least unity of mind between us on the subject of DIVINE TRUTH. It is now several years since I have apprehended that some radical disagreement existed between us there. Your letters prove it to my conviction; and I should suppose will sufficiently clear you from the opposite imputation in the view of others.

When I published my little piece on Primitive Christianity, I was aware that—so far as it excited any attention—it would give much offence to all who did not believe the truths put forward in it. And contemplating with satisfaction the possibility that it might excite some public opponent, shall I own to you that I conceived the wish that you might be my antagonist? (Do not now confound this with a wish that you might be found opposing the gospel: for indeed it would have rejoiced my heart to find you taking a decided part with it.) I said to myself, “Mr. J. Haldane is a man of sense, and candour, and temper: as well as a conscientious man; and well acquainted with the various systems of doctrine current as evangelical. If he come forward to oppose, he will oppose with manly ingenuousness and intelligence; so as to afford a fair and desirable opportunity for the discussion of scriptural truth. He will not write like another who has taken the field against me.”

This, I assure you, was my imagination : but I have to confess my present conviction of its folly. It is very foolish in a disciple, to expect candour from *any* opponent of DIVINE TRUTH.

The task of answering your pamphlet, and scripturally exposing it throughout, would be in some views a very easy one ; but, in others—most tryingly difficult : its very facility presents such temptations to my wicked heart to vindicate *myself*, to seek my own glory under the pretext of asserting the divine, to employ that *wrath of man* which *worketh not the righteousness of God*. In what mind I may reply to you, is to myself a matter of solemn consideration : but what judgment you or others may form of it, is indeed of very little consequence. If you continue of your present mind, I am sure you will think that I continue to write in a *very bad spirit*.

If all the readers of your pamphlet would give an attentive reading to what I have already published on the various subjects, I might be quite content to pass by your STRICTURES in absolute silence. That cannot be expected : and I therefore avail myself of your publication as an occasion for keeping up that great controversy, which shall be continued from generation to generation, in spite of all the efforts of earth and hell to suppress it : till at length it shall be decided by HIM, whose cause it is.

As to your grossly calumnious misrepresentations of my sentiments,—(I use the expression deliberately)—the new mind in me forgives you from the heart. So great is what you justly term *the astonishing deceitfulness of our hearts*, that I am persuaded that in the most calumnious of them—you verily thought you were doing God service.

Do you ask me to justify the *severity* of expression, by which I have characterized your misrepresentations ? For a few exemplifications of them, turn to p. 113, in which you say—“ On his own avowal, his *religion* is purely *hereditary* :” —to p. 114, in which you speak of my *leniency* of language towards the most openly profligate characters, and my *preferring* them to others ; prefacing this with the words, “ But let me not misrepresent our author :—to do him *justice*, he speaks very *leniently*,” &c.—to p. 119, in which you plainly represent me as *denying the necessity* of a sinner’s *conversion* to God :—to p. 111 and 120, in which you say, “ Mr. W. *teaches* that *the truth* has so little influence on the mind, that,” &c. and again—“ according to his system it seems doubtful whether faith produces any effects.”

It would be very easy to prove, not only that my publicly avowed sentiments are not such as you attribute to me, but that (when you were carried away to pen these passages) you certainly knew them to be utterly the reverse. Whether the public circulation of such calumnies against a disciple be among the *evidences*, by which you arrive at a confidence of your being a believer, is a matter for your own consideration.

But do I *complain* of your misrepresentations ? This would ill become one that remembers HIM, who was indeed “ holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners ;” yet was charged by the religious professors of that day with being “ a gluttonous man and a

winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners:"—HIM, who expressly commanded, that we should "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," yet was accused of "forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar." Shall HIS followers complain of being misunderstood or misrepresented? Shall *they* expect to meet fairness or candour of opposition?

So far also from vindicating *myself* against the charge of antinomianism,—(I use the word now in the popular sense)—or against any other charge of evil you could bring against *me*; I have to acknowledge that *my own heart* is at this day, and I am persuaded will continue to the last, one mass of antinomianism and pharisaism in combination:—while *it* would prompt me to make even that abasing acknowledgment with light indifference, or from high-minded vanity. In short, *it* is essentially opposed to the whole revelation of the only true God, in all its parts, and in all its bearings. I have to confess this continually before God; while I have to bless Him for that glorious revelation of his name, which leaves such a wicked creature no legitimate motive for the vain attempt to conceal it before Him, or in any degree to cover my sin;—no legitimate motive to present myself before him in any other character, than that which He knows to be *my own*,—whether I will acknowledge it or not.

Those who have never seen, or who are not kept in the discernment of the fulness of hope towards God, which is afforded by the gospel to the chief of sinners AS SUCH,—in that and no other character,—are no judges at all of the influence of this hope, or of any one of the real characters of *the new mind* in the believer. "The natural man *cannot* know the things of the spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) And such men, especially those of the most religious sort,—when they see a disciple contending earnestly for the faith, in opposition to all the ungodly principles by which *they* enforce strictness on their followers,—will always conclude that he is aiming at some unscriptural "laxity of conduct." (p. 17.) And I am sure, my dear sir, that with your present views I could not convince you that I am not, or that my principles do not lead to it, but by giving up the unequivocal confession of Christ, and sacrificing his truth to gain your approbation.

In the following pages, I shall indifferently either address you in the second person, or speak of you in the third.

I remain,

Your real well-wisher,

J. W.

A SUFFICIENT REPLY, &c.

SECTION I.

Purification of the *heart*.—The new mind the exclusive work of God, both in its first production and in its subsequent continuance.—Human responsibility.—Natural character of fallen man—Total and never-ending dependence of the LORD's people upon him.—Moderate and high Calvinism.—An absolute identity of evil in all men at all times.—The author's assertion of this not new to Mr. Haldane.—Mr. H. and the author at issue on the gospel itself.—Mr. H. invited to a closer contest.—The narrowness of bigotry imputed to the author at least consistent.—Remarks on the petition, *Lead us not into temptation*.—Trial of ourselves, and trial of our faith, distinguished.—State of probation.—The new covenant.—Remarks on Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot.—Remarks on Haggai ii. 10—14. and on Leviticus xvi. 15—19.

IT IS GOD, the LIVING GOD, (in whom all live, and move, and have their being, even while they know him not,) that gives to his people whom HE saves “the spirit not of fear”—of the fear that hath torment—“but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim. i. 7.) And he gives them this mind of the Spirit, opposite to the flesh or their own mind, by discovering to them his own glorious Name, or character, as testified in the word: so that *in believing* the great things of God there reported unto all alike, their hearts are purified; that is, they have an *inward* cleansing of their consciences, and a good hope before Him.

“If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;”—if these types and shadows of the better things then to come produced that ceremonial and outward cleanness, which was required in the worshippers under the levitical law;—“how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God,—(suffering for sins once the just for the unjust)—purge your *conscience*”—(yours who believe the voice from heaven declaring that God *is* well pleased in *Him*)—“purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. ix. 13, 14.) His people are “a people near unto him” indeed; (Psalm cxlviii. 14.) but they are “made near by the blood of Christ” alone; (Eph. ii. 13.) that Lamb of God, who *hath* “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. ix. 26.) And they know not the meaning of that language, where God is said to “purify their *hearts* by faith,” (Acts xv. 9.) who conceive of it as importing some process of ‘moral husbandry,’ (p. 8.) by which themselves or their own natures are improved, by which their own hearts—their own ways—their own thoughts—become good, or become a whit less essentially evil than they were before. Those who think so, and are either striving for such an improvement in themselves, or contemplating with satisfaction its supposed existence, are assuredly turned aside from the faith and hope of the gospel, if ever they professed it.

“There is none good, but one, that is, God.” He only has power

to convey that divine truth, in its divine majesty, to the conscience of the sinner: and he conveys it by the light of "the gospel of his glory," so as to cast down all the high thoughts and vain imaginations, which exalt themselves in our hearts against him. HE is good;—good "to the unthankful and to the evil." And those who know his Name will acknowledge and rejoice in him in that character, as "the justifier of the ungodly;" and will own *his* Name alone excellent, and *his* praise above heaven and earth:—while others will go on contending for the excellence of various human characters like themselves, and complaining of the *bad spirit* which animates the disciples of Christ.

I have endeavoured to mark, as plainly as I can, how the new mind is produced in the believer by Him "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness." But I am sure that *I* cannot explain its nature to those who have it not. They will be still saying (as they did of old) after the plainest language that can be employed—"how long dost thou make us to doubt? Tell us plainly." Yet let me here add, in the same open manifestation of my sentiments at which I aim throughout,—that I hold the continuance of that new mind in the believer each moment as much the sole effect of divine power and sovereign mercy, as its first production;—that every thought and working of his own heart—so far from contributing as it were to maintain and strengthen it—is in direct opposition to it:—that it is no such thing as is put into his own keeping and improvement; but the continued work of GOD the SAVIOUR fulfilling in his people all the good pleasure of his own goodness, and holding their souls in life, by keeping them in the remembrance of his glorious Name. Thus He accomplishes the declared counsel of his own mercy,—“ I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.” (Jer. xxxii. 40.) And if it were not so, I could have no hope that I shall not apostatize from the truth, and perish in unbelief.

Do any object?—this man represents us *as machines*, and denies human responsibility. How can it be that God *works* all *their works* in his people, if his people be *voluntary agents*?—How?—How is it that they live; yet not they, but Christ liveth in them? (Gal. ii. 20.) I shall undertake to answer that, and similar vain enquiries, when the objector tells me how it is that a blade of herbage grows. A creature and a sinner, I am surrounded on every side with mysteries unfathomable; but which disturb me not. The ONE thing revealed from heaven is sure, and is enough; while I own myself every moment dependent on the God of heaven for keeping me in the discernment of his revelation, and the conviction of its certainty.

But as to human responsibility, (to inadequate views of which Mr. H. attributes much of that harshness and severity which characterize my writings—p. 17.) let me attempt to explain my sentiments. I hold it, in one sense, so unequivocally and broadly, that while I assert *my own* utter incapacity for any good work or thought, and the essential character of *myself* as evil and producing nothing but evil continually, I equally assert that if God were at any time for this evil to cast me off from his presence, or—(what must issue in that)—to leave me

to myself and my own ways, he would be justified in his judgment, and righteous when he condemned. I could not answer him, if he were to call me to this responsibility, for one of the workings of my proud and wicked heart,—even while I write in vindication of his truth. And if he willed my most righteous condemnation, it would take place assuredly by my only being left to *myself*. I should then walk in a way, which perhaps might *seem right* unto me; but the end of it would certainly be death. (Prov. xvi. 25.) Well may such a creature rejoice that salvation *belongeth* unto JEHOVAH;—rejoice in the remembrance of Him who made himself *responsible* for the ungodly, and is set forth as that propitiation for sin, through which God is just while he justifies such; yet remains just in condemning all who believe not his word.

What you, sir, mean by human responsibility, or what your more adequate views of it are, as you have forbore to say, I shall forbear to conjecture. But I have thus stated, as clearly as I could, that sense in which I hold, that no creature of God can shake it off,—unless he can overturn the Almighty Governor from his throne, or alter the essential nature of his gloriolous being, as opposed to all that is evil. I have also, in what I have stated of the work of faith as from first to last the work of God, afforded you probably an exemplification of the *extreme*, to which you say I carry my views of the work of the Spirit. (p. 17.) But allow me to say, that when you next take up your pen, it would really be better that you should state distinctly what your own views are on these subjects, and what is erroneous in mine, than rest satisfied with throwing out vague undefined and unsupported assertions to the ready credence of your readers.

Man, as a *sinful* creature, is naturally alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him. In a state of apostacy from the *only true* God, all his thoughts, and ways and works, even in their most refined form, are evil and only evil continually. He aims at being as God unto *himself*; and pictures to himself a god like unto himself. His own will, his own wisdom, his own strength, his own fancied goodness, are the basis of his hope of recovering that favour of heaven, which his conscience tells him he has forfeited, and of averting that deserved condemnation, the apprehension of which he is not able altogether to discard. This is the spring of all *natural religion*, and of all those perversions of christianity, which are but natural religion disguised in the phraseology and forms of revealed. In this state, “except the LORD of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and made like unto Gomorrah.” (Isa. i. 9.) In the salvation of that remnant, He—and He *alone*—will be glorified: and in that salvation which is *his* work, he makes a discovery of his glory, which—but for this revelation of it—never could have been known or thought of by any creature. Man just displays his own proper character in all his treatment of that revelation. The wisdom of God is foolishness to him: the glory of God is vileness in his sight. He turns the very word of life into an instrument subsidiary to his pride of heart,—subsidiary to the attainment of some fancied excellence in himself. In spite of all the clearness and fulness and glory of the revelation of God, no man on earth would

ever have believed its report, nor after believing it would have continued an hour in the remembrance and discernment of it, if God himself did not convince of it those whom he has ordained to eternal life. And in them nothing but divine mercy and divine power are displayed, continually making his "arrows sharp in the heart of his enemies," (Ps. xlv. 5.) continually overcoming their *evil* with his exuberant goodness, continually bringing the proud rebel into the blessedness of total dependence on the living God.

The *new mind* in them is wholly good; as *their own mind* is wholly evil. The language of the former evermore is—"some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." (Ps. xx. 7.) "Blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory!" (Ps. lxxii. 19.)—Receiving not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, they "know the things which are freely given to them of God;" (1 Cor. ii. 12.)—that eternal life which is his gift in Christ Jesus, (Rom. vi. 23.) and assured alike to all them that believe:—not who believe (as many seem vainly to suppose) some fancied supplementary revelation about themselves,—that they are the peculiar favourites of heaven,—but who believe those scriptures of truth which are none of them of private interpretation. The new mind of faith—the mind of God—in them, I consider substantially the same as that which shall fill and work in them, when they shall exchange faith for sight, and having put off these earthly tabernacles shall have no contrary principle of the flesh lusting against the spirit. (Gal. v. 17.) God *hath* now "saved them, and called them with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.) God is glorifying himself in leading them and keeping them, as the flock of his pasture, the people which he hath chosen for his own inheritance: while he marks to them *their own* character continually in that testimony of his word—"my people are bent to backsliding from me." But they are *already* "come unto mount Zion and to the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels:" (Heb. xii. 22.)—and when the veil drops which separates that heavenly society from their view, they will be as absolutely dependent upon the keeping of their God and King in glory, as they are here; and with the perfect consciousness of this their eternal blessedness will be connected. God will then be ALL IN ALL. (1 Cor. xv. 28.)

There is a thing called *low*—or *moderate*—calvinism, as contemptible in its philosophy, as it is insidiously ungodly, in all its origin and principles. But there is a thing called *high* calvinism also, which—while it often assumes a much more plausible appearance,—while it appears to assert strongly and decisively many of the most important truths of scripture,—is (I am persuaded) but a more deceitful perversion of the gospel; substituting for that real revelation of God which is gloriously sufficient to give peace and confidence towards him to all who believe, a presumptuous confidence on the assumed favoritism of the individual; and disconnecting in his mind the ideas of departing from the living God and destruction, the ideas

of walking after the flesh and death. The lie that is at the bottom of such a profession, is often not to be detected by any examination the most close, of the avowed sentiments: while it is manifested to the believer's view by a spirit opposed to the *fear* of the LORD, and subjection of the conscience to his word. There is in short no end and no limit to the varied forms, in which the deceitfulness and ungodliness of the human heart works—under a nominal reception of the gospel—to corrupt its truth and becloud its divine glory.—Nothing but the indwelling of that unadulterated truth, kept in the mind by divine power, can detect these innumerable snares, or deliver the disciple from them,—can lead him walking in a mind contrary to *his own*, awake to observe and to abhor the wickedness of his heart, to *walk in the light*, to *walk with God*, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh.

Among the principles which you hold up to the scorn and indignation of your readers,—(without attempting however any confutation of them)—that is one, that I view myself—*my present self*—as not a whit better than the vilest of malefactors, nor a whit worse than an apostle. Now, sir, if the apostle Paul said truly, when he said—“in *me*, (that is, in my *flesh*) dwelleth no good thing;” (Rom. vii. 18.) if in all—whether believers or unbelievers—whether walking after the flesh or led by the spirit—the flesh (or their *own* hearts) be a principle of absolute and total ungodliness, lusting against the spirit and the spirit against it, so that “these two are *contrary* the one to the other;”—then the truth of that position which you think so monstrous inevitably follows: and the man who conceives of his own heart as either better or worse than that of any other man, only proves that he does not believe the plainest testimonies of the word of God.

Much as you have avoided the explicit avowal of your own sentiments upon this and other subjects, the reader of the passage in your strictures to which I refer, (p. 112, 113.) can have no doubt of your general meaning; that you think *yourself* a much *better* kind of creature than the dying blasphemer, and probably not nearly *so good* a kind of creature as a dying apostle; and that you consider this progressive improvement in the character of the flesh, or of ourselves, as what is imported in scripture by “putting off the old man.” You say that I speak so *plain* a language, that “if any are *now* misled by my doctrine, they have themselves alone to blame.” (p. 122.) Well: I must plainly say, that I think it important to mark your sentiment so distinctly, in order that no disciple may longer be deceived by *you*.

But give me leave incidentally to remark, that you are the last person who could justly represent me as now at length speaking a plain language upon this subject: for, many years ago, even while I was a clergyman and in the establishment, I published the same views of it in language just as plain. And you know that I did; for you were at least instrumental in having a large edition of the work printed in Scotland. I refer to my Expostulatory Address to the Methodists of Ireland, and my letters to Mr. KNOX which it occasioned. In that work I thus express myself:—

(Expostulatory Address, p. 13.) ‘The methodistic idea of sanctification is, in plain English, this: that the corrupt nature of man becomes in believers less and less corrupt, through the influence of divine grace aiding their exertions; till at length it becomes wholly good, perfectly purified from all evil, &c. Now I scruple not to pronounce the whole of this idea unscriptural. According to scripture, I am not warranted to consider it any part of the work of grace to *mend* our fallen nature. *That* nature is as bad, as wholly evil, in a believer as in an unbeliever,—as bad in the most established believer as in the weakest;—as bad in Paul the apostle, just finishing his course, and ready to receive the crown of righteousness, as in Saul of Tarsus, a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the church of Christ.’

Again, addressing Mr. KNOX in support of these sentiments,—(and he was not more indignant at them than you now appear to be)—I write thus: (Third letter to Mr. KNOX, p. 88, 89, 90.) ‘As our natural *disbelief* of the glorious gospel marks the character of *our own* nature or fleshly mind, in our unconverted state; so when we are brought to the knowledge and belief of the truth we are born again, *not of the will of the flesh*, but *of God*. This *faith* is the continued work of *his* good spirit, in opposition to all the tendencies of *our own*.—These two are *contrary* the one to the other; the latter not a whit more disposed to God, or capable of producing any good fruit, than it was when we walked after it and fulfilled its desires, &c.—By this time, sir, you may perceive that when I—“state, in terms of scripture, that believers grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour”—I speak of a work very different from any, in which the man *himself* is supposed to be *mended*. In the walk of faith, the old man—or our own nature, remains corrupt as it ever was; and not the less intrinsically and totally corrupt, because sin “shall not have dominion” over those in whom Christ reigns by his spirit, who are not under the law but under grace. (Rom vi. 14.) And therefore it is that believers are called continually to put off the old man, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to deny themselves,—and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,—in which all things are become—not mended—but *new*. (2 Cor. v. 17.)—In what a different view must they regard their corruptions, who consider them as the remaining infirmities of a nature, *diseased* indeed, but *convalescent*, from the light in which they appear to the believer, who sees in the smallest of them the workings of the same deadly nature—of his sinful flesh—wholly evil and *enmity against* God,—which formerly reigned in him, when he walked after the course of this world and was led captive by Satan at his will; from the continued tendency of which to lead him from the living God he needs to be continually *kept by the power of God*, through faith unto salvation!’

Upon comparing the language which I have employed on this subject, in the work from which the preceding quotations are borrowed, with my language in the letters on Primitive Christianity, which have provoked your strictures, I confess myself at some loss to say which is the more plain. But if the latter have more success-

fully conveyed my meaning to you or others, I am glad of it. In referring to the fact of your having materially promoted the circulation of that former work, in which the same sentiments are so explicitly asserted, believe me I have no wish to throw any impediment in the way of your making your peace with the religious world, if you continue to desire it. I have too much reason to fear that you *never* concurred with these sentiments; else you would not now be opposing them:—to fear that the work which contained them, and substantially all the same principles that you now stigmatize as ‘Mr. W.’s Gospel,’ in opposition to the apostolic, (p. 113.) was recommended in your view by some of the other characters which I now observe in it with shame and abhorrence: while they appear there indeed with a strange inconsistency of evil, from their striking contrast with the important truths contained in the same volume.

You have admitted, sir, that we are at issue on the GOSPEL itself; and I shall have to mark that in further particulars. Permit me then to suggest to you,—(if you continue of your present mind)—that the popular preachers and their followers may fairly require of you some more important service, and some more decisive expiation of your former offence in having even *seemed* to countenance ‘Mr. W.’s gospel,’ than that light distant skirmishing which appears in your strictures:—a skirmishing so distant that, while it abundantly manifests your hostility to the thing, looks as if you were more than half afraid to grapple with it. I invite you to the close and full discussion of the subject: than which none is more important. I have published so much, and in language so plain, that I think you can be at no loss to understand *my* sentiments,—as far as they can be understood by those who are not convinced of their truth. Come forward with a manly and explicit refutation of them, or attempt at refutation of them; and I can assure you that, for one of your religious associates, whom you may lose by the clear developement of *your* meaning, you will gain thousands. This attempt on your side is the thing which I most desire;—next to that which would above all rejoice me—your being found to take a decided part with the despised truth of a despised but glorious Saviour.

While I am on this subject permit to add one remark; which I would recommend to the serious attention of yourself and our readers. In the piece on which you animadvert, while I disavowed the idea that the Churches with which I am connected comprehend all the real disciples in this country, I avowed that they do comprehend all whom I know or can acknowledge as such. This *bigotted* sentiment was followed in my letters with a plain statement of the scriptural grounds, on which it rests;—a statement which you did not find it convenient to examine and refute. Instead of this, as usual, you bring forward to the scorn of your readers, a garbled sentence from one of my letters,—represent me as having found no other gospel than that which is *held* by all the inhabitants of this country, and indignantly exclaim—*is this the man who declares* that he knows or can acknowledge none as real disciples but those connected with him in church fellowship? (p. 113, 114.) The grossness of misrepresentation, with which you have embodied this question, I may leave to your

own conscience, and to the observation of any attentive and intelligent reader of my pamphlet. But it is a more important matter to which I would now call your attention. You perceive and avow that I hold a different gospel from you, or—as you say—from the Apostle Paul. (p. 113.) You perceive also that the odious gospel which I hold is held indeed by very few;—*perhaps* by none in these countries but those with whom I am in Christian fellowship. Am I not then at least consistent in acknowledging these alone as all the real disciples whom I *know*? Would Paul, think you, have acknowledged any as disciples—however religious and devout,—who professedly held a different gospel from himself?—Yet, if you had found me ready to acknowledge you an ‘excellent man,’ and others of the same mind with you, ‘excellent men,’—I have little doubt that you would have been ready to return me the compliment, in spite of our holding different gospels. And *if* this be so, Mr. Haldane, are you standing in the faith of Christ? You may charge me with censoriousness, with harshness and severity of construction, (p. 8.) for expressing this opinion. But it is the honest avowal of an opinion forced on me by the whole tenor of your pamphlet: and there would be no true kindness towards you in concealing it.

But I have been betrayed into a digression, from which I now return; and would offer some further remarks on the continued character of *ourselves*, or our flesh, as altogether and unalterably evil, even after knowing the truth. It is (as I have shewn in my letters to Mr. Knox) the ground of all those admonitions and exhortations to disciples—to deny themselves, to mortify the flesh with its corruptions and lusts. I add, that it is the ground of that petition, in which they are taught to pray to their heavenly Father—“lead us not into temptation”—or *into trial*. Let me intreat your attention, and the attention of our readers, to some enlarged observations on the import of this petition; from which it may appear that none *can* put it up, but the believer of that doctrine which is at present so disgusting to you.

A *trial* of any thing is calculated—not to alter the nature of the thing tried—but to manifest its nature; to develop and expose to view its intrinsic characters. From this self-evident principle it follows incontrovertibly, that the trial of any thing intrinsically evil, is but adapted to manifest its evil; and of any thing intrinsically good, to manifest its goodness. Now when disciples are taught to pray, “lead us not into trial”—into a trial of *ourselves*, it is as much as if they prayed,—“Let us never be left to manifest what is in ourselves.” And the petition altogether proceeds upon the view of that *total evil* of their own character, any trial of which could only issue in the clearer exposure of the evil. This is a view, which nothing but the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the person and work of Jesus his anointed, gives to the sinner at first; and which nothing else maintains in him to the end. All the disturbances of the sinner’s natural conscience,—all his frettings and strugglings against some forms of his iniquities,—proceed upon utter ignorance of the true God, and ignorance of what it is for a creature to have departed from him.

If I were to suppose this ignorance removed at present from the mind of any sinner, but without the discovery of the glorious gospel to his mind, the effect would be nothing *good*, and nothing short of that blackness of despair which reigns where hope never comes. But in the divine testimony of Him who "came into this world to *save sinners*," even the chief, by giving his own life a ransom for many, there is a discovery made of the divine glory, such as no man ever thought of or could conceive;—such as no man—clearly as the report of it is given in the scriptures—will believe, till he is convinced of its truth by the same power which commanded the light to shine out of darkness. When any sinner is convinced of it, the mind of faith, which credits the divine declaration—"This is my beloved Son in whom I AM well pleased,"—is a mind not HIS OWN, but opposite to and opposed by every thing that issues from himself. He is "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That mind sees the foundation which God hath laid in Zion, and rests upon it; the way which is opened unto the holiest for sinners, and draws nigh by it;—the salvation which belongeth unto JEHOVAH, and rejoices in it;—the rich provision of his house, and is satisfied with it. It is a *new creation*, which God has wrought; and which in his faithfulness he upholds by the same power. But it is not *any alteration or improvement*, in the old fabric of the sinner's own heart and nature. He possesses in himself, and in his own heart, but one unmixed and unalterable character of evil, and contrariety to God. His flesh was depicted under the levitical law by that house infected with the plague of leprosy, (Lev. xiv. 45.) for which there was no cleansing; but the stones of it were to be broken down, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house, and to be carried forth out of the city into an unclean place.

And let it be remarked once for all, that when I speak of our *flesh* and its incurable evil, I mean not the mere organization of our corporeal frame, but that which I may allow indeed to be connected with the former, while I must leave to the philosophers of this world every vain speculation about the nature of the connexion:—I mean *our own* minds, including all our own thoughts, our own desires, and every motion of our own wills:—in short, every thing which constitutes our proper *selves*. That description of man and of "*every imagination of the thoughts of his heart*," as "*only evil continually*," (Gen. vi. 5.) holds as true at this day, as immediately before the flood; and (I maintain) holds as true of the believer as of the infidel.

It is upon this view of *themselves* that believers are taught to deprecate all *trial* of themselves: as it is upon the view of God, as the revealed justifier and Saviour of such sinful creatures, they are taught to pray, "Father! lead *us* not into a trial of ourselves, but do thou deliver *us* from the evil." Of *this* trial or temptation it is said in scripture, "let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James i. 13, 14.) And—"do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in *us* lusteth

to envy?" or, (as the word probably here imports) to the provocation of the LORD. (James iv. 5.)

But, as I intimated above, there is another and a blessed trial, to which the Lord does call his people, and from which they are called not to shrink; the *trial of their faith*, of that precious faith which is his gift and his work. Of this the apostle Peter speaks, when addressing believers as those whom God "according to his abundant mercy had begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven" for them,—as those who were "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time,"—he adds, "wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the *trial of your faith*, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 3—7.)

This trial is the trial of a thing that is *good*; for it is of God: and it is to *his* praise, and honour, and glory, that it will be found to issue, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. i. 10.) The proprietor of what he knows to be fine gold fears not to expose it to the hottest furnace, in order to manifest its characters. Even so the living God puts into the furnace of affliction and tribulation for his name's sake that precious faith of his elect, the work of which he fulfils in them with power: (2 Thess. i. 11.) while the word marks their patient endurance under the influence of his truth as an evident token of perdition to his adversaries, but to them of salvation, and that of God. (Phil. i. 28. 2 Thess. i. 5.)

You, sir, know that it is many years since I have opposed the popular notion of *sanctification*, as a progressive amendment wrought in our own hearts,—an improvement into something good of that which was naturally evil. And I must say that those, who think they have attained any *such* sanctification as this, cannot consistently or seriously pray—"lead us not into trial." They might rather wish for a trial of themselves, to manifest the happy change which has taken place in their own character. But while they are engaged in the pursuit of its attainment, or in the contemplation of its supposed existence, they are vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds: and (as I have shewn in my remarks on the parable of the pharisee and publican) they differ nothing from the pharisee in modestly attributing its production to what they call the grace of God; the pharisee also *thanking God* that he was not as other men. And thinking so, surely he could not deprecate any circumstances that would *try his character*, and by trying it bring out to light those traits of excellence which distinguished him. All the unbelieving world,—so far as they take any serious view of their situation here as creatures accountable to God,—take some such view of it.

That the present state in which men are placed is "a state of probation,"—in which they are put upon shewing how they will behave themselves, in order that their final destination in another world may

be thereby determined,—this is a principle so widely diffused, so long and so universally prevalent, sanctioned by such great names of philosophers and divines, and indeed so interwoven with the natural pride and ungodliness of man, that I do not at all wonder that the few, who set their faces against it in maintaining the principles of the divine word, are generally reckoned—(so far as they engage any attention)—wilder than lunatics, and more wicked than infidels.

I am aware that there is a gross form, in which the principle of a *probationary* state is held by Arminians, Pelagians, Socinians, &c. which shocks the evangelical world. But indeed, sir, there are variously refined forms of the same principle, which are perfectly consistent with the most evangelical language, and with the highest repute for evangelical doctrine. To the acknowledged unbeliever something perhaps undistinguishable from the gospel is zealously preached;—something so *like* the glad tidings of great joy to sinners which the scriptures proclaim, that one would be ready to suppose that the preacher intended that glorious thing. But follow his doctrine, and too abundant proof will be afforded that he means only by his gospel something—which places the sinner in a state of probation after all,—a step-ladder on which sinful man can be raised to a capacity for acquitting himself well in the trial.—(Methinks you exclaim—‘here we have more specimens of Mr. W.’s keenness, and severity, and *bad spirit*.’ Why, my dear sir, against what is my keenness and severity of language employed? Is it not against sentiments, against principles, which I do plainly avow, that I consider ungodly and destructive?—ungodly, as altogether perverting that revelation which the only true God has made of his glory;—and destructive, as hardening sinners in their unbelief of the divine word. Fight, as keenly as you please, in defence of the principles which I attack. But object not to my attack, that it implicitly invades the character of ever so many *excellent men*, who uphold them.)

It ought to cool the ardour, with which men adhere to the idea of a “probationary state,” to reflect on the instances, which are divinely recorded, of the result of such a probation. In the case of the angels, who sinned and kept not their first estate,—and in the case of the first human pair, created in the image of God,—the *trial* afforded a striking evidence of the utter vanity of the creature, even at best, without the keeping of the Creator. Yet while sinless creatures have been proved to be inadequate to the trial; sinful creatures, in the pride and blindness of their hearts, rest their hopes on a supposed capacity to sustain it.

But let us look at the terms of that *new covenant*, according to which all who have been saved since the fall have obtained salvation;—while it is since the accomplishment of the work of the Lord Jesus, its great head and surety, that its divine glory has been fully developed in his gospel. Let us look, I say, at the terms of that *new covenant*, as quoted from the prophet Jeremiah, by the apostle to the Hebrews. (Jer. xxxi. 31.—34. Heb. viii. 7—12.)

“Behold, the days come, saith JEHOVAH, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day

that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant *they brake*, although I was an husband unto them, saith JEHOVAH;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith JEHOVAH, I *will* put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and *will be* their God, and they *shall be* my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know JEHOVAH: for they *shall all* know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith JEHOVAH: for *I will* forgive their iniquity, and *I will* remember their sin no more."

Is there any thing here, which countenances that current idea of a probationary state? On the contrary, is not the idea put down by a plain intimation, that any possible terms proposed to the sinner—as the conditions, on his fulfilment of which his justification in the sight of God shall turn,—are "weak through the flesh,"—inefficient for his justification on account of his corrupt nature, —and can but issue in his condemnation? And in place of all such conditions whatsoever, what is the one glorious thing presented to our view? what, but the majestic promulgation of JEHOVAH'S own work, the declaration of the sovereign counsel of his own mercy, to be accomplished by his own power, as the justifier of the ungodly, and the Saviour of the lost? It is in perfect harmony with this, that we are assured—"whosoever believeth shall be saved"—whosoever believeth the word of the LORD;—and that sinners are called "to hearken diligently to Him, to eat that which is good, and to let their souls *delight* themselves in fatness," even the fatness or rich provision of *his* house: (Is. lv. 2.) while it is by the miracle of his power, that the ear of any sinner is opened, and kept open, to obey his call.

Men consider this world as the theatre left to them for pursuing their own schemes, and acting the several parts which they assume or imagine assigned to them. But those whose eyes are enlightened to see the great things of God, declared from heaven in the scriptures, behold in it the theatre on which *his* glorious work of saving unto the uttermost his elect is going on, in opposition to all the powers of earth and hell;—a stage, therefore, which shall be taken down when that work is completed. All the displays made on it of *man*—of themselves or any other men—they see marked with one unvarying character of ungodliness, blindness, hardness of heart, and unbelief: while on that dark ground they see displayed the glory of JEHOVAH, and of his revealed mercy, reigning triumphantly through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, where sin hath reigned unto death. (Rom. v. 21.) Well may they glory in his holy name, sing aloud of his righteousness, speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power; while they come to him continually with the suitable petitions which he has taught his children, and which he is faithful to answer—"Abba! Father! forgive us our trespasses:—lead *us* not into trial; but do thou deliver us from the evil."

My views of the perfect sameness of evil character in the hearts of believers and unbelievers,—in their own hearts,—may be farther illustrated and confirmed by a few observations on the apostles Peter

and Judas Iscariot. The latter is commonly considered as an extraordinary monster of wickedness: and an awful exhibition indeed of human wickedness he afforded. But when his history is viewed in the light of the truth, it will be seen that, "as in water face answereth to face," so his heart was but a counterpart to Peter's—of believing Peter's,—of Peter's after he was pronounced by his divine master blessed in the knowledge of that, which flesh and blood could not reveal.

Judas professed himself a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, altogether under the same false views of the Messiah's kingdom,—as of a temporal and worldly character,—which commonly prevailed with all his countrymen, and which certainly continued to infect all the apostles, till the descent of the Holy Spirit. He beheld the mighty works which shewed forth themselves in him; and, like Simon the sorcerer, wondered. He was endowed with the power of working miracles himself; and no doubt gloried in it: and we may well suppose that great was his zeal, and warm his attachment to Jesus, when he returned with the rest joyfully reporting—"Lord! even the devils are subject to us through thy name." In having the *bag* also, and bearing what was put therein, (John xii. 6.) he saw himself put into an office just congenial to his taste: and we may suppose, often contemplated with delight the expected greatness and glory of that kingdom, in which he should be arch-treasurer; and must have largely shared in the indignation of the other disciples against the sons of Zebedee, when they aimed at securing to themselves the places of chief honour under the king of Israel. (Matt. xx. 24.)

But in attending on the man of sorrows, and hearing his words, Judas must have continually observed characters at which he would stumble; which would cool his attachment, and counteract his sanguine hopes. He had no teaching from above, giving him to see in his master "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of mercy and truth." He had no ear opened by divine power to the gracious words—the lessons of heavenly wisdom,—which fell from his lips: and must have soon begun to apprehend that he had made a foolish choice, in attaching himself to one so meek and lowly; against whom all the greatest, the wisest, the *most excellent men* of his country were opposed in bitter animosity. The same words, which the new mind in others found to be "the words of eternal life," must have been to him fretting thorns and irritating goads, to the wounding sharpness of which conscience would give a personal keenness. Soon also finding it announced that one of the twelve, whom Jesus had chosen as his apostles, was known to him as a traitor;—finding all that passed within his heart "naked and open before the eyes of him with whom he had to do;"—his original attachment must have rapidly given place to exasperated hatred. Till at length the *idea* of changing his party was embodied in a resolution; the resolve was hurried into execution; and he offers himself to the rulers and pharisees as their willing agent for betraying Jesus of Nazareth: and—having once made the offer—is contented to receive for the work even that paltry payment, which was probably so far below what he had expected.

The man, who sees in the whole of this sketch any display of human wickedness, to which he conceives that *he* in the same circumstances—only left to himself—would not have been competent,—knows not himself, nor what is in man. But I say more. *If* Judas had been a vessel of mercy, ordained unto glory,—and Peter not; we have abundant evidence that Peter and Judas might justly have exchanged parts, after Jesus was betrayed to the Jewish rulers.

Peter—the self-confident Peter—was but left for a time to manifest what was in his own heart: and did he then exhibit any better heart than Judas—any different character of mind from his? No. In opposition to the most explicit warning and repeated admonition, he thrice denies his master;—he repeats his denial even after the cock has crowed, and the interval of a whole hour has elapsed;—and ultimately confirms his denial with curses and with oaths.

View him at that moment,—with all the hell of irritated conscience in his breast: and admit for a while the *supposition* that *mercy* had not interfered, that divine power had not revived the dormant mind of faith;—in short, that he had been still left to *himself*. In spite of all his curses and his oaths, let other by-standers insist upon the fact which he has denied, and challenge him to a more decisive disproof of it, by his joining in the cry of—“crucify him.” Was there any thing in his own heart, if left to its uncontrolled influence, that would not have desperately plunged to accept the challenge?—or, that would have withheld him from closing the scene of guilt (like Judas) in the blackness of despair, by going his way and hanging himself?—While, on the other hand, if we *suppose* it to have been in the divine counsel that the traitor Judas should have been made a monument of saving mercy and power,—he needed only to have his mind enlightened to believe the real nature of that solemn transaction on mount Calvary, in order to find peace to his guilty conscience, and to be fitted—under the influence of this divine truth—for appearing as the fearless witness of that Jesus whom he had betrayed.—“Cursed is the man that trusteth in *man*, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from JEHOVAH.” (Jer. xvii. 5.)

I am aware that the views for which I contend, of the utterly evil character of the heart of man, in *all alike*, and at all times, must appear to the mass of religious professors not only subversive of what *they* call sanctification, but also subversive of their confidence and joy. Those who know of no gospel to a sinful creature *as such*, but hold under the name of gospel something which they speak of in high terms as joyful to those who have somehow thrown off that character, must naturally be shocked at the view, which exhibits believing Peter as *himself* exactly the same utterly wicked creature with Judas Iscariot: for they cannot conceive what peace or confidence in drawing nigh to God *such* a creature can derive from the gospel. But let my readers bear with me, while I offer to their attention two passages from the scriptures of the old testament, which may throw further light on the important subject:—the one from the prophet Haggai; (ii. 10—14.) the other from the levitical law. (Lev. xvi. 15—19.)

The jewish people—a picture of man in all ages and nations—were “haughty because of the LORD’s holy mountain.” (Zeph. iii. 11.)

They conceived of themselves as possessing some intrinsic sanctity of character above other nations, on account of their connexion with all the holy things of that law, of which they were made the depositaries. To rebuke this vain idea, the prophet Haggai is directed to propose two cases to the priests concerning the law. In the first case, described in v. 12. the question is propounded, whether any thing common or unclean became ceremonially holy by contact with that which was holy? The priests answered from the law, *no* :—such contact communicated no holiness to the thing that was common. The next question proposed is,—what was the effect, when any one ceremonially unclean touched a thing that was holy? And the priests pronounced according to the law, that it became unclean :—the ceremonial uncleanness was communicated by such contact to the thing that had been holy.—“Then answered Haggai, and said, so is this people, and so is this nation *before me*, saith JEHOVAH; and so is *every work* of their *hands*, and that which they offer there is *unclean*.”

In this declaration there is read to every one of us an abasing lesson, confounding to the pride of our hearts. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” it. Creatures so defiled in themselves, and in all *their* works, and in all *their* offerings,—and defiling every thing connected with them,—would indeed be without hope, and for ever shut out from the presence of an holy God, were it not for that wonderful and adequate provision of his redeeming mercy,—that blood of atonement by which believers are *sanctified*, (Heb. xiii. 12.) and presented spotless before Him who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil.” Let those who would see this revealed in the gospel to the guilty and the sinful, turn to the second passage I have referred to. Lev. xvi.

There we find the high priest under the law, on the great day of expiation, directed to sprinkle the blood of the goat—the sin-offering for the people—upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat; and so to make an atonement *for the holy place*, and the tabernacle of the congregation, (v. 15, 16.) and in like manner to make an atonement for the altar that was before the LORD, and to cleanse it, “putting the *blood* upon the horns of the altar round about.”

What! make an atonement for the holy place! and for the tabernacle of the congregation! and for the altar! Were not these holy? Were they not the institutions of God? What need could these have of cleansing?—The reason is assigned: “he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the *uncleanness* of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their *uncleanness*.” And—“he shall cleanse the altar, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.”

This was the exclusive work of the *high priest* under the law,—that law which had “a shadow of good things then to come, but not the very image of the things;”—that law, whose sacrifices were multiplied, and repeated year by year continually, at once to mark the inefficacy of the blood of bulls and of goats to *take away sin*, and to direct the true worshippers to the true hope of Israel,—even to Him whom God hath “set for *his* salvation unto the ends of the earth,”

—who offered himself *once* through the eternal Spirit unto God, bearing the sins of many; who *hath* put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and abideth a priest continually; bringing unto God those who at no moment—at no period—could come unto the most High, but through that blood of the covenant whereby they are *made near*. **HERE** is a hope that maketh not ashamed. But indeed those who persist in cherishing any other hope or confidence, but what this affords to the guiltiest and most unclean, shall “perish in the gain-saying of Koreh.” (Jude 11.)—This expression of Jude—(I may incidentally observe)—I have heard applied—profanely misapplied—to those, who gainsay the vain and ungodly pretensions of the *clergy*,—those *soi-disant* priests of Christendom. Reader! it has a far different—a higher and more solemn import.

The divine glory of the subject, which I have been attempting to treat,—“grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ” where “sin hath reigned unto death,”—makes it a painful thing, Mr. Haldane, to descend to notice your particular strictures upon what you call Mr. W.’s Gospel. But let me just tell you, although you say I ‘teach that the truth has so little influence on the mind,’ that it *seems doubtful* according to my system ‘whether faith produces any effects,’ (p. 111, 120.)—let me just tell you, that if my faith, or belief of this despised gospel, were but “as a grain of mustard-seed,” kept abiding in the view of these great things of God, I should be kept walking with him as Enoch walked, rejoicing in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory,—and at the same time walking in that reverence and godly fear of his holy name, which fills the angels before the throne, while they veil their faces with their wings, and cry—**HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!**

SECTION II.

Faith no act of the mind.—Mr. H.’s position, that a sinner is justified by his believing the truth.—His bad metaphysics.—Impossible to ascertain what Mr. H. means by believing the gospel.—Remarks on the nature of faith.—How far an unbeliever can understand the gospel.—John vii. 18.—Mr. H.’s charge that I keep my faith in the background.—Remarks on Hebrews xii. 2.—Imputed leniency of language about the profligate and irreligious.—Prov. xiv. 9.—Sketch of a double-minded evangelical professor.—The gospel contrasted with the systems of doctrine held by the religious world.

MR. HALDANE might seem at times somewhat infected himself with the leaven of that odious thing, which he calls Sandemanianism; as where he appears, however feebly and cautiously, to vindicate Glas and Sandeman for ‘affirming that faith is simply the belief of the truth,’ of the truth testified in the scriptures: and where, in opposition to those *excellent men* who (he tells us) ‘undervalued the simple belief of the truth as nothing better than the faith of devils,’ (p. 11.) he pronounces that it is ‘most improper to charge men with denying the work of the Spirit, because they hold that faith is nothing more than the belief of the truth.’ (p. 15.)

I fancy, however, that the popular preachers and divines will have no serious quarrel with the person who holds this, but at the same time avows that he views them as excellent men, though they 'undervalue the simple belief of the truth as no better than the faith of devils.' I must however avow, in spite of the bad spirit which it discovers to Mr. H. that the man, who does really so undervalue the simple belief of the truth, is an unbelieving man, undervalues and despises the divine truth revealed for the obedience of faith,—and pours contempt upon the only true God who reveals his glory in it.

But the attentive reader of Mr. H.'s strictures will in other parts see abundantly enough, to vindicate him from all imputation of Sandemanianism even on this subject;—a subject, on which certainly a man may be doctrinally correct, and yet ever so far from the discernment of the glorious truth revealed in the scriptures.

In page 73. Mr. H. observes, as one of the *extremes* into which Glas and Sandeman ran, that they 'maintained that, if we are justified by any act of the mind, the grace of the gospel is made void, and salvation is in fact by works.' One would suppose, that this must be maintained most confidently by all, who do not make some mysterious distinction between an *act* and a *work*. I should expect every believer and unbeliever alike to admit, that if we are justified by an *act* of the mind, we are justified by a *work* of the mind. At all events, I must maintain it with Glas and Sandeman, though in Mr. H.'s view it exposes us to the imputation of ignorance.

But the reader, who turns to the context of the passage quoted, will see plainly that Mr. H. supposes that Glas and Sandeman considered faith as *some act* of the mind;—in which view he thinks himself agreed with them;—while, as far as I know any thing of their writings, he here quite mistakes their meaning. Any such view of faith may well consist with the popular ideas of a sinner's *trying* to believe,—earnestly setting about the act or work of believing,—and praying to be *enabled* to perform it. But all such ideas are utterly inconsistent with the view of faith, as the *mere credence* of the testimony given in the scriptures concerning the Son of God. In merely *believing* a thing declared to me, there is no *act* of the mind at all; but a conviction produced on the mind by the evidence, which the report appears to me to carry with it. And accordingly, in the case of any human testimony, to talk of setting about the act of believing it, or *endeavouring* to credit it, would be rejected as nonsense.

However this be, Mr. Haldane, meaning by faith or the belief of the truth some act of the mind about the truth—maintains, against Glas and Sandeman, that a sinner is justified by believing the truth; and gravely assures us that it is an unmeaning distinction to contrast this with his being justified *by the truth believed*. I must suppose that Mr. H. does not so idly play upon words, as here to use the term *justified* in any other meaning than—accepted as righteous in the sight of God. And as to the expression, *justified by the truth believed*, I know not and care not whether Glas and Sandeman have used the phrase: but it will be less ambiguous to say—what they certainly meant—*justified by that of which the truth testifies*,—the work of

righteousness finished by the Lord Jesus Christ in his obedience unto death.

And now having guarded as well as I can against ambiguities of language, let me ask Mr. H. does he seriously expect that any of his *Christian* readers will receive his *ipse dixit*, his bare assertion, that it is an unmeaning distinction to say that the thing, by which a sinner is accepted as righteous in the sight of God, is that perfect work of his righteous servant in which *JEHOVAH* is well pleased, and *is not* the sinner's credence of the testimony concerning it?—Such an assertion may be lightly and confidently put forward; and will be eagerly received by many, who wish not to keep their faith *in the background*, as you say the Sandemanians do. (p. 73.) But the assertion might be truly pronounced *unmeaning* from its absurdity, if it did not convey a meaning most hostile to the truth.

At the same time I must remark, that in one of my last interviews with Mr. Haldane, when I mentioned this point of his doctrine as one in which he and I were broadly at issue, and appeared vitally to disagree,—he seemed to answer with a smile that I mistook his meaning, and that on this subject there was no real disagreement between us. I marvelled at the time, and I marvel still: as his language on the point seems to me most distinct and unequivocal. But let me invite Mr. H., when he resumes his pen, to employ some of that 'plain language,' for which he gives me so much credit, in declaring what he means by the assertion, that it is *by* a sinner's believing the truth that he is justified. And let him not so trifle with the subject, as merely to quote ever so many passages of scripture, in which justification by faith is mentioned, and repeating his remark—that "there is not a vestige of jealousy on the subject in the word of God." There is a jealousy, or apprehensiveness of being misunderstood, which would ill comport with that majesty of divine truth which pervades the holy scriptures: while they abundantly inculcate on disciples a jealousy for the recorded truth, and against every adulteration of it by the corrupt interpretations of men. And you must be aware, Mr. Haldane, that the advocates of the grossest form of anti-christian doctrine might as reasonably refer me to the passages of scripture, in which the justification of a man *by his own works* is expressly mentioned; might as reasonably, I say, refer me to such passages,—repel all examination of their *import*,—gravely pronounce that any proposed contrast between their true interpretation and his falsehood was an unmeaning distinction,—and add, that "there is not a vestige of jealousy on the subject in the word of God." Let me hope that Mr. H. will not employ a mode of evading the question, which might be equally adopted by the socinian and the papist.

But in a note which occurs (p. 127.) we have a farther evidence, that Mr. H. is indeed no Sandemanian, even where he might at first view be suspected of having some tincture of that odious doctrine. He there tells us, that — '*whether belief be the mere assent of the understanding*, depends on the subject. If this be purely intellectual, the understanding alone may be concerned: but if our belief refers to any thing in which our happiness or misery is deeply involved, the heart or affections are necessarily brought into exercise.'—And

after this bit of bad metaphysics, he immediately guards against the detection of his error by adding,—“at all events it must be improper to clog the doctrine of Jesus with *metaphysical subtleties*.” With the latter sentiment I most cordially concur: while I must assert the propriety of exposing the false subtleties, by which any men attempt to obscure that doctrine.

The position—that the heart or affections are necessarily brought into exercise by the belief of any thing, in which our happiness or misery is deeply involved, and believed to be so,—is in itself a very innocent truism, which I fancy no one has been so wild as to controvert. But as it stands in Mr. H.’s note, it is obviously put forward as implying—that the belief of an *important* testimony is in itself a different thing from the belief of an unimportant one: and, by inference, that to *believe the gospel* means a different thing altogether from believing an ordinary testimony about a matter, in which our happiness or misery is not at all involved. A man is assured by a person, on whose veracity he has the fullest reliance, and whom he knows to have studied the subject, that the sun is many thousand times larger than the earth, and more distant than the moon. He *believes* what he is told, and perhaps is very indifferent about it; because the sun will give the same light and heat to-morrow, whatever be its real magnitude and distance. The same man is told by the same person that his house is in flames: he *believes* it, and runs in trepidation to extinguish the fire. Now, according to Mr. H.’s metaphysics, though we employ the same language in both cases, and say that he *believes* each of the things reported to him, we do not mean the same thing by his believing the latter report, as by his believing the former;—because the former relates to a subject purely intellectual, but the latter to one which nearly concerns his welfare! If this be not clogging a plain subject with metaphysical subtleties,—or rather metaphysical absurdities,—I know not what is.

But indeed its absurdity might well be passed by without notice, were it not for the wickedness of the plainly intimated application; as if the mere belief of the testimony in the scriptures meant something different from the belief of any other testimony. We all know equally well what is meant, by *believing* a thing declared to us, in ordinary matters. But what Mr. H. means by *believing the gospel*, as he does not mean this, I confess myself wholly at a loss to conjecture: and it remains for him plainly to say.

As to the language of those to whom Mr. H. alludes, ‘who affirm that simple belief is no more than *the assent of the understanding*,’—while I decisively oppose his correction of them,—I make very little of their explanation. An untutored peasant will know, without any explanation, what I mean by asking him—*do you believe what I have told you?* But if I proceed to *explain* my question, by gravely telling him that I mean—does your *understanding assent* to what I have told you? I should not wonder if he became puzzled to reply. It is most important to mark, in opposition to all the corrupt glosses of theologians by which they have darkened the counsel of God, that the faith spoken of in scripture as connected with salvation, is neither more nor less than—the *belief of the testimony there*

declared concerning the Son of God. But any attempt to explain what it is to *believe* a testimony declared to us, is at once utterly superfluous, and only calculated to produce perplexing obscurity. But while I deprecate all metaphysical subtleties on the subject, as much as Mr. H. can, I shall add one or two remarks which I think not unimportant; without troubling myself to inquire whether they are likely to be called *metaphysical* or not.

Some metaphysical writers, as Mr. Locke, have applied the term *belief* to a state of mind different from what I mean, when I speak of believing the gospel;—a state of mind that is perhaps rather that of *scepticism*, in which the person wavers between opposite doubts whether the thing reported to him be true or false,—though he is perhaps more or less *inclined* to think it true. Perhaps it would be juster to say, that the person in such a case thinks the thing *probable*, than that he believes it, or is persuaded that it is, as has been reported to him. However this be, it is in the *latter* sense that I would be understood to use the word *faith*, or *belief*, on the present subject. And in this sense, the *understanding* of the testimony delivered to us is certainly included. If I tell any thing ever so true to a person, who does not understand the language in which I speak to him, it would manifestly be absurd to talk of his believing me. Or if, from his imperfect acquaintance with the language which I employ, he mistakes what I mean to convey to him as true,—let him ever so fully credit what he *thinks* I tell him,—yet he cannot be said to believe what I really do tell him. It is plain therefore that the faith of the gospel includes in it—the understanding of that divine testimony in its one and unchangeably true import or meaning.

But I must add that it includes more. A man may *understand* what I testify to him, so as to have a correct idea of what I mean to convey, without being convinced that what I tell him is true. He may yet altogether discredit my testimony, or remain dubious about its truth. On this account, I have never approved of that refinement of language about the faith of the gospel, which some have employed in justly maintaining the *simplicity* of its nature;—as if it consisted in our having an *idea* of God and of his salvation corresponding with the truth declared in the scripture. This I think an unwarrantable refinement, and language at least dangerously ambiguous. I have a correct *idea* of a Centaur, but do not *believe* that such a creature exists or ever has existed. And I must maintain, that the gospel of Christ is a testimony so simple, that it can be intelligibly explained to any man, who will lend an ear to what is said upon the subject: though to convince the mind that it is true—divinely true—is at all times the exclusive work of that only living God, whose testimony it is, and the sword of whose spirit is his own word.

Accordingly I know at least one deist, who has often appeared to me in conversation to have as correct an *idea* of the gospel as myself; and has gone so far as to assert, that—if the Bible be the word of God—what I have offered as the doctrine of the scriptures is true;—accompanied perhaps with some *suspensions* that there may be more truth in it than he was willing to admit. When I say that

he *understood* what I meant to put forward as the gospel, certainly I do not suppose that he saw its glorious nature,—that he discerned in it those characters of divine majesty, of wisdom and power, and righteousness and mercy in combined perfection, which it really bears. No: that is an understanding of the things of God, of which the natural man is utterly incapable,—which the spirit of truth alone can convey to the mind and maintain in it,—and which is inseparably connected with the *belief* of the truth.—I do not conceive that the persons, whose occasional refinement of language I have noticed, mean any thing different from what I have stated upon this subject; and I hope they will consider my remarks with no unfriendly eye.

As to all Mr. H.'s talk of our anxiety to 'keep faith in the back ground,' (p. 73.)—to 'keep our discernment of the truth entirely out of sight,' (p. 128.)—I do not wonder at it: for we dare not bring it forward to the ground on which Mr. H. places it, as that by which—in whole or in part—we are justified in the sight of God. But it happens oddly enough, that others have as strongly objected to my doctrine for *making faith every thing*; because I maintain that whosoever *believes* what is declared to all alike in the scriptures, is justified and shall be saved, but that whosoever *believes* it not shall be condemned. I may leave the opposite charges to neutralize each other.

Mr. H. charging me with 'keeping our discernment of the truth entirely out of sight,' puts the question to me—whether I can entirely forget my own discernment of it?' (p. 128.) I thought I had spoken a sufficiently distinct language on this subject in the 363rd and 364th pages of my letters. He is much mistaken, if he conceive that I share in that shyness which some feel, to avow themselves believers of the gospel. While kept standing in the truth, I never can have any difficulty in avowing that I believe it; and that, believing, I have eternal life. Indeed I consider myself as avowing this, whenever I assert what the gospel is. But let me observe to Mr. H. that an assertion—that I am a believer—is not the gospel; and that the most confident persuasion—that I am a believer—is not the faith of the gospel. And let me repeat what I have sufficiently intimated in the letters, that when any object the most interesting is really seen, the person who sees it is occupied by the object, and not by the consideration of his own discernment of it. Mr. H. therefore has no just cause to blame me, for putting forward to my fellow-sinners that glorious truth of God, which none can discredit without making Him a liar, instead of any position about *my* believing it, which any man may question even without questioning the truth of the gospel.

Let me not dismiss this part of Mr. H.'s publication, without marking—what I can seldom mark—my full acquiescence with his important observation, that 'some perhaps have been elated by the consideration, that they understand better than others that gospel, which is intended to stain the pride of man:—and that 'we may attempt to procure *honour one of another*, by what we call clear views, as well as by any other thing in which we strive to excel.' O! it is

awfully true : and any professor of the truth, who thinks that such is not the continual tendency—that such are not the workings of his own heart, is deceiving himself. “He that speaketh *from himself* seeketh his own glory.” That divine saying, in its real import, draws as black a portrait of *ourselves*, as any language of mine on the subject that has most disgusted Mr. Haldane. *There* is the picture of vain sinful man ; *self* his centre, his aim, his idol,—even while he pretends to be most zealous for the LORD.—“But he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is *true*, and *no unrighteousness* is in him.” In that picture, the believer will recognize only the character of that peerless one, the man Christ Jesus, who humbled himself and *took upon him* the form of a servant, and as the servant of JEHOVAH fulfilled all righteousness. The mind which alone seeketh the glory of God is the *mind of Christ* ;—exhibited in divine perfection in HIM, and (through the power of the truth influencing them) exhibited in all of them that believe, just in proportion as they are kept in the faith of him. Even as it appeared in him, their great forerunner, given as “a leader and commander to the people,” (Isaiah lv. 4.) “the author and finisher of faith,”* (Heb. xii. 2.)—it was the mind of FAITH,—of perfect unvarying faith in the word of JEHOVAH. He could say, “I have set JEHOVAH *always* before me.” (Psalm xvi. 8.) The law of his God was in his heart ; and in him was nothing opposed to it. HE therefore could say—“*I do always* the things that please him.” In believers it is the same mind ; but opposed to every thing which springs from themselves, and which is properly their own. So far as they are kept holding the faith, and giving diligent heed to the things which they have learned, they “walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” But there is

* The words thus rendered are literally—*the leader and perfecter of faith*. They present the Lord Jesus as him, who has *gone before* his people in that walk of faith in which they are called to follow him,—and who has marked it in complete *perfection*. Many, whose judgments are regulated more by the systems of men, than by the scriptures of truth, appear shy of viewing him and unequivocally speaking of him in that character, lest, forsooth, it should trench upon his true and proper GODHEAD ;—the assertion of which is indeed inseparable from the maintenance of the truth. But this is the vain wisdom of man, making the revealed truth of God a subject of his speculative theology, in consequence of not seeing its glory as bringing salvation to the guilty and the lost.

The two views of the Lord Jesus,—as GOD over all blessed for ever, one with his heavenly Father,—and at the same time true and very man, subject to the Father even as his members are called to be, and *made like unto his brethren* ;—these two views are presented to us in intimate combination, when it is declared (Phil. ii. 7, 8.) that he *humbled himself* and *took upon him the form of a servant* :—an expression which could not be applied to any created being ever so high and glorious.

But these views are never truly seen, till the sinner's eyes are opened to the scriptural testimony of that *work*, which he came into the world to accomplish, and of that *office* which he holds exclusively ; the work of bearing the iniquities of many, and putting them away by the sacrifice of himself in their place ;—the office of *bringing unto glory* those many sons given unto him out of an ungodly world. The discernment of this, while it satisfies the soul, confounds our pride ; and checks the vain refinements of subtle investigation, in which others will go on wantoning without fear,—glorying in the thought of their supposed discoveries about the mode of the Divine Being, though they are utterly unable to comprehend their own.

no moment when the flesh—*their own* evil nature lusteth not; or lusteth not against the Spirit. In all who believe not the truth; as testified in the word of God, that flesh *reigns*,—though often in forms the most specious and esteemed. The most religious and devout opposer of the one unadulterated gospel,—yes, and the most sincere, is “sowing to the flesh, and shall of the flesh reap corruption;” just as much as the most profligate and profane. They both alike—but in some points the former *peculiarly*—exhibit the portrait of the wicked, drawn by the Spirit of truth in the 36th Psalm. “They flatter themselves in their own eyes, until their iniquity be found to be hateful. They set themselves in a way that is not good, and abhor not evil.” “They only consult to cast HIM down from his excellency,” (Psalm lxii. 4.) whom God hath crowned with glory and honour, and set over the work of his hands. (Psalm viii. Heb. ii.) They—more especially the devout and religious opposers of the truth—“practise hypocrisy, and utter error against JEHOVAH, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.” (Is. xxxii. 6. compared with v. 2.)

Mr. H. talks (p. 114.) of my speaking ‘very *leniently* of those who are altogether regardless of *religion*’;—of my giving ‘the *preference* to the laughing swearing drunkard, over the serious conscientious religionists of the world:’—and he chooses jocularly to conjecture, that it is ‘perhaps because the profession of the former is *purely hereditary*.’—although in the passage of my letters, from which he makes this garbled extract of my expressions, and (as usual) misrepresents their meaning, I have distinctly stated the reason, why I view the latter as—in one particular—making even the more awful display of human wickedness. How far that warrants him in saying that I *prefer* the former, and speak very *leniently* of their character, is for him to consider, and for our readers to judge.

But let Mr. H. know that I really consider them both alike on a perfect par,—as being in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity,—dead in sin,—and the wrath of God abiding on them. If I do not fill my pages, and display my zeal, in declamations against drunkenness, and adultery, and profane swearing, &c., it is because I know that the persons, who most walk in such abominations, are more or less conscious of their evil, and do not think of vindicating their course as good. If I plainly testify against and expose the equal evils, which reign in the serious conscientious religionists of the world,—it is because I know that they are utterly insensible to them; that although the end of the way in which they walk is death, yet it *seemeth right* to themselves. (Prov. xvi. 25.) Nor would I (while in my right mind) for a thousand worlds, be found engaged in the same work with Mr. Haldane,—of building them up in their confidence that they are *excellent men*, notwithstanding their opposition to the gospel of Christ.

I should wish the Christian reader maturely to weigh that quotation, which Mr. H. has given from the beginning of my 5th letter,* in

* In that quotation there is an awkward misprint of my words. “To see the character of the most grave,” &c.—instead of—“to see the character [i. e. the character of the *fools* who make a mock at sin] *in* the most grave,” &c.

p. 19. of his strictures; and to compare it with the use he makes of the passage in p. 114. It will at once afford an instance of his decisive opposition to the plainest principles of scripture, and of the *ingenuousness* with which his opposition is conducted.

However offensive what I have said in that passage, (on Prov. xiv. 9.) I am bold to pronounce that it is what no believer of the gospel can deliberately controvert. That Mr. H. means to controvert it, though he does not venture on any direct and close attack;—that his indignation is excited by it, and that he exhibits it for the purpose of exciting the indignation of his readers; no one, who attentively peruses his work, can question. Thus are “the thoughts of many hearts revealed” by the doctrine of Him, who is still “set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” The person, who controverts that passage of my letters, must certainly conceive—in opposition to what is there asserted—that the *only fools* who make a mock at sin, are “the jolly dissolute irreligious folk around us:”—must therefore conceive that all “the most grave, religious, and devout of the world,” are not among the *fools* spoken of, but are *wise* unto salvation: and must therefore conceive that all the various doctrines, which such hold under the name of gospel, are alike good and true;—at least so far that they will alike conduct their several adherents to eternal life. To any one of that mind, the controversy about the great truth, which is still kept alive by the “sect every where spoken against,” must indeed be very annoying. And no wonder that Mr. H. thinks it hard and strange, to pronounce any man accursed, who preaches another gospel than the apostolic. (p. 99. 114.)

We may see also the nature of the *evidences*, by which—according to Mr. H.’s views—a man is to satisfy himself that he is a believer. ‘Am I sufficiently grave, religious, and devout?—No; I am not.—Well: I must try and become more grave, religious, and devout; that I may be a believer.—Or—yes; I am very grave, very religious, and very devout.—Then all is well. Thank God that I am not as other men are.’—But let Mr. H. take care. Certainly these evidences may equally satisfy the conscience of the pious papist, mahometan, or hindoo.

Mr. H. says (p. 114.) that I ‘rail against the gospel professed not only by the great body of the people of this country, but also by the evangelical, the religious, the devout.’ Railing is a very evil thing; and a weapon most unsuitable for a christian on any occasion to employ. When Mr. H. confirms his assertion, by adducing any instance in which I have employed it, I trust I shall take shame to myself for the evil. But I must tell Mr. H. that the plainest exposure of anti-christian lies, or the most unequivocal testimony of their deadly nature, does not constitute railing: and that the circumstance of those anti-christian lies being maintained by multitudes the most religious and devout—and reputedly evangelical—only increases the necessity of plainly exposing them.

I must also say—however it may expose me to the imputation of railing, of a bad spirit, &c.—that this insidious talk of *religion* and *devotion* in the abstract, as things intrinsically good,—and the sentiment that views the religious and devout, merely as such, with a

more favourable eye than the profligate and openly profane,—imbody in them the principle of infidelity;—the principle that it is of no essential moment *what God* men worship and serve, if they but worship their god with ardour and serve him heartily.

That Mr. H. would not avow this principle, I am sure. That he would shrink from looking at it broadly in his own mind, I think highly probable. But it is a solemn fact, that there may be notices in the mind of something like scriptural truth, producing something like a scriptural profession of it; while yet all the leading principles, which *actually* influence the professor's strictness of conduct and excite his zeal, are in direct inconsistency with the truth which he seems at times to talk of:—an inconsistency which he strives to cover from his own conscience. Without any such perception of the glorious gospel as alone produces the *new mind* according with it, he may yet have such suspicions that there is a divine truth in its declarations, as will excite him to do and to say much of an evangelical character. But never seeing the hope there revealed to those that are *without God* and *without hope* in the world, so as to be satisfied with it and trust himself to it,—he may be prompted to all his diligence in religion by principles and motives altogether fleshly and opposed to the gospel; while he will naturally regard, as the attack of an enemy, every attempt to expose their opposition. He may think himself doubly safe, and eminently wise;—sufficiently evangelical, in case the gospel should be true; and sufficiently good, in case it should not. But sooner or later such professors shall discover their mistake. Such professors—such evangelical professors—are as keen adversaries of the gospel of Christ, as those who make no evangelical profession; and they are at the same time much less candid opposers of it.

When Mr. H. adds, in the passage last referred to, that I 'have not found any other gospel than that which *they* [the evangelical, religious, and devout] *hold*,'—I might leave the gross assertion to be refuted by his own language elsewhere, when he speaks of what he calls *my gospel* as distinguished from his own, or from what he considers truth. I might leave it to be refuted by the whole tenor of his pamphlet; in which the gospel that I have put forward manifestly appears to excite his indignation and disgust,—even while he is most shy of encountering it with open and manly opposition. But his assertion presents one of those occasions, of which I am always glad to avail myself, for distinctly contrasting that gospel, which I find in the scriptures, with the systems of doctrine held in this country by multitudes the most religious and devout, and nominally evangelical.

In the scriptures I find it declared—that Jesus Christ came into this world to *SAVE sinners*;—effectually and unto the uttermost to save creatures wicked, ungodly, and lost:—that He holds the office of *giving* ETERNAL LIFE to all whom the Father hath given him, and *bringing unto glory* those many sons with whom He took part in flesh and blood. Is this the gospel held by multitudes of devout religionists, who conceive of a Christ who came to put all men into a *salvable state*?—in which the comparatively good and well-disposed may save themselves, and contrive to scramble to glory,—if they avail themselves sufficiently of the *aids* supposed to be afforded for the purpose.

In the scriptures I find it declared—that Jesus Christ came to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself;—that He *has finished* that work in which JEHOVAH is well pleased, and on account of which God is glorified in *justifying the ungodly*. Is this the gospel held by the multitudes of devout religionists, who have nothing *joyful* to tell those whom they consider wicked and ungodly?—by those who think that a sinner is at least in a very *hopeful* way, when under the disturbance of a guilty conscience he is anxiously enquiring—“what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?—what will JEHOVAH accept for the sin of my soul?—with what will he be well pleased?”—by those who urge that *infidel* inquirer to various exercises and various efforts, for working out his own salvation, and getting his sin removed,—under the specious name of seeking to *win an interest in Christ*? Is this the gospel held by any of those evangelical professors, who in fact “deny that Christ has come in the flesh,” by putting the sinner upon attempts to do something in that work, which it is divinely declared that CHRIST *has finished*? Or, is the essential contrariety of the two doctrines reduced to a sameness of import, because some of those men affect a character peculiarly evangelical, by talking of the thing that remains for the sinner to do, in order to make his peace with God, as *very—very little*?

In the scriptures I find the gospel—which reveals the glory of God in that salvation which is HIS work—consistently declaring as the heirs of that salvation, and possessors of the eternal life which is his gift, all—without difference or exception—who *believe* the divine report. Is this the gospel held by the thousands of devout, religious, and evangelical professors, who—as you tenderly express it—“undervalue the simple belief of the truth?”—who blaspheme that belief as the *faith of devils*; and set it aside as an unimportant thing, with which a sinner may perish, in order to make room—for what?—for something, the meaning of which—although for ages they have been preaching sermons and writing books about it—they have never intelligibly explained, nor satisfactorily settled even among themselves:—for something under the same name, by which some of them intend a mystic godly exercise of the mind about their gospels; and others, a venturesome confidence about a thing nowhere declared in the scriptures; but which *becomes* true by their *believing* it true,—a venturesome confidence that *they* are among the elect, the sheep for whom Christ laid down his life.

In the scriptures I find it declared—that the sinner, who believes not the one unchangeable gospel there testified from heaven, knows not the *only true* God whom it reveals, and *cannot* call upon Him;—that his very *prayer* is *abomination*; and that, until he is “given repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” he remains in the gall of bitterness and under the power of darkness. Is this the doctrine held by those, who teach *unbelieving* sinners—whom they themselves consider as yet destitute of saving faith—how they may in this state pray, so as at least to bid fair for being heard with acceptance? Is this the doctrine held by those who inculcate a something under the name of *repentance*, which they themselves consider antecedent to *faith* and preparatory for it?

No; Mr. Haldane. In the systems, which overspread the world under the name of evangelical, every phrase of scripture connected with the gospel of Christ has long been wrested out of its scriptural import, and employed to support a doctrine opposed to the truth of Christ. Faith, repentance, grace, atonement, sanctification, &c. are *words* that continue in abundant use: but the things put forward and inculcated under these phrases are religious lies of the father of lies. And the time has long come, since that prediction has been fulfilled, in which we are warned that “men—(men certainly under the christian name)—will not *endure* sound doctrine; but after their own lusts—(the several tastes and fancies of their ungodly hearts)—shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall *turn away their ears from the truth*, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.)

In your making a common cause with them,—in your endeavours to harden them against the reproofs of the word, and to excite their indignation against its offensive truths;—I would not disguise from you that you are presented to my view, as maintaining a character—and engaged in a work—the most awful. Nor is its awfulness lessened to my view by all your zeal for making them baptists, or for making them more devout. Whether in making this avowal I *judge* you, or manifest *contempt* of you, the day is coming which will discover; and those alone are competent to conjecture, who know the scriptural meaning of *judging* and *despising* others. Certainly, *if* I think your heart a whit worse than my own, or view you as a whit more worthy of condemnation than myself,—I *am* walking in that fleshly mind opposed to the faith of Christ, the end of which is that those who so exalt themselves shall be cast down, and shall receive judgment without mercy. To be involved in that righteous condemnation at any time, I should need only to be left to *my own* proud and wicked heart. And such is its deceitfulness, that it would be abundantly capable of combining that high-mindedness and vanity, with the clearest language, and keenest contest about truths—the most glorifying to God and abasing to sinful man. Well is it for such a sinner, that the gospel is indeed glad tidings of great joy to sinners—*as such*; publishing a salvation which belongeth to

JEHOVAH.

SECTION III.

Mr. Haldane's assertions.—Character of the Pharisees.—Indisputable truth of the author's statement.—Mr. H.'s attack of it.—Hypocrisy. Scriptural meaning of the term.—Sincerity.—The practice of all unbelieving religionists corrupt, and their religion a pretence.—Covetousness.—Mr. H.'s merry anecdote.—Mr. Sandeman's severity.—Specimen of his worst spirit.—Calm expostulation with Mr. H.—He is invited to the bold discussion of a point truly important.

MR. HALDANE'S introductory letter and the quotation from it, which he has prefixed as a motto to his pamphlet, led me to look for some distinct attack upon the *doctrines*, which I have asserted as constituting the gospel of Christ; and for some explicit avowal of the doctrines which my opponent holds. But it is marvellous, how cautiously he abstains in general from such a manly procedure. Indeed in his concluding letter also he talks very confidently of *having shewn*—not only that my 'views of the truth are *defective and inadequate*'—(what I would be very far from denying)—but that my 'sentiments, on matters of fundamental importance, are *directly opposed* to the doctrine of Christ.' And so odious and disgusting to the heart of man are the sentiments which I have avowed, that I am sure all Mr. H.'s readers, except a very few, will be most ready to give full credence to his assertion.

But really one of the chief difficulties I find in replying to him is, that from beginning to end of his work he scarcely even attempts to shew what he tells us he has established. He *ASSERTS* indeed that my 'views of human responsibility are inadequate;'—that I 'give a very partial and inadequate view of the work of the Spirit;'—that 'I *seem* on that subject to go into the opposite extreme to those who oppose the work of the Spirit;'—that I 'misapprehend the meaning of such texts as Isaiah lxx. 1, &c.' But he does not even *attempt* to shew, what my errors on these subjects are. He makes up however for this omission, by abundant testimonies against my bad spirit; and abundant insinuations—or more than insinuations—that according to my doctrine the grace of God—(that is, the divine mercy revealed in the gospel)—does not teach the believer "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world." These gratuitous assumptions, with some corresponding misrepresentations of my meaning, the most gross, constitute the chief part of Mr. H.'s attack upon my *doctrine*.

But there is one topic, on which Mr. H. enlarges; and on which he labours to prove that those whom he calls Glasites, and myself, take 'a very distorted view' of scripture;—namely, the character of the *pharisees*. On this ground I gladly meet him: while I cannot but reflect—how readily my own heart would turn the discussion into a vain contest for the prize of superior knowledge. The discussion however is a truly important one.

Mr. H. quotes my observation on the pharisees, that ‘ they were the *strict religious professors* of the day, honoured by all the people for the outward regularity of their conduct, for their earnest zeal towards God, and for their extraordinary closeness of adherence to—what they conceived to be—the principles of the divine law :’—and again—‘ the ordinary traits of outward morality and religious strictness—which really did distinguish the pharisees. They were not in these respects *as other men*, nor *as the publicans*.’—Now really it is marvellous, how any one, the most moderately acquainted with the letter of the scriptures, can controvert the accuracy of these statements. If the pharisees were not the strict religious professors of the day, how comes it that Paul uses this language?—“ after the *strictest* sect of our religion I lived a pharisee.” (Acts xxvi. 5.) If they were not looked up to and honoured by the mass of the people, as the standards of religious strictness, whence came that question? “ have any of the rulers or of the pharisees believed on him?” (John vii. 48.) If their *outward conduct* were not regular and what is called moral,—if they were not exempt from the open and acknowledged vices of the publicans,—how comes it that Christ himself speaks of them as “ *making clean* the outside of the cup and of the platter?” and comparing them to “ whited sepulchres which indeed *appear beautiful* outward,” expressly declares—“ even so *ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men*?” (Matt. xxiii. 25, 27, 28.)

Accordingly, Mr. Haldane himself, although he plainly quotes those statements for the purpose of controverting them, does not venture to mark what part of the statement he denies. But then he is shocked at the idea of such characters—strict and zealous professors of religion—being treated by the Lord, as he admits the pharisees were, with peculiar severity of rebuke. “ I know you, that ye *have not the love of God* in you.”—“ If God were your father, ye would love *me*.”—“ Ye are of your father the devil: and the lusts of your father ye will do.”—“ Wo unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites.”—“ Publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of God *before you*.”

And now the grand object is, to interpret all this in such a way, as to exempt all the *strict and zealous professors of religion* at this day from the imputation of being like to the pharisees of old.—I really have no anxiety nor occasion to push the resemblance beyond this simple and truly incontrovertible statement:—that under a professed acknowledgment of the word of God, men may abound ever so much with a religion and religious zeal, which shall procure them high reverence and admiration from the observing world, and shall be accompanied with the strongest confidence in themselves that they are the special favourites of heaven;—while yet they are the children of the evil one, and all their religion is abomination in the sight of God:—and further;—that this is the case and this the character of every the most religious professor, who *believes not* the divine testimony concerning the Lord Jesus.

Wherever therefore I find *very religious* men, and of high *repute* in the religious world, but opposing and gainsaying the one scriptural doctrine of Christ;—there I find men, of whom I must say

that in this respect they *resemble the pharisees*. But to strain the resemblance, or run a parallel between them in minuter circumstances,—I have no desire. I find such characters in abundance; the keenest and most embittered blasphemers of that doctrine which I hold as the gospel of Christ,—just as the pharisees were of old: and I am sure that it is true *mercy* to testify in the plainest terms against the ungodliness of all their religion,—if God peradventure may give to any of them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.

But let us see how Mr. Haldane attempts to repel the offensive testimony. Why, he tells us (p. 21.)—that ‘the *grossest* and most *unprincipled hypocrisy* was the characteristic’ of the pharisees: and he intimates, of course, that in this they essentially differed from those, whom I view and speak of as resembling them now. And have I ever denied, Mr. Haldane, that they were *hypocrites*? But indeed you mistake, in attributing to them the *grossest* hypocrisy. There is a *grossness* of hypocrisy, which defeats its own object; and which would have been quite inconsistent with their being *honoured*, as they were, by the people.—As to *unprincipled* hypocrisy,—their hypocrisy had its principles,—fixed and deep-rooted principles on which it proceeded: but certainly no *good* principle; and I know not the hypocrisy, which must not in this sense be *unprincipled*.

But to come closer to the point:—Mr. Haldane differs from me altogether, in the view that he takes of the meaning of *hypocrisy* in scripture. He evidently thinks only of those hypocrites in religion, who are inwardly *conscious* that they are not what they pretend to be;—a class of hypocrites which I believe comparatively small: though I fancy there are many who would have this consciousness, if they allowed their consciences to speak, and attended to their testimony. But the deceitful heart of man has various ways of drowning the voice of conscience, or of turning the ear from it. However this be, I must maintain that the scriptural meaning of the word *hypocrite* is—one who *pretends to be what he is not*,—who assumes a character which does not belong to him;—and this, whether he thinks or not that it does.

Accordingly, the original word is commonly applied to a *player on the stage*; who is not a whit the less an actor, though he should so enter into the spirit of the character which he represents, as to forget that it is not his real one. In this sense, every religious professor at this day and in this country, who believes not the unadulterated gospel of Christ, which he professes, is an *hypocrite*, just as much as the pharisees of old. For, confident as he may be that he is a disciple of Christ and a child of God, he *is not* that which he *pretends to be*.

But, says Mr. H., (p. 19.) Mr. W. ‘considers the pharisees to have been not only strict professors of religion, but *sincere* in their profession.’ Yes: as sincere, Mr. Haldane, in one sense as you or as myself;—as really persuaded that they were right, and were doing God service in the course which they pursued. And from the plain but important observation, which I have just now made upon the real meaning of *hypocrisy*, there is nothing inconsistent in this with their character of hypocrites.

For instance; when the ruler of the synagogue, (Luke xiii. 14, 15.) “answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day,” and the Lord rebuked him as an *hypocrite*;—are we to understand that he really did not feel the indignation which he expressed? that he had really no hearty zeal for what he considered the strict observance of the sabbath day? or that he did not *sincerely* think himself an assertor of the divine law against a supposed violation of it? Far from it: his indignation was hearty; his zeal was cordial; and we have no reason to doubt but he was *sincerely* convinced, that he was right in opposing the Lord Jesus. Yet he was an *hypocrite*.

But if Mr. Haldane, in saying that I ‘consider the pharisees as *sincere* in their profession,’ mean to intimate that I consider them as sincerely loving God or believing Moses,—(in the sense of really believing what Moses testified)—I can assure him that I am fully convinced of the contrary. But, in this sense, I am equally sure that those who at this day oppose the doctrine of Christ, however strictly and zealously religious,—are *not sincere* in their profession.

Mr. H. tells us (p. 22.) that ‘*sincerity is good*’;—though he admits that ‘men may be *sincere in their wickedness*.’ Is then sincerity in wickedness *good*? Such certainly was the *sincerity* of Saul of Tarsus, when he blasphemed the name of Christ and persecuted his church. And such alone is the *sincerity* of all religious professors at this day, however evangelical in their language, who oppose the doctrine of Christ.—The language which Mr. H. holds about such sincerity is truly awful, as falling in with all the infidel principles, which lie at the bottom of the religion of the world. And its awfulness in him is much increased, by the saving clause which he throws in towards the conclusion of his pamphlet, expressing his approbation of what I have written on the glory of the atonement and the righteousness of faith. (p. 127.) When Mr. H. resumes his pen, let him condescend to tell us distinctly what he means by that *sincerity*, which he denies to the pharisees, but attributes to the religious professors of a false gospel in this country. And (if I may say it without painfully reminding him of his old sins) let him reply to what I have written on *sincerity* in my first letter to Mr. Knox, and on *heart-religion* in the postscript to my seventh.

But to return to the pharisees. Mr. Haldane sums up his charges against them, by saying—that ‘their doctrine was false, their practice corrupt, and their religion pretence.’ (p. 20.) Most true. And indeed Mr. H. mistakes me much, if he supposes that I have taken any other view of them. Yet I am fully persuaded, that he and I take a view of them altogether different;—as well as of every scriptural truth, precept, and admonition, upon which our language might *seem* to be most similar.

If Mr. H. knew one of the pharisees, who had a great deal of what he calls ‘*heart-religion*,’—who was very much in earnest about recommending himself to the favour of God, and full of sincere zeal for his false views of the Mosaic law;—he would look at that pharisee as an *exception* from his general account of them, and look at him with a much more favourable eye:—just as he conceives Saul of

Tarsus, and the pharisee represented by the Lord in the parable, as of a character favourably distinguished from the rest of their sect. But I intreat Mr. H. and I intreat all my readers—(I do not expect they will be many)—to observe well what I now explicitly maintain :—that the black sketch, which he has drawn of the character of the sect, is an accurate portrait of Saul in his unbelief, and of every other religious professor—(however hearty and sincere in his unbelief)—*whose doctrine is false*,—who believes not the one divine doctrine or testimony concerning the Son of God.

Wherever I find opposition to that doctrine, the scriptures teach me to see that damning sin against the holy Spirit of truth, which seals the wrath of God upon the person who continues under its power ;—which manifests in him the dominion of that fleshly mind which is “ enmity against God ”—against the only *true* God,—though it is perfectly compatible with the greatest zeal and devotedness to the idol that is *called* God and worshipped ;—which develops the malignity of human wickedness and hostility to JEHOVAH, in the sinner’s hostility to the truth that reveals his distinguishing character and glory :—while to this greatest and most awful display of the ungodliness of his heart, the sinner who makes it must be altogether insensible and blind,—whatever depth he may have experienced of what the divines call *conviction of sin*. For so long as he *disbelieves* the divine testimony concerning the Son of God, he must think himself right in rejecting and opposing what he regards as *false*.

Now, Mr. Haldane, while I take this view of adherence to *false doctrine*, is it not almost superfluous to add, that wherever I find this—even in the strictest and most sincere religionists, there I view *practice* that I am sure is *corrupt*, and religion that I am sure is *pretence* ? As to corrupt practice, where the tree is evil, none of its fruits (however specious and fair to the human eye) are any other than corrupt. “ Whoso turneth away his ear from hearing the law, (that law which hath gone forth out of Zion, that word of JEHOVAH which hath proceeded from Jerusalem, in the apostolic gospel, (Isaiah ii. 3.) even his *prayer* is abomination,” (Prov. xxviii. 9.) in the sight of him who seeth not as man seeth. Mr. H. may flatter such professors that they are ‘ truly *exemplary* characters,’—‘ *excellent* men,’—‘ in earnest in their inquiries respecting *the will of God*,’ &c. And no doubt they will return the compliment ; and will think his spirit as good as he thinks it himself ; for the world will love its own. But in all this, though I doubt not but he *sincerely* thinks that he is doing God service, he is really engaged in the work of the father of lies.

With respect to the religion of the pharisees being *pretence*, those who enter into the real meaning of that *hypocrisy* which characterized them, will see in that nothing distinguishing them from any unbelieving religionists at this day. They pretended to be the children and servants of the God of Israel, and to be full of zeal for *his* glory : and they did much, and many of them with great earnestness, to maintain the character which they assumed. But the character not belonging to them, all that they did, for the purpose of appearing

what they *were not*, was as truly *for a pretence*, as all the most impassioned acting of a stage player in the character which he personates.

With respect to the ostentatiousness of their *long prayers*, their *seeking honour one of another*,—and their desire to be held in veneration by the people ;—I have no desire to disgust Mr. H. needlessly, and therefore shall decline the task—the very easy task of running the parallel between the ancient pharisees and the modern. It is more important to remark, that there is such a thing as “making long prayers *for a pretence*,” where no human eye sees ;—such a thing as long prayers in the closest privacy of the closet made to keep up an assumed character *in our own view*, and (if possible) to impose it upon God himself. And the truth is, that every the most devout prayer, that is not the *prayer of faith*, is such.

With all their religious strictness, the pharisees are declared to have “passed over judgment and the love of God,” to have “omitted judgment, mercy, and faith.” (Luke xi. 42. Mat. xxiii. 23.) Will Mr. H. maintain that this distinguished them from any of the *unbelieving* religionists at this day ?—that these heavenly things are included in the practice of any man, however devout—who *believes not* that Jesus is the Christ, and who therefore is not born of God ?

I should not be surprised if Mr. H.—pressed by the scriptural view of the subject, but not receiving it,—should turn about and say—‘O! I never thought of denying that the pharisees, as *unbelieving* religionists, must have in many respects resembled *unbelieving* religious professors in this age and country.’ And have I, Mr. Haldane, ever compared with the pharisees believers of the truth ? Mr. H. may tell me that men may be believers of the truth, though they believe not what he calls ‘Mr. W.’s gospel.’ But presumptuous and uncharitable as it will appear to him and almost all others—I must deny it. And I must tell him further, that I need no more unequivocal evidence, to prove to me of any man that he does not himself believe the truth, than his avowal of the so called *charitable* opinion, that some who do not believe the same doctrine with *him* are yet believers, disciples of Christ, and children of God.

Indeed from Mr. H.’s language it is hard to say, whether he thinks that any man in this country is an unbeliever, who is heartily *in earnest* in his religion, heartily *devout*, and exemplarily *strict* in his conduct. What such a man means by the *truth*—or by *believing* it, I cannot pretend to conjecture : especially when he tells me, (p. 11.) of some, ‘who lived by the faith of the Son of God, and would have rejected an angel from heaven who had taught them to *undervalue it* ?’ but who at the same time ‘*undervalued the simple belief of the truth as nothing better than the faith of devils.*’

Mr. H. was more unfortunate than he is aware in mentioning the *covetousness* of the pharisees, and their derision of the Lord’s instructions on that subject to his disciples,—as distinguishing them from the evangelical professors of this day. *Covetousness*—what the scriptures mark as covetousness—is one of the most *reputable* sins that a man can live in ; and I am bold to say that the great mass of the evangelical world, with the evangelical divines and preachers at their

head, would just as much as the pharisees deride the same instructions of the Lord—as most wild, extravagant, and improper. *Our* unbelievers to be sure, bearing the name of christians, as the pharisees professed themselves disciples of Moses,—would not avow that they derided *Christ*; but would profess great reverence for him and for his words. But, just like the pharisees, they make the word of God of none effect by their traditions; and the thing really taught by his words they turn from with contemptuous disgust.

Which of them does not think it a most laudable thing in a christian man to *lay up treasure for himself on earth*; to lay by, as not to be broken in upon or touched, (except, perhaps, the *interest* of it) a store of this world's goods,—for the future wants (real or imaginary) of himself and his family?—‘O! yes; an excellent thing this;’ say the divines—‘provided he does not *set his heart* upon his earthly treasures.’—Nay, but Christ tells us, that his heart *will be* where he lays up his treasure. And again another scripture saith—“whoso *hath* this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

Accordingly, in the first christians, we find none of that prudential backwardness, which is now commonly justified and recommended, to break in upon their capital stock, where the necessities of their poor brethren called for it; even to the sale of houses and lands for their relief. The divines, no doubt, furnish their willing hearers with an easy way of getting over that recorded *exemplification* of the Lord's precept of love; by representing it as an *extraordinary* case, never designed to be brought into precedent, or imitated by any other church. And then these ‘excellent men’ strongly and eloquently enforce the necessity of *heart-religion*, and of what they *call* holiness; and distinguish themselves by their zeal against an odious something—(under the name of Sandemanianism, or whatever other name)—which impeaches the excellence of their characters, and which they therefore represent as opposed to all that is good. Well: they have their reward—the admiration of the religious world. But while I am kept hearkening to the word of God, I must ever view in such men the genuine descendants of the ancient pharisees.

But, I must repeat it, the portrait of the pharisee in every age is the portrait of an *unbelieving religionist*, corrupting the word of God, and changing his truth into a lie, under the professed acknowledgment of it: and this is but the portrait of the religious form of the *flesh* in sinful man; every the blackest trait in which—whether hypocrisy, pride, vain-glory, covetousness, or whatever else—has a counterpart in my own heart and in Mr. Haldane's.

Mr. H. makes himself and his readers merry (p. 115.) with an anecdote, in which he describes a person ‘received as a brother, on an open *profession of hypocrisy*.’ I can easily conceive that his account of others is as distorted, as his misrepresentations of myself: and think it very possible that the persons, whom he ridicules as so absurd, were but manifesting suitable jealousy for the truth of God in the inquiries which gave occasion to Mr. H.'s story. Though

the churches, with which I am connected, do not generally enter into any *public* scrutiny of the sentiments of the person, who desires to join our fellowship; we do commonly enter into such a scrutiny in private conversation; decisively thinking this the more effectual way of ascertaining *his meaning*. And I can easily conceive a man, on such an occasion, holding such a language about the hypocrisy of his heart under an *antecedent* religious profession, as would necessarily lead us to inquire whether he thought his heart—his *own* heart—less hypocritical *now* than formerly. And if we found that he did, and if the sentiment yielded not to the scriptural exposure of its falsehood, I avow to Mr. H. that we would not receive him as a brother, though he should otherwise talk about the truth with the clearness of an apostle. And while we abide in the truth, all Mr. H.'s grave jocularity, about our *receiving men as brethren on a profession of hypocrisy*, will not disturb us.

Mr. H. speaks of my 'morbid apprehension of self-righteousness;' adding that 'self-righteousness is very bad, but is never represented in scripture as worse than *avowed ungodliness and contempt of the divine authority*.' (p. 21.) Mr. H. misrepresents me in saying that I so represent it. I plainly tell him, that I think one just as bad as the other, and that the former includes in it just as much real ungodliness and contempt of the divine authority as the latter. Whether it is better *avowedly* to condemn the divine authority, or really to condemn it under a profession of respecting it, is a question which I have no inducement to discuss. I have as little inducement to enlarge on the awfulness of avowed ungodliness, and avowed contempt of the divine authority: for I really know not any, and have heard of but very few, who attempt to justify these. Mr. H. therefore must excuse me, if I continue the invidious task of exposing ungodliness and contempt of the divine authority in those specious guises, which they wear in the *religious* world, and under which they are admired as things the most excellent and highly esteemed:—though I know it must expose me to the imputation of being a foe to all that is good,—an enemy of all righteousness.

One of the first effects of the glorious truth of God, when the sinner's eyes are opened to discern it, is to convince him of the foulness and abomination—not merely of the things which his conscience before acknowledged to be evil—but of all the things in himself which he before viewed as the *best*. And when he ceases to admire these things in himself, certainly he will cease to admire them in others. Therefore, when I find any man, talking perhaps at times about important truths of the gospel, but holding in admiration the persons of men, who deny and gainsay the very principles of divine truth which he himself pretends to admit; fired with indignation at any assertion of the truth, which could be supposed to impeach their *excellence*; exerting his zeal against the vindication of scriptural doctrines, and for the vindication of human characters:—when I find such a man, I am sure that—even if he has ever had any discernment of the truth—his eye is now turned aside from its glory.

Mr. H. tells us (p. 11.) that 'many complain of Sandeman's *severity*, who admire his accurate views of truth.' I must say that

many may admire his accurate views of truth, and yet be very far from seeing the same great truth, for which Sandeman in general so manfully contends. And I suspect that such are the characters who complain of his *severity*. I write not as the advocate of Sandeman, or of his spirit, any more than I would write as my own advocate. But from the general recollection of his principal work, which one reading of it, and that many years ago, has left upon my mind, I avow that I admire the general *spirit* in which it appears to have been penned, as much as the *general* matter of it. To me it seemed the spirit of a man keeping *the truth of God* steadfastly in view, and boldly maintaining his course in the assertion of it, regardless of human authority, and of every thing which would oppose that course : while I am sure that I could adduce many instances from his work of the greatest personal *tenderness*, combined with fidelity, towards the man whose deep errors be immediately attacked.

He indulges indeed, more than I have ever done, in mentioning the *names* of individual writers and preachers who opposed the truth. And let me give the reader a specimen of what is here reckoned his *worst spirit*. I recollect few passages, which I believe raised a greater outcry than that in which he recommends to the attention of any, who desire to know a '*devout path to hell*'—MARSHALL'S *Mystery of Sanctification*, and BOSTON'S *Fourfold State*. Now I am not deeply read in those books ; but I have looked at them sufficiently to concur decisively in Mr. Sandeman's recommendation :—and I beg leave to add a third very popular work to the catalogue—the *Rev. Dr. DODD-RIDGE'S Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. Mr. H. probably will feel indebted to me for giving such an unequivocal instance—of the *bad spirit* of Sandeman and his supposed disciple. He may call together his religious friends, to join him in looking with pious horror at the spirit, which stigmatizes the writings of such holy and excellent men, as pointing out a *devout path to hell*. But assume for a moment, Mr. Haldane, a little of that coolness which you attribute to me ; and I will suggest to you a more effectual way for putting down or exposing these odious *Sandemans*, than by mere gratuitous assertions of their *bad spirit*,—their '*keenness, severity, and contempt* of all who differ from them.' (p. 10.) And for once I beseech you to hear me patiently.

That the path pointed out in the works above alluded to is a *devout path*, no one can deny ; and I am sure you will be ready to admit. It is certain also that they are, or have been, studied by multitudes of devout persons, as pointing out a sure path to heaven ;—without any doubt but that—if they only walk in the path there marked for them—they will get to heaven. Now I am persuaded from the scriptures that any person, who does really go on to the end in the path recommended in those writings, will perish in his sins for ever, or—in plain language—will be cast into hell. And this I am ready (with the help of God) publicly to maintain, by an examination of those popular works, and a comparison of their devout path with the *one way* marked in the scriptures as leading to eternal life. Well ;—under this conviction—(whether right or wrong is not now the question)—should I not be according to your own notions of things a

most *bad man*, and influenced by a most *bad spirit*, if I forbore to cry out in language the most plain and unequivocal, and warn the multitudes whom I see treading that *devout path to hell* of their awful danger? Surely you would yourself do so, if you took the same view with me of the termination of that path. Surely you would think yourself a very *wicked man*, if taking that view you should—under the pretence of shewing a *good spirit*,—hold an insidious language to them, as if the path were tolerably safe, and might answer well enough for conducting them to heaven,—though perhaps you might intimate that you could recommend a better.

You do not then, I conclude with certainty, take the same view with me of the path marked in those writings. No, surely; I should do you injustice, if I thought for a moment that you did. Indeed I confess to you, that from the whole tenor of your pamphlet, as well as from various particular passages, I do conceive that you are not convinced there is any such thing as a *devout path to hell*:—though perhaps you may have ugly *suspensions* at times upon the subject. I do think you are inclined to believe that all, who are sincere and hearty and devout in their religious course, will—one way or other—get to heaven. But however this be, I must suppose, since you reprobate Sandeman's spirit and mine for testifying so plainly against these popular and *evangelical* writings, that you think the devout path pointed out in them will not lead to *hell* those who walk in it,—and therefore will lead them to *heaven*.

Well, Mr. Haldane: here is a point at issue between us infinitely more important than the canvassing of this or that man's character and spirit. Come forward boldly;—come forward honestly; and publicly maintain the justice of your opinion on this point, in whatever way and by whatever arguments you think best. If you succeed, I shall be put to deserved shame, for such an outrageous and profane falsehood, as that of calling so good a path—a *path to hell*. On the other hand, if I succeed in proving the justice of the view I take of it, you need not fear but the religious world will still continue to think my *spirit* most evil. But I beg you to observe, that it is to a discussion about the character of the *writings* mentioned I invite you;—not to any discussion about the character of the *writers*. To the latter I hope I never shall descend.

SECTION IV.

Anecdote of Miss H. G.—Observations on it.—Scriptural method of enforcing faith and repentance.—Last and worst stage in the doctrine of the popular gospels.—Pitiable situation of a popular evangelical teacher.—The awful ungodliness of his life illustrated and exemplified—Mark ii. 14—17.—The common evangelical interpretation of the passage proved to be directly contrary to its real meaning.—Plain address to one of those who are employed in thus corrupting the word of life.

MR. HALDANE asserts (p. 14.) that I appear to regard with much greater *complacency* one who is completely careless, and perhaps ridiculing all concern about futurity, than a man ‘impressed with a sense of the importance of eternity, and plunged into great distress of mind from the apprehension of future punishment, while ignorant of the gospel.’ He speaks elsewhere (p. 17, 22.) ‘of my unfeeling indifference towards those who are *alarmed about eternity*, while they do not behold the glory of the atonement of Christ;’ and of my using ‘*harsh and contemptuous* language in regard to persons, who, while *mistaken*, are *in earnest in their inquiries respecting the will of God.*’

These charges give me no trouble; and I introduce the mention of them, only as the occasion of laying before my reader additional views of most important, though most offensive truth. It is quite clear, that Mr. H. regards the unbelieving *religionist* with much more complacency than the unbelieving *profligate*. But I can truly say, that I regard them both alike, as on a perfect par:—both alike at present dead in sin, and deniers of the *only true* God; and both alike such as any other sinners, in whom that God glorifies himself, according to the sovereign counsel of his own will,—either by displaying in them the riches of his mercy and saving power,—or by destroying them with the righteous condemnation which shall fall on those, “who know not God and obey not his gospel.” (2 Thess. i. 8.) Whether I am unfeelingly indifferent to the awful state in which I view them both, or employ against them harsh and contemptuous language,—is a matter for my own consideration, but not worth discussing with Mr. Haldane. But I shall beg leave to relate to him an anecdote, for the truth of which I can vouch; and which may, perhaps, usefully illustrate the general subject.

Several years ago, a young woman (Miss. H. G.) called on a man, whom I shall name Philemon, in such a state of mental anxiety and disturbance of conscience, as closely bordered on distraction. She described herself as having been long a hearer of the gospel under the *ministry* of certain evangelical preachers whom she attended; and as long racked with the most painful apprehensions that she *had not faith*. Indeed she appeared as much *in earnest* in her inquiries, as *sincere* in her *alarms*, and as deeply *impressed* with the importance of eternity, as Mr. H. could desire. Philemon, however, after listening for a short time to the detail of her anxieties and distresses, told her plainly that *he was quite sure* she had not faith, that she manifestly

disbelieved what God declared in his word. She interrupted him to declare, that she did firmly believe every word in the scriptures: and he had some difficulty for a time in persuading her to discontinue speaking, and to hear what he wished to say. At length, however, she allowed him to proceed; and he proceeded to state to her in the simplest language that gospel, which is contained in the scriptures—the testimony of God concerning his Son; and to contrast its glorious truths with the sentiments which she obviously entertained;—thus proving to her that she had been to that moment under the power of *unbelief*. He marked the inevitable condemnation, in which that must issue, if she continued of the same mind; and set before her that righteousness whereby God justifies the *ungodly*, the greatness of that salvation wherewith He saves all who *believe* the divine report of it.

Philemon throughout addressed her as one, who was evidently in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;—just as he would have addressed a *murderer* or an *harlot*. He observed that she listened with the most fixed attention: but after he had finished speaking, she took her leave without saying a word in reply. And he remarked to a friend whom he told of the interview, that he should not be surprised the next day to hear of her having committed suicide,—(the agony of mind in which she came to him was so extreme)—unless she were given to believe the truth set before her.

The next day, however, she returned: and O! what a new creature!—rejoicing in the faithful testimony of God;—wondering at the great things of his salvation which her eyes were opened to discern in his word;—perceiving the ungodliness of all her former views, her religious exercises, and religious efforts;—looking with abhorrence at the deceitful doctrine, which she had been accustomed to consider as the gospel of Christ, and at the whole system with which her before favourite preachers were connected. Amidst all her wonder and peace and joy in believing, Philemon could not but smile at a kind *indignation* which she manifested, while she told him that she had called upon two of them with her complaints, and that one indeed gravely assured her—that ‘he had known others in as deep waters as herself who yet had come out of them happily,’—and the other replied to her complaints, by advising her ‘strongly to continue instant in prayer for ability to believe, and diligent in the study of the scriptures.’

‘Aye:’ Mr. H. probably will say—‘the young woman had become a true Sandemanian, infected with the bad spirit of that odious doctrine.’—Yes, Mr. Haldane; she had become what you call a Sandemanian,—that is, a christian.* She believed the divine testimony

* When I consider such an instance as this,—and it is not the only one I have known of a similarly *marked* transition from a false Gospel to the belief of the truth,—I perceive, and am anxious to acknowledge, that in my seventh letter on Primitive Christianity I have expressed myself much too generally and strongly against the idea of christians, at this day and in these countries, knowing the time when they *first* believed the truth. Without any abatement of my abhorrence of the idea, as held and employed by the evangelical world, I should wish to correct some of my expressions on the subject, and to guard others.

in such a case as that which I have related of Miss. H. G.—where the simple

concerning Him, in whom God is well pleased; and she found in it everlasting consolation and good hope. I have every reason to think that she held fast the truth to the end, and died in that hope which maketh not ashamed;—a hope suited to and sufficient for the chief of sinners. And I can wish you, sir, no greater mercy, than to be infected with the same spirit which you now think so bad. If ever you be, you will see how bad the spirit has been which has prompted your pamphlet;—which has led you to labour for the purpose of confounding the truth of God with the various systems of men, who corrupt his word and handle it deceitfully.

In the manner in which Philemon addressed this very religious unbeliever, you may see exemplified that harshness and severity of language, towards religious professors, which you represent as originating in contempt and unfeeling indifference; and which is indeed so different from the smooth and flattering words, in which such devout complainants are accosted by the evangelical teachers of the day. And to give you every advantage, Mr. Haldane, in declaiming against the terrible spirit of these Sandemanians,—I assure you that,—even if the case had terminated as awfully as Philemon conjectured that it might,—I believe he would have felt no compunctions of conscience for having addressed her as he did; and would have considered what you term harshness and severity as but fidelity to that truth of God, which he commended to her conscience by the manifestation of it.

‘Mr. W.’—you say—‘seems upon principle to avoid enforcing the duty of faith and repentance.’ (p. 16.) False as this charge is, I acquit you of all intentional falsification here. I am sure you think it true. But you think so, because you do not know the nature of *faith* or *repentance*; nor the only scriptural method of *enforcing* them. And arrogant as you will think the assertion, I must tell you plainly

truth appeared to be at once received, with that discriminating perception of its real import and divine glory, which produced the proper effects—of rejoicing in it,—of abhorrence of the former lies by which it had been corrupted in the mind,—and of prompt obedience to the authority of the word in walking with the disciples according to the holy commandments delivered by the apostles of the Lord;—and where the person so brought out of darkness into light holds fast the faith (as in that instance) to the end;—in such a case it must be admitted that the *first* transition was strikingly marked to others, and might be clearly known to herself. And far be it from me to say that such cases may not become much more frequent if ever the mighty God be pleased to clothe his word with more of that power, which formerly accompanied it.

But I must also add, that I can easily conceive the very person referred to—from the further development to her view of the deceitfulness of her heart, and the deceivableness of unrighteousness—becoming afterwards quite uncertain whether she really knew the truth at that period: and this, without its interfering in the smallest degree with her rejoicing of hope from the truth itself. And I am quite certain, that—so far as she was kept at any time abiding in the faith—she derived not her joy and hope at all from looking back to that *epoch* of her conversion.

If any disciple ask, (as a disciple fairly may)—‘why I have introduced any such anecdote?—as if the indisputably authentic anecdotes recorded in the scriptures of the conversion of sinners to God were not sufficient,’—I can only reply, that I disclaim with abhorrence all that profane idea;—but have been led to relate the circumstances only from conceiving that they strikingly exemplify the contrasted effects of the popular evangelical doctrine, and the only true Gospel.

—that—in almost all the pieces I have published on scriptural subjects for many years—I have been doing nothing but enforcing that, which I seem to you on principle to avoid. Of course you think that Philemon did not *enforce the duty of faith and repentance*, in merely calling the attention of his hearer to the truth divinely declared in the scriptures; marking its real import, its divine authority, its unchangeable verity, and the certain condemnation which awaits those who disbelieve its report, and who (disbelieving it) retain their own ungodly thoughts in opposition to its glory, and continue to walk in their own ungodly ways. Yet it might be worth your while to consider, whether it was not in this way alone the apostles enforced “repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ” on all the unbelievers, whom they addressed. “Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. *Beware*, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.” (Acts xiii. 38—41.)

But let us look again at the anecdote above stated, as illustrating the deadly nature of those false gospels, with which this country is overspread.—There we may see a sinner most religiously and devoutly exercised under the evangelical ministry which she had long attended;—fully persuaded of the truth of the doctrine which she weekly heard; her sentiments according with all that the preachers put forward;—but *miserable* from the want of a good conscience towards God, and distracted with anxiety how she should get peace with him. And was *this* doctrine, which she had heard, and which she did believe, but which left her miserable,—was this doctrine the gospel of Christ, the glad tidings of great joy to lost sinners,—to the ungodly and those without strength? No, assuredly. And the more refined and specious the garb of evangelical phraseology was, in which it was attired, the more abominable was the transformation of satan into an angel of light.

The spiritual guides, to whom she had applied in her perplexity, appear not to have troubled themselves much about her case. And it was well. But it is quite clear, from the little they did say to her, that they themselves made no question but that she did sufficiently believe all that they meant to teach. One of them, I am sure, must have been considerably embarrassed by a little approach, which he had *then* made, towards something *like* that same odious Sandemanianism: and I therefore do not wonder, that he put off the inquirer with a mere testimony—about what *he had known* of similar cases in his religious course.

But we may remark, what a fine subject that anxious inquirer would have been—(if the mercy of God had not interfered)—for the last and most deceitful stage of training in the popular gospels;—for the *peculiar encouragement* administered to such exercised souls to *venture to believe*,—that is, in plain English—to venture to believe

themselves now so good and so humble, that they may venture to believe that God has a special favour to them:—such soul-destroying encouragement, as I remember Sandeman shews that Aspasio at length affords to his friend Theron;—encouragement derived from the depth of the sinner's convictions, from his felt need of a Saviour, from his ardent and sincere *desire to close with their OFFERED Christ*, and from the consideration that his *wish to believe* is a degree of *incipient faith*:—and all this potion of deadly poison sweetened and disguised, by being combined with the best words and fairest speeches about the atonement of Christ, as the 'only meritorious cause' of a sinner's acceptance before God.

It is in this art of persuading an unbelieving sinner that he is a believer,—that he is too modest in not thinking very well of his state,—or that he needs only to venture the confident persuasion of his safety in order to be safe;—it is in this art that satan specially triumphs as an angel of light. And Mr. Sandeman has so ably and clearly exposed the wickedness of all such evangelical doctrine, that I do not wonder at all that his name is so odious to the abettors of it, and to all who do not see the glory of that hope which the gospel brings to an ungodly sinner. I do not mean to intimate, Mr. Haldane, that you are *in one sense* an abettor of that gross—but most common—form of the popular gospels. I know that you are sufficiently acquainted with the unanswerable exposure of it, to have professedly abandoned that untenable ground. But in all that favourable eye, with which you regard its most strenuous advocates,—in all that indignation of zeal, with which you are fired, against those who contend for the truth of God,—in all your calumnious misrepresentations of their characters and their sentiments,—in all your efforts to represent it as of no vital consequence what gospel men believe, provided they be very religious, sincere, and devout;—(though you gravely assure us, p. 129, that you are 'very far from undervaluing *distinct apprehensions* of every part of the truth,')—in all this, as well as in your direct, though covered, attacks upon the truth, you are clearly marked to me as not discerning that which flesh and blood never can reveal;—though I dare say you could speak about it, and probably do at times, as *correctly* as any one. It may be superfluous to add, that when I also consider you as one of the heads and leaders of the opposition to scriptural truth,—a public champion against it,—and a stated *teacher* of false doctrine,—my feelings towards you are very different from those of complacency. And yet—incredible as it may appear to you—perhaps they are as remote from unfeeling indifference and contempt.

Indeed I have long considered the situation of a popular evangelical teacher as one—not only very awful—but peculiarly pitiable. Every circumstance in it concurs to strengthen in his own mind the delusions of false religion; and to blind him to the real characters of the spirit in which he walks. His very office, with all its engagements and occupations, is of a *religious* description; that is, of a description which all men naturally regard with veneration, and consider as *good*. He is commonly kept in a regular routine of *devout*

exercises, of prayers and preachings; and is the centre of a circle—larger or smaller,—which is supposed to collect within it whatever is most excellent. His *dictum* decides to his people the interpretation of the word of God. He is looked up to as the oracle of divine wisdom, from which they seek responses. And shall he not be zealous to put down every suggestion, which might intimate that he is *blind*? Shall he, all whose life is a life of religion, admit the supposition that all this religion may be stark ungodliness? and this,—when he sees it precisely of the same kind with what has been, and is, taught and sanctioned by men of names the most eminent in the religious world;—men in a manner canonized by their admiring followers. Every thing contributing to sear his conscience, to puff up his mind, to harden him in the strong delusion which he loves;—it may truly be said that it is “easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle,” than for such a man to enter into the kingdom of God. But “the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” (Luke xviii. 24—27.)

Nor do I at all mean to intimate,—nor do I conceive the words of Christ which I have just quoted to intimate,—that there is really any more difficulty (as it were) in the subjection of one sinner than of another sinner to the truth of God: although, according to the conceptions of men, greater hindrances appear to present themselves in one instance than in another. But, in every case, what appears to the human eye a difficulty or hindrance, is a real *impossibility* to man: and the work, wherever it is effected, is the work of that God who said of old—“let there be light, and there was light;” of that God, for whom nothing is too hard, and with whom all things are alike easy.

It may be, that some one of that class of religious *teachers*, whose awful and pitiable case I have just now sketched, may indignantly exclaim, while he reads what I have written,—‘I wish this arrogant man would tell us distinctly what it is in our ministerial office and exercises, that he regards as ungodly.’ If he really wish for the distinct statement of this, let him attend to what I am about to add, and shall take the liberty of addressing to him individually.

The person who poisons a spring,—that spring from which man and beast imbibe draughts which they expect to be salubrious;—the person who makes its waters the vehicle of death by the introduction of poison into them,—that person even in war is reckoned a monster. Yet his guilt is but a faint image of yours. The scriptures contain the words of *eternal life*: and he who perverts them from their real import, and gives them a currency in a corrupted meaning, attempts to poison the *very waters of life*. That very word, which “shews unto men the way of salvation,” he makes the guide to eternal death. This is the wicked business of your life: and that you greedily drink yourself of the same poison, which you administer to others, lessens not its wickedness. I might illustrate and confirm what I say, by taking any of the texts of scripture you have ever preached from, and contrasting the manner in which you have handled it, and the construction which you have put upon it—in some part or other of

your discourse,—with its real meaning as indited by the Spirit of truth. But I shall content myself with exemplifying this in *one* very plain and striking instance.

If an old evangelical preacher, you have probably preached ere now from the calling of Levi the publican. (Mark ii. 14—17.) Whether young or old, you have frequently introduced in your ministerial exercises the memorable words, which Christ uttered on that occasion:—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Now, often as you have introduced them in public or in private, have you ever brought them forward but combined with the interpretation of the word *righteous*, as importing those who *think* themselves righteous,—and of the word *sinners*, as importing those who *feel* themselves sinners,—who are deeply *convinced of sin*? What evangelical commentator, what evangelical divine is there, who does not consider and represent this as the conceded and indisputable meaning of the passage? Well, I say that in thus treating that declaration of Christ, you have been doing the work of the father of lies; you have been employing the words of divine truth to support the most palpable falsehood; you have been making them say not only what they do not say—but what is *directly contrary* to what they do say. The words indeed—if they were let alone—would need no commentator or divine to *explain* their gracious import. They simply mean what they plainly say:—"I came not to call the righteous," the good, the well-disposed,—“but to call to repentance sinners,”—the wicked, the evil. I remember once making this remark to an evangelical minister, who had accompanied his quotation of the words with the usual paraphrase upon them: and I remember well the astonishment which he expressed, at hearing the sense in which I understood them. ‘Surely’—said he—‘that would represent Christ as saying *nothing*: for surely none are good.’ (The *humble* man!) However, what seemed to him quite unmeaning or unimportant, is the life, and joy and hope of every one who believes the truth.

Now, sir, forbear for a while your holy indignation against the *antinomianism*, which of course you see in the view I take of the passage: and condescend to consider from the whole context—what is its *real meaning*. That meaning stands blessedly ascertained to us by the illustration immediately preceding. “When Jesus heard it,” (namely, the objection of the murmuring scribes and pharisees—how is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?)—"he saith unto them, they that are *whole* have no need of the physician, but they that are *sick*: I came not to call the *righteous*, but *sinners* to repentance." Now, no one has any colour for denying, that they that are *whole*, (or in health) are illustrative of the righteous, and they that are *sick*, illustrative of sinners. Let us then introduce *your* paraphrase of the righteous and of sinners into the illustration; and observe how it will stand. “They that *think themselves whole* have no need of the physician, but they that *feel themselves sick*.” What think you, sir? Is this true? Does a man’s need of the physician turn—not upon his being sick—but upon his *feeling* himself sick? A man in the delirium of a fever,—does he need the

physician less, because he thinks himself in perfect health? The idea is absurd. Yet you must either maintain that absurdity, or give up your interpretation of the following words.

Indeed, if Christ came not to call those who *think themselves righteous*, I wonder how it came to pass that Saul of Tarsus ever was called? But why should I particularize Saul of Tarsus? Is there that unbelieving sinner, in whom *self-righteousness* reigns not?—who has not some hope, more or less, to quiet his guilty conscience; and that hope derived from the consideration of some favourable circumstances about himself? something that he has done, or something that he has not done, which makes him hope that he is better than, or not so bad as some of his fellow-sinners? I tell you candidly, sir, that I have found *self-righteousness* as palpable in an harlot, as in the strictest religious professor.

‘But, if we take these words of Christ in their plain and literal meaning, will they not convey an intimation that some *are* righteous? in opposition to the scriptural declaration, that there is none righteous, no *not one*.’ Good sir, dismiss your evangelical apprehension. The words intimate nothing but the character of Christ, and the character of those in whose behalf he came;—nothing but *his* infinite goodness, and *their* absolute evil. The words leave you and others to take what view you think most just of your own characters: but they plainly tell you that the persons, in whose behalf and for whose salvation he came, are not righteous or good, but sinful or *wicked*. For it is quite evident, that (according to our phraseology) the term *wicked* more justly expresses the characters intended in the passage by the word *sinners*. When the scribes and pharisees murmured at his eating and drinking with *publicans and sinners*,—the company, in which they saw him placed, specifies the description of persons we are to understand by *sinners*. And blind as the objectors were, they were not so blind to the notices of natural conscience, as well as of the law, as not to know that they themselves were sinners—in the *sense*, in which men now acknowledge, that all *are sinners*.

But they saw him seated at table with persons, whom they knew to be what are called *wicked* characters: and they were shocked at this in one who avowed that he had *come from God*;—nay, had spoken of himself as equal with God, one with the Father. He does not repel their objection by any vindication of the characters, with whom he was seen in familiar converse. He does not repel it by asserting, that they were not *such very bad* men as the scribes and pharisees thought them:—nor by urging that, although they *had been* very wicked, yet there was now a gracious change in them. No: but he repels their objection by a plain declaration of *his own character and office*. Just as if we should see a man spending all his days in an hospital, where the plague raged; and some should ask him with surprise—‘how comes it that you remain by the beds of the sick and of the dying, amidst infection and disease?’ It would, I think, be a reply in point to the inquiry, and a sufficient account of his conduct, if he answered—‘I am a physician: and where should the physician be, but where the sick are?’ Exactly similar is the blessed reply of him, who came into this world to save lost sinners.

And now, sir, having sufficiently asserted and proved the real meaning of the passage, against the interpretation which you, and others like-minded with you, have been accustomed to put upon it; I must intreat you to look again at that lying interpretation in contrast with the true. "I came not to call" those who *think themselves righteous*; that is, the self-righteous, the proud, the high-minded. Such persons, I believe, you will allow are *very bad* men. "But I came to call" those who *feel themselves sinners*; that is, the humble, contrite people, justly *sensible* of their need of me, and *desirous* of my help:—I came to call such *to repentance*. Why, sir, these people—if ever they needed repentance—I think have been already brought to it. So, in short,—according to your paraphrase—Christ tells us that he came to call—not the bad—but the *good* to repentance. Well: if this be not an instance proving that you, and such religious teachers as you, employ yourselves in perverting the scriptures, so as to make them speak—not only a *different* thing from what they do declare—but a thing directly *contrary* to it!—I know not what can prove any thing, or what two propositions directly contradict each other.

Sir, turn not yet upon your heel in indignation. It is a charge of *great wickedness* that I have established against you. For what wickedness can be greater than that of not only rejecting the truth of God yourself—but spending your life in adulterating and falsifying the divine words, which declare it to others. The same thing that has been shewn in the one instance, which I selected, it would be easy to shew in numberless others;—in all that you have been teaching concerning the nature of faith, of repentance, of sanctification, of the work of the Spirit, &c.—in the deceitful manner in which you have handled every part of the word of God.

The same wickedness, by which you spend your life in corrupting the *truth* of the gospel, it would be easy to shew extends to the invasion of all its peculiar *precepts*;—to shew that you systematically labour to make them all void by your tradition;—to shew indeed that every so-called minister or pastor of a popular evangelical congregation (whether connected with the establishment or with the dissenters) is—and must be in order to fill his situation—a ringleader in the antichristian conspiracy against the authority of the king of Zion.

You have been to the present hour despising and rejecting the Christ revealed in the scriptures; and putting forward in his place a false Christ, to whom, perhaps, you are zealously devoted, and whose office, character, and work you describe indeed in the *words* of scripture;—but those words, in your interpretation of them, importing a work, character, and office altogether different from those belonging to the Christ of God. In all your corruptions of that sacred truth, which reveals the *name* of *JEHOVAH*—the distinguishing character and glory of the only true and only living God,—you have been denying *his* being; while you have been a zealous assertor, and (I shall suppose) a most devout worshiper of the false God, portrayed in your false doctrine. You have been changing Him, who is the glory of his redeemed people, "into a thing which doth not profit," (Jer. ii. 11.)—into a lying idol and vanity; while just like the jews

of old, in similar circumstances of idolatrous departure from the God of Israel, you have masked your sin by—"proclaiming a feast to JEHOVAH." (Ex. xxxii. 4, 5. Ps. cvi. 20, 21.)

"You have done all this wickedness:" and in it all you have been awfully displaying the wickedness of *man*, even when that wickedness is attired in its most *religious* garb;—that wickedness, which is the character of my own heart, at this and every moment, just as much as of yours. (Hos. xi. 7.) But—blessed be God!—his truth remaineth the same, however few believe its joyful report. It still proclaims the name of JEHOVAH—"The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping *mercy* for thousands, *taking away* iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that *will not utterly destroy*;"—(Ex. xxxiv. 5—7.)—but will *leave a remnant* according to the election of grace, a people chosen out of an ungodly world for his own inheritance, and in whose complete salvation from wrath and from all iniquity HE will be glorified.

The revelation which He has made of *his glory*, in the face of Jesus his anointed, abundantly indeed verifies and confirms that wrath, which is "revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" and gives a display of it more awful—in *the way in which his people are delivered from it*—than will be afforded even by the final execution of the sentence upon his enemies. Behold that display of the righteous judgment of God—in the execution of the tremendous sentence upon the Son of God and son of man,—upon Him who "appeared once in the last age of the world to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself;"—God the redeemer—becoming flesh, that he might "die the just in place of the unjust,"—that he might bear in his own body on the cross the sins of those many sons given to him out of the world to be redeemed by him. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him,"—to "make his soul an offering for sin;" that He might be "just and the justifier of the ungodly." This is the *mercy* that *belongeth* to JEHOVAH:—thus it is that *there is forgiveness* with Him.

The perfection of Christ's work of righteousness in his obedience unto death;—the truth of his expiring words—IT IS FINISHED;—the divine acceptance of his offering for sin, and complacency in Him;—this has been ascertained and evidenced to all men by his resurrection from the dead, of which his apostles are the chosen witnesses. They testify, that "Him hath God highly exalted"—a priest and king over his own house—a prince and a Saviour—to *give repentance* unto his Israel and the remission of sins;—to *give eternal life* unto all whom the Father hath given him.

He "saves unto the uttermost *all* that come unto God by him,"—without any difference, without any exception. But no man cometh indeed unto God by him, but he that *believeth* this divine testimony in which the name of JEHOVAH is revealed,—but he that *believeth that God is*. "Whosoever"—without any difference and without any exception—"whosoever shall call on the name of JEHOVAH shall be saved." But how shall they "call on him, in whom they have not believed?" "Whosoever *believeth* that Jesus is the Christ *is* born of God,"—*is* justified from all things, and *hath* eternal life.

The word, which publishes the salvation of God, addresses me in no other language, than it addresses you; and you in no other, than it addresses the drunkard and the harlot. To all alike to whom it comes it *brings nigh* that "righteousness of God," which it reveals: and communicates a *good hope*, that maketh not ashamed, to every one alike who believes "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh," and who therefore believes that the work is accomplished which He came in the flesh to do;—that in Him God is well pleased. The sinner, who remains still at a loss for something more—or something else—to embolden his conscience to draw nigh into the holiest,—*believes not* that divine record. And whether he go on in hardened *indifference* about eternal things;—or in *anxious pursuit* of that supposed good thing, which he is looking for to relieve his conscience;—or in the fulness of *confident* rejoicing at his imagined attainment of it;—the word assures us that he shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power," among all those who "know not God and obey not his gospel,"—with every one "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." (Rev. xxii. 15. 2 Thess. i. 9.)

At this moment, sir, are you rejoicing in the divine truth which has been set before you; and gladly taking your proper place with the publicans and sinners, to whom it speaks good words and comfortable? Blessed be the name of the Lord! His arrows are still sharp in the hearts of his enemies. (Ps. xlv. 5.) But—are you murmuring at the antinomian doctrine; and looking with eye askance at the bad company, into which it would introduce you?—Guardian of good works and holiness! you have just the same jealousy for their interests, which the scribes and pharisees had of old: and just the same reply is to be made to your objections against Him, who "receiveth sinners and eateth with them," as he made of old, when he said—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Ought such a good man as you to object against the extension of the richest mercy to sinners the most vile,—however you may yourself stand upon a more respectable footing? "Is thine eye evil, because he is good?"

SECTION V.

No difference of any consequence between Mr. H. and the popular preachers on the subject of conviction of sin.—None but the believer of the gospel believes the revelation of wrath from heaven against all sin.—Repentance unto life never antecedent to justifying faith.—Attempt to rescue the passage, John xvi. 8. from the perversion of the popular divines.—Isaiah lxxv. 1. descriptive of the divine procedure in every case where God is found by a sinner.—None but the believer seeks the LORD.—An insidious passage in Mr. H.'s strictures submitted to the christian reader.—Paul's address at Athens considered.—Corrected translation of Acts xvii. 23.—Mr. H.'s view of the sole cause preventing the belief of the gospel.

I RETURN to Mr. Haldane. Preparatory to his charge against me of regarding the careless and profligate with much greater *complacency*, 'than those who are plunged into great distress of mind at the apprehension of future punishment, while ignorant of the gospel;' he endeavours (as frequently) to shew his own freedom from the errors of the popular doctrine which Sandeman opposed, by declaring his disapprobation of the sentiment—'that a man must be *convinced of sin* by the terrors of the law, before believing in Christ.' (p. 13.) But in the tenderness of his opposition to the sentiment it is very easy to perceive, that there is indeed no *essential* disagreement between Mr. H. and the popular teachers.

Let us hear his language.—'It is indeed evident, that without the knowledge of sin, there can be no regard for a Saviour; but no man is entitled to *limit the work of the Spirit of God, in giving the sinner repentance unto life*. Whether a person be convinced of his guilt and danger, by hearing that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, or from being convinced that such is the malignity of sin, that nothing but the blood of the Son of God could atone for it, is of no importance.'

Well then: the only difference between Mr. H. and the popular teachers on this point of *theology* is this;—the latter hold that a sinner *must* be convinced of sin by the terrors of the law, before believing in Christ; and Mr. H. holds that he *may* be so convinced, but that it is unwarrantable to say that he *must*; as this would be 'to limit the work of the Spirit of God.' Now I shall readily grant to Mr. H. that it 'is of *no importance*' which of these doctrines is maintained upon the subject:—but I must maintain that they both alike proceed on ignorance of the real work of the Spirit of God, and the real nature of sin. I must maintain that a sinner—not believing in Christ—is wholly destitute of the Spirit of God, and under no gracious work of that Spirit;—however 'deeply impressed with a sense of the *importance of eternity*, and plunged into great *distress of mind* from the apprehension of future punishment.' And I must maintain, that if his great distress of mind fall any thing short of the blackness of *despair*,—(even in which, if it were his state, I could acknowledge *nothing good*)—that sinner is utterly ignorant of the true nature of sin, and utterly incredulous to the revelation of "the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

He may have heard of that revelation ; and the natural notices of guilt in his conscience may be much excited by it, and much strengthened. He may be ever so much disturbed with the *apprehension* that this revelation may prove true : but this is not believing it. All the *hopes*, however faint,—which support his mind—however imperfectly, are at bottom hopes that this revelation will not be *universally* verified ;—that its truth will not be assuredly maintained in that absolute extent, in which the wrath has been denounced ;—that God may in some way be prevailed on to *forego* his declared purpose in some instances. Hence all the anxious solicitude and earnest endeavours of that sinner to lessen—or get lessened—the *quantum* of his ungodliness and unrighteousness ; in order that the remainder may come *within the limits* of that ungodliness and unrighteousness, upon which he flatters himself that God is too *good* and merciful to execute the sentence of his wrath. For, in this state of mind, what the sinner calls *divine mercy*, is always something directly opposed to the *perfection* of the divine righteousness, holiness, and truth. And the false Christ of those systems is but “the minister of sin,” to introduce and confirm such ungodly expectations.

Against all such solicitude and such endeavours that word of the Lord stands, which declares HIM to be “not a man that he should lie, neither the Son of man that he should repent”—or change his mind. And again that word—“though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked *before me*, saith the Lord God.”

In that effort to escape apprehended wrath, and become acceptable to God, some very easily satisfy themselves : and, “between justice, as their prime support, and mercy fled to in the last resort,—they glide and steal along with heaven in view.” Others find it very hard to satisfy themselves, and to drown the clamours of an accusing conscience :—but they remain deaf to the voice from heaven, which testifies the real mercy belonging to Jehovah, which is exercised in delivering the *most vile* from wrath—through him who was wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities. And these men, in all their most abasing bewailings of their *unworthiness*,—in all their anxious yearnings after some other hope, than that which is *brought nigh* to the ungodly in the word of the most high God,—only evidence in another way the reigning disaffection of their fleshly minds to the revealed glory of JEHOVAH. The deceitful preacher of a false gospel may tell them that *it is better* they should be thus, than careless and indifferent to eternal things ;—may insinuate that they are under an incipient *work of the Spirit of God, giving them repentance unto life*. (p. 13, 15.) But the word of God declares—“*this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent :*” and owns no repentance *unto life*, but that which is “repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.” These sentiments, however shocking they seem to the evangelical world, certainly are not new in their statement to Mr. Haldane. Nor has he any room to say, that it is only now I speak a *plain language* upon the subject. He once appeared to countenance them himself ; as is proved by the extracts which I subjoin from the work before referred to. I insert them, because I

believe the work is out of print.* But I repeat it, that I have no intention of imputing to Mr. H. any real agreement of sentiment with me, even when he seemed to countenance these sentiments by circulating the work which contained them. It now appears that he only conceived, that there are two kinds of repentance unto life, or two ways in which it may be produced; the one—by the terrors of the law,—the other (perhaps) by the faith of the gospel. And I am sure, that the popular preachers will have no great quarrel with Mr. H. on this or any other score, when they come to understand one another.

There is a consciousness of sin, which no man—even the greatest infidel—can altogether shake off. And accordingly we find, that the apostles—wherever they went, and whomsoever they addressed—had no hesitation in addressing their hearers as persons, who *knew* that they were sinners. But when Mr. H. and others speak of the *conviction* of sin, and the *knowledge* of sin as produced in men ‘by the terrors of the law before believing in Christ,’—and when they attribute this to the Spirit of God;—they plainly intimate that such men may have a knowledge of the *real nature of sin*, while they yet disbelieve the gospel, or, while they yet have not—whatever these men intend by *faith*. And in support of this supposed work of the Spirit in unbelieving men, the popular divines commonly refer to the words of Christ recorded in John xvi. 8. “When he is come, he will reprove—(or, as they say, *convince*) the world of sin.” This, say they, is the *first* work of the Spirit, in the *process* of converting a sinner. How they interpret the two next things, of which it is declared the world was to be reprovèd,—namely *righteousness* and *judgment*,—I am not certain, and I do not think it worth while to inquire. But it may not be unimportant to direct the reader’s attention to what appears the *real meaning* of the whole passage;—premising that the word rendered to *reprove*, commonly means—to *prove* any thing *against* those who *deny* it.

Now the Lord Jesus, in that his last discourse with his apostles previous to his crucifixion, seeing their hearts filled with sorrow at

* In the former edition of the “Sufficient Reply,” &c. Mr. W. published, in a note to this paragraph, several extracts from his “Seven Letters to A. Knox, Esq.” &c., in order that his readers, who had not that work to refer to, might be enabled to compare the sentiments and language of it, which Mr. H. had appeared to approve, with the sentiments and language of the “Letters on Primitive Christianity,” which Mr. H. so strongly condemns in his “Strictures.” The construction of the present edition renders it unnecessary to reprint these extracts: the reader may readily find them by the following references:

Fifth Letter to Mr. Knox, p. 119. l. 44.—beginning—“for half the books,” &c. and ending—“walking very religiously to hell.”

Sixth Letter to same, p. 134. l. 15.—“and that as long as,” &c. to—“except they repent and believe the gospel.”

Ibid, p. 137. l. 22.—“Both are at present,” &c. to—“nothing can stop.”

Ibid, p. 139. l. 16.—“But I do not wonder,” &c. to end of paragraph.

Ibid, p. 140. l. 35.—“The man who believes,” &c. to p. 142.—“an enemy of God.”

Mr. W. concludes his note with the following proposal:

“If any printer or bookseller be willing to undertake, at his own risk and expense, a new edition of the work, from which the preceding extracts are borrowed, I shall readily allow him to reprint it;—but with notes corrective and explanatory, with which I shall furnish him.”

the thought of his removal from them, suggests to their minds various consolations; and among the rest promises that he will send them the Comforter, to supply the want of his own bodily presence. This *coming* of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is continually applied to that which took place on the day of Pentecost. (Compare John vii. 39. and Acts xix. 2. the latter of which passages should be translated just as the former.) That wonderful sending of the Comforter to his disciples the Lord speaks of in the so much perverted passage, John xvi. 8. and foretells—that it should afford a convincing *proof against the unbelieving world* of three distinct things:—“of sin” because they believed not on him;—that is, of their wickedness in rejecting him:—“of righteousness,” because he went to the Father;—that is, a convincing proof also of his being the righteous servant of JEHOVAH, in whom the Father is well pleased, inasmuch as his shedding forth that heavenly gift divinely evidenced that he had gone to the Father:—and lastly, “of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged;”—that is, a sure proof and pledge of that judgment which is committed to him, with all power for the destruction of his adversaries, inasmuch as it shewed the kingdom of the prince of this world shaken to its base.

Such appears the plain meaning of the passage. And now in all this what is there that affords the faintest shadow of countenance to the theological scheme, which is currently supported by a reference to this scripture? What is there, in the passage, descriptive of the work of God in the hearts of his people at all? Still more may it be asked, what is there in it descriptive of a work of the Spirit in them—both distinct from the work of faith, and *antecedent* to it?—a work by which sinners, yet disbelieving the record which God hath given of his Son, should be brought to a knowledge of the real nature of sin to prepare them for believing. Nay; is not the sin specifically marked in this passage, as that which the coming of the Comforter should prove against the world, the sin of *not believing* in him whom God hath sent? And it may afford some work for the popular divines to shew, how a sinner can be brought to a knowledge of the wickedness of *this*, while he yet continues in unbelief. *This* at least was a sin, which none of those who rejected the apostolic testimony on the day of Pentecost were convinced of;—though indeed it was clearly *proved against them*, and although many of them might have been much “pricked in their hearts,” and rendered very uneasy by what they heard and saw. But the manner in which the passage is employed by the evangelical preachers is another of numberless instances, in which these men corrupt the word of God, and pervert the scriptures to their own destruction and the destruction of their hearers.

Mr. H. speaks (p. 14.) of my ‘misapprehension of certain texts, such as, “I am found of them that sought me not.” Isaiah lxx. 1. And in the following paragraph, as well as other places, he sufficiently intimates what he understands by *seeking* the Lord. Of that by and by. But at present I would, as distinctly as possible, state the view which I take of the text he has referred to;—inviting Mr. H. when he resumes his pen to mark, with similar distinctness, where my misapprehension of it lies.

On this text, "I am found of them who *sought me not*," we have an infallible commentary in Rom. x. where it is adduced by the apostle in illustration and confirmation of the doctrine he has laid down, concerning "the righteousness which is of faith." If we will learn from that commentator, we shall be certain that those words of the Lord by his prophet Isaiah were an immediate prediction of the calling of the gentiles to the knowledge of the only true God, and their participation of eternal life in him:—but we shall equally learn that the words are illustrative of the way, in which *every* sinner who finds the Lord is brought to the knowledge of him. For the apostle assures us that "there is no difference between the jew and the greek;" and that the jews who were "following after the law of righteousness," and seeking justification before God in some other way than that in which God revealed righteousness to the gentiles, had "not attained unto the law of righteousness."

And here let it be well observed—that these gentiles unto whom the Lord made himself known, are expressly declared not to have previously *sought* HIM. Indeed, even the unbelieving jews acknowledged this of the heathens; and never thought of regarding the observances of their idolatrous religion, or the vain speculations of their philosophy about what they called God, as any *seeking* of the Lord;—though we shall find a christian divine more than intimating that they are to be so regarded. We are expressly told by the apostle elsewhere—that "the things which the gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils, and *not to God*." (1 Cor. x. 20.) Yet he calls our attention to the wonderful fact, that such gentiles, so sunk in the power of darkness and bondage of corruption, had "attained unto righteousness;"—that Lord, whom they *sought not*, sending to them the word which testified his glorious name, and "by the foolishness of preaching" saving all them who believed its report.

The unbelieving jews thought themselves much superior to these gentiles; and conceived themselves in a much fairer way for the favour of God, on account of that "zeal of God" which animated them. But the apostle plainly speaks of it as a zeal "not according to knowledge," and of them as "ignorant of God's righteousness,"—"going about to establish their own," and "not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God,"—but *stumbling* at him who is a "stone of stumbling and rock of offence" to them that perish, while he is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The apostle beats down all the pretensions of the jews above the idolatrous gentiles;—marks them as on a perfect par;—and points out the way in which righteousness came to the gentiles, as the only way in which it could come to the jews. He utters not one word countenancing their blind zeal in following after the law of righteousness, as if it were something *better* than the avowed indifference of the heathens to the God of Israel;—not one word intimating that in all this zeal they were *seeking* that God, whose revealed righteousness they opposed and gainsaid. Nay, in the third chapter of the same epistle, he expressly applies to those jews the divine testimony—"there is none that *seeketh* after God."

Indeed, all the scriptures warrant me in saying—that the glorious

name (or distinguishing character) of the only true God is made known in the word which he has sent; and that the man—under whatever profession—who disbelieves the testimony of that word, knows not God, and denies his being in denying the revelation which he has made of himself. To speak therefore of such a sinner as *seeking God*—that God beside whom there is no other, is as absurd as it is impious;—impious in confounding the only living God with all the idolatrous fictions of the world. In correspondence with all this view, the scriptures of both the old and new testament speak of the character of those who *seek the Lord*, as identical with those who know his name, and who have that eternal life which is his gift. “Let all those that *seek THEE*, rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as *love thy salvation* say continually, let God be magnified.”

If these things be so, I must continue to maintain that the declaration in Isa. lxx. 1.—“I am found of them that *sought me not*”—is literally descriptive of the divine procedure in the case of *every* sinner—in *every* age—who is brought to the knowledge of God. And I must consider all Mr. H.’s grave assurances, that it is *better* that men should be unbelievably concerned about eternal things, than altogether careless, as declarative of his opinion—that it is better to be diligent in the service of an *idol*, than to have no kind of god at all. But when he writes next, I hope he will tell us plainly in what this *betterness* consists:—whether it be that the idol will do him some good;—or that his zeal for his idol will dispose him to receive the divine testimony against it;—or will dispose God the more to give him repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.

But let us hear Mr. Haldane.—Speaking of those who ‘imagine that it is necessary for them to produce, or to find something in themselves, which may entitle them to the divine favour,’ he adds, (p. 14.)—‘While we should by no means encourage such ideas, we ought to treat men under their influence with all-long suffering and patience. *It is the will of our heavenly Father, that men should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him*, although he be not far from every one of us;’ Acts xvii. 27. and it is very unbecoming in us to regard persons *under concern about eternity*’—[you might have said *any* persons, Mr. Haldane, whether concerned or unconcerned about eternity]—‘with unfeeling indifference or contempt, because they do not see, as they ought to do, *the fulness and freeness of the gospel*. The blind man whom Jesus restored, *saw men at first like trees walking*; and many christians have been *very gradually led to the knowledge of the truth*. When they look back they see that much self-righteousness and pride were working in their hearts;’—[of course they can see none working *now*]—‘yet still their *anxiety about a future state was better* than their former indifference.’

None but the believer of the truth can duly appreciate the insidious wickedness of that paragraph.—A broad intimation that those, who are looking for ‘something in themselves to entitle them to the divine favour,’ are *seeking the Lord*, and in this *doing his will*; that,

* In page 16. Mr. H. expresses it thus:—‘we have seen that *it is the will of God that men should feel after him and find him.*’

although they do not see the gospel 'as they ought to do,' yet they are no longer blind;—and that their state is certainly *better* than that of careless indifference about eternity: and all this deadly poison conveyed in the way of *guarded insinuation*; sweetened to the palates of the evangelical by the fair speech about 'the fulness of the gospel:' and accompanied, as usual, with a reference to the *language* of scripture—misapplied and misinterpreted. With any who believe the gospel, nothing more can be necessary for ascertaining what kind of religious *spirit* animates Mr. H.—than to direct their attention to that passage. But as he refers in it to Acts xvii. I would make it the occasion of offering some observations on the discourse of Paul, there recorded, before the counsel of Areopagus at Athens.

"Men of Athens," said the apostle, "I perceive that in all things ye are *extraordinarily religious*." Such is the real import of the word rendered by our translators—"too superstitious." It is a word of (what grammarians call) a *middle* signification, like our *religious*; equally applicable, according to the idiom of the greek language, to true or to false religion; and certainly conveyed to his hearers nothing but the idea of that reverence for the gods, which they thought a most proper thing.

In confirmation of this character of the Athenians, the apostle adduces a circumstance which he had observed, that—not content with all the deities whose temples, and statues, and altars filled and adorned their city,—they had erected an altar with the inscription, TO A GOD UNKNOWN. And immediately availing himself of this, with an admirable dexterity of heavenly wisdom, he opens his commission. "That God, therefore, of whom amidst all your religion ye are ignorant, him declare I unto you." He proceeds to set forth that God as the *only true* God, the creator of the universe, in opposition to all their idols; proves against them the folly and ungodliness of their religious conceptions; on the authority of the only living God calls them to repentance, to the renunciation of their idolatrous thoughts and ways, to a subjection of mind to the divine truth which he testified; and refers them to the approaching day, in which the judgment of God shall be executed on those who reject his word, by that man, whom he hath ordained, and evidenced to be his righteous servant in raising him from the dead. Here the discourse of the apostle appears to have been interrupted by his audience.—And now, after having presented these general outlines of his address, I would return to the more particular consideration of some parts of it.

The reader may observe, that I have expressed the latter clause of the 23rd verse differently from our translators. [Every greek scholar, when his attention is called to the original, will see that *ὅν* depends—not upon *ἐπισεβείτε*—but upon *ἀγνοοῦντες*, and that *ἐπισεβείτε* according to its proper import is a verb neuter.] It would be literally rendered—"whom therefore ye not knowing are religious," or "devout;" that is (accommodating the phrase to the structure of the English language) "whom therefore ye know not in all your religion, him I declare unto you." I have been often so disgusted with the pruriency of conceited ignorance laying down how this and that passage *ought to be rendered*, that it is always with reluctance

and some pain that I offer any correction of our valuable version. But the present is one of the instances, in which it is necessary and important. As the words stand at present in our common translation, I have known them adduced by some for the purpose of disproving the charge of *idolatry* against religious *unbelievers* under the christian profession; and for establishing a difference between worshipping a *false God*—and worshipping (as they say) *the true God ignorantly*. Yes; these men will be ready even to allow the idolatrous heathens at Athens to have been *worshippers of the true God*, rather than admit the reproof of the word against the unbelief of antichristian professors at this day. However, it may now appear that they have to look for some other argument to justify their vain distinction, than any which this passage of scripture affords.

And it is well worthy of serious attention, that—when the apostle states it as his commission to *declare* that God who “made the world and all things therein, the Lord of heaven and earth,”—we may learn that the character of this only true God is made known to men exclusively in the apostolic doctrine: so that none know HIM, but those who *believe* that; and no others therefore worship HIM, seek HIM, or call upon *his* name. (Rom. x. 14.)

Well therefore might the apostles, in describing their ministry, speak of themselves as “testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks *repentance* toward God and *faith* toward the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts xx. 21.)—And how plainly may those see, who choose to see it, the real nature of that *repentance*, in opposition to all that is now preached under the name;—of that *repentance*, to which Paul called his Athenian auditors, when he said,—“the times of this *ignorance* God winked at,” or overlooked, leaving the nations of the earth to their vain inquiries about God,—to see (or make it appear) “*if they would grope him out and find him*” by the researches of their wisdom:—[the greek scholar may advantageously compare the expression in the 27th verse with that in Mark xi. 13.]—“but now commandeth all men every where to *repent*.” What is this *repentance* of which he speaks? Is it not evident from the connexion that it is nothing more or less, than that *new mind* which the belief of the apostolic word declaring the only true God brings with it,—the discarding of those unrighteous thoughts concerning God, which they had entertained in opposition to his essential glory?

Truly the apostle must appear to Mr. H. and to many other evangelical preachers—if they would speak the truth, or venture to *look* at their own thoughts—to have made a very poor sermon of it, in not having lashed the *vices* of his auditors,—(particularly when he had so fine a field for invective against the manners of that dissolute people)—in not having *pressed upon their notice the vast importance of eternity*, (p. 15.)—as well as in not having *coaxed* them to credit his testimony. But Paul knew his commission better. He lays the axe to the root of the tree. He clearly exposes their brutal *ignorance of God* amidst all their religion and all their philosophy; and leaves them without excuse for the ungodly conceptions they formed of Him, who “is not far from every one of us,” seeing that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.”

Indeed, in attacking the vain imagination, that He is to be wor-

shipped and served by men's hands—as though he needed something,—and in exposing its ungodly absurdity from the consideration that “HE giveth to all life, and breath, and all things,”—Paul attacked the very fundamental principle of all the *natural* religion of man's heart, whether that religion assume the christian name and form, or any other. It all proceeds upon the expectation of a sinner's being able to make God his debtor;—to render something unto him—as though he needed it,—in order to receive something in requital from him. With what indignant majesty does the divine word rebuke the proud and impious idea, in the language of ELIHU! (Job xxxv. 6, 7.) “If thou sinnest, what doest thou against HIM? Or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto HIM? If thou be righteous, what givest thou HIM? Or what receiveth HE of thine hand?”—And how does the grand discovery of God in the gospel of his Son harmonize with every conception of him, which right reason ought to form, but which the blinded heart of ungodly man never *did* form,—in revealing Him as the GIVER of *eternal life* to sinners dead in trespasses and sins!—But for the comfort of those, who think they have something, or can do something, whereby to *obtain* this boon at the hands of God,—(be that something little, or be it much)—there stands a proclamation in the divine word summoning them to put in their claim:—“who hath first *given* to the Lord, and it *shall* be recompensed unto him again?” (Rom. xi. 35. Job xli. 11.)—When Mr. H. next takes up his pen, to screen the religion and religious efforts of unbelieving men against the rebuke of the truth, and to urge in extenuation of their unbelief—in proof of their religion being *better* than irreligion—that ‘it is the will of God that men should feel after him and find him;’ I beg of him to take into consideration, and to give his exposition of another word of the apostle; namely this:—“after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom *knew not God*, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to *save* them that *believe*.”

Mr. H. assures us (p. 16.) that all who hear the gospel ‘are prevented from believing it by nothing but their *love of sin*.’ And I think this as good an exemplification as I know of the bad art of—conveying falsehood in saying truth. I do unequivocally agree with Mr. H.'s position, in one most important sense of the words. Nothing prevents a sinner from believing the gospel, but the *disaffection of his heart* to that God, whose glory it reveals: and this hatred of the true God imbodyes in it indeed the *love of sin*. In it is centered and displayed all the malignity of evil in our fallen nature. But while I acknowledge and assert the truth of Mr. H.'s *words* in this sense, I must plainly add—that in the sense in which he employs them, and evidently intends them to be understood by his readers, they are most grossly and abominably false. In the same paragraph he exemplifies what he means by sin, from the mention of worldly-mindedness; and from his assertion that ‘it is only from the gospel's interference with our *hopes of happiness in worldly objects*, that it is not universally received.’ When Mr. H. thinks that nothing but *such* love of sin as this prevents men from *doing their duty* in becoming believers, no wonder that he considers the work of making men christians as at least half done, when they have become ‘deeply impressed with the

vast importance of eternity,'—anxious about a future state,—and very sincerely and earnestly *religious*.

In the language of such men, *sin* means merely the practices of the dissolute and profligate,—the course of the sensualist, the voluptuary, and the profane. But has Mr. H. never read of persons, who were prevented from believing the gospel by a "zeal of God," and by "following after the law of righteousness?" (Rom. x. 2. ix. 30.) Has he never heard of a man "giving his body to be burned" in his zeal for false religion? or laying it on the ground to be crushed under the wheels of his idol-god, in his deadness to all hopes of happiness in this life, and his eagerness to ensure felicity in a future state of being? I suppose if Mr. H. met with such a deluded votary of Jaggernaut, he would be sure of making a convert to the christian faith of one so little *worldly-minded*. Be assured, sir, you are prevented from believing the gospel much more by your love of what you think *goodness*, than by your love of what you call *sin*.

The reader may find at the end of the tract No. 2. [vide post. p. 513.] some more scriptural account of the causes which make men stumble at the word of God. But I should be glad to learn from Mr. H. how this same love of sin, which he says is the only thing that prevents men from believing the gospel, is to be subdued in any. 'By persuading them to renounce every thing which they are putting in competition with eternal life.' (p. 16.) Aye; but how are they to be persuaded to this renunciation? O! by a process of 'moral husbandry;' (p. 8.)—by 'arguing with them on the folly of their worldly-mindedness,' and 'pressing on their notice the vast importance of eternity.' (p. 15. 16.) Well, sir: it pleased God formerly by the foolishness of the apostolic preaching of Christ crucified, "to save them that believed;"—to save them from their sins;—to "turn them to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven:" (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.) and the same thing still pleases him. "Who is he that overcometh the *world*, but he that *believeth* that Jesus is the Son of God?" "Faith worketh by love;"—by that love which "rejoiceth with the truth," and rejoiceth not in—but abhorreth—all that iniquity, which is opposed to the truth of God. And when you, by your *moral husbandry*, and by the false gospel which you employ as its instrument, have made a convert animated by your own spirit of religious zeal against that despised truth and its calumniated witnesses,—you have a man as much animated by the *love of sin*—by that carnal mind which is "enmity against God," as he was before. This testimony, unless you be given "repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth," must appear to you only another specimen of my harshness and severity. But I dare not soften or qualify it; when I consider the ground you have taken of public opposition to the word, and the stated office of a religious teacher which you hold.

One effect at least has resulted from my late publications, and the indignation which they have excited: and it is an effect which I contemplate with satisfaction. In more than one instance, the mask has dropped off from persons, who were supposed by many not to differ essentially in doctrine from those stigmatized by the name of SANDEMANIANS.

SECTION VI.

Popular misapplication of Luke xiii. 24.—The passage applied to the believer.—Common version of Phil. ii. 12. corrected. (See notes.)—Wicked use made of the passage.—No man standing in the faith will think of at all working out his own salvation.—One spring of all the believer's hope towards God.—Mr. H.'s joy greater than that which is unspeakable and full of glory.—1 Peter i. 8.—Rom. xv. 13.—The fruits of righteousness.—The believer addressed on their inseparable connexion with the faith of the gospel.—Evidences.

MR. HALDANE observes (p. 43.) that he knows not whether I 'would employ the language adopted by the Lord and his apostles,' but that he has 'met with nothing in my letters resembling such passages as the following'—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate"—"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."—Any notice that I take of this or similar *strictures* of Mr. H. cannot legitimately be to satisfy him, or others, that I would employ the language adopted by Christ and his apostles; but to call the attention of my readers to the real meaning of their language, in opposition to the perverted application of it by the popular preachers.

"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, strive to enter in [*ἀγωνίζεσθε*, maintain the *contest* for entering in] at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Luke xiii. 23, 24. A similar admonition is given by the Lord to his disciples, in Matt. vii. 13, 14. "Enter ye in at the *strait* gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Whenever a *professed* disciple is insensible to the solemn weight of those words, it is more than probable that he is walking in the broad way, and knows not whither he is going. But indeed there are multitudes bestirring themselves most earnestly in a religious course, and persuaded that they are conforming themselves to this divine admonition, who yet totally mistake its meaning, and are but *seeking to enter* into life, in a way, *in which they never shall be able*.

The words are commonly handled by the religious teachers of the day for the purpose of exciting their hearers to strenuous efforts—for *entering into a state of peace with God*, for obtaining the forgiveness of their sins and acceptance before the Most High. They often (with deceitful jugglery) instruct the sinner to labour as vigorously in the task assigned him for this purpose, as if he thought that he could do the whole; and then—to be very humble—to depend as exclusively upon the false Christ of their system, as if he thought he could himself do nothing in the work. By many, who think themselves much clearer than these in evangelical doctrine, the words are employed for the purpose of stirring up those, whom they regard perhaps as children of God, but who have not "the answer of a good conscience," nor any assured hope and filial confidence towards him,

—in order that they may become satisfied in their minds that they are called and chosen of God, and so possess a confidence of their *personal interest* in Christ,—a confidence that they are favourites of heaven.—All who employ these words of Christ in any such manner, and for any such purpose, are but wresting this scripture, as they do all the other scriptures, to their own destruction, and the destruction of their hearers.

To the disciples of Christ—to the believers of his glorious gospel, who have peace with God through his blood, and that good hope which maketh not ashamed,—(for such alone can either understand or obey the call in these words)—to them I would say:—brethren, attend to the exhortation which calls you to hold fast unto the end that which ye have received, to “fight the good fight [*ἀγωνιζέσθαι τον κλον ἀγωνια*, to maintain the good contest] of faith,”—to “run with patience the race that is set before you,”—to “walk in Christ Jesus the Lord as ye have received him,”—abiding in him, and his words abiding in you. Attend to the voice of heavenly wisdom and redeeming love, which reminds you that “this is not your rest, for it is polluted;” but that “*there remaineth* a rest for the people of God,” into which they *have not yet entered*, even the heavenly rest in the celestial mansions prepared for them. The same gracious voice reminds you of the *one way* which leadeth to it—of Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life;”—and of the character of that way, as a *narrow path*, every deviation from which (however small apparently) would turn you out of the way of peace and righteousness into the *broad way* of darkness and of death:—*narrow*, as closely beset on every side by the snares and devious paths, in which the father of lies keeps and leads his captives. It reminds you that the whole course in which you are called to keep the faith is a course of continual *contest* against many adversaries, who would move you away from the hope of the gospel,—adversaries around you and *within* you;—a course contrary in all things to the perpetual bent of *your own* evil hearts:—a course therefore in which you are called to “put on the whole armour of God,” and never to think of laying aside the heavenly panoply, but to “quit you like men”—like “good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” vigilant, circumspect, giving “diligent heed to the things which ye have learned and been taught, lest at any time ye should let them slip;” remembering him who hath said—“To him that *overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Rev. iii. 21. xii. 11.) “He that *endureth unto the end*, the same shall be saved.”

Those who are of the truth may be so addressed, and they will understand the language:—though I must observe, that such a publication as this is not the legitimate organ for so addressing them. It is in the churches of the saints that they are called thus to “exhort and edify *one another*,” to build up each other in their most holy faith. And those who make a profession of the faith ever so clear, but remain deaf to the reproof of the word for “forsaking the assembling of themselves together,” as the churches of the saints did of old, and persist in maintaining their connexion rather with the various synagogues of satan, which are leagued against the uncorrupted truth;

—these professors afford little evidence of being the disciples of the Lord. But passing this; all who are not of the truth will unavoidably mistake the clearest exposition of what is implied in the call—“strive to enter in at the strait gate;”—and will either conceive the offered interpretation quite inadequate and feeble, in only calling believers to *hold fast the faith*; or will still understand it as summoning *them* to some mighty exertion for *working*—what they think—the *works of God*,—for getting rid of some character that does belong to themselves, or attaining to some character that does not belong to them.

Similar is their misapprehension of that passage in Phil. ii. 12. and too much countenanced by the language of our translators—“*work out your own salvation.*” In it the apostle exhorts the Philippian believers, for whose “fellowship in the gospel” he thanked his God, and of whom he avows his *confidence* that “he who had begun a good work in them—(even the work of faith)—would complete it until the day of Jesus Christ,”—these believers he exhorts to be “occupied with this salvation”* of God, of which they were partakers;—to have it as the one thing engaging their minds and employing

* Similar is the phrase in Rev. xviii. 17. *ἄσοι τὴν θάλασσαν ἔργαζονται* “those whose *employment* is in the sea,”—who are *occupied* about maritime affairs. So *ἔργαζοσθε τὴν βρωσὴν* (John vi. 27.) ought to be rendered—“be not occupied with the meat that perisheth, but” &c. Indeed the unbelieving hearers of Christ were ready enough, as now, to think of some labour by which they were to obtain that meat, which the Son of man *gives*—without money or price—to all that *believe* in his name.

So again in Demosthenes, *οἱ κατιργαζομένοι σιδήρων* are persons—not who *work out* iron from the mine, much less who *make* the metal,—but persons who are *occupied* or *employed* about the iron with which they are *furnished*;—whose *business* it is to *work up* the iron, or manufacture it into the various utensils, to which it is applied. In like manner, disciples of Christ are called, in that so much perverted passage, Phil. ii. 12. to be men of *one business*, *occupied* with one thing,—even that great *salvation of God* unto which they are called, with which they are *saved*, and unto the consummation of which they are kept by his power. With this, as that wherewith they are *furnished* by his rich mercy, they are called (as it were) to do every thing that they do;—“whatsoever they do, in word or deed, doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God even the Father by him.” Col. iii. 17.

Some, who still wish to screen from detection the infidel principle suggested by the common translation of the passage, will be apt to say,—‘Well; these are *learned* observations, about the justice of which none can decide but those who have some knowledge of Greek. What are unlettered christians to do, who have nothing but the English translation of the scriptures, from which to derive their sentiments?’—If the meaning of the question be—(as it commonly is)—‘what are unbelieving men to do in order to discover what is the truth of God?’—I answer without hesitation, that I profess not to have any prescription for effecting any such purpose. Most of the evangelical divines would be forward to give a very different answer:—‘let them pray earnestly, and read the scriptures diligently, and bestir themselves devoutly in employing the other *means of grace*—especially attendance on our *ministry*: and they shall sooner or later come to a knowledge of the truth.’ It is as false as the father of lies, from whom the sentiment springs. *God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.* He calls to the belief of his revealed truth whom he will, even all whom he hath “ordained unto *eternal life.*” (Acts xiii. 48.) And that truth, discovering his glory as the *just God* and the *Saviour*—saving lost sinners through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,—that truth (I say) stands so prominent, not merely in this or that passage of the scriptures, but throughout the whole of their tissue, that it is sufficiently put forward to view in versions of them much inferior to ours; a version generally

their thoughts;—and this, “with fear and trembling,”—with the reverence and godly fear which becomes those who see in it the glory of the living God, “*working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*”

Indeed it would be curiously ludicrous, if it were not too awful, to hear a popular preacher of the more evangelical sort, when he gets upon that passage in Phil. ii. 12. in connexion with the following verse:—one minute describing to his hearers all the arduous work that a sinner has to do in *working out his own salvation*; and the next minute guarding his *evangelical* character, by gravely assuring them that the whole work is God’s:—so that those of the congregation, who are uninitiated in those depths of satan, are left wholly at a loss to know what the preacher means. One thing is certain, that he does not mean the truth; and commonly succeeds too fatally in persuading his followers of the religious lie which they love. But the disciple of Christ must maintain against them all (whatever handle it affords them for exclaiming against him as profane)—that the man who is most strenuously engaged in *working out his own salvation*—in whole or in part,—or who entertains any thought of the kind,—will assuredly be damned unless he repent. Mr. H. may see that I still desire to speak a *plain language*; and I invite him to state in similarly plain language what *he* means, when he urges his hearers to work out their own salvation.

I have hesitated considerably, whether I should say one word upon the various passages in which Mr. H. speaks of his *evidences*, as confirming his hope and increasing his joy: and have hesitated chiefly from the apprehension that what I should be obliged to say, if I treat the subject at all, might possibly lead Mr. H. and those like-minded with him to imagine that the difference between them and me is less broad and important than it certainly is. In their present mind, any statement from me that would in the least clear my character and sentiments in their view, could do so only by failing to convey my real sentiments. However, I have finally decided to attempt expressing myself upon the topic as distinctly as I can, for the sake of one and another scattered disciple who may read these pages, and whose minds may have been perplexed and entangled by the popular doctrine.

valuable, because for the most part intentionally fair and made by men of real learning.

But if the question mean—“what will a *believer* of the truth do, who understands no language but the English, when he finds in our version of the scriptures such a passage as that—*work out your own salvation?*” I reply—that if he can do nothing else, he will let it alone—as a passage of which he does not know the meaning, but which certainly *does not mean* what the English plainly appears to convey. If an angel from heaven told a believer of the truth, that he was called to *work out his own salvation*, the believer—“kept by the power of God through faith”—would reject that angel as accursed. Such passages in our version,—and indeed many passages of the word where there is no error in our version, and which the believer sees in perfect harmony with the truth,—form so many gins and snares to the unbelieving world, by which those who “receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,” are ensnared, and taken in their own craftiness, and confirmed in a strong delusion to believe the lie which they love. (2 Thess. ii. 10—12.)

Let me first quote a passage from Mr. H.'s strictures, (p. 22, 23.) 'Mr. W. considers the believer's comfort as derived *immediately* from the gospel.' Yes, Mr. Haldane: *all* his genuine comfort and confidence of hope towards God I do consider derived—from first to last—immediately and exclusively from the bare report of the glorious gospel,—from the things there testified from heaven to all men alike:—while it is surely needless to add that none will be comforted by that joyful report—by the things there testified, but those who believe the report of them, and in proportion as they are persuaded of it. In short, all that I have expressed upon this subject in pages 317 and 318, of the Prelim. Obser. &c. I adhere to; and hope through the divine mercy to be kept adhering to till I die.

Mr. H. goes on:—'and doubtless the glorious truth, that through Christ is preached to us the forgiveness of sins, is *sufficient* to make the christian *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*' Now, Mr. Haldane, I freely say that I consider this language from you as nothing, but good words and fair speeches to deceive: for I understand what you mean by the *christian*, namely, the man who has done his *duty* in performing that h'ly mental *act*, which you call faith, and which I know you illustrate by the *due taking* of a medicine that is held out and *offered* to all men in the gospel. I understand therefore what you mean by the *preaching of the forgiveness of sins* to men through Jesus Christ. However, let us hear you further. 'But Mr. W. goes further, and *denies that the believer's joy is capable of increase from his bringing forth the fruits of righteousness.* Now, this is not only contrary to many explicit declarations of the word of God, but opposed to all the principles there laid down.'—In representing to your hearers what I affirm or what I deny, I could wish that you would either quote my own words, or at least refer to them. But passing this;—let us observe what Mr. H. has said. The gospel itself, he professedly admits, is sufficient to make the christian rejoice with "joy unspeakable and full of glory:"—but this joy, he says, is capable of *increase* from another source. Well; if those be not great swelling words of vanity, I know not what are: for I confess I know nothing of joy *greater* than that which is "unspeakable and full of glory:" and I suspect that the believer, who rejoices with such a joy derived immediately from the gospel, will be satisfied with that; while I am sure also that the believer, as he abides in this joy, will abound in the *fruits of righteousness.*

And here let it be distinctly marked, that in the very passage (1 Pet. i. 8.) where the apostle characterizes the joy of faith in language so strong, he expressly speaks of its *one* spring and object;—expressly describes it as a rejoicing—not in certain tokens of good and hopeful evidences, which the believer discovers about himself,—but *in Jesus Christ*, Him who is set forth in the gospel as *the salvation of God unto the ends of the earth.* (Is. xlix. 6.) So when another apostle prays that the disciples may be "*filled with all joy and peace,*" (Rom. xv. 13.) he marks this fulness of all joy and peace as had "*in believing*" the report of the gospel, not in viewing the evidences that they believe it. Here is the *hope of Israel* and the *consolation of Israel.* And therefore is their hope "a good hope," and their con-

solation “everlasting consolation;” (2 Thess. ii. 16.) because HE always *is* that just God and justifier of the ungodly, which his word reports him to be. This *joy in the Lord* the testimony of his name affords and warrants to the vilest of the vile—*now* believing its report; though he were to the preceding hour in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. And therefore whenever a religious professor is rejoicing in something, which—if it were declared to the publican and harlot—would not be *equally* calculated at once to afford *them* the same joy, that man is certainly not rejoicing in *Christ Jesus*.

Again,—as to “the fruits of righteousness;” it is in the first place to be maintained that *none* of them do exist,—whatever may be the appearances of them,—where the unadulterated gospel is not confessed, but is gainsaid and contradicted. All who believe the word of the Lord must know, that *there* the tree is corrupt, and *cannot* bring forth any good fruit;—that *there* is a sinner not righteous before God—not justified in his sight, and in whom therefore *there cannot* be any of “the fruits of righteousness:”—that the spirit reigning in that man, and manifested in his opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, is the spirit of antichrist, the spirit of the father of lies:—although satan, “transforming himself into an angel of light,” is not such a bungling deceiver, as not to have a *counterfeit* for every fruit of the Spirit of God, as well as an endless variety of counterfeit gospels. The professor who displays his *good spirit* by saying—‘such and such a man does not indeed hold the same doctrine exactly with me, as to the way of salvation and a sinner’s justification in the sight of God; but then they are such *good men*, and evidence so much of the *fruits of righteousness* in their spirit and conversation, that I cannot doubt but they are dear disciples of Christ:’—that professor just evidences that he is not himself of the truth.

But having so far cleared our way, I would turn to the believer and say, that it is of the last importance in many views that we should hold fast in our judgments that *inseparable connexion*, which the scriptures mark, between the belief of the truth and the fruits of righteousness which it produces. It is important—for putting down and detecting in our view the false profession of some, in the confession of whose mouths about the truth no error perhaps can be discovered; but who, walking after the flesh in any of its forms—prove that their faith is but professional and dead;—that in saying they have faith, they say what is not true. “If we *say* that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.” (1 John i. 6.) And if the various passages of the word, which rebuke the vain pretensions of such professors,—(as those, for instance, in the epistle of JAMES)—appear to us at any time of an *un-evangelical* character,—sayings that we secretly wish had not been written;—it is more than probable that our own minds have been corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, and that we are at bottom mixing some lie with our profession of the truth. The mind of faith is a mind that “*fears* JEHOVAH and that trembles at *his* word,” while it rejects the traditions of men. An immediate effect of the discernment of his revealed glory is the subjection of the conscience to the divine authority of the word,—of its precepts, its admonitions, its reproofs, as

well as to the rich consolations drawn from that river "which makes glad the city of God." And whenever we find a man talking of the truth and its consolations, but manifesting that he walks in a mind opposite to that fear of the LORD and subjection of the conscience to his word,—(though this may be manifested in instances not at all *discreditable* in the world, but the contrary)—let him talk as an angel, the word binds us to consider him but a *talker*.

The recollection of the same principles is important—for regulating us in our dealing with our brethren, when "found in any transgression;"—suppose in any instance of conduct opposite to that purity of walk and conversation, which becometh the gospel. In our endeavours to bring them to repentance, if we view the evil—whatever it be—as that which certainly indicates a turning aside of their minds *from the truth*, in what way are we called to set about restoring them? In what other, than by seeking to bring to their remembrance that glorious truth which they have been letting slip;—that gospel, which *worketh effectually* in all them that believe, and (as the light) makes manifest all that is opposed to its own pure and divine glory? We might indeed otherwise skin over the evil; but that alone can probe it to the bottom, and (under the blessing of Him who has appointed the merciful dealing) bring health and a cure.

But, believer, shall we try the character of *others* and their walk by this rule, but *our own* by some different rule? Far be it! We are ever called to "ponder the path of our feet," to "walk circumspectly," to "consider our ways:" and these calls are as inconsistent with a heedless indifference to the course in which we have been walking yesterday, as with the same heedlessness about the course we walk in to-day.—(Here I could heartily wish that Mr. H. and all like-minded with him would close the book. They have nothing to do with the subject, and cannot understand it.)—We know how those who believe not, and are endeavouring to *work out their own salvation*, totally misconceive the *circumspection* of walk, to which the believer is called; and imagine that they walk circumspectly, when they labour to keep before their eyes a standard of moral purity and religious ardour, to which they constantly endeavour to square their tempers and their conduct:—little aware that all such *efforts* (for instance) to be humble, *efforts* to be heavenly-minded, &c. are but hypocritical efforts to cover our sin, and to assume a character other than our own. We are called, believer, to *one* thing,—to "*hearken diligently*" to the voice that speaketh to us from heaven in the word declaring the name of the LORD, and *thus* to follow Christ who "set the LORD always before him;" (Ps. xvi. 8.)—to "consider the apostle and high priest of our profession," through whom the guilty and ungodly are *brought unto God*, and have an open way of access into the holiest. And so far as that divine testimony dwells and abides in us, *shall we not walk* in all lowliness of mind, and have our conversation in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour? "He that *abideth in me*, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." (John xv. 5.)—Whenever our consciences therefore testify against us, that we have been walking in another mind than is accordant with the glorious gospel,

—though the evils be such as our fellow-men cannot take cognizance of,—in a mind high and lifted up, earthly, and anxious about this world's concerns,—what do these evils evidence to us? What, but that we have been forgetting the name of the LORD? What, but that we have been letting slip his glorious truth; and therefore walking after *our own* minds and in *our own* way? What, but “an evil heart of *unbelief* in departing from the living God?” If you be afraid to look at such *evidences* of your hardness of heart and unbelief, lest the perception of them should disturb your *present* confidence or joy, are you *now* yourself standing in the truth? Is not your present confidence or joy just of the same deceitful kind as that of the religious world?—who must be satisfied by some good *evidences* in their past course that they *were* genuine disciples yesterday, in order to derive any good and sure hope towards God from their gospel *to-day*. Are you not “forgetting what manner of man you are,”—a sinner and nothing but a sinner,—a creature altogether evil and ungodly? Are you not forgetting the salvation that “belongeth to JEHOVAH;”—forgetting the word which reveals him “rich in mercy,” and “multiplying pardons,” unto *all* them that call upon Him?

But is it so, professor, that you are—not indeed afraid to look at and to own these evils in your course, or any other instances in which you have been “fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind,”—but are not afraid *because* you make light of them in yourself, and conceive that they have not evidenced any *departure from the truth*;—or *because* you conceive that the principle, from which they have proceeded in *you*, is a principle of less deadly malignity and ungodliness than that, from which they spring in the unbelieving world:—or *because* you are sure that *you* are one of those for whom Christ has died, and confound that persuasion with the persuasion of the truth testified *in the word of God*, or mistake for the faith of the gospel the ability of *talking clearly* about a theological system? High professor, you are awfully deceiving yourself;—your peace is false peace; and your hope, that hope of the hypocrite which shall perish.

Let us remember, believer, that a good tree no more *can* bring forth evil fruit, than a corrupt tree *can* bring forth good fruit:—that “every *good* and every perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of lights;” who has made himself known as bestowing eternal life and all good things upon the sinful and the evil; who worketh in his people both to will and to do, by the power of that word which is the sword of his spirit. Let us remember that every evil fruit in us but *evidences* the radical evil of the tree from which it springs—*ourselves* and our own evil hearts, turning aside from the divine word, and leading us to forget the great things of God. And let every evidence of that character of incurable malignity in our fleshly minds, and of their continued tendency to depart from the living God, but lead us—in the light of his glorious truth—to “cleave with purpose of heart unto the Lord,” in holding fast the faith of his glorious name, the word that reveals his “mercy reigning

through righteousness unto eternal life by Christ Jesus," where "sin hath reigned unto death."

So shall our peace flow like a river. So shall He lead us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. So shall we be kept in the love of God, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

As to those who are seriously looking for some *evidence* that they *now* know the truth, in order that they may take to themselves its comfort; they sufficiently evidence indeed that they do not know it, and are not of the truth. However they may dress up their anxious search in scriptural *language*, it is the inquiry of a mind not persuaded of the truth, nor discerning its joyfulness and glory. Whenever a sinner does indeed believe the truth of God, it is because that truth *evidences itself* with divine power to his conscience; and it then brings "peace and joy in believing" it,—though that sinner were to the moment before dead in trespasses and sins. If Mr. H.'s eyes were *now* opened to it, he would perceive indeed that he has been hitherto gainsaying and corrupting it: and while he would loathe himself in his own eyes, and all that he has esteemed most excellent in himself or others,—he yet would rejoice in God, and be satisfied with his revealed goodness.

SECTION VII.

Miscellaneous remarks.—Mr. H.'s language of defiance, and perversion of Luke xvii. 4.—Nature of the forgiveness there enjoined.—Intemperance of Mr. H.'s zeal against scriptural forbearance.—Brief notice on marked separation.—Numbers xxx. 2.—Imprecatory nature of oaths.

I HAVE nearly gone through all the topics in Mr. H.'s Strictures, of which I mean at present to take any notice. I should be unwilling to divert the reader's attention from the fundamental principles of divine truth, on which I am at issue with Mr. Haldane, to any points of subordinate importance. On other questions treated in my letters enough has been there said, to present the scriptural view of them to the believer's attention: and none but the believer of the apostolic gospel has any thing to do with them. I am quite content to let what I have offered on these subjects go before disciples, accompanied with Mr. H.'s strictures: for they will find all my *real* positions not only remaining secure, but even perfectly *unassailed*,—notwithstanding all the noise and smoke of his attack. But though I have no intention of resuming the detailed consideration of these subjects, I would make two or three brief remarks before I conclude.

In p. 48. Mr. H. writes thus:—"Mr. W. could not forbear with the most humble, conscientious, and devoted servant of Christ, who maintained that all believers ought to be baptized, or that it was unnecessary to have a *marked separation* between the church and the spectators; but a man may be guilty of drunkenness, and of every other abomination, till seventy times seven, and still be regarded as

a brother in the Lord. The offender may be an house breaker, or a murderer, he may be justly condemned to die for his crimes: and because *he says* he repents, the church will restore him, and accompany him the next morning to the gallows.'—And on the words '*he says* he repents'—Mr. H. has the following note:—'Bold as Mr. W. is, it appears, he *dares not* fairly avow the length to which his premises necessarily lead him. The Lord's words are express: "If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn to thee, *saying*, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Mr. W. has changed the expression, and substituted, 'appear restored to a mind accordant with the truth.' This softens the matter, and makes it at first sight less revolting; but Mr. W. *must* adhere to the plain language of the precept.'

I am not at all surprised, either that Mr. H. continues to advocate the false forbearance which I have exposed; or that he cordially abhors the true forbearance which I have asserted, and endeavours—by the grossest misrepresentation of it—to excite the abhorrence of his religious hearers. Nor is it to shew that I *dare* meet the bullying language of his note that I bring forward the passage; but for the purpose of rescuing the words of scripture from his perversion of their meaning.

"If *thy brother* trespass against thee, rebuke him; and *if he repent*, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day, *turn again to thee, saying*, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Now, let the christian reader observe, that the *forgiveness* here enjoined—being made conditional on the repentance of the offender—is certainly more than that forgiveness from the heart of all injuries committed against us, which the law of Christ enjoins on his disciples towards their most obstinate and *impenitent* enemies,—which his dying prayer for his murderers exemplified,—and which his redeeming mercy marks to all who know it as part of his *easy yoke* and light burden. The forgiveness of our *brother* enforced in this passage is decidedly that, which continues to hold him *as a brother beloved*, and allows us not to remove him from the brotherhood;—which we are elsewhere equally commanded to do—*if he repent not*. This I conceive even Mr. Haldane will not distinctly controvert. Now this being established, it is sufficiently established that I have rightly interpreted the words—"if he *turn again, saying*, I repent,"—as equivalent with the words in the preceding verse—"if he repent,"—or, *appear restored to a mind accordant with the truth*:—and that Mr. H. altogether perverts them, when he maintains—not indeed that the offender is to be forgiven—but that the Lord's words are express that the offender is to be forgiven merely 'because *he says* he repents.' When he tells me that I '*must* adhere to the *plain language* of the precept,' I shall only tell him that I hope to adhere to the sufficiently plain and certainly *real meaning* of the precept;—and that in the indignation of his pious zeal against the forbearance I have asserted, he has directly aimed his feeble stroke against the express command of the King of Zion.

Disciples, walking together in the fellowship of the gospel, need to remember that the repentance, on which they are bound to confirm

their love towards an offending brother, does not consist merely in his use of *any form* of words, however gravely and seriously employed :—while indeed it is obvious that he might merely *say*—‘ I repent’—in such a manner, and accompanied with such circumstances, as would decisively manifest that he did not repent ;—that he remained of a mind not accordant with the truth.

The passage which I just now quoted from Mr. H.’s *Strictures*, commences with a charge against me, which, notwithstanding the falsehood conveyed in it—would scarcely claim any notice, but that it has occurred as part of the quotation. ‘ Mr. W. could not forbear with the most humble, &c. servant of Christ, who maintained that it was unnecessary to have a *marked separation* between the church and the spectators.’ Now what will you say, reader, when I plainly tell you—that there neither is, nor ever has been, in any of the churches with which I am connected, *any marked separation* between the church and the spectators, further than this—(which Mr. H. himself in page 51. pronounces *necessary*)—that the church and the spectators are not promiscuously intermingled? What will you say, when I tell you that in all these odious churches, the church and the spectators are seated in the same room—without so much as a hand-rail or cord to *mark* their separation? and that in the most numerous of them, the church and the spectators sit in *immediate contact* ;—without our ever apprehending the least defilement from the closeness of the *juxta-position*? * * * [I have here expunged an additional observation, which I had inserted in the first copy, and which Mr. H.’s consciousness will enable him easily to supply. I have expunged it from a wish not to irritate him needlessly.]—Probably Mr. H. had a cogent reason for bringing forward this topic, and handling it in a distinct letter ;—though one word upon the subject occurs not in that piece of mine, on which he professes to animadvert,—nor indeed in any of my other publications, *in the sense* in which he uses the expression *marked separation*. But could he not make the *amende honorable* for himself, without misrepresenting others?

Upon the Lord’s precept to his disciples—“ *swear not at all by any oath,*” —I shall add very little. I am quite content that Mr. H. should strenuously maintain, that swearing is ‘ an *appointment of God* for promoting the *welfare of society,*’ and ‘ when properly conducted, calculated to *promote reverence for God.*’ I suppose it will be inserted for the future among what divines call—*the means of grace* ; and among the religious *ordinances* to be observed by the children of the world for the welfare of the kingdoms of this world. Mr. H. however quite mistakes, when he seems to intimate that I deny a reference by the Lord, in the introduction of the subject and throughout his command upon it, to the precept in the law of Moses recorded in Num. xxx. 2. “ If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or *swear an oath* to BIND HIS SOUL WITH A BOND ; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.” I assert that reference ; and I call the christian reader to attend to it. Under the law of Moses, the divine command was merely this ;—that the man, who *swore an oath to bind his soul with a bond* that he would do so and so, should do that to which he thus pledged him-

self. Under the gospel, the divine command is—that disciples should not swear an oath at all to bind their souls with a bond. Mr. H. contends that this relates only to a religious vow,—‘prohibiting the confirmation of a religious vow by any oath.’ I shall not argue that point with him. The gloss has been sufficiently refuted: but I have no desire to interfere with the practice of those, who wish to think otherwise.

Mr. H. justly says that there may be a vow or simple promise, however solemn, ‘without any oath or imprecation.’ (p. 62—64.) And in this language he seems to admit what I have asserted, that every oath includes in it an imprecation, either expressed or understood;—in other words, that the man who swears an oath binds his soul with a bond, under the forfeiture of which he pledges himself to act so and so. That such is the intention of the legislature, in every oath administered in this country, has been shewn from the express language of Dr. Paley—a good authority upon such a subject.* If the christian reader should wish for any further confirmation of that point, he may find it in the Attorney General’s speech at the opening of Carlile’s late trial? where he asks the jury—‘If christianity be not a part of the law of the land, why did they thus pledge their hope of eternal life, arising from christianity, for the truth of their verdict?’ The legal view of the nature of an oath is here unequivocally expressed; though the argument perhaps was weak enough, as it might equally be applied to prove that mahometanism is part of the law of the land, —a turk being sworn on the koran. However, I believe that no one, the most moderately acquainted with the law of the land, will question but that something called christianity is part of it. The disciple of Christ must only deny that the thing is Christianity; or that the christianity of the bible can form any part of the law of any land. Professors of christianity will choose, in this instance of oaths, and in every other, whether they will obey God or man. Here they certainly cannot obey both.

I shall only further assure Mr. H. that I should have no scruple about answering—on any suitable occasion—*adjured by the most high God.* But if I should do so, I must yet decline even saying that, in

* On the imprecatory nature of every oath, some may consider the authority of an evangelical minister better than that of an un-evangelical archdeacon. I find the Rev. John Brown, of Haddington, expressing himself thus in his self-interpreting bible—on Gen. xiv. 22. ‘All oaths are to be taken by God alone, and import—a taking of him to witness the truth of what we declare or engage, and calling him to avenge himself upon us if we utter falsehood, or neglect to perform our engagement.’—The authority of this reverend gentleman is of the greater weight upon the subject, because he quite agrees with Mr. Haldane in pronouncing it a most proper and useful thing, that men should thus engage for their future conduct under an imprecation of the divine vengeance on themselves in case of failure. I suppose if Peter had but taken an oath that he would not deny his master, it would have been a useful preventative against his fall.

Classical authorities might easily be multiplied, to shew that all nations have taken the same view of the imprecatory nature of an oath. The classical reader may refer, for instance, to Juv. Sat. xiii. 78—85.—But blessed be God! no human authorities are needful for proving to the christian reader the nature of the thing forbidden by the Lord. It is abundantly ascertained by the manner in which he enforces the prohibition, and by the reference to Numb. xxx. 2.

this, I *swear at all* by any oath :—I must decline even professing to violate an express command of the Lord.

On baptism, which occupies more than one third of Mr. H.'s pamphlet, he has given us again the usual routine of the stalest baptist arguments, without even attempting to meet mine. In my letter on the subject, I brought the question to the narrowest focus ; purposely divesting it even of the *mention of Jewish proselyte baptism*, or any other matters not immediately and essentially bearing on the point. Mr. H. has chosen again to raise a dust by the introduction of these topics : and I shall not follow him into the dust which he has raised. I have shewn that *his baptism* is a thing essentially distinct from any thing, for which there is either a *precedent* or *precept* recorded in the word of God. He has chosen to leave all that position absolutely unassailed ; and to amuse his readers with such questions as—whether *Timothy* was brought up from his infancy in the profession of the christian faith, or was born before his mother's conversion to it :—as if any one of my arguments turned upon that. I leave Mr. H. to the enjoyment of his baptism and his strictures.

SIX ESSAYS

ILLUSTRATIVE

OF THE

FAITH AND HOPE OF THE GOSPEL.

[Published at different periods, from 1807 to 1819, in the form of Tracts.]

I.

ON THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL SUBJECTS.

OUR attention to the things we hear, ought to be regulated by their certainty and their importance. There are some truths, which, however certain, we may disregard; because the knowledge of them is of no concernment to us. Other matters may be reported, the importance of which we shall acknowledge, while we reasonably slight the testimony as of uncertain authority. But your attention, reader, is now entreated for a few moments to a declaration, which at once comes attested by authority the most unquestionable, and relates to a fact of the highest and most universal concernment. It is that declaration which the Apostle Paul of old recommended by those united characters of certainty and importance, when, writing to Timothy, he said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15.

In these few words we have the great substance of that revelation, which God hath sent into the world in the Scriptures. It is the testimony which the God of *truth* delivers to us; and the man that rejects it is therefore said to make God a liar." 1 John, v. 9, 10. The matter of it also, as we might expect in a revelation from the eternal God, is of import so high, that in comparison of it every thing reckoned most interesting, vanishes into insignificance; and when every thing that now most engages the anxiety of the world, shall cease to be of any consequence, the importance of this truth will continue to be known and felt.

But there are subjects, which, though of weighty moment, are yet of a forbidding character on account of their gloominess. This is not such. It is a truth, as joyful in its nature, as it is weighty in its moment, and certain in its authority. Those that believed it of old

were "filled with all joy and peace in believing it:" Rom. xv. 13. and it will have the same effect on you, reader, whatever be your circumstances or character, if you receive the declaration in its real import. To lay that before you is the object of the following pages. Withhold not your attention from them; and compare what you read, not by the opinions of fallible men, but by the unerring standard of the word of God.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This is a divine declaration of mercy to the guilty, of blessedness to the wretched, of salvation to the lost. Salvation, or deliverance from ruin, is the joyful subject of it—unspeakably joyful, even while it is most humbling to human pride, and awakening to the carnal security of a sinful world.

That all men are sinners, is a truth which all men readily acknowledge; while most take encouragement from that very fact to flatter themselves, that their sin cannot subject them to any destructive consequences; as if a deadly plague were less fatal to individuals on account of its being general throughout a country. But sin is, in its nature, an act of rebellious opposition in the creature to the infinite Creator; and must not they think little of him, who think little of sinning against him? He is the righteous and holy Governor of the universe, which he has formed; and has "revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i. 18. He has denounced "death as the wages of sin." Rom. vi. 23.—its appointed and deserved recompense; and however light an ungodly world may make of it, however they may deceive themselves with the hope that it is but an empty threat, the eternal God changeth not his purpose. He "is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent," Numb. xxiii. 19. and will not in any instance revoke the sentence that has gone out of his mouth.

The belief of this might well sink us all in despair, were it not for that "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," which reveals the provision God himself has made for the salvation of sinners: wherein He appears at once making good all his most awful denunciations against sin, and delivering sinners from condemnation:—at once "just and the justifier of the ungodly." Isaiah xlv. 21. Rom. iii. 26. iv. 5.

For this gracious purpose, He sent his own Son into the world, clothed in human nature, "made of a woman, made under the law," Gal. iv. 4, 5. iii. 13, 14. to redeem them that were exposed to its curse, as transgressors, by becoming a curse for them; to die the just in place of the unjust, that he might "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26. 1 Pet. iii. 18. "bearing the sins of many in his own body on the cross." 1 Pet. ii. 24. Matt. xxvi. 28. For this gracious purpose Christ Jesus came into the world, humbling himself to take upon him the form of a servant, and willingly offering himself to do that work, Heb. x. 4—9. Phil. ii. 6—8. which none in heaven or on earth could do but he, who is one with the heavenly Father, "God over all blessed for evermore." Rom. ix. 5. John x. 30. And that work, which he undertook on behalf of sinners, he accomplished unto the uttermost, by his obedience unto death.

John xix. 30. "He has finished transgression and made an end of sin." Dan. ix. 24. Heb. x. 11, 12. "He has magnified the divine law and made it honourable." Isa. xlii. 21. He has made peace, and opened a new and living way into the holiest for sinners, by his blood. Heb. x. 19, 20. Acts x. 36. JEHOVAH has declared himself "well pleased in him," and for his righteousness sake, Isa. xlii. 21. Matt. xvii. 5. and has given assurance of this unto all men, in that he has raised up his Son Jesus from the dead, and exalted him high above all principality and power; "giving him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as have been given him by the Father." Rom. i. 4. John xvii. 2.

This testimony of the person, and work, and office of the Lord Jesus Christ, is called the Gospel, or good news, which God sends throughout the world, proclaiming peace made for the rebellious: yea, beseeching them to be reconciled to him, 2 Cor. v. 18—21. setting forth Christ crucified as the propitiation for sin, Rom. iii. 24, 25. and assuring acceptance in him, and on account of his work of righteousness, to every sinner who believes the record of God concerning his Son; John iii. 15, 36. Acts xiii. 38, 39. Rom. x. 9—13. Isa. xlv. 17, 22—25. and this, without any difference or exception; so that "whosoever believeth is justified from all things," and shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Many are seeking earnestly, and striving hard to make their peace with God: but they shall never succeed. A sinner can do nothing in this work: and those who attempt it, manifest that they are, though under a religious form, fighting against God, and rejecting his testimony against themselves. Rom. ix. 31, 32. For his testimony is, that Christ—*his righteous servant*—came into the world to do this work, which they vainly imagine themselves capable of doing, and that he has finished it: so that, as nothing acceptable in the sight of a holy God can be done by a guilty sinner, so nothing more needs to be done for the acquittal and acceptance of the most guilty, than Christ has already done.

Reader, is not this joyful news? Certainly it was regarded as such by those who received it of old. We read, Acts ii. 41—47. of three thousand, who on one day received this testimony; and one of the effects related is, that they did "eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God:" though an apostle had a little before addressed them as those, who "by wicked hands had crucified and slain" that Jesus, through whom he preached to them the remission of sins. Again we read, Acts viii. 39. of one, who "went on his way rejoicing," having believed what Philip declared to him concerning Jesus Christ. And again, Acts xvi. 25—34. of another, whose hand was at one moment raised against his own life; but "the same hour," having heard the word of the Lord from Paul and Silas, "he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God."

In all these instances, and many other recorded in Scripture, what they had heard and believed concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, was the great matter in which they rejoiced. And, considering the previous character of the persons to whom it afforded this joy, it is

manifest that the testimony they heard concerning him was adapted to comfort and gladden the heart—even of the chief of sinners. By this test, reader, you may try the various doctrines which are current in the world under the name of the gospel. Whichsoever of them has not this tendency, whichsoever is not adapted to produce this effect immediately in any sinner who believes it,—that doctrine is not of God; it must be different from the *Gospel* which the apostles of Christ testified: and those who maintain it, however they may put on the appearance of ministers of righteousness, 2 Cor. xi. 13, 15. yet come under the awful sentence pronounced by Paul of old, “ Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Gal. i. 8, 9.

The testimony of the apostles to all whom they addressed, was this; “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” —saved by him, beside whom “ there is no other name under heaven given unto men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts iv. 12. And this doctrine does not flatter the pride of the human heart, by addressing any, as persons well disposed, and possessed of some power to recover the favour of God. It does not point out to them what “ they shall do to be saved;” but it proclaims to all alike, the work which *Christ Jesus has done* for the justification of the ungodly; and the office which he sustains, as the Saviour of the lost: declaring on the authority of the God of heaven, that his righteousness is unto, and upon all of them who believe the divine record concerning him; that *the gift of God to them is eternal life*, and that *this life is in his Son*. Rom. iii. 22. vi. 23. 1 John v. 11—13.

Many talk of believing the Scriptures, and of believing in Christ, who avowedly disbelieve the things that are written in the Scriptures concerning Christ. Some deny the scriptural testimony of his person, as “ God manifested in the flesh:” and thus impiously attempt to introduce idolatry, under the mask of divine revelation; representing a creature as the object of that trust and confidence, of that allegiance and devotedness of heart and life, which cannot, without idolatry, be transferred to any other than JEHOVAH. Many who are professedly religious, deny the scriptural testimony concerning his office, and his work; while they paint him as a friend and favourer of the worthy and the good,—a kind of helper to the feeble, but well-inclined, and a partner with them in the business of their getting to heaven: in opposition to his own plainest declarations, that “ he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;” that “ he came to seek and to save that which was lost.” Matt. ix. 13. Luke xix. 10. Others, who even speak highly at times of his righteousness and grace, hold out what they call *his righteousness*, as that which the sinner must labour to obtain,—must seek and strive after, till he lays hold upon it; and describe those alone, who are devoutly exercised in this unbelieving effort, as the objects of what they call *his grace*; and all this in opposition to the word which reveals him, as “ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” Rom. x. 4. even the most wicked and ungodly; and thus brings it nigh alike to every

sinner who hears the joyful sound. And others again, in calling him their Saviour, mean nothing more than that they hope he will give them a kind of impunity in sinning; while the word proclaims that "His name is called JESUS, because he shall save his people from their sins:" Matt. i. 21. that he "gave himself for their sins, that he might deliver them from this present evil world, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Gal. i. 4. Tit. ii. 14.

Many talk of the gospel, profess to preach it, and to believe in it, and yet its real glory (as a divine revelation of mercy and salvation to the lost) appears out of their view; and they seem to prize it chiefly as a convenient instrument for producing some imaginary reformation in the heart and life of a sinner.

The one and only true gospel, when perceived, does indeed produce in the sinner "a new mind" and "a new spirit," and is in this respect, as in every other, "the power of God unto salvation."

The people "that know righteousness," are a people that have "his law in their hearts,"—Is. li. 7.—even that law which hath gone "forth out of Zion;" as in the same new covenant, in which God declares, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," he also declares, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts." But they know nothing as yet of either blessing, who conceive, of any fancied reformation of the heart or life, as advancing the sinner towards the remission of sins; as preparing him to receive the gospel doctrine, or placing him in likelier circumstances than others for being brought to the belief of it. Repentance, or a new mind, and the remission of sins, are inseparably connected, and both alike accompany the belief of the gospel. The divine testimony concerning Jesus, presents an object so glorious, and reveals such a view of the distinctive character of the only living and true God, (as the just God and the Saviour, just and justifying the ungodly,) that whoever discerns it, whoever believes the report, has at once peace with God, and has that new mind of the spirit which is according to the mind of God. He delights in that one object, in which alone God is well pleased, and abhors all the course, and all the sentiments which he before most admired. Being now made "free from sin," and become a servant to God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life; in the good hope of which he rejoices, and is taught by that grace (or rich mercy) of God, which has brought him salvation, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world:" and he now sees the friendship of this world to be enmity with God, as he sees, that in all its most specious forms, it is opposed to that revealed truth of God in which all the divine will is manifested.

These various errors, which so generally abound, mark the ignorance of the Scriptures that prevails in this country; and men's attachment to these errors, and aversion to the truths of Scripture, mark their character as haters of the only living and true God, who reveals himself in his word.

From a great part, indeed, of the inhabitants of Ireland the Scriptures are shut up by their human guides; or, if they venture to look into them at all, they read them under the influence of a persuasion, that it is a damnable sin to call in question the interpretation which their guides have put upon them. And thus, under a name and profession of Christianity, they are led blindfold in all abominable idolatries, as gross as any the heathen world ever adopted; worshipping angels and the spirits of departed men; yea, worshipping as their God and Saviour, what they take into their mouths and eat; persuaded that some bread and wine, which they see or taste, is human flesh and human blood.

To such—to all—even to the most benighted, and the most ungodly, the glorious gospel comes, as it did of old, proclaiming “glad tidings of great joy,” peace made by Jesus Christ for the rebellious, sin taken away by his one offering up of himself, once for all, in place of the guilty, everlasting righteousness brought in by his obedience unto death, the “just for the unjust,” complete salvation for the lost—assured to every one alike, who believes the “faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Reader, if you are given to believe it, and to “know the grace of God in truth;” whatever you have been hitherto, you will now be “turned unto the living God, to serve him, and to wait for his Son from heaven;” 1 Thess. i. 9, 10. you will be “constrained by the love of Christ” 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Rom. xiv. 8, 9. John x. 27. to yield yourself to him, and follow him, as your gracious Lord and good Shepherd. Neither will you be ashamed to confess his name before a gainsaying world; nor shrink from “suffering the loss of all things” for him, Phil. iii. 8. who, “though he was rich, became poor for our sakes, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich;” 2 Cor. viii. 9. yea, stooped to be “made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” 2 Cor. v. 21. His word abiding in you “will work effectually,” as it doth in all them “that believe;” 1 Thess. ii. 13. and will “bring forth fruit in you,” even the fruits “of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.” Phil. i. 11. Col. i. 6.

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;” 1 John v. 1. born of that Spirit, which is “the Spirit of truth.” John xvi. 13, 14. As a child of God, he is “led by that Spirit;” Rom. viii. 14. walking in the truth, and not “after the flesh,” or principles of corrupt nature—which ever “lusteth against the Spirit,” and is contrary to it. Gal. v. 17.—If you then would know “how you ought to walk and to please” him who has redeemed us by his own blood, search the Scriptures. In the writings of the apostles, his words, and the precepts delivered by them in his name to his disciples, stand on record; and form the only sure and authoritative rule for their conduct to the end of the world.—That rule has been set aside, as out of date, by the great mass of the world called christian; and various precepts and traditions of men have been substituted in its place. Even disciples have been awfully led astray by these devices of the adversary.

But let it be remembered that no man, or body of men, has authority to abrogate any of the laws of Christ's kingdom,—either to take from them, or to add to them. His apostles were commissioned and qualified by him, to instruct its subjects in his will. They convey the same instruction, on the same divine authority, in their writings, at this day : and at this day it is as true as it was of old, “that whosoever heareth them, heareth him.” Luke x. 16. Those therefore who confess his name need to decide whom they will serve, and whom they will obey. If they will obey men, rather than God, they may continue in connexion with the various bodies called christian churches, but regulated by human tradition, and founded on a systematic rejection of the apostolic precepts. But if they will consistently maintain their allegiance to him, whose name they bear, they must “come out and be separate” from all such spurious churches. As belonging to a kingdom, which is “not of this world,” John xviii. 36. they must receive their laws from him, whom Jehovah has set as “King upon his holy hill of Zion,” Psalm ii. 6. and must acknowledge no other legislator in that kingdom, but himself. As a people “sanctified by the truth,” John xvii. 16, 17. separated unto him from all the nations of the earth and one in him, they must walk in fellowship with those—and with those alone, who hold the same great truth as it is in Jesus, and who follow him according to his revealed will.

But, reader, if you reject that truth, if you disbelieve the divine testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, it matters not what outward church you are connected with. Indeed, false churches are the fittest for those who hold a false gospel. However this be, the word of God testifies, that unless “He give you repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth,” 2 Tim. ii. 25. you shall assuredly perish. As to the notion so generally current in the world and fondly cherished by it, that there are various ways of getting to heaven, and that it is of no essential consequence what set of religious opinions men adopt, it is a notion suggested by the “father of lies,”—contradictory to the most express declarations of Scripture,—and inconsistent indeed with the persuasion, that the Scriptures contain a revelation from the God of heaven. For if they do, can it be that sinners may reject it with impunity?

The same word which declares, “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” declares also, “he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John iii. 36. And if you continue in unbelief, the truth of this testimony shall yet be confirmed in you. A day is coming, “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” 2 Thess. i. 7, 10.

II.

THE APOSTOLIC PREACHING EXEMPLIFIED.

READER, in this country which bears the name of christian, there are great multitudes who have never seriously considered what the GOSPEL of CHRIST is; and among those whose minds have been seriously engaged with that inquiry, there are great differences of opinion, and various disputes upon the subject. Among a dozen of those who profess, or even preach, what they call the gospel, it would be easy to find a dozen different meanings annexed to the word; and no two of them intending the same thing, by what they all term the gospel of Christ.

From this fact some, who wish to take the matter easy, borrow an argument to justify their indifference and unconcern about the question. 'What use,' say they, 'in our attending at all to a subject which appears to be involved in such perplexity?' And others, by a similar consideration, are persuaded that they ought not to judge for themselves upon the matter, but give implicit credence to what they are told is true, by those whom they submit to, as their guides in religion.

But in fact, it may with certainty be concluded, that any teachers, who wish the people to give implicit credence to their dictates, are deceivers and blind guides. And it is a great mistake to imagine, that they alone shall be responsible for the delusions in which they lead their followers. It is written, Matt. xv. 14. that, "if the blind lead the blind, *both* shall fall into the ditch."

It is equally certain, that the subject is of such high importance to every man, that indifference and unconcern about it is nothing short of the most awful madness. And I add, that the subject has none of that intrinsic perplexity, to which many impute the various and contradictory opinions prevailing upon it. These spring from quite another cause. But the question itself—what *the true GOSPEL of CHRIST* is—admits a simple and easy determination, if men would only try the question in the plain and obvious way, open alike to every one that can read English; and would then submit to that determination of the question, to which this way must lead them.

Now, what is that way of which I speak? It is this:—The apostles were commissioned and qualified by the Lord Jesus Christ to preach his Gospel to all nations: and they did so in obedience to his command. That Gospel, which *they* preached, was the *true* Gospel; and we have it on record in various narratives contained in the Acts of the Apostles, where we are expressly informed what they said to

those whom they addressed. For the purpose then of deciding the question—what the *true* Gospel of Christ is—must it not be a fair and reasonable way to turn to those passages in the Acts, and see what it is that the apostles preached? for that, I repeat it, is certainly the true Gospel.

And we may be the more encouraged to bring the matter to this test, because they did not speak a vague, obscure, and mysterious language on those occasions, like many of our modern preachers; but a language plain and simple, and level to the understanding of all whom they addressed. They spoke, not merely to the wise and learned, but to the most illiterate and rude; and a language which the most rude and illiterate can understand, as well as the most learned and wise. Their discourses are, several of them, still extant. In them they still preach the Gospel, wherever the Scriptures come. And, before we either pass by the inquiry into the nature of the Gospel of Christ as unimportant, or give it up as inscrutably difficult, or submit to the decisions of any man upon the subject—it would be but fair that we should give the Apostles themselves a hearing, by turning to those parts of the Acts, where we have recorded what they declared as the Gospel. Reader, whatever you be, you must acknowledge that this is a reasonable appeal. Be persuaded then to accompany me in such a short and plain examination.

In the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, we learn that Paul and Barnabas, proceeding on a course of labours in the ministry of the Word, visited, among other places, the town of Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath-day they went into the Jewish synagogue, and sat down. “And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them,” inviting them to speak to the people, if they had any word of exhortation for them. “Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand,” addressed the assembly in a discourse, which is accurately detailed in the following part of that chapter.

In it, after a brief mention of the signal mercies wherewith God had favoured the Jewish people, he proceeds to tell them of a still greater mercy which was now revealed, in the accomplishment of that promise, which the Jews anxiously expected to be fulfilled—namely, that God would raise up to them, of the seed of David, a mighty Saviour, or Deliverer. He declares to them the glad tidings, that his promise was now fulfilled, and fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Of this Jesus, however, about whom he published such great things, he does not conceal or disguise a fact, which was very offensive to the generally prevailing prejudices of the Jews, namely, that he had been *crucified* at Jerusalem, had suffered a death the most painful and the most ignominious, to which none but the very vilest of malefactors were adjudged. But he adds to this account two very striking declarations: 1st, That the heads of the Jewish people at Jerusalem, while, by condemning him wrongfully, they manifested ignorance of him and of the voices of their own prophets, which were read every Sabbath-day,—had at the same time been in this the blind and wicked instruments of fulfilling the very prophecies

which had been written concerning him : so wonderfully does God overrule all the purposes of men, to bring about the purposes of his own will.

And, 2dly, He declared that God had “ raised him from the dead,” and shewed him openly for many days, to those who were the appointed witnesses of his resurrection :—so wonderfully did God give evidence that this same Jesus, who was “ despised and rejected of men, is his righteous Servant, his well-beloved Son,” of whom all the prophets from the beginning had spoken. Isa. liii. 2. xlii. 1. Matt. xvii. 5. Acts iii. 24. x. 43.

The apostle then briefly sums up the substance of the glad tidings concerning him, which he had to testify ; and declares the great and gracious purpose for which God had thus sent his Son into the world, in the following words ; verses 38, 39. “ Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” And he concludes his discourse, with a solemn warning to the people, to beware how they rejected the testimony ; lest that destruction, denounced against those who disbelieve it, should come upon them.

Such was the Gospel which Paul preached,—in the first instance, to the Jews ; and afterwards (as is related in the same chapter) to the Gentiles. Such is the only Gospel that is worthy of the name, — *glad tidings* alike to Jew and Gentile ; a declaration from heaven proclaiming to men of every class and character, that great blessing, which all men alike need, even the “ forgiveness of sins :” and in that way, which brings it nigh to all alike, even through that Jesus who humbled himself to the death of the cross, that he might be a *propitiation* for sin : Rom. iii. 25. testifying, upon the authority of God, that “ by him, all who believe” the record concerning him “ are justified from all things.”

This is the one gospel, the one joyful doctrine, which, to all that believe it, is “ the power of God unto salvation.” And sinners may have a kind of faith of various other things testified in Scripture, of the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell, and the necessity of a conversion to God ; and may be much concerned about these matters ; and yet, disbelieving the testimony of God concerning his Son, may be dead in trespasses and sins. That one doctrine, however, of which I speak, is the only key to the whole testimony of Scripture ; and when that is not possessed, the whole is misunderstood : nor is it matter of wonder, that such men set the practical exhortations of Scripture in opposition to the doctrinal statements. They are alike ignorant of the true import of both, though they appear so busy and zealous about *some* of the former.

Observe again, reader,—the gracious—the joyful import of this Gospel which Paul preached. “ Be it known unto you,” saith he, “ that through this Jesus is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” And is not every other blessing included in that ? As it is *sin* that separates us from the living God, subjects us to his righteous condemnation, and thus exposes us to every misery here and

hereafter; so surely the forgiveness of sin, and acceptance (or justification) in his sight, must bring with it deliverance from every evil, and the certain participation of all good, in restoring us to him, whose "favour is better than life," and "in whose presence there is fulness of joy." "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven," whose sin is covered. Psal. xxxii. 1. Rom. iv. 6, 7.

But while this Gospel proclaims to men the only blessing which is suited to the wants of all men, it proclaims that blessing in a way which commends the wonderful mercy and righteousness of God. It proclaims it as coming to sinners *through* Jesus Christ, his beloved Son; whom he *spared not*, but sent into this fallen world in our nature; and gave him up to die in place of the ungodly; that he might "put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself," and make peace for the rebellious by his blood. John iii. 14—16. 1 Pet. iii. 18. Heb. ix. 26. It testifies his resurrection from the dead, as the "assurance given unto all men," that he has finished that work; that God has accepted his sacrifice, and "is well pleased for his righteousness' sake:" and has "highly exalted him, a Prince and a Saviour, that he may give eternal life" to those who have earned for themselves the bitter "wages of sin"—even eternal death. Acts ii. 33—36. v. 30, 31. xvii. 31. Isa. xlii. 21. John xvii. 2. Rom. vi. 23.

And lest any sinner should have room to suppose, that something still remains, which the sinner must *do*, in order to attain this blessing of the forgiveness of sins; the Gospel, which the apostles preached, expressly assures us, that whosoever *believes* the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ, "is justified from all things by him"—by that work of righteousness which he has done and completed, in behalf of those who were "without strength, and ungodly;"—that "He is the end (or accomplishment) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth:" 1 John v. 1. and 10—13. Rom. x. 4—9. v. 6. Acts x. 43. while it proclaims, against the pride of those who reject this testimony, that "there is not salvation in any other," and that they never can be justified in the sight of God, by any thing that they can do, as it were "by the works of the law." Acts iv. 12. Rom. iii. 23. ix. 31, 32.

Thus, according to that Gospel which Paul and the other apostles preached, any sinner whatsoever, who *believes* what they testify concerning Jesus Christ, has the forgiveness of all his sins—though he were to that moment the wickedest wretch on earth;—is at peace with God and justified, or accepted as righteous in his sight, on account of that work of righteousness which Jesus Christ has finished, in the stead of the ungodly, for their justification before God. And, on the other hand, any sinner whatsoever, who *disbelieves* their doctrine on this subject,—however respectable he may be among men, even for zeal and strictness in religion, and however righteous in his own esteem,—is yet in his sins, and "the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36.

This is the Apostolic Gospel—truly glad tidings to sinners; which accordingly gave peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart, of all who received it of old; and still bears the same cha-

rafter. This is the Apostolic Gospel, announcing to sinners *the forgiveness of sins*, through Jesus of Nazareth,—through that work which he finished near eighteen hundred years ago; and assuring this blessing, which includes in it every other, to all, without distinction or exception, who *believe* the testimony concerning him.

It is a doctrine which reveals the glory of the LORD, and confounds the pride of human wisdom and human righteousness, leaving room *for no flesh to glory in his presence*—1 Cor. i. 29—31. Among other characters of its divine original, is that contrariety in which it stands to every thought, and every working of the natural mind; insomuch, that even though it be so plainly declared in the Scriptures, so abundantly confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, so solemnly enforced, and so powerfully recommended to the acceptance of sinners, yet they *will by no means believe* the report; but reject the glad tidings with scorn and abhorrence. That they are few indeed who receive this testimony, not only the conduct of the world around us, but their avowed opposition to this doctrine, evinces; and it is a spurious charity, that would consider as believers, those who deny its truth.

Reader, if you believe this doctrine—whatever you have been to the present moment—you will now rejoice, and bless that God who has brought SALVATION to the fallen sons of men. And being now brought nigh to God by the blood of Christ, you will desire to serve him henceforth in newness of life, living to his praise in the midst of a wicked world, and gladly following Him, according to his revealed will, who has redeemed sinners unto God to be *a peculiar people*, in whom he shall be glorified—Acts xvi. 34; 1 Thess. i. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 9; 1 Cor. vi. 20. If you disbelieve this doctrine, you reject the counsel of God against your own soul: you give the most awful evidence, that you have not in you the love of the only living and true God, but that you *love darkness rather than light*—John iii. 19. v. 42. And unless that God, whose word and being you deny, *give you repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth*, you shall yet prove the truth of his word to your destruction. 1 Thes. i. 8, 9; 2 Tim. ii. 25.

I readily admit that this doctrine is every where spoken against, and generally rejected with scorn and indignation, wherever it comes:—by all indeed, except a few, here and there, whose hearts the Lord opens to receive his truth. But this fact only proves, that “the offence of the Cross has not ceased,” Gal. v. 11. that is, the offensiveness of the doctrine of Christ crucified, which the Apostles taught. And it may be well to state briefly, some of the causes which have always rendered that doctrine so offensive to the world; and always must do so.

One general cause for this may be assigned—namely, that it is the doctrine of God, and therefore opposite to all the thoughts and imaginations of fallen *man*. In consequence of sin, we are naturally “alienated from the true God.” Eph. iv. 18. 1 Cor. ii. 14. “His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.” Isa. lv. 8. In the Gospel of his Son Jesus, he reveals his ways, his thoughts, and counsels. No marvel, therefore, that they should run in contradiction to all the sentiments of sinners; and that such a

Gospel should be offensive to creatures, whose minds are in a state of opposition to him, and enmity against him.

But more particularly—the doctrine of the scriptures concerning Jesus Christ, stands opposed to the natural *pride* and *self-sufficiency* of the human heart; and is, therefore, offensive to the world. It addresses all men *alike* as sinners, who have destroyed themselves by sin, and who can be delivered from that destruction only by the sovereign *mercy* and almighty power of God. It affords no countenance to the flattering imagination, by which men conceive that, however frail and imperfect, they are yet too innocent to be subject to the righteous condemnation of God; or too worthy, not to have some claim upon his favourable regard and compassion; or possessed of too much moral power, not to be able to do something towards recovering his favour. In opposition to all such high-minded thoughts, the Word of God declares that he sent his Son into the world “to seek and to save that which was lost; to die the just in the place of the unjust;” to call, not righteous creatures, but wicked,—“to call sinners to repentance;” yea, “to *give* them repentance and remission of sins.” Matt. ix. 10—13. Luke xix. 10. And in that very sacrifice and propitiation for sin, which the Gospel exhibits, in the Son of God humbled even to the death of the cross, to bear the sins of many in his own person,—in this great and glorious revelation of the only way, in which the forgiveness of sins could be brought to the children of men, the most humbling evidence and confirmation is afforded of the *exceeding sinfulness* and deadly nature of all sin: the most awful display is made of the universal unrighteousness of men, and of “the wrath of God revealed from heaven against it.” Rom. i. 18.

But above all, this doctrine is offensive to the pride of man, on account of its declaration concerning the persons whose sins are forgiven, and the manner in which this blessing comes upon them; assuring it to every one without distinction, who *believes* the record which God hath given of his Son. It thus brings the glad tidings to all, as upon a *perfect level* in the sight of God; and sets at nought all the circumstances of superiority, on which one man would elevate his hopes above the lowest of his fellow men: confirming and illustrating the declaration of the Lord Jesus, that “the things which are most highly esteemed among men, are abomination in the sight of God.” Luke xvi. 15.

This doctrine is indeed suited to the wants of a poor ungodly creature, without strength to do any thing well-pleasing to a righteous and holy God, whereby his favour might be recovered, and the stroke of his indignation averted. Such is the real situation of all men since the fall; but no man naturally likes to think so. Even the most profligate view with self-complacence, something in themselves which they conceive affords them just ground to hope that God will spare *them*, though he may justly punish others; and especially, the more regular and religious look with satisfaction at the difference between themselves and the profligate, as warranting such a hope. But the Apostolic Gospel comes addressing all alike: not telling any man of something that he is to do in order to make

his peace with God, and so opening a field for the pride of man's self-righteousness to run in; but proclaiming that peace, which Christ Jesus has made,—that work of righteousness which He has finished—Acts x. 36. It holds out him as the only object in which God is well pleased—the only sacrifice by which sin is put away; and testifies his resurrection from the dead, as the great evidence that God has accepted this sacrifice, and that now *all who believe* this joyful testimony, *are by Him justified from all things.*

This doctrine has ever shocked the religious pride of the world: and the objections against it, on this ground, are urged with most vehemence by those, who are most highly respected among men for their religious attainments. Such were, of old, most forward in charging the Lord Jesus with being “a friend of publicans and sinners.” Luke xv. 2. vii. 34. v. 30.—a charge which he never contradicted, though many who call themselves his ministers, have since been very solicitous to vindicate him against it.

But again; the doctrine of Christ crucified, is offensive to the pride of man's *wisdom.* It reveals indeed the unsearchable wisdom of God, in a truth the most glorious; but at the same time so simple, that it must ever appear foolishness, and a contemptible thing, to the wise of this world. It declares the great things of God, in plain unadorned language, as level to the capacity of the illiterate peasant, as of the profoundest scholar,—to the capacity of the child as of the philosopher. It proposes no inquiry to engage the laborious investigation of the wise and learned; but determines all inquiries by revealing the great salvation of God; and proclaims, that whosoever believe the testimony declared to them are partakers of that salvation; while it leaves no room even to them, for “glorying in the flesh,” as if they had discovered this knowledge by any powers of their own; inasmuch, as it assures us that none receive the testimony, but those to whom it is given from above. John i. 12, 13. Matt. xvi. 17. xi. 25, 27. Acts xiii. 48. And all this appears to the world a thing too simple and too foolish; they stumble at the word, and scorn it as a thing ridiculously absurd. Those, who are of some repute for human wisdom and learning, employ themselves in forming systems of doctrine more attractive; and in perverting the scriptures ingeniously so as to bring them in aid of their several systems: while the rest of the world range themselves under these religious guides, according to their respective fancies; and listen to them gladly, because they speak a doctrine palatable to the worldly taste. John v. 43.

The last cause which I shall mention, of the general offensiveness of the Gospel of Christ, is one which springs indeed from the others, though it deserves to be mentioned distinctly. For the reasons that have been already assigned, the true, the Apostolic gospel must ever be an object of the world's scorn and indignation: and, on this very account, it is additionally offensive to the children of the world. The *worldliness* of their minds stumbles at the *reproach* of Christ. The profession of the true faith of Christ cannot be maintained without incurring the loss of the world's esteem and friendship: and from this, and the doctrine which exposes to this, the carnal mind loving the world must ever shrink with aversion.

Meanwhile, God himself will carry on his own work by the foolishness of preaching, in his own word, "It shall not return to Him void: it shall accomplish all that whereunto He hath sent it." Isa. lv. 11. His design in sending it was to save the few here and there who believe it; to gather them to Himself out of a world that lieth in the wicked one: turning them from its religion and false gods, above all its other abominations. In these the word finds them sunk, without any *preparation* for being saved but ruin and darkness and sin. It saves them by discovering to them a God, whom they knew not, and therefore could not seek: and discovering Him to them in a character so glorious, that all, without exception, whose eyes are opened to discern it, rejoice in Him; and find themselves put in possession, by him, in his son Jesus, of all that the chief of sinners can want for present acceptance or eternal life.

Such converts of God will make a very poor figure in the eyes of the religious world; and cannot reasonably wish to be had in admiration of those who despise that Christ of God, who calleth—"not the righteous, but sinners to repentance; who hath stood alone in putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" who is exalted "a Prince and a Saviour, to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him." They will, of course, be under the same opprobrium with their Divine Master—of being no friends to morality and good works. And while they are kept faithful to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints against all the perversions of it in the corrupt doctrines of men, it must be expected that the various classes of religionists in the world will make a common cause against them, as against common foes. Trying as this is, to have the faces of all men against them, to be universally misunderstood, and unknown, and disliked, to be every where spoken against as the disturbers of the religious world, objects of general jealousy and disgust; yet while kept in the faith they will count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt: they will endure as seeing him who is invisible, recollecting him who has gone before them in the way, and looking forward to the coming day, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Let those who know the truth as it is in Jesus, who indeed believe the record of God concerning his Son, take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees—Mat. xvi. 6. Full well do many, at this day, reject the commandments of God, that they may keep their own tradition.—Mark vii. 9. Let disciples be assured, that in proportion as they give weight to the traditions of men, they will make light of the commandments of God. Brethren remember that it is life eternal to know him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.—John xvii. 3. Remember that ye are not of the world, but chosen and called out of it, to be a peculiar people unto him who hath redeemed you by his blood. Remember that ye are called to be saints—1 Cor. i. 2.; holy unto Him whose name is HOLY. Is it suitable to his people to be mingled in religious fellowship with the nations of the world, which lieth in the wicked one—in the father of lies? Ye are taught to pray, hallowed be thy name!—to pray that the holiness of His name, the infinite distinction and

separation of His glorious character, from all the gods of the unbelieving world, may be manifested and acknowledged. Take heed, that your practice be not inconsistent with your prayer.

It must be owned, indeed, that various systems have long been current under the name of Christianity which the world likes and admires; and which afford to many an easy road to worldly profit and reputation. But in this circumstance, such systems carry the mark of being different from—and opposite to—the Christianity of Scripture. Its divine Author has established a kingdom, that is “not of this world,” John xviii. 36. and holds out no allurements to the worldly eye. On the contrary he proclaims, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;” and “Whosoever will be a friend of the world, he is the enemy of God.” Matt. xvi. 24. James iv. 4. If the disciples of Christ ever escape the contempt and resentment of the surrounding world, it must be either because they fail of confessing his truth distinctly, or because they disguise by their conduct, what they confess with their lips;—because they forsake the standing laws of his kingdom in their practice, and confound it with the various religions of his enemies. The laws of his kingdom are handed down in the apostolic writings, for the regulation of his subjects, to the end of the world. And he who attempts to set aside their divine authority, by adding to them or taking from them, is, in this, doing the work of Antichrist.

III.

THE SCRIPTURAL NATURE OF REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE.

AMONG the events recorded between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and his being carried up into heaven in the sight of his disciples, we are informed by the evangelist Luke, xxiv. 36—48. that he stood in the midst of the eleven Apostles, as they were gathered together; and after giving them convincing evidence that it was no apparition they beheld, but that he was indeed risen from the grave—(by shewing them his hands and his feet, and by taking food before them)—“he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that *repentance* and *remission of sins* should be preached in *his name* among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.”

We have in the latter words a brief description of the preaching of the Apostles; a description, the accuracy of which is certified to us by the infallible authority of the speaker; and the import of which is abundantly illustrated by subsequent narratives of the apostolic ministry. For what their divine Master declared to them should be preached in his name among all nations, that and nothing else they did preach.

Reader! there has long been a great deal of *preaching* in the world called Christian; and in many instances our modern preachers are attended by crowds of admiring hearers; and some of them pretend to be a kind of *successors* to the Apostles, and lay claim to a kind of divine mission like them. But without at present saying any thing more upon their pretensions, I would observe, that it is of the last importance to attend to what the *Apostles* of Christ preach to us all, as recorded in the writings of the New Testament. For they assure us—"he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us," 1 John iv. 6.—Follow me therefore with your attention, while I offer a few plain remarks on that short account which Christ himself gives of the preaching of the Apostles, as the *preaching of repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations*.

The first observation I would make upon the words is this:—It appears that to all nations of the earth, however diversified in character and manners, Christ has sent by his apostles one and the same word. Whether they were Jews or Greeks, barbarous or civilized, what is called virtuous and moral, or dissolute and profane,—the same unvarying testimony was to be proclaimed to all: and this a testimony adapted to one *common character*, in which they all stand in the sight of God—the character of sinners, *ungodly* in their minds, and *guilty* before him. Such alone can need to have *repentance* proclaimed to them, and the *remission*—or *forgiveness*—of sins.

The word translated *repentance* literally imports a *change of mind*: and the repentance, or change of mind spoken of here, is expressly called "*repentance towards God*," Acts xx. 21. But this repentance no creatures can need, but those whose *minds* are of an *ungodly* character; as none, but creatures *guilty* before God as transgressors against him, can need the remission or forgiveness of sins.

But, in the next place, let it be observed, that there may be ever so much and earnest preaching about repentance and the forgiveness of sins, and yet the doctrine held forth be essentially different from that which the Apostles were commissioned to preach; and not only different from it, but in direct opposition to it. The Apostles of the Lord Jesus were commissioned to preach repentance and remission of sins *in his name*: and this they did, in delivering that testimony concerning *him*, of which they were the appointed witnesses. They themselves leave us at no loss to discover what it was they preached to all nations. One of them tells us, 1 Cor. i. 23. "we preach Christ crucified;" and calls his preaching, "the preaching of the cross." v. 18. Another describes his preaching as "the word which God sent—publishing the glad tidings of peace by Jesus Christ," Acts x. 36. and after speaking of himself and his fellow-

apostles as *witnesses* of his resurrection from the dead, “chosen before of God,” he adds, “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which has been ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him give all the prophets witness that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive *remission of sins*. v. 42, 43.

That the word GOSPEL literally means *good news*, or *glad tidings*, is generally known, but cannot too carefully be remembered. And the *Gospel of Christ*, which the Apostles were sent to preach, is the good news which they publish to sinners concerning Jesus Christ. Now many conceive that the gospel does indeed include in it a doctrine about the *forgiveness of sins*, but that *repentance* is to be preached in some way distinct from the preaching of the gospel. To a sinner, whom they consider penitent, they are ready to propose *their* gospel: but an impenitent sinner they aim at bringing to repentance by preaching something else than the gospel,—perhaps by preaching the terrors of the law. But such men are not preachers of the GOSPEL OF CHRIST; and the doctrine which they hold, not only about repentance, but about the forgiveness of sins, is essentially different from the apostolic.

The gospel of Christ is the divine testimony concerning him, as “exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to *give* repentance and forgiveness of sins,” Acts v. 31. to that people whom he has redeemed unto God by becoming a curse for them; by dying the just in place of the unjust, putting away their sins by the one offering of himself as the propitiation for sin. Gal. iii. 13. 1 Peter iii. 18. Heb. ix. 26—28. It is a testimony joyful to the chief of sinners, to the ungodly, to the guilty; as it proclaims the great salvation of God, with which he saves those who had destroyed themselves. And it brings this salvation near to every man who hears the report of it, in the divine declaration, that *whosoever believeth* that report shall be saved. Rom. x. 8, 9.

In this testimony from heaven, the glory of “the *only true* God” is exhibited as at once the just God and the Saviour; just, and justifying the *ungodly* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. John xvii. 3. Isa. xlv. 21. Rom. iii. 22—24. iv. 5. The sinner who believes the testimony, *is* forgiven all his iniquities, and *is* brought (by that divine mercy and power which convinces him of it) to repentance,—“repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth,”—“repentance toward God;” 2 Tim. ii. 25. Acts, xx. 21. *is* brought to a *new mind*, even the mind of faith, confessing and rejoicing in the glory of God.

The prophet Isaiah, predicting the appearance of the Messiah, uses these words, xl. 5. “And the *glory* of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” The evangelist Luke, iii. 6. quoting this passage from the prophet, expresses the same thing by the words—“and all flesh shall see the *salvation* of God:” conveying to us, that it is in the *salvation* of God, which is by Jesus Christ, that the *glory* of JEHOVAH is revealed; so that those alone who see that salvation, or believe the word which announces it, discern the glory of the only true God. It was therefore in publishing this

salvation that the apostles of Christ preached at once "repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts xx. 21.

A natural sinner may undergo various *changes of mind* without having any of this repentance. From a careless and irreligious profligate, he may become a devout and religious professor, earnestly and heartily concerned about eternal things, and putting forth the most serious efforts to obtain peace with God and eternal life. But all the while he has only changed the *idol* which he serves, and equally denies the being of "the only true God" in the latter case as in the former. While a careless profligate, he pictured to himself a god, who took little or no concern about the conduct of his creatures; perhaps a god, who would accept a certain vague honesty of heart and intention, as a set-off against the immorality of his actions, and ungodliness of his life. When he becomes, under the disturbance of an excited conscience, such a religionist as has been described, he is more devoutly engaged in the service of another idol, who is conceived to require more strictness in his worshipers, but to be well pleased with the endeavours of a sinful creature to render him propitious. What he calls *salvation*, he looks for as the fruit of his earnest efforts to obtain it; while perhaps he compliments his god by verbally attributing it to *him*. Under the greatest alarms of his conscience, retaining the proud conception that his deliverance from the effects of sin turns upon his willing and striving to escape them, he knows not what sin is; what none indeed can know, but those who know the true God, as he reveals himself in the word that proclaims his *salvation*, and who are therefore among the people "saved by the Lord." Deut. xxxiii. 29. The most devout religionist of whom we speak, is as far from "repentance unto life,"—from "repentance toward God," as when he was most careless and profane. Disbelieving the scriptural testimony, in which "the only true God" reveals his name, or character, and claims salvation as belonging to himself, he denies in his heart the very being of that God, and manifests his hatred of him, in his opposition to that truth of the Gospel, which discovers his glory.

This man may dress up his idol with names and epithets, borrowed from the word of the living God: and this is commonly the case in these countries, since so large a portion of the world has been led to assume the Christian name and profession. But all these phrases of Scripture which he employs, are in his system wrested out of their scriptural meaning. He may call his god righteous and holy, and he may call him merciful also: but all the while he means characters which belong not to JEHOVAH. In his language they designate a god, who will punish some sins and wink at others, who will remit the hundred pence, and exact the ten thousand talents.

Nor does it signify what further changes may take place in that man's mind, and in his religion, though of a nature commonly called *evangelical* and *spiritual*; as long as he discredits the doctrine which the Apostles deliver concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Their Gospel is one and unchangeable, as that only true God who reveals himself in it: and they teach disciples to hold as *accursed*, any man who preaches *any other* gospel. Gal. i. 8. The false charity, which repre-

sents it as of no essential consequence what we believe under the name of Gospel, is but another form of human ungodliness, holding it of little consequence what god we acknowledge. But the scriptures represent the final vengeance of the Lord as to be executed "on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. i. 8. This obedience is the obedience of *faith*: and those who *disbelieve* that Gospel are the same persons who are spoken of, as not *knowing* God, and are contrasted in the following verse with "them that *believe*."

Of the only true God we are all naturally ignorant; from him we are all naturally alienated; as well as all naturally guilty before him as transgressors. In his word he sets forth his Son Jesus as the propitiation which he has accepted, as the Lamb of God who hath taken away the sin of the world, by dying the just for the unjust; as him in whom all without distinction that believe the testimony concerning him are fully justified, and shall be eternally saved: and in this Gospel of salvation he reveals his own glory, as at once the just God and the justifier of the ungodly, the Saviour of the lost. As many as are ordained to eternal life believe the divine testimony, and in believing it have "repentance toward God," and peace with him. God, whom they had not known, and had not sought, has made himself known to them in a character the most glorious and the most joyful: the discovery of which turns them from all their idols, causes "the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," Isa. lv. 7.—his own ungodly ways and ungodly thoughts—ungodly, however religious; and at once sets his feet in the way of righteousness and peace. In one and the same divine object—Christ crucified, there is exhibited to his view the exceeding sinfulness of sin,—the awful holiness and unchangeable righteousness of JEHOVAH,—and mercy higher than the heavens, providing him with all that the chief of sinners can need, for emboldening him to come into the holiest. Made wise unto salvation, he will joyfully concur with the divine declaration, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Rom. ix. 16. While every one who discredits the testimony of God concerning his Son, remains the fool that "saith in his heart, God is not," Psal. xiv. 1. the wicked, whose sacrifice is an abomination to JEHOVAH, Prov. xv. 8. "having no hope and with out God in the world;" Eph. ii. 12.—though he may abound in zeal and piety towards his idol, and though he may be most confident of the safety of his own course. For "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. xvi. 25.

Thus we may observe how the Apostles preached "repentance and remission of sins, unto all nations," in the name of Jesus: that it was in delivering their simple, but divine and joyful, testimony concerning *him* whose chosen witnesses they were. And it is not the least observable part of the instructions given to them by the Lord, that they were to *begin* this, their preaching, at *Jerusalem*. In that city, and by its inhabitants, the Lord of glory had been a little before crucified and slain. That people, after witnessing his mighty

acts, and hearing his gracious words, had despised and rejected him, gainsaid and reviled him; had denied the holy one and the just, and had desired a murderer, rather than him, to be granted to them by the Roman governor. Acts iii. 14. They had killed the Prince of Life, and aggravated his expiring agonies with cruel insult and mockery; and this, though they heard read in their synagogues every Sabbath the writings of Moses and the prophets, who all testified of *him*, the long expected Messiah." Acts xiii. 27. Yet, to *this* people the Lord graciously directed that his Apostles should *first* preach the glad tidings of salvation through his name. In the view of this procedure, we may well exclaim with David, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" 2 Sam. vii. 19. No!—man would rather have expected, that the Lord Jesus should have commanded his Apostles to preach repentance and remission of sins, in his name, unto all nations *except in Jerusalem*; that he should have expressly excluded that people from the number of those, to whom he sent the joyful proclamation of his redeeming work and character. But he, whose ways are not as our ways, Isa. lv. 8. enjoined them to *begin* their testimony at Jerusalem; thus blessedly marking to us, that there is no atrocity of guilt—no hardihood of ungodliness—which precludes a sinner from the comprehension of his sovereign mercy, or the efficacy of his saving power. The most guilty and ungodly may mark this display of his character with joy.

We have recorded in the book of Acts, how the Apostles at Jerusalem executed this their commission of preaching *repentance and remission of sins* in the name of Jesus. And any reader of the narratives, there given us, may see that it was in the way which has been marked; namely, by bearing their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, as the divine evidence that he was the Christ, the Saviour of sinners, exalted "a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Acts v. 31. In witnessing that God had glorified his Son Jesus in this character and office, they set forth the glory of the only true God, in opposition to that ungodliness of mind which had prompted the Jewish people to reject him: and at once bore the most decisive testimony against their sin, and presented all that relief which the chief of sinners can require.

In the same narratives we may see, that all who "gladly received the word," Acts ii. 41.—who believed the things which they testified concerning Jesus of Nazareth,—had repentance and remission of sins. How *changed* indeed were their minds toward God, when those who had a little before cried out, "crucify him, crucify him," now believing, rejoiced in him "with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. as the Saviour and Redeemer of Israel! And however disturbed the consciences of others might have been, and probably were, under the apostolic testimony, were any of them, who did not believe what the Apostles testified, brought to that *repentance* or change of mind—of which we speak? Not one.

And as that *new mind*, to which the Gospel wherever it is sent calls the ungodly, Acts xvii. 30. is nothing else than the mind of faith acknowledging the *truth*, in which the only true God displays his glory in opposition to all the unrighteous thoughts of man, how-

ever modified;—as it is only the divine word, testifying this *truth*, that at first turns a sinner to the living God, and reveals him in a character in which the most ungodly can draw near to him;—so it is nothing else but the abiding of this word in those who believe, that keeps them “cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart,” Acts xi. 23. that leads them “walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit,” Acts ix. 31. according to that *new mind* which the truth of God produces, and in continued opposition to that mind of the flesh which “is enmity against God.” Rom. viii. 7. In themselves to the last nothing but *sinner*s, in whose flesh there “dwelleth no good thing,” Rom. vii. 18. they are “kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation,” 1 Pet. i. 5. having boldness at all times to draw near unto the holiest in that new and living way, which has been opened by the blood shed for the remission of sin,—the blood of the Lamb of God who hath taken away the sin of the world. Heb. x. 19—22. John i. 29. It is only in holding fast that word of the truth of the Gospel, by which they have been born again,—begotten of God unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Pet. i. 3, 23—25. that they hold the grace (or mercy) whereby they “serve God *acceptably* with reverence and godly fear.” Heb. xii. 28. It is only that word of God, which “bringeth forth fruit,” and “effectually worketh” in all them that believe. Col. i. 6. 1 Thess. ii. 13. The evil heart of *unbelief*, which turns aside from the *unadulterated* truth, always operates (whether manifestly or secretly) in a “departure from the living God.” Heb. iii. 12.—And well may those, who acknowledge *that* to be the unvarying character of *their own* hearts, ever deny themselves, and have no confidence in the flesh, while they rejoice in Christ Jesus. Phil. iii. 3.

 IV.

 SCRIPTURE PARADOXES EXPLAINED AND
 VINDICATED.

A PARADOX is some assertion, which contradicts a *generally received opinion*. A paradox, though thought incredible, may yet be very true; because the opinion which it contradicts, however generally received, may be false.

In matters of religion, the word of God is the one and only standard of truth: and the revelation, which is there made to us from heaven, does indeed run counter to the natural sentiments and

ideas of all men. Yet this is in fact one of the internal evidences of its *divine* origin and truth. For sinful man is a creature fallen from the living God: and it is but consistently with this, that God declares in the Scriptures, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Isa. lv. 8.

You ought not therefore, reader, at once to reject the following Paradoxes, because they appear to you most strange and incredible; but rather let your attention be excited, to see whether the statements made in them be not supported by that revelation, which you professedly acknowledge as divine.

PARADOX I.

A man may be all his life most sincerely religious,—may abound ever so much in what is called heart-religion; and yet may live and die that character which the Scriptures pronounce an Atheist.

AN *atheist*, according to the meaning commonly attached to the word, is a person who denies the being of a god, of *any* god. And in that sense certainly there are very few, if any, atheists in this country.

But in the scriptural sense of the word, an atheist is one who denies, or disbelieves the being of God, of "the only true God," that has revealed his character and glory in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (See Essay, No. 3.) For the Scriptures acknowledge no other god beside him; and pronounce all the Gods of the nations to be vanity and idols,—the creatures and fictions of man's corrupt imagination.

The word *atheist* is borrowed from the Greek language; in which it literally means a person *without God*. And so it is translated in Ephes. ii. 12. where the Apostle reminds the Christians at Ephesus of the awful state in which they were before their acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ. "Remember," saith he, "that at that time ye were without Christ, having no hope, and without God (or atheists) in the world."

Now the Apostle, by these words, certainly did not mean to deny that these Ephesians, while unbelieving heathens, had acknowledged some object which they called god; for the fact is, that they had then diligently worshiped many so-called *gods*. But as their gods were really no gods, and as they had been alienated from the only true God, and ignorant of him, he describes them as having been without God, or atheists. And just in like manner, he speaks of them as having had at that time *no hope*; because they were strangers to that only true and good hope, which the Gospel reveals to sinners, and conveys to all who believe its testimony.

Nor let us suppose, that this awful description is applicable only to idolatrous heathens. In the very same chapter, the apostle Paul speaks of himself as having been in the same awful state with these heathens; "Among whom," saith he, "we all had our conversation in times past;—and were by nature the children of wrath, even

as others,—dead in sins." v. 3—5. Yet Paul was a Jew; one of those Jews, to whom "were committed the oracles of God," Rom. iii. 2. in whose synagogues the Scriptures were "read every Sabbath-day," Acts xv. 21. those Scriptures all of which testify of Christ, John v. 39. Luke xxiv. 44. Acts xxviii. 23. those "holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. iii. 15.

We have likewise the testimony of Paul himself that, during the period of that his unbelief and atheism, he abounded in religion: that "after the strictest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee;" Acts xxvi. 5. that "he profited in the Jews' religion above many his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers." Gal. i. 14. It was indeed the heartiness of his zeal in his false religion, that made him "exceedingly mad" against the doctrine and disciples of the Lord Jesus. And in all his bitter persecutions of the church of God, he was most sincerely conscientious, and persuaded that he was "doing God service." For he tells us himself, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Acts xxvi. 9. So that we have here an unquestionable instance in point exemplifying the statement made—'that a man may be most sincerely and heartily religious, and yet be an atheist;' may yet disbelieve, and deny the being of the only true God. Such religion certainly is any thing but a good thing. It abounds in the world; and is one of the most awful forms of the world's wickedness.

What has been already observed, may help us to the right understanding of two passages of Scripture, which are in general quite misinterpreted. It is written in the book of Psalms, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God; or, as it should be more justly rendered, "God is not." Psal. xiv. 1. This is a testimony, not of some rare and extraordinary instance of human wickedness, but of the natural ungodliness of every fallen man. And so another passage of the Psalm is adduced by the apostle Paul, Rom. iii. 12. to establish the natural corruption of all men as "under sin." The *fool* spoken of in the first verse, denotes every man who is not made "wise unto salvation:" who does not believe and know the truth of the Gospel: and this, however he may abound in zeal and devotedness towards what he calls god;—whatever be his religious strictness, and piety, and estimation among his fellow-men. Such a man, in rejecting and opposing the unadulterated doctrine of God the Saviour, is but giving expression to that atheism of his heart, which says, "God is not." He denies the very being of "the only true God," in denying the truth of that testimony in which he has revealed his character. Yet all the while this man probably is looking abroad for that character of the fool, among those who are most irreligious and profane: little aware that the Scriptures point himself out with a—"thou art the man."

Similarly misinterpreted is another passage of sacred writ, which declares—"He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6. This text has given occasion to many a grave discourse, de-

signed to prove the existence of a god; to shew that the belief of a god is the fundamental principle of all *religion*, and to stir up those who acknowledge it to a diligent seeking of that their god, in expectation of getting a reward from him.

But it might be well for the writers and readers of such truly *atheistic* discourses to remember what the word of the Lord declares;—"all the gods of the nations are idols;"—"there is no God else beside ME: a just God, and a Saviour:" Ps. xvi. 5. Isa. xlv. 21.—and what Jesus uttered of old, "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John xiv. 6. It might be well for them also to remember all the passages of Scripture, which mark that those, who *seek* the Lord, are those, and those alone, who know *his* name, and who have life eternal in him: while in following him, and cleaving to him here below, their path is beset with so many trials that they indeed need to have their hearts cheered and supported by the prospect of that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which he has "reserved in heaven" for "all them that love his appearing." 1 Pet. i. 4. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

The first and great commandment to his believing Israel is thus prefaced: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord thy God is one Lord." Mark xii. 29. Deut. vi. 4. This is the *only Lord God* whom the Scriptures acknowledge, and whom the Scriptures alone reveal. That it is of *him* the apostle speaks, when he says, "he that cometh unto God, must *believe that he is*,"—the context proves abundantly.—Throughout the chapter, he is adducing from the old Testament instances of that *faith*, by which "the elders obtained a good report;" that faith which has for its object a revelation from the living God; which is, "the confidence of things expected, and the conviction of things not seen." And among those instances, he brings forward that of *Enoch*. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death: and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God"—or, as it is expressed in the book of Genesis, that he "walked with God." "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must *believe that he is*," &c. Did the Apostle mean by this reasoning merely to prove, that Enoch acknowledged a god, or was not what the world calls an atheist? No, surely: but to prove that Enoch believed the revelation, in which the only "living and true God" makes himself known. All who disbelieve what is there revealed concerning *his* glorious character and work, are in the scriptural sense of the term—*atheists* indeed; "*without* God in the world."

The leading principle of the fashionable religion, which overspreads Christendom, has been well designated by one, as consisting in—piety toward the gods. The few who confess the name of "the only true God," have little favour to expect at the hands of those against whose idols they testify. The false charity of the religious world corresponds with the infidelity from which it springs; and has its great exercise in the interchange of flattering compliments towards their respective gods, and in the maintenance of a mutual good opinion of each other's sincerity and safety. The *charity* (or

love) of the TRUTH springs from that *faith*, which believes the testimony that God hath sent into the world in the Gospel of his Son ; and is expressed in a steadfast adherence to that truth in its unadulterated purity, and to all the holy commandments given to the disciples of the Lord Jesus by his Apostles,—especially that new commandment of love to the brethren for the truth's sake. The more *this charity* abounds in any follower of Christ, the more will he be reproached by the world as an uncharitable bigot.

What has been said on the first Paradox, makes it needless to enlarge much on

PARADOX II.

A man may be all his life most devout—most diligent and fervent in prayer—and yet may never have called upon God.

THE only true God (as we have observed) reveals himself in the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. They who believe that testimony in its uncorrupted truth—in its one divine import—know the living God, and call upon his name. But all others, whether they openly deny that divine revelation, or, under a professed acknowledgment of it, maintain sentiments in opposition to it—are strangers to the only true God, and deniers of *his* being ; though they may be most diligent and fervent worshipers of the idol, which they picture to themselves under the name of god. “ How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed ? ” Rom. x. 14.

This plain question, proposed by the apostle Paul, strongly asserts the *impossibility* of any man's calling upon God, while he does not believe the revelation he has made of his character in the gospel. Accordingly, although Paul himself, as a very religious Pharisee, had in the days of his unbelief abounded in prayers ; yet it was not until after the Lord Jesus Christ made himself known to him, that he ever prayed to the *true* God. And therefore it was not till then, that the Lord said of him to Ananias, Acts ix. 11. “ Behold he prayeth : ”—that is, prayeth unto ME.

PARADOX III.

Any man who is not an Atheist,—or in other words, any man who believes that God is,—hath everlasting life, and shall inherit eternal glory.

PARADOX IV.

The same is true of any man who has ever prayed to God.

WERE it not for the general ignorance of the Scriptures, and the consequent real *atheism*, which overspreads the countries called Christian ; these statements could not appear paradoxical to the

reader. They are but equivalent with the plain declarations of the word of God—"he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" and "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." John iii. 36. Rom. x. 13.

In the holy Scriptures, God has made known his glory, as at once the *just* God and the *Saviour* of lost sinners; just and justifying the ungodly. Isa. xlv. 21. Rom. iii. 26. iv. 5. The people of these countries have picked up so much of the *language* of Scripture, that they often compliment their gods by verbally attributing salvation to them; while at bottom they have no idea, but that what they call their salvation turns more or less upon themselves, and upon their due discharge of that part of the work, to which they conceive the sinner must contribute. Thus, according to the lie originally suggested to our first parents, they think of being *as gods* unto themselves. Gen. iii. 5.

Different persons differ much as to the nature, and quantity, of the particular task they have to do, in order to obtain acceptance with their gods, and to win what they call salvation. Some also are very little concerned about the matter; and others very much. Some take it very easy; and others are diligently and earnestly employed in it, as the main occupation of their hearts and lives. The former are the *irreligious*—the latter the *religious* of the world. But all alike, who proceed on that idea, are of that *world*, the whole of which "lieth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19. are what the Scriptures call *atheists*, or "without God in the world," and are rejecting the counsel of God against themselves.

"*Salvation* belongeth unto the Lord." Ps. iii. 8. It is his exclusive work from first to last;—the work of his mercy and of his power. That he might display his glory in its accomplishment, God sent his own Son into the world "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin;" that he might die "the just for the unjust, bearing their sins in his own body on the tree," "and putting them away by the sacrifice of himself." John iii. 14—16. 1 Pet. ii. 24. iii. 18. Heb. ix. 26—28. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Heb. ii. 10. It was suitable to his glory, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," in bestowing eternal life upon the sinful and the evil, to manifest his righteous judgment against their sin. This was done, when "it pleased the Lord to bruise him," who knew no sin of his own, but who willingly submitted to be smitten and made a curse "for the transgression of his people,"—of the many children given to him out of the world, to be redeemed unto God by his blood, and blessed in him with that eternal life which is the gift of God in Christ Jesus. Is. liii. 5, 6, 8. Gal. iii. 13, 14. John xvii. 2. Rev. vi. 23.

By his resurrection from the dead, God hath given assurance unto all men that he hath accepted his offering for sin, and is "well pleased for his righteousness sake," Ps. xx. and xxi. Isa. xlii. 21. In the gospel, he sets him forth as the only and the all-sufficient propitiation; publishing to the rebellious the glad tidings of peace made with God by Jesus Christ. Rom. iii. 25. Acts x. 36. And in oppo-

sition to all the vain inquiries of the human heart—"What shall *I do* to be saved?" or, (according to the form of the question current among many of the religious sort)—"how shall I obtain an *interest* in Christ?"—the word of God proclaims—"he that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth *not* shall be condemned."

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ"—appointed by God for that office and work which the Scriptures declare him to sustain—"is born of God," 1 John v. 1. and "knoweth God, or rather is known of him." Gal. iv. 9. He that believeth the record, which God hath given of his Son, hath "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," crying, "Abba, Father;" Heb. x. 19. Rom. viii. 15. and to him there shall be an accomplishment, from the Lord, of all the good things spoken by him concerning his people.

V.

THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD.

I PETER v. 12.

THE Holy Scriptures, "given by inspiration of God," are declared to be able to make the believer of them "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. In them "the only true God" makes himself known, as at once "a just God and a Saviour;" Isa. xlv. 21. and it is "life eternal to know Him and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." John xvii. 3.

But because the things revealed in the Scriptures are so divinely glorious and important, therefore Satan, "the father of lies," "the god of this world," John viii. 44. 2 Cor. iv. 4. employs all his arts to corrupt the very fountain of heavenly wisdom, by perverting the word of God, and giving a general currency to false interpretations of scriptural language. In this view it may be truly said, that the Bible—the Bible misinterpreted—is one of the devil's greatest instruments for leading men to destruction: for blinding their minds, "lest the light of the gospel (or glad tidings) of the glory of Christ should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Nor can this assertion appear strange to any who are acquainted with the Scriptures. They speak of Satan as "transforming himself into an angel of light;" and of his ministers (or servants) being "transformed as the ministers of righteousness." 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15. And in the history of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, when Satan found that his first assault was repelled by the Lord with "the sword of the Spirit, the word of God," he himself is recorded to have shewn his dexterity in quoting Scripture, and to have used a misapplied text for masking the wickedness of his next temptation. Matt. iv. 6. If he could, he would persuade all men openly to reject the whole of divine revelation as a fable. But when he cannot suc-

ceed in this, his end is equally attained by leading them to misunderstand its import; and thus, under the most serious profession of receiving the Scriptures as the word of God, to disbelieve what they really declare, and support the grossest lies of his suggestion by Scripture misinterpreted and misapplied.

Never, therefore, can it be unimportant to mark the *true meaning* of Scriptural language; nor can any undervalue the attempt, but those who, from their unbelief, undervalue that divine *truth* which this language is employed to convey.

Probably, reader, you are familiar with the phrase, “the *grace* of God.” It occurs frequently in the Bible, and is frequently in the mouths of professed christians. But have you ever seriously thought what the phrase *means*? The most serious people commonly understand by the words, some *divine influence* exerted on the minds of men, of a mysterious nature, and unconnected with the revealed truth of God; by which influence they conceive themselves inclined to what is good, and their natural powers aided in the pursuit of it.—Now let me freely tell you, that this is nothing like the real meaning of the phrase in Scripture.

The word *grace* is of very similar import with the expression *mere mercy*. It denotes *undeserved favour*, or kindness extended to those who have no claim of right:—as when the King is said to pardon rebels by an *act of grace*. And “the *grace of God*,” in Scripture, imports that wonderful *mercy* and undeserved kindness, which he displays in saving guilty and ruined sinners; in bestowing eternal life, as his “*gift* in Christ Jesus,” Rom. vi. 23. upon those who had incurred the just penalty of rebelling against him, and could do nothing to *entitle* or *recommend* themselves to his favour.

God has so loved sinners of the human race, “that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John iii. 16. For it is written, that the “wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:” Rom. i. 18. and it would therefore have been inconsistent with the divine glory, with the truth and righteousness and holiness of God, to allow any sinner to escape the sentence of condemnation he has pronounced against sin; were it not that he, who is one with the Father, “the brightness of the glory of God and the express image of his person,” John x. 30. Heb. i. 3. had undertaken to endure the full penalty of sin for the guilty, and—in that body which was prepared for him—to “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;” Heb. ix. 26. to become a curse, “and suffer for sins, the just for the unjust,” Gal. iii. 13. 1 Pet. iii. 18. that men might be *blessed in him*; that he might *bring unto God* all who were given him by the Father, in the eternal counsels, to be redeemed and saved by him.

Accordingly the Scriptures testify that “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman,” Gal. iv. 4. according to the prophecies which had gone before; and that he, as the Son of man, finished that work of redemption which he undertook: that the holy and righteous God has accepted his sacrifice for sin, and is “well-pleased for his righteousness sake;” Isaiah xlii. 21.

of which he has given assurance unto all men, by *raising him from the dead*. He is highly exalted, a Prince and a Saviour; is set down as a Priest and King upon his throne; and has received "power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him." John xvii. 2. And to mark that this eternal life comes to the guiltiest sinner in a way of *grace* or *mere mercy*, and not of debt—"not by works of righteousness which we have done, or can do," Tit. iii. 4, 5.—it is declared, that "*whosoever believeth* shall be saved;"—not that he who *does* something to obtain the divine favour, shall obtain it; but that he who *believes* the divine testimony in the Scriptures, concerning the Son of God, hath everlasting life in him, and "shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." John v. 24. "Therefore is it of *faith*, that it might be by *grace*." Rom. iv. 16. For this reason has God assured eternal life to every one who *believeth*, without exception and without distinction, in order that it might be marked as coming to sinners, not as the reward of any thing good in them, but as the free gift of his rich mercy to the guilty and the vile; that so the Lord alone may be exalted, and "that no flesh should glory in his presence."

I have asserted, that in Scripture "the *grace* of God" signifies this his undeserved kindness and saving mercy to lost sinners, even the chief. Let me establish the truth of that assertion, by directing your attention to a few passages of Scripture, in which the phrase is evidently used in this sense. Rom. iv. 4. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of *grace*, but of debt." Does not this plainly mean, that when a man *does* something to obtain a reward, the reward is considered as *due* to him for that which he has done, and not as a gift of *undeserved bounty*? Does *grace* here mean any thing like a divine *influence* on the mind.

In like manner, the same Apostle, speaking of the "remnant according to the election of *grace*," which God had reserved to himself from among the Jewish people, adds these remarkable words:—Rom. xi. 6. "And if *by grace*, then is it no more of works; otherwise *grace* is no more *grace*. But if it be of works, then is it no more *grace*; otherwise work is no more work." Is not the plain meaning of the Apostle this? that if the true Israelites were the people of God, in consequence of any thing they had *done*, to determine his favourable regard towards them, then the blessings they enjoyed as his people were not the consequence of his *mere mercy* and undeserved favour towards them; and on the other hand, that if (as he asserts) their relation to God and blessedness in him flowed solely from his *mere mercy*, then they could not be the consequence of any of their own doings: so that, according to the Scriptures, there cannot be any such mixture and jumble of the two things as multitudes dream of; as if sinners could *do* something to *deserve* the divine *mercy*. The two ideas are utterly inconsistent. If a man *deserve* the divine favour, it cannot be *mere mercy* to extend it to him; and if it be of *mere mercy* or *grace*, then he cannot have done any thing to *deserve* it.

Again, when the apostle is stirring up the Corinthian believers to

liberality, in supplying the wants of their poor brethren, he addresses them with this language :—2 Cor. viii. 9. “ For ye know the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” Now, reader, is it not evident that by “ the *grace* of the Lord Jesus Christ,” mentioned in the beginning of the verse, the Apostle means nothing but that his wonderful *mercy* to sinners, which he describes in the following words; and does not mean any thing like the common notion of some mystic influence on the minds of men inclining them to goodness? Although, indeed, the consideration of that mercy or *grace* of the Lord Jesus does effectually influence all who know it, (that is, all who *believe* the testimony which reveals it)—to every good word and work. “ This is the *true grace* of God,” in which they alone *stand*, who have received, and hold fast the one unadulterated “ *Gospel of the grace of God.*” 1 Pet. v. 12. Acts. xx. 24.

I have thus sufficiently established, from the Scriptures themselves, the true and simple meaning of the phrase “ the grace of God.” And the great importance of always attending to that meaning may be seen, if we apply the preceding remarks to a text of Scripture, which many very religious people awfully pervert; deriving from their false interpretation of it, some support (as they conceive) to a system of doctrine the most opposite to the Gospel of Christ.

The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to Titus, instructs that evangelist how he should exhort believers, of various ages and various circumstances in life, to such a conduct as shall “ adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.” Tit. ii. 10. And he proceeds in the following verses to subjoin this reason for his directions :—“ For the *grace* of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Now what are we to understand by the words, “ the *grace* of God that bringeth salvation hath *appeared to all men*?” What but this? The light of the glorious Gospel, which reveals the redeeming mercy, and that great salvation, wherewith he saves the guilty and the lost, has been sent into all the world in the universal promulgation of the word of life; has been sent to all nations of the earth, and to men of all circumstances and ranks in life, without distinction and without respect of persons. The Apostle goes on to observe, that this revealed mercy of God alone influences *us*, who believe its testimony, to a conversation such as becometh the Gospel.

But in what sense do multitudes of religious professors at this day quote and apply these plain words of the apostle? Still understanding by “ the grace of God” some divine influence on the mind, they speak of a *common grace* actually *given to every individual* in the world, by which all men are more or less influenced, and are put, as some express it, into a *salvable* state; that is, into a state in which they *may save themselves*, with the help of this so-called grace, if they be but sufficiently diligent in *improving* the *stock* of it, on which they are set up, and sufficiently faithful to its suggestions. And in sup-

port of this their *Antichristian* system, they gravely adduce that text, "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men;" a text, which we have seen, really expresses nothing like the idea to which these men pervert it.

In fact, it really contradicts the whole of their infidel system, as all the other Scriptures are seen to do, when rightly understood; for it expressly states, that what brings salvation to sinners is the *grace* (or unmerited favour and bounty) of God, not their diligence or faithfulness in availing themselves of certain aids afforded them; and that this grace does not put sinners into a state in which they may be their own saviours, but saves—effectually saves, those who have destroyed themselves.

The same text also really exposes the vanity of all those boasted works, by which unbelieving religionists hope to *gain the divine favour*. For it expressly exhibits the revealed *mercy* of God in the salvation of sinners, as the only thing which *teaches* those who believe, to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Every genuine "fruit of the Spirit" is produced by the genuine "Gospel of the grace of God;" Col. i. 6. 1 Thess. ii. 13. and therefore is produced only in those who *believe* it. Accordingly, the Lord Jesus saith to his disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that *abideth in me, and I in him*, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me (separate from me) ye can do nothing." John xv. 5. And in the 7th verse he expresses the same thing by their "abiding in him, and *his words* abiding in them." Those who reject his words, the words of eternal life, are "dead in trespasses and sins," and "the wrath of God abideth on them," John iii. 36. even when they abound most in a strictness and piety and zeal, which they mistake for the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit of God is "the Spirit of *truth*," of that *truth* which they disbelieve: and the word of the truth of the Gospel is "the sword of that Spirit." Eph. vi. 17. His office is to *glorify* Jesus, John xvi. 14. by convincing all who are "ordained to eternal life" Acts xiii. 48. of the things declared from heaven concerning him, who "came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15.—Whoso believeth shall be saved; and whoso believeth not, shall be condemned. THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT.

VI.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

LUKE XVIII. 9—14.

WITH NOTES.

“*And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:—Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying; God be merciful to me a sinner.—I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.*”

THIS Parable strikingly illustrates some of the most important principles of the kingdom of God. It exhibits the blessedness of that hope towards God, which (A.) THE GOD OF HOPE reveals and communicates to sinners, even the chief, in the GOSPEL of his SON. It exposes the delusiveness of every other hope—even in its most specious form—which the natural pride and ungodliness of our hearts dispose us continually to cherish. It marks that God is no respecter of persons; that the things which are highly esteemed among men are abomination in HIS sight; that the ways and thoughts of GOD are not as our thoughts or ways. Acts x. 34. Luke xvi. 15. Is. lv. 8, 9.

But, as usual, the more blessed and important the instruction is, which this passage of scripture is calculated to convey, the more diligently has the father of lies laboured by his agents, (many of them religious commentators and divines) to pervert and obscure its meaning.

READER! whatever your character be, whether religious or irreligious, your attention is entreated to the following pages, while the writer endeavours simply to present the parable to your view in its genuine import. Let all that he advances be tried, not by the systems of men, but by the WORD of GOD.

The parable was uttered by the lips of Him, who speaketh as never man spake,—by him who is the Wisdom of GOD, and the Salvation of GOD; and was addressed unto certain persons who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” It is recorded by the spirit of Truth, for instruction in righteousness, to the end of the world. But to understand it aright, we may profitably carry ourselves back, in imagination, to the day in which the words were first delivered, and attend closely to the ideas which they must have conveyed to the hearers then. This is the more necessary, because some of the expressions have considerably changed their meaning; and are now commonly employed in a very different sense, and connected with very different ideas, from those which were annexed to them at that day.

The name of PHARISEE, for instance, is now employed as an epithet of *reproach*, insomuch that most would be *offended* at being called *Pharisees*. But it was quite otherwise when the LORD JESUS spoke the parable. The name of *Pharisee* was then a name of respectability and honour; a name of which none who bore it were ashamed. See Acts xxiii. 6. xxvi. 4, 5. They were the strict religious professors of the day; honoured by all the people for the outward regularity of their conduct, for their earnest zeal towards God, and for their extraordinary closeness of adherence to—what they conceived to be—the principles of the Divine Law.

The reason why the name of *Pharisee* has so much changed its signification, seems plainly to be this. The belief of the New Testament Scriptures is commonly *professed* in these countries; and all who are in the least degree acquainted with their contents, must be aware that the Pharisees were among the bitterest opposers and persecutors of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; as they were indeed the objects of his most plain and severe rebukes. Hence most people now are accustomed, from their childhood, to consider the *Pharisees* as very *wicked* persons; and annex *their* usual ideas of wickedness to the name, wherever it occurs.

But, to enter into the true view of this parable, we ought to throw off these recollections for the present: and then, when we are told, "That two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a PHARISEE, and the other a PUBLICAN," we shall see that the two characters presented to our attention are the most strongly *contrasted* that can be;—the character of the *Pharisee* marked by every thing most favourably thought and spoken of by the world; the character of the *Publican* marked by every thing the opposite,—by every thing which men most universally and justly reprobate. For the *Publicans*—or farmers of the taxes imposed on the Jews by the Roman government—were so notoriously guilty of extortion and fraud in the execution of their office, so infamous for the immorality of their conduct, that the name of *Publican* was equivalent with that of a wicked profligate. This is evident, from our finding *publicans* and *harlots* classed together in the New Testament; where we see the Publicans ranking—proverbially—with sinners of the very vilest description upon earth. See Matth. xxi. 31, 32. ix. 10, 11. xi. 19. Luke xv. 1, 2.

Behold then, reader, the two characters held forth to our view in the opening of this parable: the one, a strict religious professor, most highly esteemed by men for that, which men esteem most highly as the *best* thing;—the other, a notorious profligate. They both go up into the Temple, the place where *prayer was wont to be made* under the Jewish Law. They both go up there for the same professed purpose,—*to pray*. Here let us pause a moment, to reflect on the nature of that act, in which they are represented as professing to be engaged.

PRAYER—however lightly talked of, and slightly thought of frequently—is an engagement the most solemn. A *creature* drawing near to the infinite CREATOR! and holding fellowship with that GOD, before whom the heavenly host veil their faces with their wings.

while they cry—**HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!** Is. vi. 2, 3. Rev. iv. 8. But in the case of a *sinful creature*, how wonderful that there should be such a thing possible as his approach into the Holiest, to receive blessings from that **HOLY ONE** against whom he has revolted, and who is of *purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity!* Hab. i. 13.

That any *sinners* are so highly privileged, and do come unto **GOD** in prayer *with acceptance*, is solely the effect of that revelation of **MERCY**, in which **JEHOVAH** discovers his glory as at once the **JUST GOD** and the **SAVIOUR**. Is. xlv. 21—25. This is the only true ground on which any sinner can draw near to **GOD**: but this is a ground sufficiently sure to encourage the *prayer*, and support the *hope* of any sinner, even the most vile.

And here lies the grand difference, which is represented between the prayer of the Pharisee and the prayer of the Publican: it lies in the different grounds of *hope towards GOD*, which each conceived, and which encouraged each to draw near to Him. For, however opposite (as we have observed) their characters were in the sight of men, yet there was one material point of *resemblance* between them, one *common* character which they both possessed in the sight of **GOD**. They were “two men,” sinful men, descendants of the same transgressing pair, and partakers of the same corrupt and polluted nature.

Now, the natural effect of that *consciousness of sin*, of which no man can wholly divest himself, is **FEAR**, guilty fear; (B.) a dread of the Divine judgment against sin. Its natural tendency is to make the sinner fly, if possible, from the presence of his offended Creator; as appeared in our first parents after their fall, when they “hid themselves from the presence of the **LORD GOD** among the trees of the garden,” upon hearing his voice. And, therefore, whenever a *sinner* professes to approach unto **GOD** in prayer, he must have derived from some source an encouragement that allays his guilty apprehensions; he must have before his eye something which revives his **HOPE**, by standing in his view as a counterbalance against his sin; something on account of which he *expects*,—either more or less confidently,—that **GOD** will accept him, although a sinner. According as this is the **ONE** thing, which the redeeming mercy of **GOD** has revealed for the purpose, or any thing different from that, the **HOPE** conceived is either a *good hope through grace*, or a *false hope* which shall perish.

What then is it, which is described as emboldening the *Pharisee* to draw nigh to **GOD**? Evidently those circumstances of superiority, of which he was conscious in himself, as favourably distinguishing his character from many of his fellow-sinners. Nor does the evil marked in his prayer lie,—as many have represented,—in his *falsely* boasting of characters which did not really belong to him. He mentions nothing but the ordinary traits of outward morality and religious strictness, which really did distinguish the Pharisees. They were not in these respects *as other men*, nor *as the publicans*.

Much less is the evil of his prayer (as others have strangely taught) represented as consisting in his arrogating to himself the

glory and *merit* of the difference, which he contemplated between himself and the publican. This idea is expressly contradicted by the very words of his prayer, "God, I thank THEE that I am not as other men are." He is here plainly described, as assigning the *praise* of that difference to what many now call *the distinguishing grace of God*.

Nor, lastly, did the evil, which caused his prayer to be rejected, consist merely in the *boldness* and *confidence* with which he drew near to GOD. For, had his hope been built on the right foundation, it *could not* have been too assured. The disciples of Christ "have *boldness* to enter into the holiest;" Heb. x. 19. and are called to "come *boldly* unto the throne of grace." Heb. iv. 16. And, when they pray, to say, "Our FATHER which art in heaven!" Luke xi. 2. The foundation which GOD *hath laid in Zion*, Is. xxviii. 16. is gloriously sufficient to support the *strongest* hope and confidence of the guiltiest sinner upon earth. But even what is called the *humblest hope*, which rests on any other basis, is presumptuous and vain. The former gives the more *glory* to GOD, the more strong it is: Rom. iv. 20. the latter dishonours GOD, by representing him as such an one *as ourselves*.

So the Pharisee is described as viewing with complacency certain *characters in himself*, which distinguished him from other men; and as encouraged in his approach to GOD by the contemplation of these, conceiving that the most HIGH viewed them with complacency likewise. And thus we may see what it is "to *trust in ourselves* that we are righteous." We are of that mind, whenever our confidence that we are accepted of GOD, and can draw near to Him acceptably, is derived from the consideration of *any* circumstances *in ourselves*, no matter of what kind, or under what name, (C.) distinguishing us from the very vilest of our fellow-sinners. And while of that mind, we are certainly (in the scriptural sense of the expression) *despising others*. For those who are destitute of the characters, which, seen in ourselves, inspire our own hope and confidence towards GOD, those persons we must of course view as at present precluded from all well-founded hope.

Nor does it at all exempt us from the charge of "trusting in ourselves that we are righteous and despising others," because we attribute wholly to—what is called—the *grace of GOD*—(D.) those favourable characters in ourselves, which we conceive to warrant our hope; or because we admit that the same grace may yet produce those characters in the person now most destitute of them, and so hereafter warrant *him* to entertain the same hope with *us*. In all this we should differ nothing from the Pharisee, presented to our view in this parable. All such worshipers *worship they know not what*. John iv. 22. They are blind to the glory of the *only true GOD*. John xvii. 3. Their sacrifices are *vain oblations*, an *abomination* to the LORD. Is. i. 13. Prov. xv. 8. They have "chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations:" they have "chosen that in which the LORD delighteth not." Is. lxvi. 3, 4. They walk in that way, of which it is written, "There is a way, which *seemeth* RIGHT unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. xvi. 25.

Let us turn now, reader, to a more pleasing view,—the prayer of the PUBLICAN,—the ground of *his* hope; and that from which *he* derived encouragement to pray. In himself he appears to have seen but one character, that of a *sinner* against GOD; and in smiting on *his breast*, he appears to have traced all his *outward* enormities of conduct to their true source, the *inward* wickedness of a corrupt heart and polluted nature. See Mark vii. 21, 22. Yet, while in and about *himself*, he sees no good thing, but every thing naturally calculated to deter him from approaching the MOST HIGH, he, notwithstanding, discerns *in the revelation of GOD* that GOOD THING, which is a sufficient spring of hope to his conscience, and which does embolden his prayer, “GOD, be merciful to me a sinner.”

It is needful to observe, that the word rendered “be merciful,” would be more literally and accurately translated “*be propitiated* :” (E.) “GOD, *be propitiated* to me a *sinner*.” The word is derived from, and obviously alludes to, the PROPITIATORY, OR MERCY-SEAT, under the law of Moses, of which you may read in Ex. xxv. 17—22. Levit. xvi. 2, 14, 15. Heb. ix. 4, 5. This *mercy-seat*, or *propitiatory*, was one of the Jewish types, all divinely appointed, and all designed to direct the view of the true Israelites to HIM, of whom Moses in the law and all Prophets testified; Luke xxiv. 27, 44. Acts x. 43. to “the LAMB of GOD, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John i. 29, 36. And for this purpose the MERCY-SEAT was eminently adapted. It was a lid, or covering, for the Ark of the Covenant, made of pure gold, and over-shadowed by the wings of “the cherubims of glory,” which were formed at each end, out of one piece with it. Placed in the “holiest of all,” into which the High Priest entered only once every year, on the great day of atonement, the blood of the expiatory sacrifices was sprinkled by him upon and before this *Mercy-seat*; and there the glory of JEHOVAH appeared in the cloud resting on the *Mercy-seat*, from above which, even “from between the two cherubims,” he declared to Moses that He would *commune with him*.

Now all this was a type and figure of that great *propitiation*, or *atonement*, which, in these latter days, the GOD of all grace has clearly *set forth* in the GOSPEL, without the veil of types and figures, in the person and work of his SON JESUS, through whom MERCY flows unto the *guilty* and SALVATION is brought unto the *lost*. HE is “the LAMB of GOD” which has *taken away the sin of the world*; the LAMB which that GOD, against whom we all have sinned, himself provided, in the riches of his mercy, “to *put away sin* BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF.” (Heb. ix. 26.—Reader! look at the passage quoted, and view the glorious and joyful truth which it declares.) HE it is that “engaged his heart to approach unto” that GOD who is a *consuming fire*, Jerem. xxx. 21. (F.) Heb. xii. 29. with that whole burnt-offering for sin, which alone the righteous and holy JEHOVAH could accept, as a full atonement for it; and which HE *has accepted*, as completely magnifying his violated law. “It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, *in bringing many sons unto glory*, to make the CAPTAIN of *their salvation* perfect *through sufferings*.” Heb. ii. 10. HE it is, “whose goings forth have been from

of old, from everlasting ;" Mic. v. 2. who said by the mouth of his servant and prophet David, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin (which are offered *by the law*) thou hast had *no pleasure*. (For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should *take away sin*.) Then, said I, Lo! I COME *to do thy will*, O GOD!" to offer that sacrifice for sin in which Thou *art well pleased*. See Ps. xl. 6—8. compared with Heb. x. 1—9. and Matth. xvii. 5. HE it is, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," the word that "was with GOD and was GOD," the CREATOR of all things—HE it is, who, "in the fulness of time," came into this sinful world for the accomplishment of that work of REDEEMING MERCY, for which He was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world;" who "*took upon him* the form of a servant," was "*made flesh* and tabernacled among us," "all the fulness of the GODHEAD dwelling in Him bodily." See Heb. 1, 3. John i. 1—3, 14. Gal. iv. 4, 5. 1 Pet. i. 20. Phil. ii. 7. Col. ii. 9. HE it is, whose name is "WONDERFUL—COUNSELLOR—THE MIGHTY GOD—THE EVERLASTING FATHER—THE PRINCE OF PEACE;"—"EMMANUEL—GOD *with us*," with sinful men; JESUS (G.), which being interpreted, is JEHOVAH THE SAVIOUR. See Is. ix. 6. Matth. i. 21—23. HE it is, who "failed not, nor was discouraged" in that work, which he came to accomplish; the "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," because the *sins of many*, of all the lost sheep, *given unto HIM* to redeem and save, were laid upon HIM; because "it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him," that by *his stripes* they might be *healed*, that by his being "made a curse," men might be "blessed in Him." See Is. xlii. 4. liii. 3—6. 10. 11. Gal. iii. 13. Ps. lxxii. 17. HE it is, who "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," dying the JUST, or RIGHTEOUS ONE, in place of the *unjust*, or *unrighteous*, "bearing the sins of many in his own body on the tree," "offering himself through the eternal Spirit unto GOD," that He might "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and open by his blood, "a new and living way" into the holiest, by which the guiltiest of sinners may draw near to GOD with *boldness*, and in assured confidence of acceptance *in the BELOVED*. See Phil. ii. 8. 1 Pet. iii. 18. ii. 24. Hebr. ix. 12, 14, 26. x. 19, 20. HE it is, who with his expiring breath proclaimed, in the ears of his betrayers and murderers, the joyful truth, IT IS FINISHED: John xix. 30. all that was necessary for *finishing transgression*, for *making an end of sin*, for *bringing in everlasting righteousness* for the justification of the ungodly before a holy GOD,—all this IS ACCOMPLISHED. Dan. ix. 24. HE it is, whose testimony of this blessed truth JEHOVAH abundantly confirmed, by *raising him again from the dead*; whereby He hath given glorious evidence, that this JESUS, who was "numbered with transgressors, and poured out his soul unto death," is indeed his BELOVED SON, in whom HE IS WELL PLEASED. See Rom. i. 4. Acts. ii. 24—28. iv. 10—12, 33. xvii. 31. 1 Pet. i. 3.

And now, O Reader! there is no longer room for that anxious inquiry, which naturally obtrudes itself upon the guilty conscience of fallen man—"Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow

myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will JEHOVAH be *pleased* with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Mic. vi. 6—8. Nothing but the proud and blind ungodliness of the human heart leads any sinner to conceive, that JEHOVAH, the righteous and holy GOD, can be *well pleased* with any of his polluted offerings. But that GOD, who is "*rich in mercy,*" HE hath himself "shewed thee, O man, what is *good,*" that in which He is *well pleased*; that sacrifice which He has *accepted* as putting away sin. "GOD hath set forth CHRIST JESUS as a propitiation; Rom. iii. 25. that propitiation which in his *abundant mercy* He hath himself provided, and which, like all his works, is PERFECT. The voice of JEHOVAH sounds throughout a guilty world in his word, "Behold MY SERVANT, whom I uphold; MINE ELECT, in whom my soul *delighteth.*" Is. xlii. 1. "Behold the LAMB of GOD," which hath taken away the sin of the world!

The GOSPEL, which the Apostles were commissioned by their divine Master to preach to all nations for the obedience of faith, and which still runs throughout the world in their word, Rom. i. 5. x. 17, 18. that GOSPEL proclaims "*peace* by JESUS CHRIST;" Acts x. 36. not certain *terms* and *conditions*, to be fulfilled on the part of the sinner, in order to get peace with GOD, but PEACE MADE BY JESUS CHRIST. It is not an OFFER of salvation (as many talk) proposed to the *acceptance* of sinners, but a DIVINE TESTIMONY proclaiming the great "SALVATION of GOD." Luke iii. 4—6. And those Apostles of JESUS CHRIST testify, that "*by HIM all that believe,* [that believe their testimony,] ARE justified from all things." Acts xiii. 38, 39. 1 John v. 1. 13.

This simple, but glorious proclamation of "the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS," Rom. iii. 24. this their preaching of CHRIST CRUCIFIED, is foolishness indeed to them that perish; but unto all that are called to the knowledge of it, through the belief of the truth, it is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God." 1 Cor. i. 18. 21—24. It sets their feet *in the way of peace*: it brings them out of darkness into light, and out of the power of Satan into the kingdom of GOD: it brings them near unto GOD with acceptance, in that only way in which any sinner can have fellowship with HIM; in that way in which He displays his glory as at once the JUST GOD and the SAVIOUR, *just and justifying the ungodly*: it gives them "*a good hope* through *grace,*" a hope that *maketh not ashamed.* Luke i. 79. Acts xxvi. 18. Rom. xv. 13. 1 Thess. i. 5—10. 2 Thess. ii. 16. 1 Pet. i. 8.

Nor have I really departed from the subject, which I undertook to treat, in enlarging so much on this glorious topic. This is that which is represented as the *one* spring of hope in the mind of the Publican, when, smiting on his breast, he prayed, "GOD, be propitiated to me a sinner." It is as if he had said, 'I am indeed a sinner, outwardly and inwardly nothing but a sinner. And that *the wages of sin is death,* all the beasts slain in sacrifice for sin confirm. But these sacrifices have been *divinely appointed*; and it is by the ordinance of JEHOVAH, that their blood is sprinkled by the High

Priest upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat on the great day of atonement. Do they not all declare that there is *mercy* with our God? that although these sacrifices, *which are offered year by year continually*, cannot themselves take away sin, yet there is a LAMB which GOD has himself provided for an effectual sin-offering? Do they not all point to that HOPE of Israel, of which all the prophets speak, the REDEEMER that shall *come to Zion and open a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, being wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*? Yes! there is a *mercy-seat, a propitiatory*; there is an atonement *divinely appointed* for the relief and pardon of the guilty; and therefore assuredly sufficient for effecting the merciful design. Therefore, O GOD! thou, who hast thus revealed hope to sinners! *be propitiated to me a sinner.*'

Reader! hear the declaration of Him who has "the words of eternal life:" John vi. 68. *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.* (H.)

But if the GOSPEL thus preached to the Jews of old, by types and figures, by prophecies and promises of good things yet to come, was adapted to afford a *good hope* to the guiltiest conscience, and to direct the worshiper under the law to the only true medium of access to GOD and acceptance with him; how much more gloriously adapted to the same effect, how much more gloriously *sufficient* for producing it, is the same GOSPEL now! since HE, whom all the types prefigured, and all the prophets foretold, has *come in the flesh*; since life and immortality are *brought to light*, in the divine testimony concerning his glorious work and office.

That testimony, simply declared by the Apostles at JERUSALEM, *filled with all peace and joy in believing it* about five thousand of those, who had been a little before *the betrayers and murderers* of the PRINCE OF LIFE. Acts ii. 41—47. iv. 4.

To obscure its glory, to corrupt its simplicity, to blind the eyes of sinners against the *fulness* of hope and blessedness, which it exhibits and brings to the lost, ever has been, and is the grand design of *the father of lies*. John viii. 44. 2 Cor. iv. 3—6. xi. 3. But it *shall accomplish* all the pleasure of the LORD; and as many as are *ordained to eternal life*, shall believe it. Is. lv. 11. Acts xiii. 48 John x. 26—28.

Reader! whoever you be—beware how you *reject the counsel of GOD* against your own soul. Are you one, who has been to the present hour the veriest slave of Satan, *working all uncleanness with greediness*; Eph. iv. 19. a hardy despiser of the MOST HIGH, and stout hearted rebel against Him? Behold THE SALVATION OF GOD! Behold it in HIM, who on the cross prayed for his very murderers—"FATHER! *forgive them*;" Luke xxiii. 34.—in HIM, whose blood *cleanseth from all sin*;—in HIM, who "came into this world to *save sinners*;" 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.—who came "to call—not the righteous but *sinners* to repentance;" Matt. ix. 13.—who was not ashamed to be called "THE FRIEND of *publicans and sinners*;" Matt. xi. 19.—who *receiveth sinners*, and declares,—without any exception—"him that cometh to Me I will *in no wise* cast out." John vi. 37.—Behold in HIM the *open way* to a holy and sin-hating God! the way of

peace—of righteousness—of life. “Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved;”—“saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation.” Acts xvi. 31. Is. xlv. 17. 22—25.

Among the various ways by which the GOSPEL of peace is adulterated, that is a most common one at this day,—and common among those who profess what is called *evangelical* doctrine,—to talk of and prescribe certain MEANS of attaining an interest in the salvation of CHRIST:—means to be employed by the sinner, for attaining—what is the GIFT of GOD and the WORK of GOD! Away with the language and with the thought! It removes to a distance from the sinner that RIGHTEOUSNESS, which the revelation of GOD brings nigh to those who are farthest from righteousness. Is. xlv. 12, 13. Rom. i. 17. What saith the righteousness which is of FAITH? Rom. x. 6—13. “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart,—[even the work of faith which the APOSTLES preach,]—that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart—[or inwardly credit the declaration]—that GOD hath raised him from the dead—[in attestation of the Divine complacency in his offering for sin]—THOU SHALT BE SAVED.”—The word of the GOD of truth is worthy to be credited: the foundation which GOD hath laid in Zion is worthy to be trusted.—“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of HIM that bringeth good tidings! that publisheth peace! that bringeth good tidings of good! that publisheth SALVATION!” “Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob:—the LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our GOD.” Is. xlv. 23. lii. 7—10.

Are you, reader, a professor of the Gospel,—professedly a partaker of hope towards GOD—the hope of eternal life? And what emboldens you in your approaches to the MOST HIGH? What encourages you to come unto GOD, crying “Abba! Father?” Is it singly and alone the view of the propitiation, which encouraged the Publican? and in which you see an open and sure way of access into the holiest for the chief of sinners? Then you have indeed “fellowship with the FATHER and with his SON JESUS CHRIST:” 1 John i. 3. and the confidence and “rejoicing of hope”—thus inspired—cannot be too strong. But is it the contemplation of your repentance (I.)—your faith—your conversion—your experience—your evidences for heaven—that emboldens you to draw near? Your worship is a vain oblation. You are “trusting in yourself that you are righteous, and despising others:”—and not the less so, because you profess to give GOD the praise for that difference between you and others, which you suppose warrants the confidence of your approach.

Are you, reader, one of the few disciples of the despised JESUS? Is. xlix. 7. who know the divine certainty and see something of the divine glory of his propitiation? “Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering.” “Hold the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end:” and “be not moved away from the hope of the GOSPEL.” Heb. iii. 14. x. 23. Col. i. 23. Rejoice greatly in

the Lord, and glory in the Rock of our salvation. Beware of the cunning craftiness of men, that "lie in wait to deceive"—"by good words and fair speeches." Eph. iv. 14. Rom. xvi. 18. Beware of the "*deceivableness of unrighteousness* in them that perish." 2 Thess. ii. 10. Beware of the *continued* ungodliness and pride and deceitfulness of your own *flesh*. Rom. vii. 18. Gal. v. 17. Jerem. xvii. 9. Let that *word of truth*, through which you have been "begotten again unto a lively hope *by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST* from the dead,"—let that word "abide in you;" and you shall bring forth fruit unto GOD. James i. 18. 1 Pet. i. 3. 23. ii. 2. 1 John ii. 24. Col. iii. 16. John xv. 5. 7.

Too many, after having seemed to "begin in the spirit," seek to be "made perfect by the flesh." Gal. iii. 3. After having professed that "good hope through grace," which the GOSPEL affords to an ungodly sinner, they lay by (as it were) that hope and that GOSPEL, to proceed to *something else*:—only *referring occasionally* to them, as matters of conceded truth. But the Christian, "walking *in CHRIST JESUS as he has received him*," Col. ii. 6. has but *one* thing to keep in view from first to last;—that *ONE* glorious object, which shall be the theme of the redeemed before the throne of GOD in heaven. It is the same GOSPEL, which first brought peace to your conscience, that can alone maintain that "*peace of GOD*" reigning in your heart, "unto which you are called;"—that can alone *work effectually* in you to the end, as it doth in all them that *believe* it: Col. i. 6. iii. 15. 1 Thess. ii. 13.—that can alone lead you *walking with GOD*, in the enjoyment of that nearness and filial access to the MOST HIGH, which belongs to the *redeemed* of the LORD;—*walking with GOD* in blessed agreement,—while you glory only in that *one* object, in which alone *HE is well pleased*.

It is that same blessed truth of the GOSPEL, by which the LORD JESUS prayed that his people might be *sanctified*, or *separated unto GOD* from a world that "lieth in the wicked one;" John xvii. 17. and by which alone the SPIRIT of *truth*—whose sword the *word* is—produces in believers all those "*fruits of righteousness*" and *true holiness*, that form their conversation in this world "as becometh the GOSPEL,"—as is glorifying to the GOD of their salvation. Eph. vi. 17. Phil. i. 11. 27.

Most professors are indeed "careful and troubled about *many* things," in their religious course; but "*ONE* thing is needful." Hold fast that *one* thing, that *is good*,—CHRIST JESUS *made of GOD*, unto all that are in HIM, *wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption*. 1 Cor. i. 30. View every part of the word of the LORD in the light and enjoyment of that revelation of his *glory* "in the face of JESUS CHRIST," which the *propitiation* made on his cross exhibits;—that revelation of the *divine glory*, which sinners—in themselves *ungodly* and *without strength*—may behold with joy; while the *joy* that it affords to every sinner, who discerns it, is inseparably connected with *reverence and godly fear*. Heb. xii. 28, 29.

Turn away your ear from the precepts and traditions of men; and learn from the Apostolic word how believers, *of old*, were instructed "to walk and to please GOD:" 1 Thess. iv. i.—walking in all close-

ness of brotherhood and Christian fellowship with each other, and in absolute separation—as to religious communion—from all beside; *building up each other* in their most holy faith, and “*together* striving for the faith of the GOSPEL.” Acts ii. 42. 1 Cor. xi. 2. 2 Thess. ii. 15. iii. 6. 1 Thess. v. 11. Jude 20, 21. Phil. i. 27.—That is *still* the only course, in which they can walk consistently with their allegiance to the KING of Zion, and without profaning his HOLY name, by confounding it with the gods of the nations. (K.)

Who is on the LORD's side? Who? Be ye “*valiant* for the *truth*.” Jer. ix. 3. “*Sanctify* the LORD GOD in your hearts,” by abiding in that word which manifests his *holy* and *reverend* Name,—infinitely distinguished from every thing that is “called God and worshiped” by the unbelieving world. 1 Pet. iii. 15. “And be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a *reason* of the *hope* that is in you, with meekness and fear: having a *good conscience*; (L.) that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

“Stand *fast* in the *liberty* wherewith CHRIST *hath made* you free; and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage,” by half-hearted and double-minded professors. Gal. v. 1. Rom. vi. 22, 23. John viii. 31, 32. The *joy* of the LORD is your *strength*. Neh. viii. 10. Is. xxix. 18, 19. “*Glory ye in HIS HOLY NAME*: let the heart of them *rejoice* that seek the LORD—that love HIS SALVATION.” Ps. cv. 3. xl. 9, 10, 16. HE soon shall be manifested “in his glory,”—to be *glorified* in his saints, and to be *admired* in all them that believe.” Then—and not till then—we also “shall be *manifested* WITH HIM IN GLORY.” 2 Thess. i. 10. Col. iii. 4. Matth. xiii. 43. 1 Pet. i. 13.

NOTES.

. The following observations have been thrown into the form of Notes, in order to avoid interrupting the series of Remarks in the preceding text: to which the Reader is requested to give one attentive perusal, before he shall examine these Notes.

A. (page 539.)

THIS striking expression, THE GOD OF HOPE, occurs in Rom. xv. 13. The Apostle has been confirming from the Prophets the blessed truth, that JESUS CHRIST has been set *for salvation unto the ends of the earth*, "that the Gentiles might glorify GOD for his *mercy*." In the preceding verse he has quoted the words of Isaiah the Prophet; "there shall be a root of Jesse; and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles: *in Him* shall the Gentiles trust," or more literally, "shall the Gentiles *hope*." The GENTILES, naturally "*aliens from the common wealth of Israel*, without GOD, and without hope in the world;" the GENTILES, whose awful state of blindness and ungodliness is described at large by Paul, in Rom. i. 20—32; the GENTILES, who were reckoned as unclean *dogs* by the Jewish people; *in HIM* shall these *Gentiles hope*. The Apostle immediately adds, "Now, the GOD of *hope*," or rather, as the original words import, "the GOD of *this hope*, fill you with all joy and peace *in believing*, that ye may *abound* in hope,—in *this hope*,—through the power of the HOLY SPIRIT!"

Here is marked to us the nature of "the *hope* of the GOSPEL, as suited to, and sufficient for, the *chief of sinners*. GOD himself is "the GOD of *this hope*," the *author* of it, and the *object* of it. HE has provided; HE has revealed it. HE is himself "the HOPE of Israel, the SAVIOUR." Jer. xiv. 8.

Here also is marked the way in which *that hope* comes to a sinner "dead in trespasses and sins," and in which it is caused to *abound* in those who are partakers of it; namely, *in believing*, in believing the word of the truth of the Gospel, the testimony which GOD has given in the scriptures concerning his SON JESUS CHRIST. Rom. i. 1, 3.

Many, by *faith* or *believing*, mean some devout exercise of the heart and affections about CHRIST and his GOSPEL, some mystic and (for the most part) indescribable effort of the mind, by which they vainly conceive that they become *interested* in CHRIST. Others appear to mean by *faith*, a confidence about something no where revealed in the word of GOD; a *venturesome persuasion* that they are among the number of those "ordained to eternal life." But, in opposition to these and all other misinterpretations of the word, let it be observed, that every one alike understands what it is to *believe* a thing *testified* to us. And that this is the simple meaning of the word *faith*, or *believing*, in the Scriptures, appears, as from many

passages, so very plainly from 1 John v. 9. where “*receiving the witness (or testimony) of God, which He hath testified of his SON,*” is expressly marked as coincident in its meaning with “*receiving the witness (or testimony) of men.*” And thus, “*he that believeth on the SON of GOD hath the witness in himself,*” hath the testimony of GOD—the record that GOD hath given of his SON, abiding in him. For be it observed, that it is one and the same word in the original which our translators render by the various phrases—the *witness*, and the *record*, and the *testimony*: a variety which has considerably contributed to obscure the plain meaning of the 10th verse, and has afforded an opening to the false interpretations of men ignorant of the truth. Compare 1 John v. 1. Acts xiv. 1. xxviii. 24.

Here, lastly, is marked the one gracious work of the HOLY SPIRIT in those that are saved; *glorifying* JESUS, by “*opening their understandings to understand the Scriptures,*” which testify of Him, convincing them of the Truth there declared from Heaven concerning Him, and, to the end, keeping that word of Truth abiding in them. They are a people “*kept by the power of GOD, through faith, unto the salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time.*” 1 Pet. i. 5. And while this blessed declaration of the Apostles may well make them “*glorify GOD for his mercy,*” it is ever calculated to remind them of the unaltered character of ungodliness in *themselves*, whom nothing but *the power* of GOD can keep at any time, from *letting slip* the things which they have learned, and *departing from the LIVING GOD through an evil heart of unbelief.* Heb. ii. 1. iii. 12, 14. In the *unceasing* contrariety of *their own* vain minds to “*the glorious GOSPEL of CHRIST,*” (or, as the original runs, “*the glad tidings of the GLORY of CHRIST*”) believers ought to know more of their own wickedness, than they can know of any of their neighbours.

B. (page 541.)

“*Guilty fear.*” This accounts for the general indisposition of men naturally to all serious thoughts of that GOD, “*in whom we all live, and move, and have our being;*” and for their endeavour to banish the ideas of his *nearness* and *majesty*, by a kind of mental intoxication in the pursuit of earthly objects. The same thing accounts also for the channel in which all *natural* religion flows, all *false* religion, whether heathen or *nominally* Christian; for that anxiety and effort of the disturbed conscience to recover the favour of GOD, by rendering Him something which the sinner vainly hopes He will accept; as well as for the uneasy inquiry, after all his efforts, “*what lack I yet?*” It accounts also for the indisposition of man to *credit* the joyful testimony of the Redeeming Mercy and great salvation of GOD; the gladsome news that “*GOD so loved the world, as to give his ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, to be a propitiation, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;*” that “*the gift of GOD is eternal life through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.*” John iii. 16. Rom. vi. 23. We know, even among men, how hardly one can credit the kindness of another, towards whom

he is *conscious of being an enemy*. The overcoming evidence of the GOSPEL, which reveals the *glory* of the ONLY TRUE GOD, as the GOD OF SALVATION, can alone overcome the enmity of any man; and in giving the guilty sinner the *answer of a good conscience toward God*, by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, brings the reconciled and pardoned rebel to the footstool of the *throne of grace*. 1 Pet. iii. 21. Believers are only called to be "imitators of God as dear children," in being called to *overcome evil with good*. Eph. v. 1, 2. Rom. xii. 21.

C. (page 542.)

"No matter of what kind, or under what name." The Pharisee thanked GOD that he was not *as the Publican*. Many at this day devoutly thank GOD that *they* are not *as the Pharisee*; while they are really of just the same mind, only substituting their *evangelical graces* for his *legal strictness*. The believer, while in the light of the glorious TRUTH he discerns his own real character, will see in his own heart a counterpart of every evil he can behold in others, a combination of the *vain self-righteousness* of the Pharisee, with the *antinomian licentiousness* of the Publican.

D. (page 542.)

"What is called the *grace of God*." The most common idea now annexed to the words,—*the grace of God*,—is that of some mystic divine *influence*, unconnected with the revealed *truth*, exercised on the heart, and progressively improving its character, and purging away its corruptions. In a concordance, indeed, which now happens to lie before me, no less than EIGHTEEN different significations are assigned to the word *grace*! while, among them all, the writer does not once distinctly mention its real and simple meaning. That is, no other than *undeserved bounty*, or *loving kindness* extended to the *unworthy*;—in one word, MERCY. See Rom. iv. 4. xi. 6. This is that *grace*—or *mercy*—of God, "that bringeth *salvation*" to the lost; and hath "appeared to all men," in the universal promulgation of the GOSPEL of peace;—and which alone "*teacheth us*," who believe the testimony of it, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing [or *manifestation of the Glory*] of the great GOD and our SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST." See Tit. ii. 11—13. iii. 4, 5. 1 Pet. i. 13. Jude 21. 2 Tim. i. 18.

E. (Page 543.)

"Be *merciful*—be *propitiated*." That supposed *mercy* or *lenity* towards sin, which men naturally attribute to GOD, and in which they talk of *trusting*,—is something opposed to the characters of perfect *holiness*, inflexible *righteousness*, and unchangeable *truth*:—a cha-

rafter therefore which cannot belong to JEHOVAH. But that *Mercy* which HE reveals to sinners in the GOSPEL, is in perfect harmony and combination with those his essential glories. Where sin had "reigned unto death," that *Mercy*—or *Grace*—of GOD "reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by JESUS CHRIST." In HIM—"mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have embraced each other." Rom. v. 21. Ps. lxxxv. 10. So that GOD is at once "just and the justifier of him which believeth in JESUS." Rom. iii. 26.—This true *mercy*—this "true grace of GOD" 1 Pet. v. 12.—is known only by those who believe the testimony of that propitiation, which is set forth in "the one offering" of JESUS CHRIST for sin. And believers continue to "stand in that true grace of GOD," only while his mercy keeps them holding fast that testimony, and the "rejoicing of hope" which it affords to the guiltiest of sinners. Those who deny the necessity of that propitiation will not more really follow after some other vain hope, than those who discern not its sufficiency.

F. (Page 543.)

"Jerem. xxx. 21." That the LORD JESUS, in his priestly character and work, is the grand object of this prophecy, is manifest to every one acquainted with the truth. Yet its exclusive application to HIM is obscured by a strange mistake in the translation at the beginning of the verse—"their nobles shall be of themselves." The word rendered *nobles* is singular in the original:—"their noble one—their magnificent one—shall be of themselves;" raised up, as Moses was, of his brethren,—with whom He took part in flesh and blood. See Acts vii. 37. Heb. ii. 11—14.

G. (Page 544.)

"JESUS." The glorious import of this blessed Name has been obscured by many commentators and divines, who represent its meaning as nothing more than *Saviour*: whereas it is literally interpreted—JEHOVAH THE SAVIOUR. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, or *Jehoshua*. Accordingly, the first *Joshua*, who led Israel into the promised land, is called *Jesus* in Heb. iv. 8. Now, we read in Numbers xiii. 16. that "Moses called *Oshea*, the son of Nun, *Jehoshua*." The name *Oshea* signifies a *Saviour*:—the compound name *Jehoshua*—*Joshua*—or (in the Greek form) *Jesus*—(given to him no doubt by divine appointment)—signifies "JEHOVAH THE SAVIOUR." And thus did he become a more eminent type of HIM, who is the true *Joshua*—"the Captain of Salvation"—EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US. See Matth. i. 21—23.

H. (Page 546.)

"Justified rather than the other." The Lord adds—"for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth him-

self shall be exalted." From these words many, in treating of the parable, have enlarged on the *deep humility* of the publican, as the thing which warranted his hope, and procured his acceptance before God. But thus they altogether pervert the blessed and abasing instruction, which the parable really affords; and only indulge themselves and their disciples in the *self-righteous pride* of their imaginary *lowliness*.

I. (Page 547.)

"Your *repentance*." About the nature of *repentance* there are as awful mistakes current in the religious world, as about the meaning of *faith—grace—conversion—regeneration*, and every other scriptural phrase the most important. *Repentance* is generally considered as something *prior* to faith, and *preparatory* to it. Perhaps it is most commonly supposed to consist in pious *mourning* for past sins, and steadfast *resolves* to forsake them;—such *resolves*, as no one acquainted with his own character from the Scriptures will think of forming. But the simple meaning of the word translated *repentance* is—in general—a *change of mind*, and the scriptural import of *repentance unto life*, Acts xi. 18. is that *change of mind*—or *new mind*—which is produced in an ungodly sinner by the *belief* of the GOSPEL. Accordingly, it is called in 2 Tim. ii. 25. "*repentance to the acknowledging of the TRUTH.*" "*Repentance and remission of sins*" were preached to all nations by the Apostles—in one and the same doctrine—in the name of JESUS,—in that simple but divine testimony which they delivered concerning HIM, namely, that HE *died the just for the unjust* according to the Scriptures; and "that he was buried; and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." See Luke xxiv. 47. 1 Cor. xv. 1—4. All, who *believed* the things spoken by the Apostles, were *born of God*—or *regenerated*; 1 John v. 1. John i. 12, 13. were "all the children of God by faith in CHRIST JESUS;" Gal. iii. 26. were *converted*—or *turned*—from every idol to the *only true God*; 1 Thess. i. 9, 10. and had *repentance unto life*; Acts xi. 18.—The greatness of that *change of mind*, which the despised GOSPEL preached by the *Apostles* produces, was exemplified in what took place at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost,—when three thousand of the Jews became at once the blessed disciples of that JESUS, whom *with wicked hands* they had so lately *crucified and slain*.—Those, no doubt, to whom the glory of that *Apostolic GOSPEL* "is hid,"—those who *believe* it not in its uncorrupted truth, and therefore have not *all* their hope and joy from the thing reported in it,—they will of course think little of any *change of mind*, or *repentance*, which *it* produces.

K. (page 549.)

"The gods of the nations." Many professors, at this day, make a confession with their mouths, so plausible, and accordant with the truth of the GOSPEL,—and make such "a fair shew in the flesh,"—that it would not be easy to detect any falsehood at the bottom of

their profession, did they not manifest a mind opposed to the scriptural *fear* of the LORD, and to that reverence for *his word* and *kingly* authority, which is inseparably connected with the knowledge of his Name. But herein their profession is indeed awfully impeached. They continue deaf to the plainest instruction and reproof of that word, which marks HIM *set as KING upon the holy hill of Zion*,—maintaining a kingdom that “is not of this world,” and that admits not in its concerns any interference of human authority or wisdom. They have no ear for that voice which calls his *little flock*—in every place—to be followers of the first Churches of GOD, which in Judea were in CHRIST JESUS;—to *come out of the midst of Babylon* and all its antichristian abominations, and to be *separate*, as a people *holy* unto the LORD;—to receive at his mouth—from his Apostles—all the simple but divine rule of ordinance and discipline, by which the first “Churches of the saints” were regulated in their fellowship. They practically disown the authority of that rule, as if it were *antiquated—obsolete—and not suited* to Christians *now*. They even oppose all serious attention to it, as *legal*—as a *Galatian* error. But the real “*comfort of the HOLY GHOST*” never can be disjoined from “the *fear of the LORD*,” Acts ix. 31. and the reverential *trembling at HIS word*. True *charity—or love*—must ever bind disciples to withdraw from the fellowship of those who persist in this attempt to separate what GOD hath joined together. 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14.

L. (page 549.)

“A good conscience.” Vain is every interpretation of this expression, but that which coincides with the idea expressed by the Apostle in Heb. ix. 14. “How much more shall the *blood of CHRIST*, who through the *ETERNAL SPIRIT* offered himself without spot to GOD, *purge your conscience* from dead works to serve the *LIVING God*.”

A
 BRIEF ACCOUNT
 OF
 THE PEOPLE
 CALLED
 S E P A R A T I S T S

[First Published 1821.]

TO THE READER.

THE following brief account was lately drawn up at the desire of a continental writer, who wished to be furnished with it for insertion in one of his publications. The person to whom this desire was communicated, thought it, in some views, unwarrantable to refuse compliance with it: and somewhat similar considerations induce him now to lay the account, without any alteration, before the British public. He does not expect that it will rescue the sect described from the grossest misrepresentations. But it may prove the occasion, under the blessing of God, of leading the attention of one or another individual to principles of divine importance.

The narrow limits, within which he was necessarily confined, precluded all idea of enlarging upon any of the topics introduced; or of bringing forward from the scriptures the grounds of those opinions and practices which are stated. To the scriptures, however, of the New Testament, he refers as the one authority on which they rest. Let those who regard that authority reject whatever is unsupported by it.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT,

&c. &c.

ABOUT eighteen years ago a few christians in Dublin, most of them at that time connected with the religious establishment of the country, had their attention strongly directed to the principles of christian fellowship, as it appears to have subsisted among the first

disciples in the apostolic churches. They perceived from the scriptures of the New Testament that all the first christians in any place were connected together in the closest brotherhood: and that as their connexion was grounded on the one apostolic gospel which they believed, so it was altogether regulated by the precepts delivered to them by the apostles, as the divinely-commissioned ambassadors of Christ. They were convinced that every departure of professing christians from this course must have originated in a withdrawing of their allegiance from the King of Zion,—in the turning away of their ear from the apostolic word: and that the authority of this word, being divine, was unchangeable; that it cannot have been annulled or weakened by the lapse of ages, by the varying customs of different nations, or by the enactments of earthly legislators.

Under such views they set out in the attempt to return fully to the course marked out for christians in the scriptures of the New Testament; persuaded that they were called not to *make* any laws or regulations for their union, but simply to learn and adhere to the unchangeable laws recorded in the divine word. Their number soon increased; and for some time they did not see that the union which they maintained with each other, on the principles of scripture, was at all inconsistent with the continuance of their connexion with the religious establishment of the country, or other religious societies differently regulated.

But in about twelve months from the commencement of their attempt, they were convinced that these two things are utterly incompatible; and that the same divine rule, which regulated their fellowship in the gospel with each other, forbade them to maintain any religious fellowship with any others. From this view, and the practice consequent upon it, they have been distinguished by the name of *Separatists*.

They are a very small sect; very little known, and less liked: nor do they expect ever to be numerous or respectable upon earth. Their most numerous church (assembling on the first day of the week in Stafford Street, Dublin,) consists perhaps of about one hundred and thirty individuals. They have about ten or twelve smaller churches in different country parts of Ireland: and within the last two years a church in the same connexion has appeared in London, assembling in Portsmouth Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.—It may be here needful to remark, that according to what they have learned of the scriptural import of the term *Church*, even two or three disciples in any place—united together in the faith of the apostolic gospel, and in obedience to the apostolic precepts—constitute the church of Christ in that place.

With respect to the tenets and practices, by which they are distinguished from most other religionists, in these countries, the following particulars may be noticed.

They hold that the *only true* God is made known to men exclusively in the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ; so that those who believe the divine testimony there revealed know the true God, but all others—however religious and under whatever profession—worship they know not what, an idolatrous fiction of their own

minds. They never therefore speak of religion or piety *in the abstract* as a good thing; conceiving that *false* religion—particularly under the christian name—forms one of the most awful displays of human wickedness.

They hold that the distinguishing glory, in which the only true God has made himself known, consists in the *perfection of righteousness* and the *perfection of mercy* exercised by him in the closest combination and fullest harmony, as the Saviour of sinful creatures and the justifier of the ungodly, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;—through that propitiation for sin which He has made by his obedience unto death in the place of sinners, and which his resurrection from the dead proves to have been complete and divinely accepted. They hold therefore that all solicitude or effort of the sinner to do any thing, or to get any thing, for the purpose of making his peace with God, and obtaining the forgiveness of his sins, must originate in the ungodliness of his mind, arrogating to himself that work, which the Son of God came into this world to perform, and which it is declared He has finished.

They hold that the forgiveness of all sin—acceptance in the sight of God—and eternal life—come to the guiltiest of sinful men *as such*, and are assured in the divine word to every one, without distinction, who *believes* the testimony there delivered concerning Jesus of Nazareth. They hold, therefore, that salvation is brought to the sinner *with* the discovery of that divine truth;—not by any inquiries of his own after it, or endeavours of his own to obtain it, but in opposition to all his own ignorance of God and rebelliousness against him;—a salvation, which is from first to last the exclusive work of God the Saviour.

They consider the revelation made in the gospel, not as any means afforded to sinners for enabling them to save themselves,—much less as any instrument designed to moralize and reform all the world;—but simply as a divine *testimony* of that salvation, wherewith God himself saves those whom he has ordained to eternal life out of a sinful world:—as well as the instrument whereby he calls them to the knowledge of his name, and to the enjoyment of that blessedness of which He makes them partakers in his Son Jesus Christ.—They hold that the only good and sure hope towards God for any sinner is that, which is immediately derived to the chief of sinners from the belief of this testimony concerning the great things of God and his salvation;—considering as vain, delusive, and ungodly, every hope, which men derive from the view of any supposed circumstances of favourable difference between themselves and the worst of their fellow-sinners. And as they understand by the *faith*, with which justification and eternal life are connected, nothing else but the *belief* of the things declared to all alike in the scriptures; so by true *repentance* they understand nothing else but the new mind which that belief produces. Every thing called *repentance*, but antecedent to the belief of the unadulterated gospel or unconnected with it, they consider spurious and evil.

The belief of the revealed truth, and the new mind consequent upon it—(a mind of absolute dependence upon God, of reverential

rejoicing in him, and of unreserved devotedness [subjection] to him) —they consider as the sole work of God [the work solely of God] in his people,—both in the first production of their faith, and in their subsequent continuance in it:—while they hold that it is *by his revealed word* the Spirit of God works in them both to will and to do. They acknowledge God as the sole author and agent of every thing that is *good*; and maintain that every thing which comes from the sinner *himself*—either before his conversion to God or *after* it—is essentially *evil*.—The absolute and total evil of fallen man they consider as manifested—especially—in the contrariety of his ways and thoughts to the thoughts and ways of God revealed in the scriptures.

They hold that the subjects of Christ's kingdom upon earth shall be—to the end of the world—a despised and suffering people, hated by all men for his name's sake, just in proportion as they manifest the genuine characters of his disciples; and that the apostolic word comes to them at this day, containing the commandments of the Lord to them for their profit and for his glory, with just the same divine authority which it possessed when the apostles were personally in the world. They consider the idea of any *successors* to the apostles, or of any *change* in the laws of Christ's kingdom, as utterly antichristian. They have therefore no such thing among them as any men of the *clerical* order; and abhor the pretensions of the clergy of all denominations, conceiving them to be official ringleaders in maintaining the antichristian corruptions, with which Europe has been overspread under the name of Christianity.

Considering their agreement in the one apostolic gospel as the great bond of their union, they acknowledge themselves called to regard each other as all one in Christ Jesus, brethren beloved for the truth's sake, and on a perfect equality in the concerns of his kingdom. The expression of this brotherly affection they hold to be essentially connected with the most steadfast opposition to every thing contrary to the purity of the truth, which may at any time appear in their brother; as well as with the freest communication of their worldly goods for the supply of his real wants. They acknowledge it to be utterly inconsistent with this, and with the most express precepts of Christ, for any of them so to *lay by a store* of this world's goods for the future wants of himself or his family, as to withhold what he possesses from the present necessities of his poor brethren. In this—and in every thing else—they conceive the real principles of Christ's kingdom to stand in direct opposition to the *most approved* maxims of this world.

They come together on the first day of the week, the memorial day of Christ's resurrection, to shew forth his death—the one ground of all their hope—by taking bread and wine, as the symbols of his body broken and his blood shed for the remission of sins. In their assembly (which is always open to public observation) they join together in the various exercises of praise and prayer,—in reading the scriptures,—in exhorting and admonishing one another as brethren, according to their several gifts and ability,—in contributing to the necessities of the poor,—and in expressing their fraternal

affection by saluting each other with an holy kiss. In the same assembly they attend, as occasion requires, to the discipline appointed by the apostles in the first churches, for removing any evil which may appear in the body ;—in the first place, by the reproof and admonition of the word addressed to the offending brother ; and ultimately—if that fail of bringing him to repentance—by cutting him off from their fellowship.

When any brethren appear among them possessing all the qualifications for the office of elders or overseers, which are marked in the apostolic writings, they think themselves called to acknowledge these brethren in that office, as the gifts of the Lord to his church. But they hold that each church must exist, and act together fully as a church of Christ, previous to any such appointment, as before it. They conceive the office of elders to be nothing like that of *administering ordinances* to the brethren ; but mainly that of persons specially charged with the watchful superintendence over them, and peculiarly called to be examples and guides to the rest in that course, which the divine word prescribes alike to all. The authority of that word is the only *authority*, in matters relating to Christian faith and practice, which they acknowledge.

Belonging to a kingdom that is not of this world, they can have no connexion with any of the various religions of the world. Yet they hold themselves indispensably bound to live as peaceable and quiet subjects of any government under which the providence of God places them ; implicitly obeying all human ordinances, which do not interfere with their subjection to their heavenly King ; and patiently suffering whatever they may be called to suffer in maintaining their allegiance to Him. Their principal sufferings hitherto—(besides the general obloquy under which they lie)—have arisen from their refusal to take any *oath*, in obedience to the express injunction of Christ. But, in this most tolerant country, they find much more cause to admire the smallness of their sufferings for conscience sake, than to complain of their amount.

ON
BOLDNESS IN PRAYER.

[From The Advocate of Revealed Religion, 1803.]

THAT sinners are permitted to *draw nigh unto God*, and to *make their requests known* unto him by prayer, is a privilege of unspeakable magnitude: of which unbelieving men have not the least perception; which *the children of God* can never sufficiently estimate. And if it exhibit wonderful condescension in the Supreme, that He is to be approached by us at all; how is the favour enhanced, when we are allowed, nay exhorted and commanded, to “come boldly unto the throne of grace!”

The question, What is that boldness spoken of in the Word? is indeed important; for it respects what uniformly and essentially accompanies acceptable prayer. The nature and ground of it is easily to be collected from various parts of the Word; especially from Heb. x. 19, “Having boldness to enter into the Holiest, by the blood of Jesus,” and from Ephes. iii. 12, “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him;” to which may be added, Heb. x. 22, “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,”—James i. 6, “Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering,” These intelligible passages, not to mention others which crowd upon our recollection, instruct us that boldness is not any thing which sets aside a deeply impressed reverence for the glorious perfections and awful majesty of God—not any thing which presupposes a high sense of one’s own goodness or powers; but is a LIBERTY which the believing mind derives from a perfect persuasion of the truth of what God has testified concerning his Son, as the *Great High Priest*, as the *Advocate with the Father*, as “able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him.” This truth, as it is plainly declared in the texts above referred to; so it will be found by those who duly examine, to be satisfactorily illustrated and established by a comparison of each with its respective context.

The sinner who knows assuredly the import and truth of what was heard in *the holy mount*, is possessed of a *true heart*, and has every requisite for approaching God in *full assurance of faith—nothing wavering*. And though persons who are partakers of the *precious faith* of the gospel may, and do often, fall short of that undoubting confidence, and realizing view of the glory of Christ, which they are called to enjoy, and in which they *have boldness*; yet

let it not be thought, that the privilege we speak of is peculiar to any believers above others, as if it were connected with certain distinguishing attainments in themselves. In truth, ALL believers are said in Scripture to *have boldness*, in the same sense in which they have reconciliation, adoption, or any other gift of God in Christ; because, like them all, it is part of their *common salvation*, and the enjoyment of it is connected with their *common faith*.

Under the confident assurance, that the Lord Jesus Christ has done every thing necessary to render the vilest sinners pleasing unto God, and has by his blood opened a way of access for them; we can without terror draw near to Him who is a consuming fire; we can, without finding any one qualification about ourselves, to exalt us above the veriest wretches under heaven, contemplate a righteous and holy God, and in the view of Him, have *joy und peace in believing*. Thus finding ourselves set free from the condemning power of the law, and the torment of a guilty conscience, we are no longer at a distance from, and afraid of God, as if he continued an incensed and irreconcilable foe; and so, in this sense, we have **BOLDNESS** in the presence of God.

Under the same confident assurance, we are set at liberty from the toil (Oh, how fruitless toil!) of performing any act, of exercising any disposition, desire, or affection, of working ourselves up to any feeling whatever, in order to obtain peace with God, or to render him propitious to us: and we draw near to Him, as to one who is already propitious to sinners, who receiveth the guilty into favour, and *justifieth the ungodly*,—even every one that *believeth in Jesus*. Thus are we at rest from all efforts to gain access for ourselves, and repose our souls upon Christ, who is *our peace*, and also *the way* unto the Father. Hence we have no need to fear disappointment in our expectations, and so in this sense have we **BOLDNESS** before God.

Influenced by the same confidence, we are not afraid to open unto God our whole hearts, vile as they are, and polluted by sin; to avow before him our weakness, our blindness, our nakedness, our wretchedness; and to call upon him in the time of need, for the healing of all our diseases, and supply of all our wants: for we believe that we have an *Advocate with the Father*, who is *the propitiation for our sins*—who is *JEHOVAH our righteousness*—who is the physician of souls—who is *our strength and our song*—who was himself also a *man of sorrows*—and *tempted like as we are*, and therefore can be *touched with the feeling* of our infirmities. Thus are our hearts unburthened, and our tongues loosed—and so, in this sense, we have **BOLDNESS** in the presence of God.

Finally, impressed with the same assurance, we are not afraid lest God should deny us our petitions; seeing we approach one who is seated on a *throne of grace*,—*waiting to be gracious*, and a *very present help in trouble*. We believe that God is a *rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, and that he *giveth to all* (who ask in faith—see James i. 5 and 6,) *liberally, and upbraideth not*: since he has provided an exhaustless store of blessedness in Jesus Christ, who *became poor, that we who believe might be rich*; who *received gifts for the rebellious*, that we might have *whatsoever we ask the Father in his*

name. Hence we derive a further and most comfortable view of that BOLDNESS which should possess our souls in prayer, as we are not in dread lest God should "turn his face from our petitions," but are persuaded "that if we ask any thing according to His will, he heareth us."

Our blessed Lord, while on earth, exhorted his disciples to this spirit of confidence, and marked it as that frame of mind in which they should address their heavenly Father. Nor were the apostles unmindful of their Lord's injunctions, or negligent to impress them on the souls committed to their charge: of which we have had occasion to notice some instances already, and others in abundance the memory of our readers may supply. Moreover, we observe that the sentiments of the Old Testament saints upon this subject, were formed on the same principle. When we open the book of Psalms; what *joy in believing*, what abounding confidence, what triumphant exultation, shine through them all! And if we consult the prophetic writings, as they bear testimony to the kingdom of Christ, we shall find the same spirit breathing throughout.

Yet there are some advocates for a pretended humility, who do not consider boldness before God consistent with the state and character of a sinner. And indeed we may confidently say, that whatever boldness such persons may have, is nothing better than the rashest presumption. For, why do they reprove it as inconsistent and dangerous? Doubtless, because they must suppose it to rest on a foundation which is deceitful and unstable: in other words, because boldness (according to the only ideas these can annex to it) is something that keeps pace with a man's good opinion of himself. To call such a quality presumption, is only consistent; but why impute it to us? Far be it from us to recommend it; far be it from the Scriptures to encourage it. But,

When we consider that the ground of any sinner's hope towards God, is certainly that also which inspires him with boldness; and while we at the same time remember what is the only ground of *hope set before us in the Gospel*; the difficulty no longer appears: we can well conceive how believers of such a gospel, *looking unto Jesus* as the only *Rock of their salvation*, can be BOLD in Him without being *puffed up in their minds*; since they are filled with BOLDNESS according as they are given to see how strong and how sure is the foundation whereon they are built. And is this presumption? No, brethren. It shows us to be "strong in faith, giving glory to God;" glory—for his finished work of salvation, wherein we rejoice; glory—for the enlightening power of his Spirit, whereby we "know the things that are freely given us of God." Wherefore, let us not be of a doubtful or a wavering mind, but be "strong in the Lord;" fortified with the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation; and "having BOLDNESS to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us;—let us come BOLDLY unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

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S Y S T E M O F P R O F E S S E D C H R I S T I A N S , & C .

Professing to be wise, they became fools. Rom. i. 22.

[First Published, 1799.]

A D V E R T I S E M E N T .

SEVERAL months have elapsed since my attention was attracted by an article in the Monthly Review for October, 1798, in which Mr. BELSHAM'S work was announced to the public in terms of strong commendation,—as “ not only *extremely candid*, but evincing a *critical knowledge* of the Scriptures and a *profundity of thought and reflection*.” Had I not been long aware how little dependence is to be placed on the opinion of *Reviewers*, my surprise would have been great at finding the work marked with every character the most opposite to those which they have assigned it.

During the perusal of his letters, I formed the intention of replying to them,—an intention which a variety of business has prevented me from executing sooner, and which it would be superfluous to execute at all, if his work were harmless in proportion as it is weak, uncandid, and superficial. But, unfortunately, the temper of the present day is so distinguished by an impatience of deep inquiry, a contempt of long-established opinions, and a promptitude to follow every hardy innovator and rash dogmatist into all the wildest extravagancies of crude theory, that the facility of producing mischief and the difficulty of counteracting it never have been greater.

This consideration has determined me to publish the following examination of the two first letters in Mr. Belsham's work. They may be considered as a specimen of the whole. And if, in replying to them, I have at all succeeded in exposing the unfairness of his representations, the fallacy of his arguments, and the inconsistency of his opinions, both with reason and with Scripture;—it is needless to extend my remarks farther.

Dublin, June 12, 1799.

A LETTER, &c.

SIR,—At the commencement of your remarks on Mr. Wilberforce's late publication, you profess to have embraced your present system upon *rational* conviction and after *serious* inquiry; and to have been confirmed in its truth and practical superiority by an *attentive* comparison of it with that which Mr. W. maintains. We are therefore warranted in looking for marks of *serious* inquiry and *attentive* examination in your work: and if we find the reverse, the commands of the Lady, at whose desire you have written, cannot be deemed a sufficient apology for publishing it to the world.

You are* displeased at Mr. Wilberforce's expression—"the *peculiar* doctrines of the gospel." In the passage of his work, to which you refer, the epithet is given to those doctrines, "which the Unitarian and Socinian deny or explain away." And is it not at least a fact, that according to their system the Gospel has no *doctrines* peculiar to itself and distinct from other religious creeds? Some *facts* indeed the Unitarians admit, which Heathens are unacquainted with; but scarcely any *doctrine*. Nothing more therefore is intended by that which you term "a *high* epithet," than those doctrines which belong to Christianity, and are not to be found in other religious systems. Whether there be any such will be a subsequent inquiry.—You complain that Mr. W. "will hardly allow the *name* of Christian" to those who deny them. In the passage Mr. W. expressly calls them *nominal Christians*; and they are no more: they have the *name*, and we wish them to possess the thing.

You term the present age "*inquisitive* and *enlightened*." Indeed, Sir, it is scarcely distinguished by patient and laborious inquiry, however it may be distinguished by rash scepticism concerning every old opinion, and as rash credulity concerning every new. There is much real light, and some of it diffused over a wide surface; but, along with it, much that is no better than an *ignis fatuus*. Self-confident presumption is one of the leading features of the present age; and that seldom accompanies deep knowledge. There are some appearances of a decline even in philosophical studies, amidst great pretensions to them. Men wish to know, without the trouble of *learning*—unless it be from a Magazine, a Review, or at most an Encyclopedia. And it is now no uncommon thing to find persons appearing in print as authors, who should be sent to school to learn the

* Page 2.

elements of those sciences on which they write.* These observations, Sir, are not as irrelevant, as you may suppose.

You now undertake to prove to the satisfaction of the Lady whom you address, that these which Mr. W. calls the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel (namely, the doctrines of the *fall*, *atonement*, and *influences of the Holy Spirit*) are† “inconsistent with reason, unfounded in Scripture, and injurious to morality.”—You charge Mr. W. with neglecting to give “a clear explanation” of these doctrines which he inculcates (though you acknowledge in the same page that he is “sufficiently explicit” upon the first of them): and you observe that this is not surprising, as he “makes light of the science of metaphysics, which teaches us to think justly, and to express ourselves accurately upon intellectual subjects.” But on consulting the passage of his work to which you refer, it will appear that he there makes light, not of the metaphysics which you describe, but of those metaphysical speculations which are not designed for, or capable of practical application.

After giving‡ a very abridged statement of Mr. W’s assertion concerning the corruption of human nature, you observe that “this, it seems, is Mr. W.’s idea of the state in which the Creator of the world places and leaves the great mass of his human offspring.” Here, Sir, you imply that Mr. W. supposes they are in the state in which the Creator placed them; and that to take them out of that corrupt state is a matter, not of mercy, but of justice: whereas you know Mr. W.’s idea to be, that it is not by the act of our Creator we are placed in our present state. And however unimportant you may conceive the distinction, I contend that in a statement of his ideas you should not substitute your own. As to the *numbers* that you say are placed and left in it, this circumstance is introduced only to raise a cloud about the question. If *any* can be shown to be in that state of moral corruption and to be left in it, then, consistently with *justice*, *all* might.

You quarrel with Mr. W. for calling those *obstinately dull* who fail to discern the force of the evidence of this fact. In the passage which

* Thus, for instance, Dr. Beddoes publishes a book on demonstrative evidence, in which he instructs the world, that all mathematicians hitherto have been quite mistaken about the principles of the science, but at the same time acknowledges that there are difficulties in Euclid’s Elements which he has never yet been able to master. Thus, again, in one of the most popular periodical publications in England (the Monthly Magazine), conducted, as I am informed, by men of literary character, one philosopher discovers that the Earth’s orbit can have no such eccentricity as astronomers have hitherto supposed, because the cold is so much greater in winter than in summer:—another writes most learnedly on the two infinite series $2+2+2$, &c. and $3+3+3$, &c. and puzzles himself to determine whether they will be equal or unequal:—a third shrewdly conjectures, that air cannot be necessary, as our fathers imagined, for communicating sound; inasmuch as a bell in an exhausted receiver can be heard, though faintly. I dare say, every one of these writers would agree with Mr. Belsham in calling this age “inquisitive and enlightened,” and feel conscious satisfaction in the persuasion that he himself participated in the character. These are your rational theologians, your rational politicians, your rational philosophers; who have found out a short cut to knowledge human and divine, who pity our forefathers for not having known the way, and consider themselves as raised up to correct the prejudices and errors of former ages.

† Page 5.

‡ Page 4.

you allude to, Mr. W. is speaking of our natural depravity and weakness *in general*, not (as you insinuate) of its particular degree: and he immediately corrects his own expression of "so obstinately dull," with the following words—"or rather so heedless as not to notice it." He might perhaps have said—so *proud* as not to acknowledge it: for in truth the doctrine of human corruption is presented to us by so many evidences, that neither heedlessness nor dulness by themselves could account for our rejection of it.

You say that Mr. W. "further teaches us, that we are *left* by our Creator to contend with an evil spirit," &c. Sir, when you quote an author for the professed purpose of stating his opinions, you should be cautious of blending your own positions or inferences with his assertions. Mr. W., in that passage asserts, that "the word of God instructs us that *we have to contend*" with such. And however you may quarrel with the Bible for saying this, you should not quarrel with Mr. Wilberforce for merely stating what the Bible says.

You say that he "makes no hesitation in *consigning* to eternal misery all those who fail in this unequal contest." *He* consigns none to eternal misery. You may as well sneer at the sacred writers, who declare that certain descriptions of persons shall be damned. That is not consigning them to damnation: or, if you choose to give it that term for exciting prejudice, we are not to be deterred by an invidious term from declaring the counsel of God. As to your expression "those who *fail* in this unequal contest," he does not suppose those who perish to have been engaged in the contest. On the contrary, he represents the evil spirit as "ruling in the *hearts* of the wicked." Instead of contending against him, they yield themselves to him as his *willing* captives. And this you call *stating Mr. W.'s system!**

* The present article is one of the author's earlier productions, which I did not originally intend including in the present collection: yet, I am persuaded it deserves to be preserved, and will be viewed by my brethren as a valuable addition to the pieces of a later date, in which specious objections of Unitarians, and some vain speculations of them, as well as of others, especially on the future punishment of the condemned, are refuted and exposed. In giving it a place, with this distinct object, I have felt myself at liberty to adopt the suggestion of an esteemed friend, and to omit some passages that not only did not directly relate to these topics, but might be so construed as to countenance the false Gospels current in the religious world. Had I received the suggestion sooner, I should have exercised this liberty to a greater extent, in preference to my first intention of noticing the objectionable passages in the introduction to these works. One of this description has been suppressed in this place: the nature and apprehended danger of it will be understood by reference to a sentence in a subsequent page (576); where the author speaks of a "doctrine that directs us to look for the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit." The reader of the previous articles in this volume, as well as of those in the second, cannot fail to observe that there is no wicked sentiment of the popular Gospel, more frequently noticed, or more decidedly condemned, than that which represents the Gospel as an *offer* of salvation to men, and forms the foundation of all the deceitful training of false teachers for leading their unbelieving disciples to pray for the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit in order that they may believe. Should the passage I have quoted, or any other in this piece, appear to countenance

After holding up this "*dreadful doctrine*" to the Lady's abhorrence, you immediately add—"such are the *strange opinions* which Mr. W. presumes to call," &c. Whatever opinions Mr. W. states as the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, it would be better to show from the Gospel that they do not belong, or are not essential to it, than to throw out the unproved charge of *presumption* against those who maintain them. As to their merely appearing *strange*, many things that are true appear so. And it is very *strange* though *true*, that a man, claiming the character of a *rational* Christian and candid inquirer, has endeavoured to represent as one of Mr. W.'s opinions, what he knows Mr. W. never has asserted. It is still *stranger*, though equally *true*, that after having palmed on Mr. W. a "*dreadful doctrine*," which he no where holds, you assert that he represents it as "warming the hearts of God's people with admiration, thankfulness, love, and joy," &c., whereas, by a reference to the passage, which you quote, and the preceding paragraph, it immediately appears that he attributes these effects to other doctrines, than that which you have most unfairly slipped in, for the purpose of exciting horror, and misrepresenting Mr. W.'s reasoning.

Proceeding* to the doctrine of *atonement*, you say that he "has declined to explain his ideas," that "it does not appear what hypothesis he has embraced, or whether he uses his words vaguely and without any settled meaning." To an accurate observer I imagine this *would* appear, if he had done so. But you are dissatisfied that Mr. W. has not entered into metaphysical disquisitions, beyond what is revealed, about the degree of Christ's sufferings, and the kind of necessity that existed for his enduring them. Otherwise he is, in different places, sufficiently explicit in stating the doctrine of Christ's atonement, as a vicarious suffering for sinners, to obtain their reconciliation and acceptance with God.—It would be foreign to my pre-

such a destructive doctrine it must be attributed to a want of caution in the expressions employed, and this arising from the author's ignorance at the time of the depths of deceivableness wherewith the glad tidings of the testimony to Christ are perverted.

There is another passage that I should have wished also to expunge; it is at the close of page 579, where the "Royal Psalmist" is represented as "beseeching the Lord not to take his Holy Spirit from him." Mr. Walker early renounced the idea that the Psalms described the experience of the literal David; and acknowledged that they relate alone to the true Beloved, of whom all the Prophets witnessed, and of whom the Holy Spirit spake in the Psalms by the mouth of David.

In conclusion I would observe, that from this letter it by no means follows that even at the date of it Mr. Walker would have sanctioned all Mr. Wilberforce's religious sentiments: he expresses nothing like a general approbation of them, or even of the work criticised by Mr. Belsham; it seems to have served merely as a text for the especial purpose of exposing the fallacy of Mr. B.'s views. But there is no doubt that, at a period not long subsequent, instead of giving the idea that he made common cause with Mr. Wilberforce the smallest colour, he would have testified as strongly against many points of his doctrine, as he has done against those of Mr. Belsham.—[ED.]

* Pages 6 and 7.

sent purpose to examine and compare the three hypotheses concerning Christ's atonement, of which you profess to give a statement. I shall by and by have occasion to consider your own sentiments on this subject.

You err very much in inferring* that it is Mr. W.'s opinion the Creator does not save sinners, "out of pure disinterested benevolence, but out of regard to Christ." For we hold that Christ himself is the *unspeakable gift* of God's love to us, even while sinners and enemies against him; however inconsistent it would have been with his perfections to exercise that love, had not Christ submitted to suffer for our sins. And you err as much, in stating that Mr. W. represents us as indebted to Christ *exclusively* of God the Father for our reconciliation with God: for in the passage to which you refer, any reader of candour and judgment will perceive, that it is to the exclusion of our own works and deservings that he attributes our reconciliation wholly to Christ's merits and intercession—as means, but not at all to the exclusion of the love of God—as the originating cause.

You close your first letter with the observation† that you have "undertaken no very difficult task in professing to point out the inconsistency of such extravagant opinions with sound reason, with genuine christianity, and with good morals." But following you in that attempt, we must carefully distinguish between the opinions of Mr. W. and your statement of them, or inferences from them. You profess, indeed, at the opening of your second letter‡, that it was your design "to exhibit an *exact* portrait of Mr. W.'s system," and that you have "faithfully and closely copied from the original."—That this was your real *design* appears, I think, from the preceding remarks, not a little doubtful. At least it appears that you have fallen very short of executing it. And of this you seem to be yourself not unconscious: for you immediately add a conjecture, that Mr. W. would deny the resemblance between your portrait of his system and the original. Here, Sir, let me observe that the object of a *candid* opponent would have been, to make such a statement of Mr. W.'s system, as he himself would have acknowledged:—whereas you are sensible that you have not done so.

What you say of our not "regarding our system in a comprehensive view," is an assertion at once vague and gratuitous. And your observation that we do not "pursue our principles to their just and necessary consequences," whether the observation be true or false, is irrelevant: for you should have known that in the preliminary statement of these principles, you had nothing to do with the consequences deducible from them, however they might be subsequent arguments against them. You are pleased to state a reason, why we do not, as you say, pursue them to their consequences; and a reason not very flattering either to our heads or hearts. But I trust that facts do not show us to have less "concern for the mass of mankind"§ than you. And your thinking their danger or guilt less, than we think it, does not make you more charitable,—unless we use that word in a sense in which the character is not worth contending for.

* Page 8.

† Page 9.

‡ Page 10.

§ Page 11.

Perhaps, Sir, we are less rash than you, in deciding that such and such consequences are *just* and *necessary*. We are often afraid of using arguments *a priori* in matters of fact: and I do not think it a mark of superior wisdom in you, to discard that fear. To pronounce, in all cases, what is "reconcilable to wisdom, benevolence, or justice," and argue from that to the existing state of things, requires, I imagine, intellectual powers greater than even Mr. Belsham's; and a truly *rational* divine would feel the imprudence of attempting it.

You say "it is from the *absurd* and *injurious* consequences which necessarily result from Mr. W's principles, that you infer their *falsehood* and *impiety*." A truly *rational* antagonist would have stated these consequences explicitly, and would have shewn two things—1st. that they were necessary results from the premises; 2dly. that they were absurd and injurious: instead of contenting himself with vague and declamatory remarks. You trifle when you add, that "if Mr. W. saw them in the same light in which they appear to you, he would reject them:"—you should recollect that he might make precisely the same observation concerning the principles which you maintain.

You now proceed to exhibit *rational christianity* to our view. Your first letter professed only to state Mr. W.'s system. You might have stopped to shew that it was *irrational*, before you applied the epithet of *rational* to your own in contradistinction to it. And modesty might have prevented your using "*rational*" as synonymous with *Mr. Belsham's*. But not to dwell on these remarks:—I wish you had defined the thing, you are going to exhibit.—"*Rational Christianity*."—Do you mean by that expression a system of doctrines and precepts, derived by rational examination from the word of Christ? Or do you mean that your system is rational, but not scriptural? If the latter, it can hardly be termed *Christianity*.—In truth, it has become not unnecessary to inquire from those, who call themselves *rational Christians*, whether they allow the authority of the word of Christ: and I would always wish to have the inquiry resolved, that I might know on what ground to meet them; and not incur the disappointment of attempting to decide questions by an authority, which they ultimately disallow.

You commence with stating* a principle of natural religion, which I suppose you do not mean to appropriate exclusively to *your* party. But it is observable that, in enumerating the divine attributes, you omit that of *righteousness*; which essentially belongs to God, as the Governor of the universe which he has made. However, if it be kept in view as belonging to him, I have no objection to consider it as resulting from wisdom, power, and goodness,—engaging him to maintain the honour of his moral government.

When you say that "infinite benevolence will infallibly accomplish its purpose," you use a vague expression, which may indeed be applied to what is true, but which may also imply what is false or at least doubtful. It is certain that God will accomplish his purposes: *his counsel shall stand, and he will fulfil all his pleasure*. It is certain

also that he is infinitely good, as well as wise and righteous and powerful: and therefore that in his acts *ad extra* he proposes the production of the greatest good, that is consistent with the nature of those acts, and of the creatures who are the objects of them. But if you mean to say that he proposes in each of them the production of the greatest possible good to each individual who is the object of it, you advance an assertion not warranted by reason, and certainly contradicted by facts.

You now, Sir, make a most important concession,—equally important, whether we are indebted for it to your candour and humility, or to the undeniable evidence which must extort it. You observe that “it appears in fact, that a limited quantity of evil, both natural and moral, was necessary to the production of the greatest possible good.” Yes, Sir; its *existence* appears in fact: but when you say “it appears in fact that it was *necessary to*,” &c. you express yourself illogically, and, I fear, with intentional inaccuracy. You confound existing facts, with the rational inferences deducible from them. But I will admit *this* inference, that God having permitted this quantity of natural and moral evil, he has had a wise and good design in permitting it; and therefore that it will, *on the whole*, be productive of good. I will also admit, with you, our ignorance of the cause of its necessity. We may humbly conjecture that it arises from the *necessary imperfection* of created natures. But indeed the origin of evil is wrapt up in mystery: and I am thoroughly persuaded that the more deeply any thinking man contemplates the existence of *evil* in the creation of an infinitely *good* God, the more he will find his intellectual powers baffled by the subject. And this, Sir, should teach us reverence and caution and humility in discussing it; should check us in the presumptuous attempt of pursuing theories against certain principles; and should prevent our departing from principles that are certain, on account of apparent difficulties in their consequences.

You go on to observe that “*evil in its own nature* is temporary and self-destructive.”—This is a very positive assertion; but however the Lady, to whom you wrote, might be disposed to admit it upon your authority, you must allow your other readers to pause and examine it. And I own it rather appears to me that *evil in its own nature* is progressive and prolific. If I mistake you not, you hold that we are all brought into the world without any evil propensities: yet by your own concession in the next page, the natural consequence of our circumstances is that “we contract a certain degree of moral pollution.” Now, is it not strange to say that, after we have become corrupt, we should of ourselves expel that moral evil, the first inroads of which in our state of purity we have not been able to resist?—But you will say, it expels itself—it is “self-destructive.” It is hard to refute a sentiment which is wrapped up in a figure so obscure. After censuring Mr. W. for not giving a clear explanation of his system, it became you to be more on your guard against incurring a similar charge.—“*Evil is in its own nature self-destructive.*” Anger and malice, and lust, and avarice, with the whole train of moral evils,

tend in *their own nature* to make men meek, and loving, and chaste, and liberal ! A mystery indeed !

But let me suppose that you mean (what many writers of your class have asserted) that moral evils will ultimately produce their own destruction, *by the natural evils* which they occasion. If that be your meaning, I shall only observe here that you should have expressed it with a little more of that *metaphysical* precision, which you accuse Mr. W. of neglecting ; and that you should have condescended to advance some arguments, either from theory or from facts, in proof of an assertion which at present remains a *gratis dictum*, and against which many arguments, both from theory and from facts, suggest themselves. We see much moral evil produced by natural : and although pain, sickness, poverty, &c. often cut off the opportunities of vicious indulgence, I have never known them of themselves to eradicate vicious propensity, nor do I see how *in their own nature* they can.

When you add that “ the whole system appears to the Deity wise, beneficial, and good,” your position seems to me rhapsodical and vague. Do you mean to say, that moral evil appears to him good ? No ?—we are taught in his Word that he marks it with abhorrence : and you yourself have just observed that “ it is permitted, not because it is *approved*.”

You proceed* in the next paragraph to admit our ignorance of the reasons, why we are placed in such circumstances, as those in which we find ourselves ; and at the same time to admit that wise reasons for it do exist. I am glad of any such humble confession ; and I wish the experience of this inability to fathom the divine counsels had, in other parts of your work, checked the rashness of inference and dogmatism of assertion.—But I cannot help remarking, that at the very moment in which you make this acknowledgment, you implicitly reject the declarations of Scripture, concerning the way in which we have been involved in our present circumstances ; and impute to God as his act, what his word teaches us to consider as the effect of man’s transgression. And though I be far from asserting that what is revealed in Scripture is sufficient to solve all inquiries, which may be started on the subject, or leaves nothing hidden and mysterious ; yet it becomes those who are forced to acknowledge their ignorance, not to throw away the light which God has been pleased to impart ; nor to deny that it makes any true discoveries, because some objects are not made as clear to us as we might wish.

You say that these unknown reasons are “ consistent, *no doubt*, with his magnificent plan of universal order and happiness.” It is really disgusting to follow a man, who makes high pretensions to rationality and candour, through a series of sophisms more numerous than sentences, through confident assertions and imposing insinuations, substituted for convincing argument and plain statement. Here, for instance, after having thrown the reader off his guard by the modesty of your confession, and the apparent submission of your

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reason to the inscrutable counsels of God, you go on to presume that he has formed a plan of *universal happiness*; and instead of submitting it as a matter for examination and proof, you incidentally palm it upon your reader's concession: and insert the words "*no doubt*" in such a manner, that, while we think they bear only on what cannot be denied, we are ready to be surprised into the admission of that which at least demands inquiry.—It is not at present my object to consider the question of *universal restoration*: but give me leave to say, that your asserting there can be *no doubt*, shall not precipitate me into a decision unwarranted by arguments.

The circumstances in which men are placed, are, you say, "circumstances of *frailty* and *danger*, the natural consequence of which, in their progress through life, is the contraction of a certain degree of moral pollution." It might make one smile (if the subject were not too awfully serious) to observe how men, who reject the plain declarations of Scripture, plunge themselves into greater difficulties, than those which they wished to avoid. You fall out with Mr. W. for asserting, with the Bible, the *natural* corruption of all men. You proceed to give your own *rational* account of the matter. And what does it amount to? Why, that all men some how or other become corrupt to a certain degree in their progress through life. This, you say, arises from the circumstances they are placed in. I would wish to know, from *what particulars* in their circumstances? You reject the doctrine of natural corruption, as irrational. I must therefore suppose that they become corrupt by the prevalence of evil example:—that is, corruption becomes general by its being general. And this is the *rational* account! But I beg pardon:—*frailty* and a *certain degree of moral pollution* are softer terms for a lady's ear, than those which Mr. W. employs; and therefore your statement is more *rational*.

In the next paragraph, you first argue, *a priori*, that there cannot be a preponderance of vice and misery in the world: and then, lest some *male* reader should suspect the validity of such an argument about a question of *fact*, you support your opinion by a confident *ipse dixit*. Your *argument* is this:—*there cannot be a preponderance of vice and misery in the world: for if there were, "we must conclude that the Maker of the world, whose character we learn only from his works, is a weak or a malignant being."*

Now, sir, if an Atheist were to borrow your argument (as we know one at least has done), and infer from the "very considerable quantity of vice and misery," which you acknowledge actually exists, that the Maker of the world is a being of imperfect power or imperfect goodness; what would be your reply? Would you say, "there are wise reasons for this degree of evil, though unknown to us, and perfectly consistent, no doubt, with his magnificent plan of universal order and happiness?" "*Nay,*" rejoins the Atheist, in your own words,—"*we learn his character only from his works:*" and while I see in them so much moral and natural evil, what reason have I to suppose that he is supremely good, or that he has any such plan as you assume?

Yes, sir; your argument is as convenient for the Atheist as for

you: and it is hard to say which is greater, its impiety or its weakness. Of the moral evil that is in the world, God is not the author, as you imply:—conscience, and reason, and Scripture vindicate him from the charge; and therefore refute the inference you would draw from it. And as to the natural evil or misery that exists; existing as the natural and appointed consequence of the former, it rather marks his abhorrence of sin, than arraigns his goodness.

“The truth is,” you say, “that there is a very great preponderance of good in general; and with a few, if any, exceptions in every individual in particular.” And if there be one exception (of which you are doubtful), that individual, according to your reasoning, is but rational in denying or blaspheming God. And when, immediately before the deluge, (if I may venture to appeal to the authority of Scripture) the abounding iniquity of mankind was bringing down destruction from the Almighty upon almost the whole human race; the preponderance of evil in the world warranted men in inferring—I shudder whilst I write—that the Maker of the world, “whose character they could learn only from his works,” was a weak or malignant being! And to this day different individuals have rational evidences of his power and goodness, that are inversely as the degree of moral pollution they have contracted. I say, *moral pollution*: for it is about that we are immediately concerned in the argument. Mr. W. has not, that I know of, any where asserted that present misery in general overbalances present enjoyment. Yet, if it were not irrelevant to our subject, I might observe that the general attachment to life, from which you infer* this, will not support your conclusion; unless you can show that the dread of dissolution does not arise from the consciousness of guilt, and the apprehension of greater misery in a state of continued existence hereafter.

But I pass this, to take notice of the argument, by which you attempt to confirm your assertion, that there is a very great preponderance of *moral good* in the world: and it is indeed a curious specimen of reasoning from one who arrogates to himself and his party the exclusive title of *rational Christians*. “The disgrace universally attached to *flagrant vice* proves that *such vice* is not common.” And let me ask, what then? Suppose for a moment that *flagrant vice* is ever so uncommon: how does this bear upon the point in question? How does this go, in the remotest degree, to prove that there is a great preponderance of moral good in the world? Unless, indeed, you will assert that nothing is *morally evil* but what is *flagrantly vicious*. No, sir; your argument is on the face of it a gross sophism, *ignorationis elenchi*;—(addressing you, I need not apologize for this logical term)—and you have either imposed on yourself by it, or attempted to impose on your readers.

But let us examine your argument a little more closely. Thus it runs:—“That to which disgrace is universally attached cannot be common;—disgrace is universally attached to flagrant vice;—therefore, flagrant vice is not common.” Of the major, I must ask an

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explanation. By the words "universally attached," do you mean attached by *all* men," or "attached *always* by some men of a certain character"? If the latter, then your major is false; for it by no means follows that, because some men always count a thing disgraceful, therefore that thing is uncommon;—that, because flagrant vice is always deemed disgraceful by those who are not flagrantly vicious, therefore there are very few such. But if the former be your meaning, then your minor is false. Disgrace is not attached to flagrant vice by all men:—too many glory in their shame. I am sure, sir, you will admit that the man, who commits a nightly debauch of wine, is guilty of flagrant vice: yet he boasts of being the greatest beast in the company. The seducer also not unfrequently reckons as a trophy every victim of his perfidy. But admitting that these are rare instances, and more generally stigmatized with disgrace than I fear they are; admitting also that disgrace is universally attached to such flagrant vices as murder, robbery, theft, &c.—yet is it possible that you would infer that sensuality, profaneness, avarice, &c. are not flagrantly evil, because they are so common, as to be attended with little or no disrepute? Nay, sir, is it not a fact that the very same crimes, which are often attended with infamy and the gallows, are under certain circumstances perpetrated without any loss of reputation? What disgrace is attached to the flagrant crime of murder in the duellist, or of fraudulent covetousness in the polite gamester? So accommodating is that law of opinion, by which you would try the moral character of men.

You observe that "one evil habit is sufficient to stamp a character vicious:" insinuating that even in a vicious character there may be a great preponderance of virtue. Indeed, sir, *such* virtue is little worth contending for. Thus, the man whose ruling passion is the desire of accumulating gain, will probably be economical, temperate, diligent, and perhaps honest in his dealings, and strict in observing the outward forms of religion: and therefore *virtue preponderates in his character!* But what virtue? The absence of those vices to which he has no temptation, or which would interfere with the indulgence of his darling vice. And this is to satisfy us that human nature is not *so very corrupt* as Mr. W. has represented it!

In a *view of rational religion*, I think it not suitable to exclude from consideration the divine authority as the foundation of moral obligation, and a regard to the divine will as essential to moral good. Taking these into consideration, we shall be convinced indeed of the truth of your observation, that "one evil habit is sufficient to stamp a character vicious;" but we shall at the same time discern the falsehood of your inference—that there may be in such a character a great quantity of moral good. But you, sir, after asserting the general preponderance of the latter, attempt to prove it by showing that there is not in the world a preponderance of *disreputable* vice; and that even those who are under the dominion of *one* disreputable vice, may at the same time be exempt from *others*.

In your next paragraph you attack the idea of *eternal misery*; and

attack it, as usual, with little more than positive assertion. Many have borrowed arguments against the doctrine from the divine *goodness*. But you take a bolder course: and roundly pronounce it inconsistent with the *justice* of God, that any of his creatures in any circumstances should be made eternally miserable. Yet you confess that *misery* is necessarily connected with *vice*.—Your position then amounts to this, that it is repugnant with the *justice* of God either not to create his creatures impeccable, or (if they become vicious) not to reform them. In truth, sir, humbler language would become a creature and a sinner. Yet—strange inconsistency!—while you thus presumptuously arraign the divine justice, if he will not exert his power in delivering a corrupt creature from a state of moral evil, you deride as fanatical the doctrine that directs us to look for the gracious influence of his Spirit. If a creature, formed (as you suppose all men) pure, but peccable, may become vicious, much more may that creature, left to himself, continue vicious. While vicious, (by your own concession) he must necessarily be miserable. Left to himself, therefore, he may be miserable for ever: and while he continues vicious, he *must* continue to be left to that misery which is the necessary consequence of vice. Your assertion, then—I repeat it—amounts to this, that God cannot, consistently with his justice, suffer him to continue vicious. Thus you unknowingly implicate yourself in asserting the irresistible influence of God on the hearts, the wills, and affections of his creatures, as a debt from his justice, while you elsewhere disdainfully reject it as the gift of his grace.

You observe,* in the next paragraph, that the doctrine of a future life being “entirely unsupported both by experience and analogy, the speculations of philosophy would necessarily terminate in the disbelief of it:”—and this, although you admit that “there are some appearances physical and moral, which cannot be satisfactorily explained upon any other supposition.” This, sir, is a very odd assertion. If there be any such appearances, one would rather infer that the speculations of philosophy should terminate in the belief of a future existence; without which, you own, these appearances cannot be satisfactorily explained. “No,” say you: “it is a fact unsupported by experience:” *i. e.* because we have no knowledge from our senses that such a thing is, philosophy must *necessarily* infer that it is not. This is a very poor kind of philosophy.—“But it is entirely unsupported also by analogy.” This is a positive assertion; but the contrary has been maintained by men, at least, as *rational* and philosophical as you. It would be foreign from my present purpose to trace the analogies by which the doctrine may be supported: and it would be superfluous, after it has been so ably done by others. But is it not somewhat rash to assert that the speculations of philosophy would *necessarily* terminate, not merely in uncertainty upon the subject, but in the *disbelief* of that which you acknowledge to be true; *i. e.* that men, pursuing the inductions of right reason, would necessarily embrace falsehood?

But is not the assertion still more strange, when we consider that

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it is absolutely contradicted by fact? We know that the speculations of philosophy *did not* terminate in the way you assert they necessarily would. Whatever *doubts* some of the heathen philosophers have sometimes expressed, we know that they in general admitted, along with all the rest of the world, a future state of existence.

But why is it that you deny the capability of natural reason to discover that which all nations, whether barbarous or civilized, have actually believed? The reason is obvious. You wish to represent it as the *sole* end of revelation to establish *the belief of a future existence*: in order, therefore, to maintain that we owe any thing important to revelation, you are led to assert that without revelation human reason would necessarily disbelieve it.—“ Here,” you say, “ revelation offers its seasonable and welcome aid.” Indeed, sir, if this were all the aid it offered, however seasonable, it would scarcely deserve the epithet of *welcome*. To tell a dying *sinner* that he must assuredly appear after death before the judgment-seat of a righteous God, *who will render to every man according to his deeds*;—this alone—would not be a very *welcome* message; and if the Gospel revealed nothing else than this, it would scarcely deserve the title of εὐαγγέλιον, or *glad tidings of great joy*.

You now resume the topic of universal restoration; but seem to depend more on what you put forward as rational argument, than upon the declarations of Scripture. You say,* that “ *eternal* misery for *temporary* crimes is inconsistent with every principle of justice.” This, sir, is a mere play upon words. *Temporary crimes*, if the expression has any meaning, must mean crimes that have been committed within the period of this life. Now I would be glad to know, how the shortness of the period within which a crime has been committed, lessens its malignity or guilt. I have never understood that justice required the duration of punishment to be proportioned to the *duration* of the act which incurred it: or that an offence committed in a moment might not merit a punishment of greater severity and longer continuance than another, the commission of which occupied a day.

But the fallacy of your antithesis, between *eternal* misery and *temporary* crimes, will appear still more evident, by reverting to the preceding sentence; wherein you state the future misery of the wicked to be the *necessary* (and therefore just) consequence of that system of habits and feelings, with which they leave this world. For if it be, that consequence must continue, as long as the cause which produces it; and it remains to be shown that this cause *must* be temporary, before—even upon your own principles—the permission of eternal misery can be proved unjust. This you have not even attempted to show; but as if you had established it, infer that the future “ sufferings of the wicked will be *remedial*, and terminate in their complete purification from moral disorder.”— This, therefore, is your system:—† the natural consequence of the circumstances, in which we are placed here, is the contraction of a certain degree

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of moral pollution;—the natural and necessary consequence of this is, a proportionate degree of misery;—all, who leave this world with any degree of moral pollution, will therefore experience a proportionate degree of misery in the future life;—but this misery will purify them from the moral pollution which produced it.

“ Aliae panduntur inanis
Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.”

And this is your view of *rational Christianity!*

You feebly attempt to support this doctrine—that the future sufferings of the wicked will be *remedial*—by a reference to Scripture: but appear secretly conscious of the weakness of your ground, from the unusual modesty of your expression. You say, “we seem to be justified in this conclusion” by Rom. v. and 1 Cor. xv. The former passage, you observe, declares that “the blessings of the Gospel shall be far more *extensive* than the calamities of the fall.” I really am at a loss to know your meaning. In that chapter it is expressly declared, that the calamities of the fall are co-extensive with the human race (v. 12). The apostle also marks the analogy between the way in which these calamities have been derived to the descendants of Adam, and the way in which the blessings of the Gospel are derived through the second Adam to his spiritual seed (v. 18, 19): he likewise infers, *à fortiori*, the greatness of those blessings and the certainty of their communication. But throughout the whole he represents them as belonging to those who are justified by faith, who in this “life receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness.”

As to the other passage which you adduce, and which declares that “Christ must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. xv. 25); it affords little support to your system of universal restoration:—nay, a striking argument against it is evidently deducible from the context. “The last enemy,” saith the Apostle, “that shall be destroyed,” or put down, (for it is the same word, *καταργηται*, that occurs in the 24th and 26th verses of the original)—“is death.” And the subjugation of this last enemy he manifestly represents as accomplished, in the resurrection of the bodies of believers. He adds, that Christ’s mediatorial kingdom will then be ended. Now, if Christ must reign till all his enemies be put under his feet; if that shall have taken place at the general resurrection; if at the general resurrection (as he himself declares) those who have died in their sins will be consigned to misery;—it necessarily follows that Christ’s mediatorial kingdom will have terminated, without any such universal restoration to virtue and to happiness, as you think this passage intimates must take place *before* the termination of his reign.

Indeed, sir, the subject is of too solemn importance to be treated with such rashness of assertion, such idle parade of fallacious reasoning, and such vague reference to inapplicable scriptures as you have fallen into. The feeling mind will mourn over the existence of

natural and moral evil ;—will wish that, if it were possible, a period might arrive for their total abolition : and at one time I was led myself by such a wish far towards the opinion you embrace. But I am not ashamed to own, that I have long since learned to bow my fallible judgment to the decisive authority of that word, which I am persuaded is infallible and divine. The declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. xxv. 46) that *the wicked shall go εις κολασιν αιωνιον*, and *the righteous εις ζωην αιωνιον*, silences every rising objection ; and (however contemptible such tame assent may appear to your *rational Christians*) I tremble and believe. Nor do I find that those, who set up their puny reason in opposition to the word of God, are able to frame a system that can stand the test even of rational examination.

You now proceed to state your *rational view* of the doctrine of the Spirit. You say that *the miraculous powers*, by which the Gospel at its first promulgation was confirmed, “ are in the Scriptures called the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit :” and that, “ as conversion* to Christianity was usually produced by the evidence of miracles, the great change which took place in the views, feelings, and characters of those who sincerely professed the Christian faith, is *in this sense* ascribed to the Spirit of God.”—Now, sir, I would only ask, whether by the former observation you mean to assert that the terms *Spirit of God*, and *the Holy Spirit*, are used in Scripture in no other sense, than in that of the miraculous powers, given to the first preachers of the Gospel? I believe you will not be hardy enough to maintain that assertion : yet it is plain that you intended by an ambiguous proposition to insinuate it. Various are the effects attributed to the Holy Spirit of God ; and among them are the miraculous powers imparted to the church in the first ages. But to represent these as the sole effect of that Spirit,—nay, to state that these are in Scripture language synonymous with the Spirit of God, and that it is in this sense regeneration is ascribed to the Spirit ; when we know from Scripture that these miraculous powers might subsist without regeneration, and regeneration be produced without them :—this is such trifling as it would be waste of time to refute.

The man who will advance such gross assertions, with positive assurance, has a great advantage over his opponent. Upon the herd of male or female readers he finds it easy to impose the positiveness of assertion, for the strength of argument : and his opponent, if he enter into the field of argument, has to perform the disgusting task of advancing proofs, where he knows that demonstration will be either ineffectual or superfluous. Am I then to *prove* that, when the royal Psalmist beseeches the Lord not to *take his holy Spirit from him*, he does not mean to solicit the continuance of *miraculous powers*, which he never possessed? Am I to *prove* that, when our blessed Lord assures us of our heavenly Father’s abundant willingness to *give his holy Spirit* to all who ask him, he does not intend the *miraculous powers* of the Holy Ghost? Am I to *prove* that, when the Apostle makes the indwelling of the *Spirit of God*

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the test of our not being in the flesh, *i. e.* of our being regenerate, he does not mean to represent the possession of *miraculous* powers as the decisive criterion of being real Christians?—No, sir, I might be justly charged with trifling, (though perhaps not so dangerously as you) if I enlarged upon the refutation of positions so palpably unscriptural and irrational.

Let me however observe, before I dismiss this subject, that when you explain the scriptural phrases of a *new creation, regeneration, rising from the dead, &c.* as denoting “the great change which took place in the views, feelings, and character of *pharisaic Jews* and *idolatrous heathens*, when they sincerely professed the Christian faith;” you must (to be consistent with yourself) admit that, in these days of general profession of Christianity, wherever similar fruits are not produced, wherever there is not attachment to the person and cause of Christ, love to God and man, deadness to the world, and separation from it,—there is not a *sincere* profession of Christianity; and such nominal Christians need to be *created anew*, to be *regenerated*, to be raised from *death in sin* to newness of life, as much as the pharisaic Jews or idolatrous heathen needed it.

In the next paragraph you observe, that the Jews “spoke of themselves” as a chosen and a holy nation. You might have said, that *God spoke of them* as such. They were actually such:—chosen as those to whom the oracles of God should be committed, till the fulness of time were come:—they were holy, *i. e.* separated from the rest of the nations of the earth. And when you add, that “the heathens were *represented as sinners*, as aliens,” &c. and that “it is in allusion to these *forms of expression* the converted Gentiles are said to be *forgiven, reconciled, saved*,” &c.—you broadly insinuate that sin, the forgiveness of it, salvation, &c. are all *vox et præterea nihil*. Nay, sir; the Scriptures throughout represent not only Gentiles, but Jews, as sinners—that alike need forgiveness and reconciliation to God, and salvation from the destructive consequences of sin; and reveal one common way in which alone Gentiles and Jews may be partakers of these blessings.

If, writing on the late rebellion in this island, I were to observe that certain Irishmen spoke of themselves as loyal subjects, that others were represented as traitors, and that in allusion to these *forms of expression* the latter were said to be pardoned by an act of amnesty from their sovereign;—I desire to know whether every reader would not think I was trifling, and perhaps charge me with a design of falsifying the records of history by insinuating that there was nothing real in all these transactions.

When you speak of converted Gentiles being “entitled equally with converted Jews to the blessings of the new dispensation,” I wish you had taken the trouble of stating what those blessings are. Hitherto you have represented the Gospel as doing nothing, but establishing the belief of a future existence: and in that future existence all, except those who are perfectly free from moral pollution, must, according to you, pass through purgatory. No great blessing this to be entitled to.

You now proceed* to an explanation of what you call the "Jewish phrases" of *propitiation* and *sacrifice*, as applied to the death of Jesus, and of *redemption through his blood*. His death, you say, is called a *propitiation*, "because it put an end to the Mosaic economy." And this, I suppose, you consider a *rational* and satisfactory explanation of the phrase. But to a person of duller intelligence it may appear no explanation at all. He will naturally demand, why that which put an end to the Mosaic economy should be called a *propitiation*? And it did not suit your views to confess, that the expression is used of Christ, as being the antitype of the mercy-seat and expiatory sacrifices under the Jewish dispensation; as having by his death opened the way, in which divine mercy and grace are communicated to sinners.

You display equal clearness in your account of the term *sacrifice*. Why is the death of Jesus called a sacrifice? "Because it has been the *seal* of the new covenant." Wonderfully perspicuous!—If I met in an historian with this expression—*Codrus sacrificed himself for his country's good*—I should at once understand that he submitted to death himself, in order to avert calamity from his country. But if I found an *explanatory* note upon the word "sacrificed," informing me that the death of Codrus was therefore called a *sacrifice*, because it was a *seal* of future good to his country; I would be apt to conclude that the commentator either did not understand the phrase, or designed to perplex the meaning of it.

You next observe, that "believers in Christ are also said to have *redemption through his blood*, because they are released by the Christian covenant from the yoke of the ceremonial law and from the bondage of idolatry." So it is on one account that Jews, and on another account that Gentiles are said to have *redemption through his blood*. No, sir; in both the passages of Scripture where that phrase occurs, (Eph. i. 7. and Col. i. 14.) the Apostle himself explains it by *the forgiveness of sins*:—a common blessing derived from the death of Christ both to Jewish and to Gentile converts. The ceremonial law, no doubt, is by his death abolished; because its institutions were typical of the things of Christ, and its bloody sacrifices especially prefigured his death. When you, therefore, represent as the sole effect of his death to Jewish converts their release from the ceremonial law, what view do you give of the divine wisdom in instituting these sacrifices? Why,—that they were instituted to denote that, which merely produces their abolition: that they were introduced to prepare the way for that, which was only designed to lead them out. And when you speak of Gentile converts as being released by the Christian covenant from the bondage of idolatry, would you insinuate that they were before under an obligation to idolatrous worship, as the Jews were to the ceremonial law? No; they had indeed corrupted their ways; and, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them because of the blindness of their hearts, they honoured and worshipped the creature more than the Creator;—they were in bondage to the powers of darkness

and of sin; and our Lord bearing their sins also in his own body on the cross, obtained eternal redemption for them, a right to them as his inheritance, and those gifts of the spirit of grace, in consequence of which they have been brought out of darkness into his marvellous light, and out of the power of Satan into the kingdom of God.

Apparently conscious that you have failed of giving any account of these "Jewish phrases," that could be satisfactory to a rational and candid inquirer, you now refer the reader to Dr. Taylor's *Key*, "who," you say, "has in general well explained them." If this were well done to your hand, it is the more to be wondered at that you have done it so ill. But my present business is not with Dr. Taylor, but with Mr. Belsham. The former, indeed, has a much greater show of argumentative reasoning and scriptural knowledge, than the latter; yet is not perhaps near so dangerous in these times, as the man who confidently proclaims the *rationality* of his own views, treats those who differ from him with arrogant disdain, and dogmatizes and declaims where he ought to argue.

"The word of God," is the expression which comes next under your review. And upon this you say,* that the *Christian doctrine* is the *true word of God*: but that the Scriptures are not *themselves* the word of God, and that it is highly improper to speak of them as such: though you confess that they contain the *Christian doctrine*. Here is a nice distinction indeed! a distinction between a book and the matter of the book. For my part, if I believe that Xenophon's Memorables contain a faithful account of the sayings of Socrates, I do not think it would be highly improper to entitle that book—"The Sayings of Socrates." But probably more is meant by your distinction than meets the ear. Perhaps, in saying that the Scriptures *contain* a faithful account of the *Christian doctrine*, or *true word of God*, you only mean that by a rational separation and rejection of different passages in the Scriptures, we may arrive from them at a knowledge of the Christian doctrine. If this be your meaning, it would have been but candid to have expressed it: and if this be not your meaning, allow me to say, that your distinction is childish.

As to your subsequent assertion, that "Mr. W. and many others are accustomed to quote texts without regard to the connexion, and often in a sense contrary to their true meaning,"—it is a charge against Mr. W. which is at present advanced without proof: but it is too certain that men, otherwise able and pious, have fallen into the custom which you censure, being more solicitous to quote from Scripture according to the general analogy of faith, than according to the accurate meaning of the particular passage. And it is a custom, for which I am far—very far—from being an advocate. I have been long convinced that it is injurious, as affording to the adversaries of Christianity an opportunity of boasting that they have overturned a doctrine, when they shew that a text, incautiously adduced by some, is inapplicable to its support. I have long wished for the most "critical attention" to the sacred writings, from a conviction that it is favourable to the establishment of divine truth. But while

* Page 19.

I join with you in condemning and lamenting the error you have noticed, I confess the specimens you have given of your critical talents make me very doubtful of your qualifications to rectify it.

In the next paragraph, there is such a bundle of positions confessedly true, involved with inferences inaccurate or false, that the separation of them (though otherwise an easy task) is tedious and disgusting. "Christianity," you say, "sums up the whole of human duty in the love of God and our neighbour." And it is true, that in the Gospel these two great and inseparably-connected principles of moral duty are clearly stated, and strongly enforced. But it is false that they are peculiar to the Gospel: on the contrary, in it they are expressly stated as the substance of the morality of the law and the prophets.—It is true, in one sense, that Christianity "lays no stress upon ritual observances;" inasmuch as it expressly teaches that no outward forms, unaccompanied with the power of religion, can in themselves be of any avail. But it is false, that Christianity abolishes all outward forms of religion, or leaves it indifferent whether we observe them: on the contrary, it introduces some peculiar to itself.*

Your observation, that "a Christian is not required to be more holy, nor permitted to take greater *liberties* upon one day than upon another," is a poor attempt to insinuate what you know to be false,—that we, whom you oppose, maintain that a Christian is less holy when exerting diligence in his lawful business, *as unto the Lord*, on six days of the week, than when worshipping in his courts on the seventh; or that unlawful indulgences are less criminal on the former than on the latter.

Thus have you closed your "view of *rational religion*." And with your *usual* candour you observe, that in it God "is not represented as frowning over his works, and, like a merciless tyrant, dooming his helpless creatures to eternal misery;" by this, more than insinuating that such a representation of the Divine Being is given by Mr. Wilberforce.—Sir, it is false. We know that all the works of God, so far as they are *his*, are good; and that his tender mercies are over them all.—We know, at the same time, that he is of purer eyes than to behold with complacency that which is evil; that he is not indifferent to the violation of his law—which is holy, and just, and good, but will maintain the honour of his moral government. We know that to do this, consistently with the communication of his exuberant goodness to sinners of the human race, he has given and revealed his eternal Son as our Redeemer, in whom all that believe are justified from all things, and become his dear children and heirs of his glory. We know that, while their salvation is wholly to be attributed to *the exceeding riches of his grace*, the condemnation of those who perish in unbelief will be wholly owing to their own wilful rejection of his Gospel, and neglect of his

* The same reasons that led me to suppress the former passage, p. 567, have led me to expunge here also some lines on the observance of the first day of the week according to the prevailing antichristian practice. The reader is requested to refer to Vol. ii. 75, 76, 143—151, for the author's sentiments on the subject.—[Ed.]

great salvation. And however they may now blaspheme, and presumptuously demand—"why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?"—yet it will appear at the last day that he is clear of their blood, and has had no pleasure in the death of the sinner.

I shall now, sir, leave it to the serious, the humble, and intelligent inquirer, to determine how far your system is consistent either with reason or with revelation.—I had designed to follow you through the remainder of your work. There are few pages of it, in which there is not ample matter for correction or refutation. But the minute examination I have taken of your two first letters, seems to render a prosecution of the subject unnecessary. I shall, therefore, at least for the present, dismiss it:—happy if I have succeeded in exposing any of your errors,—still more happy if I could hope that I have produced a conviction of them in your own mind.

I am, sir, &c.

AN
ADDRESS
TO
A YOUNG STUDENT,
ON HIS
ENTRANCE INTO COLLEGE.
BY EUMENES.

[First Published, 1798.]

Labor voluptasque, dissimillima natura, societate quadam inter se naturali sunt juncta. Liv. l. v. c. 4.
Dixeris hæc inter varicosos centuriones,
Continuo crassum ridet Vulfenius ingens,
Et centum Græcos curto centusse licetur. Pers. Sat. v.

WELCOME, my young friend! Welcome to our University. Allow me to hail your arrival at this seat of the Muses; and to express my fervent wishes, that you may richly participate in all the advantages, which an acquaintance with them affords.

I have ever contemplated the situation of a young man, at his first entrance into college, with the most lively interest; as I consider it one of the most important periods of his life, and most likely to determine his future character on the great theatre of the world.—I remember—I well remember—when, in my schoolboy days, I looked forward with longing expectation, to the time when I should wear the academic gown, and engage in the wider field of literary competition, which a college opens to the ingenuous youth. You probably have felt some of the same impatient desire; and now that the long-expected time has arrived, permit me to address you as a friend, who can enter into your present feelings from no distant recollection.

My dear young friend! you are now beginning to *put away childish things*: and as at present you look back upon the days of boyhood as past, and may say with the poet—“Where are they?—with the years beyond the flood;”—so the period of riper youth, upon which you have entered, will soon be an object of retrospective survey in

manhood ; and manhood itself—if you live so long—in old age. You will find each succeeding year glide away imperceptibly like the past. Anticipate their flight ; and remember that it would be melancholy at last, to have *no note to take of time—but by its loss.*

But it is not more certain, that the misimprovement of life brings bitter recollection in the end, than that the right improvement of it constitutes present enjoyment. To lose—or, what is called, to *kill time*, is to destroy—not only usefulness—but comfort. And this I would wish particularly to impress upon you, that, if you would be happy, you must be industrious ;—you must exert your faculties in the vigorous prosecution of some useful objects. At school, application to business was in a great measure compulsory. It must henceforward depend more upon your own will : and it is therefore of importance that your judgment should be convinced of its expediency.

Now—do not draw back from me, under the supposition that I want to make you a very drudge—a slave to business. Believe me, I do not : and what I am going to add, I think, will convince you of this.—‘There are twenty-four hours in the day. How many of these would you think it reasonable to allow for sleep, food, society, recreation, &c. ? Take an ample proportion. Will *eighteen* hours be sufficient ?—“ Yes.”—Well ; give the remaining *six* to business, and I am content. Do this regularly ; do it perseveringly : and I will answer for the facility, comfort, and improvement, with which you will pass through the course of academic instruction.

But mark ;—*regularity* of application (be the time shorter or longer) is the chief thing, upon which your progress depends. Be assured no *desultory efforts* will do so much as this. I therefore strongly recommend to you, a constant adherence to some methodical arrangement of your time. This will keep your attention alive to its silent lapse ; and tends to form in youth a habit, which you will find of the most important utility throughout your future life. Allot stated hours to the different occupations of the day : and suffer not trifles to make you deviate from them.—Rise early ;—it will conduce to health of body and serenity of mind, as well as to dispatch of business.—Do not leave to one day the business of two. That is a ready way of losing both. Remember that *procrastination is the thief of time.*—While you are at study, give to it all the energy of your mind : and do not continue your application at any one time longer, than you can apply with vigour. Nothing tends more to enervate the mind, than the habit of poring over a book without any mental exertion.

Before I quit this subject, let me caution you against a common error :—the opinion that a superiority of natural talents will compensate for the want of application to study. Be assured it is a mistaken opinion. Your natural advantages, if duly cultivated, will facilitate your progress :—otherwise, mediocrity of genius, with patient industry, will leave you far behind in the literary race.

I have recommended the diligent improvement of time, as essential not only to respectability and usefulness, but also to the comfort and true enjoyment of life. I have pointed out regularity of application, as the most effectual means of improvement.—Permit me now to say a few words, upon the nature of those objects which constitute your

immediate employment in college.—Here is opened to you the wide and diversified field of literature and science. Here you are conducted along its various paths, so far at least as will enable you to judge whither they lead, and to make progressive advances hereafter in such as most recommend themselves to your judgment or your taste.

But you know that a man may pass through the finest country, with so little attentive observation, as to derive no accession to his knowledge, nor any gratification from the beauty of its scenes. There are men, who have made the grand tour, only for the purpose of having it to say that they made it; and have therefore obtained no other advantage from their travels.—And I have known too many *pass through college* in a similar way;—disgraced by having possessed advantages, which they neglected to improve,—by having spent four long years in the regions of knowledge, and leaving them in the end as ignorant and uninformed as they came. I hope that you, my young friend, will spurn the thought of such indifference to the most interesting objects:—that it will be your ambition, while in college, to attain a higher and a higher rank in the scale of *intellectual being*.—In this respect, there appears not so wide a separation between some of the brute creation and the savage, as between the savage—whether of Africa or of Europe—and the man of cultivated understanding.

Survey with a rapid glance the different studies to which successively your attention is directed in the university:—and say, which of them is not worthy to claim it;—say, of which you would contentedly be ignorant.

Logic develops the fundamental principles and laws of reasoning, explains its various modes, and examines and analyzes the different powers of the mind employed in it.—If you would estimate the importance of this study,—compare the close precision—the luminous method—the manly argument of writers in the last century, when it was generally cultivated, with the flimsy—inconclusive—declamatory writings of those who neglect it in the present day;—men unaccustomed to think deeply, whose highest aim is to cover the poverty of meaning with the tinsel finery of verbiage, and the weakness of proof under the positiveness of assertion.—In truth, I have seldom met a person wholly ignorant of logic, who, when engaged in any speculative inquiry, was able to distinguish between a sound and fallacious argument, to state the grounds of his own opinion with clearness, or to examine another's with critical penetration.

If we pass from LOGICAL to MATHEMATICAL studies;—there we behold the human mind, ascending, from principles the most simple and self-evident, to such heights of discovery in the abstrusest properties of all things, capable of numeration or measurement, as command our admiration;—whether we regard them as objects of the most curious research, or as applicable to the most useful purposes in daily practice;—whether we consider the infallible certainty with which the judgment rests on each step of the ascent—the indissoluble connexion between all the links of the extended chain—or the unlimited scope for continued investigation.

From pure MATHEMATICS, let us proceed to ASTRONOMY. On the outward face of the heavens, even the untutored rustic looks with in-

quisitive and admiring gaze. And will not *you* delight to explore the order and motions of the heavenly bodies, the laws by which they are regulated, and the various phenomena which they exhibit?

What shall I say of the other parts of NATURAL PHILOSOPHY, which are comprehended in the course of collegiate study?—which investigate the forces existing in nature, and apply them to the solution of her most complex operations;—which lay open the means of employing them for the purposes of life, and aiding the organs of man, so as to give him powers unknown before;—which satisfactorily explain the phenomena of *sounds*, and the still more striking phenomena of *vision*;—which detect by palpable experiments the most secret properties of *light* itself—a substance so subtle in its particles, so amazingly rapid in its velocity, that it might be supposed to baffle the art of man's analysis.

Which of all these branches of physical science is it, that does not hold out the strongest allurements to the ardour of the youthful student? Till at length, in ΕΤΗΙCΣ, his attention is directed to the foundations of moral obligation, the duties which man owes to man in the various relationships of life, the origin of property and the social system, with the principles of civil government.

Let us turn our view from his graver *scientific* studies, to the *humaniores literæ*—to the classic treasures of GREECE and ITALY: which, after the initiatory acquaintance with them formed at a school, he is now called to explore with a more ripened judgment and a more manly taste.

Here, do we not behold his path strewed indeed with flowers? My young friend! they invite your hand. Range among them with delight: and cull their sweets with critical attention.—Here, converse with the sages and the wits of ancient days,—with the historians, the orators, and the poets of antiquity,—living in their works. These men wrote, as the painter drew,—*in æternitatem*. And their works will remain the models of composition—the standard of literary taste: unless an iron age of unlettered barbarism should return.—Believe me, an intimate knowledge of them will amply repay any labour it may cost: and by vigorous and well-directed application, the labour itself will rapidly diminish, while the pleasure and improvement will as rapidly increase.

On the other hand; if it should be your paltry object, merely to *pass an examination*, and to avoid all study but what is absolutely necessary for that,—it will be no wonder, if your academic course be unproductive of satisfaction, credit, or advantage.—I trust you will never realize the supposition.

But there are some, I know, who cherish a most erroneous idea, that, although studious industry in college be needful—or at least expedient—for those who are to enter into some of the learned professions; yet for a youth of independent fortune it is not so necessary.—“The young squire may *take his degree*; and it will be a feather in his cap to take it:—but *he* need not trouble himself to be a *scholar*.”—And he need not indeed,—if the only use of learning be to obtain a livelihood;—he need not, if the summit of his desires be to spend his fortune in the indulgencies of the table, and his time in the

pursuit of the game on his estate—an animal not so noble as his horse, nor better informed than his groom. But, if he wish to fill with respectability the station which he holds; if he would desire any more refined enjoyments than those of his animal nature; if he would not have his intellectual debasement only rendered more conspicuous by his outward elevation;—then I must say, that for him it is more peculiarly needful to cultivate and inform his mind.

Indeed I know not any class of persons, to whom a *literary taste* is of so much importance, as to country gentlemen. It humanizes their character; it affords them a perpetual source of innocent and improving gratification:—it raises them above the sycophants, on whom they are otherwise dependent for society;—the bane of our gentry,—the panders to their vanity, their passion, and caprice. And though *literature* be not *virtue*, yet I am persuaded that the want of it, and the want of that taste for it which early culture alone can form, has plunged many a man of fortune into *vice*. Shew me a gentleman of independent property, to whom the elements of the sciences are not unknown, who can relish the beauties of the ancient and modern classics, and is fond of spending an hour in his library:—shew me such an one;—and I am mistaken if I will not shew you a man more eminently distinguished by his character and his conduct than by his rank,—a man of urbanity of manners,—courteous and beneficent to his dependents, select in his friendships, temperate in his life, and useful in society.

To the poorer student our university affords numerous advantages. And if you be such, my young friend, I hope you are not ashamed of being poor. There is no disgrace in it:—and many of those who now fill high stations in life, are not ashamed of its being known that they were once in college such as you. Only maintain independence of mind;—establish respectability of character;—exert your mental powers with diligence;—regard your tutor as your friend, and improve yourself worthy of his friendship:—you need not then fear but you will reach, at least, the *aurea mediocritas* of a competence, beyond which, I trust, you will not suffer any anxiety of desire to extend.

Be assured, wealth is less connected with happiness, than is commonly supposed. And one of the great advantages of a collegiate education is, that it renders the happiness of the man less dependent upon outward circumstances.—Live within yours whatever they be. Abhor the idea of incurring debt. It embarrasses—it distracts—and often vitiates the mind. Be virtuous;—be useful;—be industrious:—and you will be more happy than the riches of Peru could make you.

There appears in some students a contemptible vanity, that opposes the regulations of academic discipline. I trust you will think such a temper beneath you. It is foolish; it is absurd. Without discipline and subordination, such a seminary as this could not subsist: and those who enter it, are supposed to be aware of the rules by which it is regulated; and, in seeking admission, profess a willingness to submit to them. I should think I insulted your understanding, if I dwelt longer

on this topic. I pass from it to one, with which I shall conclude ; because I wish to leave a sense of its importance alive upon your mind.

Youth is the season of warm and open affections. I do not wish to repress, but to regulate them. And they need regulation especially, in selecting your companions, and forming your friendships. Here you cannot be too circumspect. Do not *hastily* contract intimacies so close, as to make it difficult to dissolve them. The character of your intimates will attach itself to you : and with reason ;—for they will assimilate you to themselves. Whatever be your present determinations of academic regularity and diligence, you will soon be laughed out of your resolves, if you associate with persons of a contrary disposition ; and will insensibly become as dissipated and idle as your companions.

Aim at forming no friendship in college, of which you will be ashamed in future life : and remember that all rational and permanent friendship must have its basis in esteem. Beware therefore of being determined in your choice, by qualities that are merely *pleasing* : and if such be combined with vicious habits, they only render the object more dangerous.—Those who are the least eligible as companions, will frequently be the most obtrusive in pressing their society upon your acceptance. It will need firmness to resist them.

But above all, if you should meet with one—not only irregular in his conduct—but a scoffer at seriousness and decorum ;—fly him as a plague. *Hic niger est*. He has arrived at premature depravity ; and has anticipated in early life the last stage of mental corruption.

END OF VOL. I.

A

GENERAL INDEX

TO THE

ESSAYS AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF THE LATE

JOHN WALKER,

SOME TIME A FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, AND A CLERGYMAN
IN THE ESTABLISHMENT.

BY WILLIAM BURTON.

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TO

THE LATE JOHN WALKER'S WORKS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT would be superfluous to make any observations here on the utility of an Index: this is so universally admitted, that certain classes of writings are considered deficient without one. Although the "Essays and Correspondence of the late Mr. Walker" may be reckoned among these, yet a disinclination to increase the size and the cost of that work by an addition of his own, and some doubt whether his performance would prove satisfactory, where he most desired it, deterred the Editor from combining an Index with the original publication. The following has been prepared at the suggestion of several esteemed friends; and no pains have been spared to render it comprehensive in matter, faithful in substance, and accurate in reference. It is printed in conformity to the Works to which it refers, and may be conveniently bound with the first Volume, thus rendering both volumes of equal size. To many its detached form will be no objection, and it may in this shape be even rendered serviceable as a ready means for proving to inquirers how much there is in the writings of Mr. Walker deserving the serious consideration of professing Christians in the present day.

At the end of the Index will be found an enumeration of some of "the names by which Jehovah makes himself known to his people:" it is taken from one of Mr. Walker's notes to his bible. A few of Mr. Walker's Letters have been forwarded to the Editor since the publication of the Essays, &c. They relate to the modern practice of Baptism, the question of eating the Supper without Elders, and the substitution of a version of the Psalms of David, (without rhyme) for the hymns at present in use: they would merit a place in the collection, though the substance of them is very fully supplied in some letters that will be found there. On the latter subject he expresses himself more strongly than in the letters published: referring to the Hymns in use among his brethren, he says; "I have had little or nothing to do with the selection; and in my own judgment decidedly prefer some such version of the Psalms of David (without rhyme) as is used in the Glasite societies: though purged from many of the grosser popular errors, I often wish they were burned."

London, November 12th, 1838.

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NAMES

BY WHICH JEHOVAH HAS MADE HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS PEOPLE.

- The Lord that healeth thee.—Exod. xv. 26.
The Lord your God, which have separated you from other people.—Levit. xx. 21
The Lord which hallow you.—Levit. xxii. 32. xx. 27.
The Lord which dwelleth in Zion.—Ps. ix. 11.
The Holy One of Israel.—Ps. lxxxix. 18. Is. xlviii. 17.
The Lord which executeth judgment for the oppressed.—Ps. cxlvi. 7.
The Lord, thy redeemer, thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldest go.—Is. xlviii. 17.
The Lord that is faithful.—Is. xlix. 7.
I am he that comforteth you.—Is. li. 12.
Thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people.—Is. li. 22.
The Lord that hath mercy on thee.—Is. liv. 10.
Thy maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name.—Is. liv. 5.
The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel.—Is. lvi. 8.
The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.—Is. lvii. 15.
I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.—Is. lx. 16.
Thy God thy Glory.—Is. lx. 19.
The Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies.—Is. lxvi. 6.
The Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you.—Joel ii. 26.
The Father of mercies and the God of all grace.—2 Cor. i. 3.
God that comforteth those that are cast down.—2 Cor. vii. 6.
God who is rich in mercy.—Eph. ii. 6.

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