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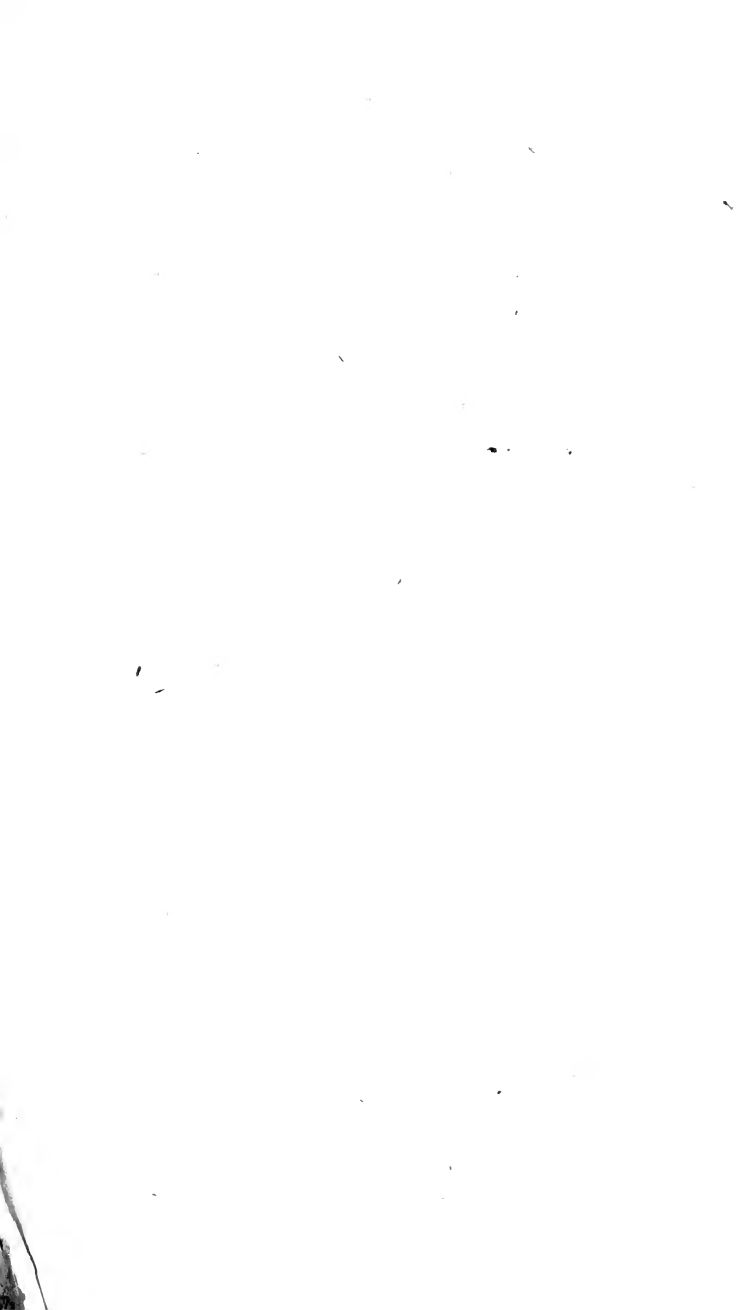
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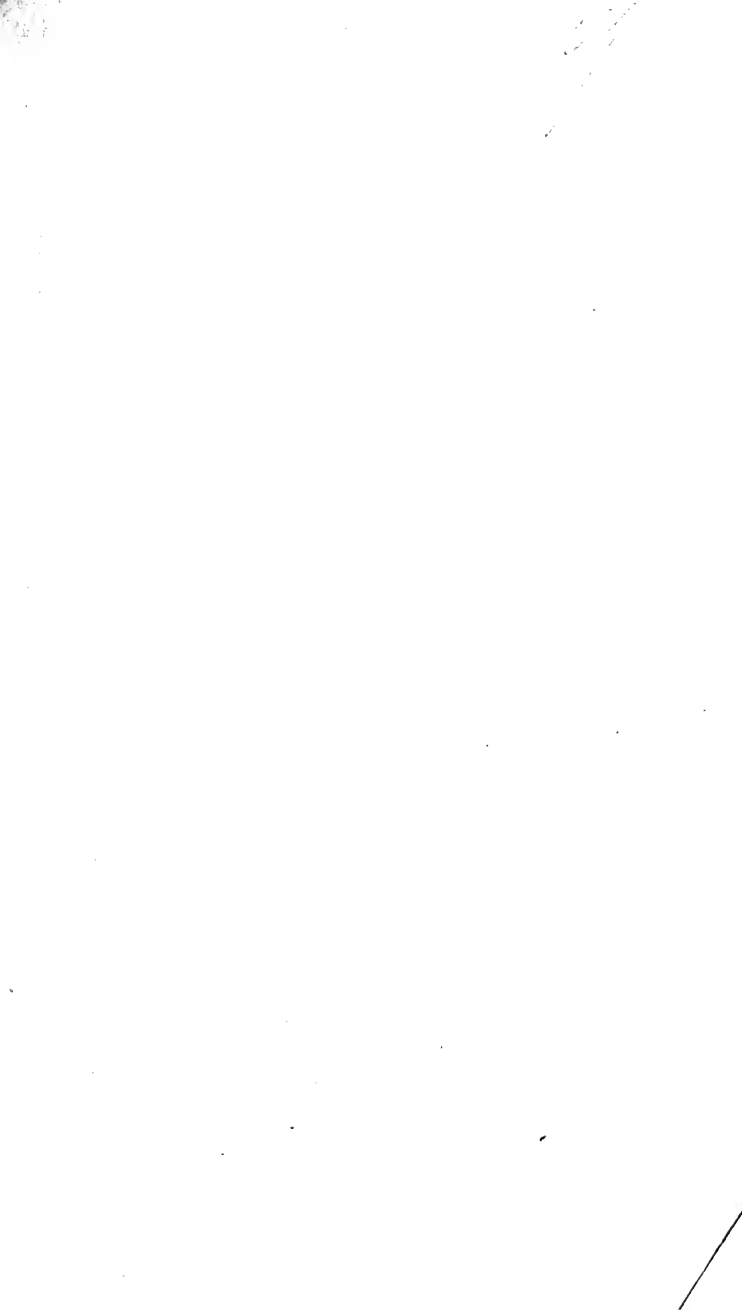
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A
LETTER

TO
ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A.
BEING THE FIRST

OF A
Series of Letters

TO THAT
GENTLEMAN,

Occasioned by his Remarks on the Author's
Expostulatory Address

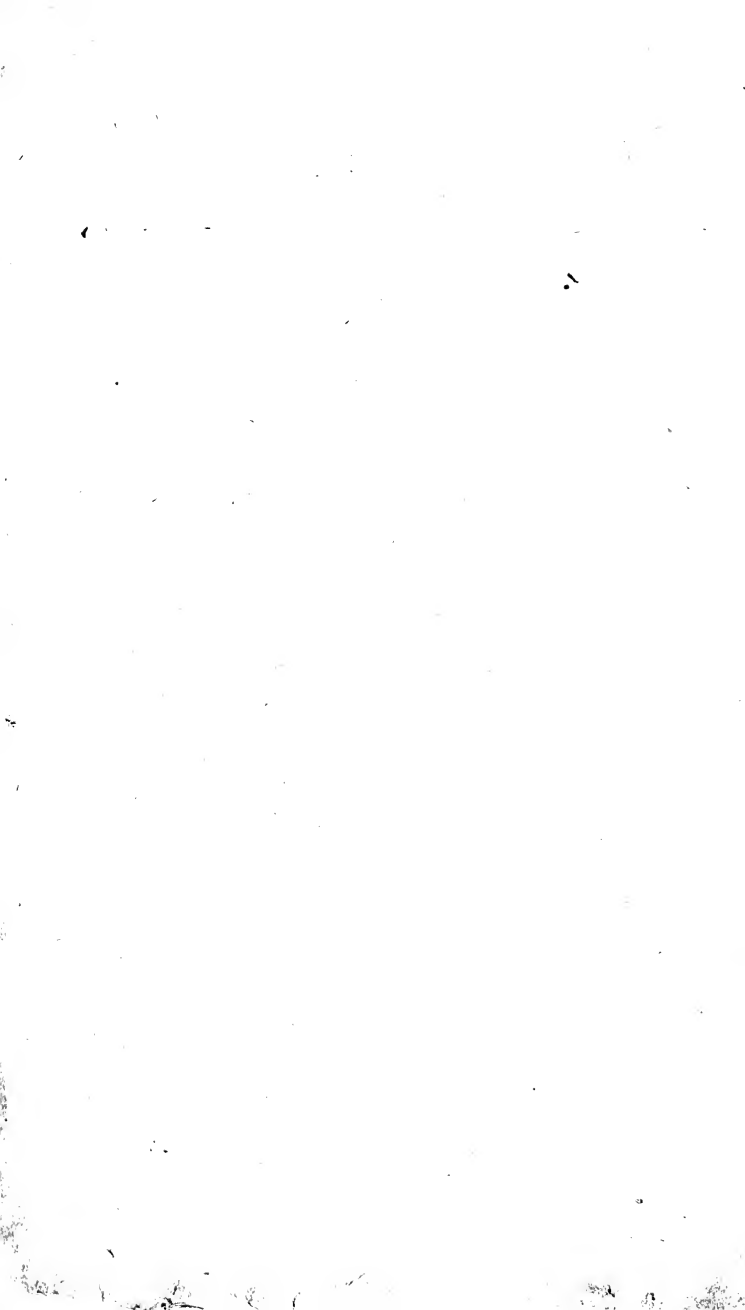
TO THE
METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

BY
JOHN WALKER, B. D. & F. T. C. D.

*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. Matth. xi. 19.*

DUBLIN:
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1803.



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

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wisdom and the power of God to them that believe.

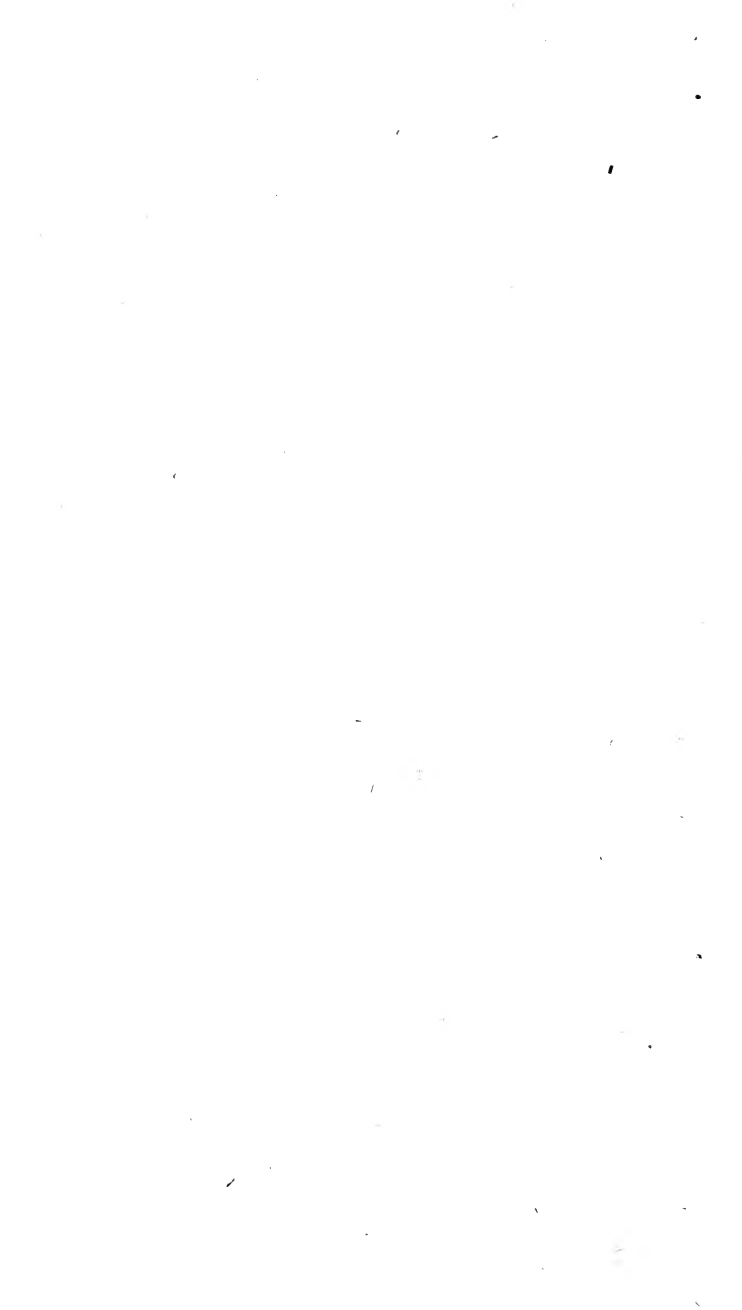
I beseech the reader to give a serious consideration to the topics handled in the following pages; and to excuse the unadorned garb in which they appear, for the sake of their intrinsic importance.

J. W.

Dec. 23d, 1802.

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palatable.—The mind of the world towards Christ unaltered.—That strict morality and general piety (so called) constitute not a Christian character.—The only true morality and piety.—Disbelief of the Gospel evinces a state of darkness.—How great stress the Author lays on true morality.—The infidelity of some nominal Christians avowed, of others evinced by their conduct.—A judgment of Clarity—the expression inaccurate.—In one sense none excluded from it—in another sense all real Arminians.—The essential character of the Gospel.—A Christian cannot escape the charge of illiberality.

✍ The Purchasers of the second Edition of the Expostulatory Address, are requested to correct the following errata;—page 8, line 15, for—*readily to adopt*—read—*readily adopt*:—line 19, for—*our Society*—read—*your Society*.

A LETTER,



A

LETTER,

&c.

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,—capa-

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ble 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 so 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

them must be desirable, for the purpose of ascertaining the real import of the revelation, and of vindicating its truth 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 his 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
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‘ 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,

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 principles, upon which you took up your pen, countenance 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

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.

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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

“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; tho’ 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

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

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
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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 counterance 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

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 no where 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 applied 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 world may decry 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

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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. 33.)? “Of 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

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 shew me that opinion which is not intelligibly declared in the word of God, and I will shew them that opi-

tion, 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 enquiry 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 still 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

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

fruitful source of every evil, both in the tempers and conduct of men. (Math. 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 *fleshy* or *natural mind* of fallen man—the fruitful source of evil and nothing but evil continually;—and the *new wind* 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

‘ 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

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 principle—because they are offensive.

So

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

the

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

* “ 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.*

‘ *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.*

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 believers, 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 any unfavourable *opinion* of the state or character of other men;—that is, to a prohibition from our Lord against *believing* the most
express

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 shew, 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 thus 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 enquirers 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

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by

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 shew 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

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 heartfelt 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,

membership, is an evil by no means peculiar to the Methodists. It is a natural fruit of that *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 "every where spoken against,"—than there is in the most numerous church unbound 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

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 any thing else, we may name her—LEHABOD—"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

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 Methodist 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

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 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 and 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 *pictists*, 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

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* of 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

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."—Extra-
 ordinary as the question is, I am glad to an-
 swer 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 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 ungod-
 liness 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 ex-
 plicit, and as offensive to some of that des-
 cription,

cription, 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 scriptural 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

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. Mean while 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—(Math. 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

“ and said, Every plant which my heavenly
 “ Father hath not planted, shall be rooted
 “ up. Let them alone: they be blind lead-
 “ ers of the blind.” If all *appearance of illibe-*
rality 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 Gos-
 pel that is to be believed, --there is a nume-
 rous class, to whom *you* will appear very illi-
 beral; and many a one will be ready to ad-
 dress 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 Re-
 marks; 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 un-
 dertakes, 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 di-
 vine 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 prin-
 ciples,

esides, which already have possession of their minds.

I am, Sir,

With every sentiment of personal regard,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

F I N I S.

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SECOND LETTER

TO

ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M.R.I.A.,

BEING PART OF A

Series of Letters

TO THAT

GENTLEMAN,

OCCASIONED BY HIS REMARKS ON THE AUTHOR'S
EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS

TO THE

METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

BY JOHN WALKER, B.D. & F.T.C.D.

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of? II. ii. 22.

The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. I. 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. Tim. i. 15.

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1803.

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 A specimen of the doctrine maintained by Mr.
 Wesley.

A SECOND

A

SECOND LETTER,

&c. &c.

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

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is

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 shew 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

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 *favorite* 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
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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 by them, 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 an 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

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, page 35.)—never mentions the *Bible*,—though each is to be asked—
 “Have you read the *plain account*?—The *ap-
 peals*? 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

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 predetermined 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

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 constitutes 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.

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 encrease, and however respectable the character or talents of those who may stand forward to *vindicate* them,—they cannot truly prosper, with
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* 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.

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
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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 formed—are so consecrated, that they ought not to be noticed. I think I noticed them with as tender a 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 respectable 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

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ter 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.” i. 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 any thing 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:

lieve: 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

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 Saint 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 any thing 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 cele-

tial 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 wordliness 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

“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 have 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

derful (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 its 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 fervor for Christian zeal.

You appear much displeas'd, 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 Shaftsbury 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

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“ the epithets of *mechanical* and *periodical*---favour
 “ 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 seri-
 ous 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 be-
 long 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 Doc-
 tors,---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 that
 you have adduced---upon the testimony of Scrip-
 ture. 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 re-
 lief

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 characters 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 Methodistic 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 distinct-
 "ness

ness 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, pp. 10, 11, 29, 30, 32. 2d Edition.

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,

tian, 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

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 the 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

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 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

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,

fact, all that I have written in the four 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 no where to be found—but in the garb of profaneness, or the eager pursuit after wordly 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,

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 ;

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

with rash desperation against his own life—re-
 joice, 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 con-
 cerning 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 pri-
 soners, “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 feel-
 ings 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 differ-
 ent 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 there-

fore 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 decry, 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 disqui-
 “ cted

“eted within them,” is the soul—“or ever they
 “are aware—made like the chariots of Ammin-
 “adib!”—by the clear discovery and lively per-
 suasion, 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 na-
 ture of our religious feelings, than either the
 circumstance of their being in general *religious*—
 (i. e. moved by some views that we have of spiri-
 tual 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* pro-
 duces 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 af-
 fections 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 live-
 liness 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—com-
 bined

bined 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

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 entreat 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

rive at the end of your Remarks on the Methodist 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

“ those who, by their own confession, neither
 “ *feared God nor wrought righteousness*”—i. e. be-
 fore 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 ques-
 “ tion never did fear God and work righteouf-
 “ nefs? His own thinking so is no proof: for
 “ we know, how all, that are *convinced of sin*,
 “ UNDERVALUE THEMSELVES IN EVERY RES-
 “ PECT.”

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.

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A
THIRD LETTER

TO

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TO THE

METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

BY JOHN WALKER, B. D. & F. T. C. D.

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.

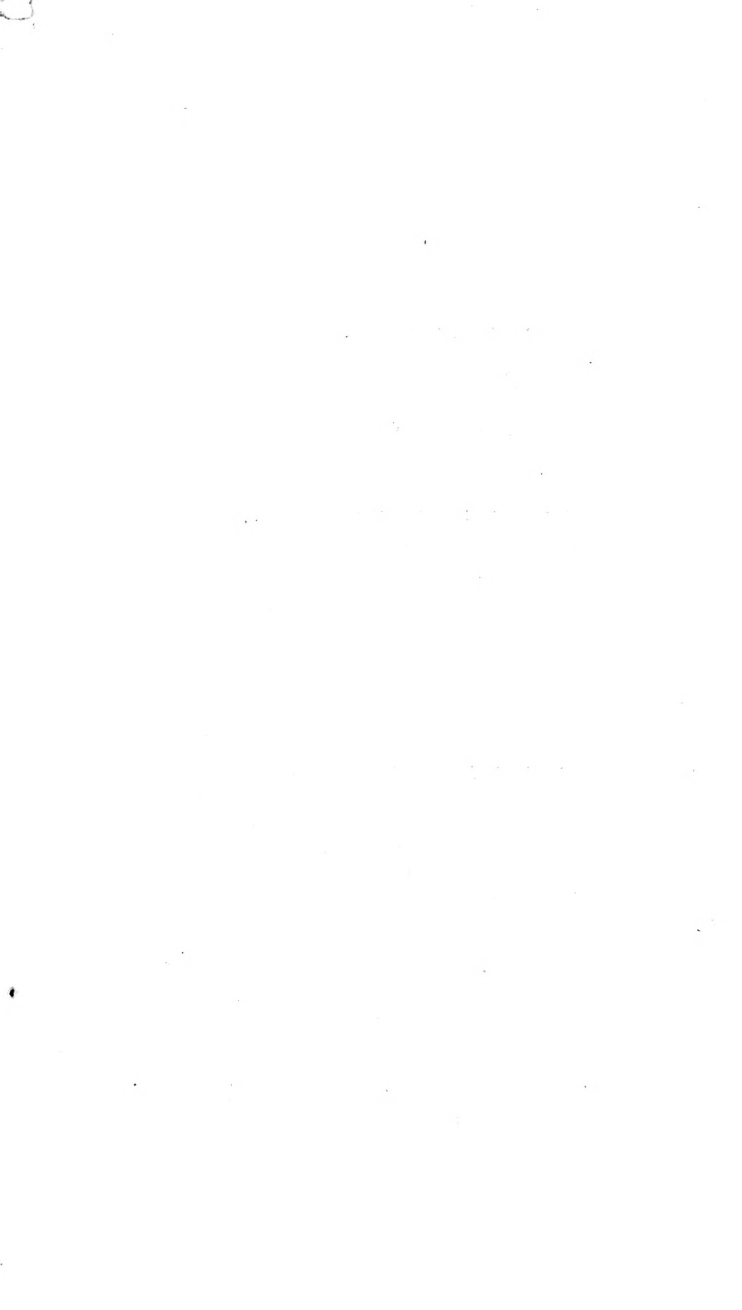
We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Phil. iii. 3.

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1803.



THIRD LETTER,

&c. &c.

SIR,

I WAS well aware that my observations on the Methodist *Class-Meetings* and *Love-Feasts* would be particularly offensive, because 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 surpris'd 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 impos'd 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

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often

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 favor 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 60 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

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; tho’ 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*; tho’ 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 rankling 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

* 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 *these* 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.

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 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 enquiry, which could imply *embarrassment*.”—You know, Sir, that the enquiry 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 enquiry;—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
are

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 favor 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 others 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

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 Methodist 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 enquire 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

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 Methodist 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

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 anti-christian 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 *suecedaneum*; 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
instituti-

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

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 *facacity* 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,—tho' 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 all is a very general one—perhaps co-extensive with those who acknowledge

ledge 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

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—(tho' 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 other; 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

--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; tho’ 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 (tho’ 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; tho’ 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 illustrated that way by drawing a picture of the progressive steps of delusion, thro’ 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

tempting 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 effect into *assertions* concerning individuals,

duals,—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—thro’ 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; tho’ 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

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; tho’ 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

either into hypocrisy or self deceit :—and following *such persons* thro' 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 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.” 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 *grossist 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 mischiefousness 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

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—than “ *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 thro’ 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

"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,—tho’ 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*,

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 statedly 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, and especially in the book of Psalms,—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:—tho' 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,—tho' perhaps not facilitated,—by recollecting that I think myself not concerned with any arguments, that are derived from the practices—or assertions—or opinions

* Since writing the above, another reply to my Expostulatory Address has made its appearance in this city, by a person signing himself—*The Ulster Herd-man*. 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.

nions 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;—tho’ 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 encouraged 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 14 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—tho' 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)—encrease 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

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 their 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

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

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

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 thro’ 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 testament. This you may perceive, by looking again at that repetition of it which offended you,

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

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 antinomianism—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; tho’ 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*

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. 11. 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, tho’ 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 surprized 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 continued 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 scared, 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 arraig- ing 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

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 crea-

ture : old things are past 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—(tho' 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 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 disco-

ver 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 endeavoring 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

from the continued tendency of which, to lead him from the living God, he needs to be continually “ kept by the power of God thro’ faith unto salvation” !

It would be an easy but invidious task, to prove by copious extracts from accounts publish’d 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 contend 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

lent—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 significance 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. Mean while I remain,

Sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

Trinity College,
June 24th, 1803.

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A.

FOURTH LETTER

TO

ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A.

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TO THE

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BY JOHN WALKER, B. D. & F. T. C. D.

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

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

They shall call them, The holy people, the redeemed of the LORD. Isa. lxii. 12.

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

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C O N T E N T S.

MR. KNOX's reply to the Author, on the Methodistic idea of *justification*, contradicted by a subsequent part of his letter. The obvious inconclusiveness of the two first arguments, by which he attempts to confirm his reply. His third argument founded in a dangerous mistake. Vanity of the supposed voice from Heaven in the Methodistic justification. The facile method in which Mr. K. combats the Author's arguments. Wherein the great difference lies between the Author and the Methodists. Mr. K.'s distinction between the *polemic* and practical view of the subject. Dangerous tendency of his expressions. His reverence for *pious feelings*. Examination of the reasons which he assigns for lamenting the Author's charges. Sceptics. The Apostolic controversy with the Jews. The cause of *real* Christianity distinguished from that of *professional*. Supposed singularity of the Author's sentiments. Rational Christianity. Mr. K.'s surprise at the Author's assertion about *sanctification*. Its incontrovertible certainty in the sense in which the Author advanced it. The practical importance of it. Essential character of Gospel-practice. Holiness of walk. *Common sense* employed to ascertain the meaning of the Hebrew word rendered *holy*. Mr. K. opposes a meaning of it which the Author never assigned. In what sense the Jewish people were commanded to *sanctify themselves*:

selves: in what sense believers. The meaning of the Hebrew word proved from *common sense* to be retained in the parallel Greek term. Holiness of GOD. Obligation to holiness. Natural unholiness of sinners. Their restoration to holiness cannot depend on themselves. What things are necessary to it. Believers alone are holy. Various meanings of the verb—to *sanctify*. Fallacy of the argument which Mr. K. derives from them. Mr. K.'s quotations from the Apostles Peter and Paul by no means contradict the Author. Mr. K.'s mode of arguing from them not only inconclusive but dangerous. The contest far from unimportant, though in some respects verbal. Important inferences deduced from it.

FOURTH LETTER,

&c. &c.

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,*”

B

nists," 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. pp. 28 & 29.—2d. edition.)—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

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 *ardour* 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 notwithstanding 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*,—

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 conceive* 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 enquire. 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-divided religion.*—1st. I have said that it is rank and dangerous *enthusiasm*, to look
for

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,—*vov & praterea nihil*,—a day is coming that will discover.

You have prefaced your observations in 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

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

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

alone holding the office and performing the work—of saving unto the uttermost every lost sinner that believes in his name. And however you may “believe that clear ideas of the doctrine”—of justification thro’ 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

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 Methodist 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
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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
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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 un'to 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 Methodist 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

them will not be afraid to maintain them *singlely* 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,
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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 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”.

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 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* :
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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 recal their attention to that, which I think it most important to attend to ;—yes, Sir,—most practically important.

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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* thro' 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 these 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
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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,
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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
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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 enquire, 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 reverence)—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 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 they bear as creatures 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
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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

--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 has 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 signifies that
generic

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 designed 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.

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 “dependence 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

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 needful, on your remark upon St. Paul's prayer—above quoted.

You

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

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 shews 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,

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.

*Trinity College,
August 19th, 1803.*

 *The Contents of the Third Letter, having been unavoidably omitted, are here subjoined.*

MR. WESLEY'S Class-Meetings a subject of considerable, though subordinate importance. Mr. Knox's arguments in favor of them. His first argument wholly irrelevant. The real meaning and importance of St. James's precept. Evil of misinterpreting Scripture. His second argument inconclusive, though the fact on which he founds it were admitted. The fact itself disproved from his own statement of it. Dr. Woodward's testimony wholly inapplicable. Mr. K.'s third argument includes a similar fallacy with the second. Duration and effects of the Methodist Society. What is necessary to *true* religion and *true* piety. Civil effects of Methodism. Meetings for Christian fellowship more important than Mr. K. represents them. His fourth argument abandons the Methodist Society as a *Christian* body. Directors of the Class-Meetings. Anecdote. Great mischiefs arising from the want of Scriptural qualifications in them. The *miraculous discernment of spirits* not at all necessary to warrant the Author's suppositions. Those suppositions confirmed. Strange method in which Mr. K. controverts the Author's illustration of the pernicious tendency of Class-Meetings. The Author's *second thoughts* shewn to be perfectly consistent with his first. Mr. K.'s heavy charge against the Author—proved to be grounded on an entire perversion and misquotation of a detached sentence. Whether the Author's *condemnation* has been extended *broadly* to persons. The only case in which he has ventured to pronounce on their state. Mr. K.'s silence on that case.

Another

Another change of the Author's expression, by which his meaning is misrepresented. Two reasons for the Author's real assertion. Hypocrisy and self-deception distinguished. The supposed utility of the Class-Meetings examined. Accounts of experience. A hint to future respondents. Tumultuous assemblies, a great instrument of spreading Methodism. Importance of the remaining topics. The deepest ground of the Author's dislike accounted for. He has not inverted the rule—*by their fruits ye shall know them*. Dangerous misapplication of that rule detected. The Author has not misrepresented the Methodist idea of *sanctification*. His argument proved not to be a *play on words*. Mr. K. mistakes the object of it. Two things implied in the argument. False notion of the duty of *self-denial*. *When its necessity will really cease*. Scriptural character of our own nature. Why unknown to natural men. What evidences of *contracted depravity* they admit. Necessarily insensible to the strongest evidence from the very nature of it. Perfectionists. Duration of the warfare against the *flesh*. The Methodist system supposes a general *improvement* in the nature of all men. Their state of *salvability*. Growth in grace quite distinct from the improvement of our own nature. Mr. Wesley's perversion of the text—2 Cor. v. 17. Inconsistent with himself. Great danger arising from the perversion of that text, and from the whole of the Methodist doctrine of *sanctification*. The expression of the Liturgy which Mr. K. conceives to countenance their notion :—founded on the very truth of scripture, which he thinks it apparently contradicts.

A
FIFTH LETTER

TO
ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A.

BEING PART OF A
Series of Letters

TO THAT
GENTLEMAN,

OCCASIONED BY HIS REMARKS ON THE AUTHOR'S
EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS

TO THE
METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

BY JOHN WALKER, B. D. & F. T. C. D.

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.

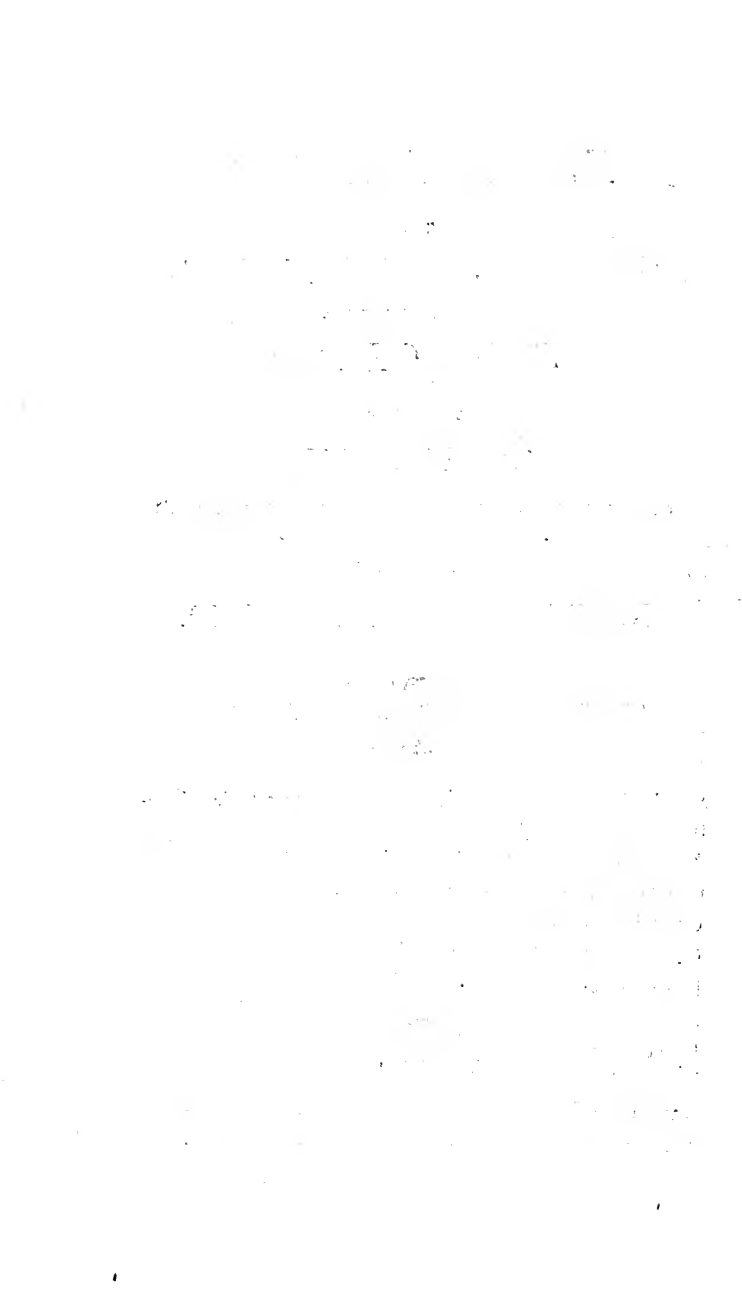
To Him give all the Prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever BELIEVETH in him, shall receive remission of sins. Acts x. 43.

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1802.



C O N T E N T S.

The Author's three assertions about repentance. That there can be no repentance unto life where there is not faith. That there cannot be the latter without the former. The Author's first assertion confirmed. His second follows by necessary inference. The meaning of his third assertion cleared. Its offensiveness. The Gospel acknowledges no distinction between men, as affecting their state towards God, but one. Various means employed by unbelieving professors of Christianity to set aside this offensive testimony. Mr. K. states the Author's meaning aright. Meaning of the word *grace* in scripture. That nothing is to be *done* by the sinner in order to obtain the grace of God. A testimony of Scripture concerning the religious works of the wicked. Mr. K's mark of incredulous admiration. The sentiment to which he annexes it confirmed from Scripture. The greatness and freedom of the gift of God denied by natural men. Absurdity of the supposed *effort* which Mr. K. maintains to be necessary to faith. Offence of the cross to the religious world. The 13th Article of the Church of England. The distinguishing glory of the Gospel. Mr. K's sorrow for sin examined, and his solicitude about eternal things. Directions to sinners as in a middle state between grace and nature. Their destructive tendency. Mr. K's hopeless attempt. The Baptist's preaching considered. How he prepared the way of the Lord. That the repentance he preached was not unbelieving repentance. Mr. K's rash misrepresentation

presentation of it. If his argument had any force, it would prove that there might be unbelieving faith. His argument founded in a mistake of the Baptist's meaning. Christianity almost as old as the creation. The spirit of adoption. Mr. K's misapplication of two texts. The superior privileges of believers since the appearance of Christ. Mr. K's argument from the commencement of our Lord's preaching refuted. The Author's assertion about repentance confirmed from the very passages of the Acts, which Mr. K. adduces as in opposition to it. That the Apostle Peter included faith in his idea of repentance proved from the whole tenor of his address and from its effects. Mr. K. inconsistent with himself in talking of saving faith. By whom the Gospel is virtually laid aside. Mr. K's extraordinary assertion about what he calls the Author's plan. His extraordinary question. Why difficult to be answered.

FIFTH LETTER,

&c. &c.

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 entreat 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

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failure

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 into men circumcised 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;

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 *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

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 fleshy 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 fleshy 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
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faith,

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 sinners 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

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 fallhood, 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

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 finner, 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*.

polations 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 “WHO-SOEVER *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”

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 work-
 eth 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 as-
 sert 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 ques-
 tion—“ What must I *do* to be saved? ” did he
 tell him in reply—*do this or that preparatory*
 WORK.

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—to 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

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

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 sal-
c
vation.

vation. 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

tinguish 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:

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 him-

self 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. “Who-soever *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

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. 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 may 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

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

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

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 believ-
‘ ing Abraham;—who expect and desire the ap-
‘ pearance 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 warn-
‘ ed; and prove that you are indeed the spiritual
‘ children of *believing* Abraham—that you are
‘ really partakers of that *faith* which you pro-
‘ fess,—not by any of your outward ceremonies,
‘ but—by an inward renewal of your hearts and
‘ minds

' minds,—by that *repentance uno 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 hypocri-
 ' tical professors know that the axe lyeth 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 repre-
 sented him as an advocate for *unbelieving repent-*
ance ; and before you indulged the keenness of
 farcastic 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 preach-
 ed 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 Gos-
 pel from all the Prophets, and all the Apostles ;
 and from that which HE declared, whose way
 the Baptist was sent to prepare.

You

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

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 farther and higher than man could ever 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 *Savior*, 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 had 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 (Hebr. 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,

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 (John 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
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which those texts relate, that either may subsist without the other ;—but is not, I conceive, at all distinct from the spirit of *fai h*, 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 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 sun 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 forebore 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

“not clearly intimate, that they whom he addressed might *tru'y 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 proceed to vindicate it against you.—You own that the Messiah’s spiritual kingdom had
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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 Italicks 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

ving *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; may 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,
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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 favour 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 stedfastly 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 adul-
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terer. 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

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

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 scriptural warrant for believing that their sins *are blotted out*:—and that any—either *humble hope* or *strong confidence* which they cherish, that their sins are blotted out—while they continue to disbelieve the Gospel of Christ and therefore con-

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tinue *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

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.

Trinity College,

September 15th, 1803.



A
SIXTH LETTER

TO
ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A.

BEING PART OF A
Series of Letters

TO THAT
GENTLEMAN,
OCCASIONED BY HIS REMARKS ON THE AUTHOR'S
EXPOSITIONARY ADDRESS
TO THE
METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

BY JOHN WALKER, B. D. & F. T. C. D.

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. Matth. 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.

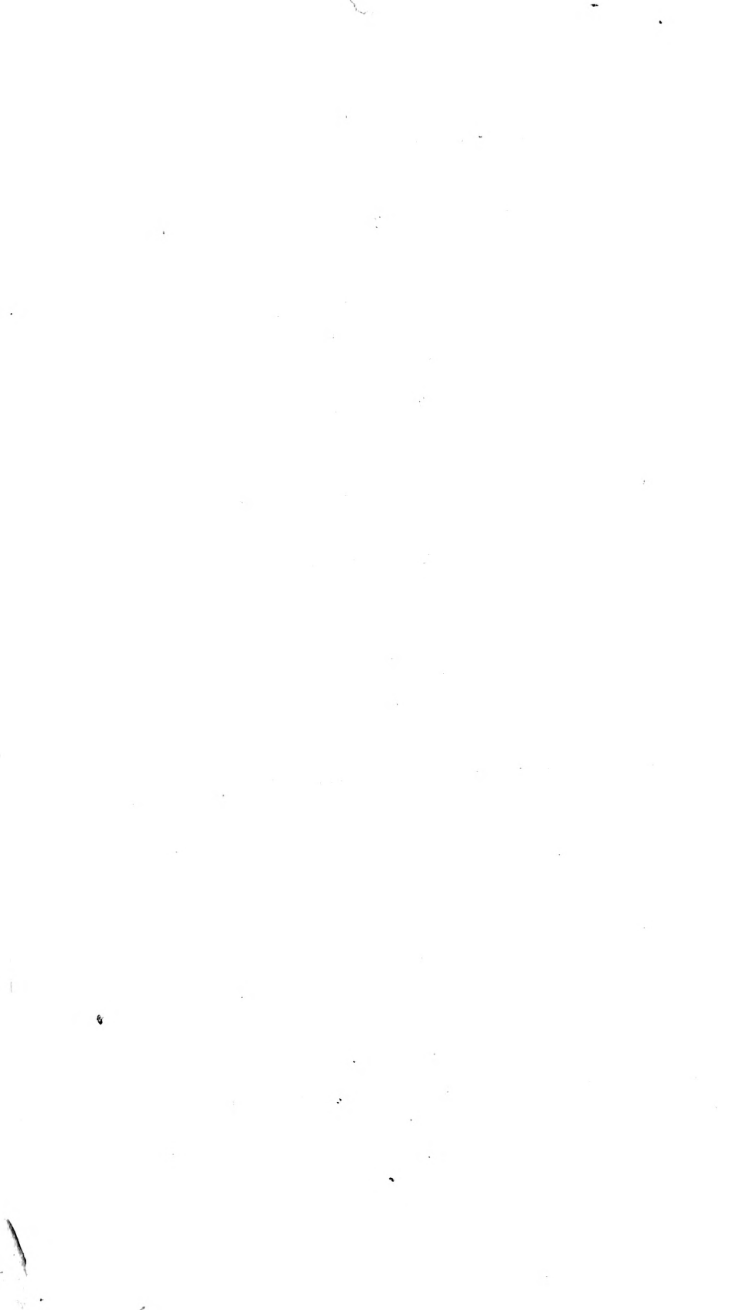
Not as many which corrupt the word of God. 2 Cor. ii. 17.

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1803.



C O N T E N T S.

Mr. Knox's observations on the meaning of the Greek word rendered *repentance*. The meaning assigned by the Author confirmed. That the question controverted between Mr. K. and him does not turn at all upon the etymology of the term. Mr. K's argumentative language. That it is perfectly consistent with the Author's principles to *commence* an address to sinners with a testimony of the necessity of repentance. Mr. K's paraphrase of the word *repent* accepted, and his inference from it refuted. The Author's perfect agreement with Mr. K. on the importance of the doctrine of repentance. The doctrine of *justification* necessarily involved in it, and equally important. Mr. K's argument to shew the comparative unimportance of the doctrine of justification. No *uprightness* of heart in unbelieving sinners. That nothing will stop the course of God's mercy. The effects of that mercy where it takes its course. Mr. K's vain attempt to shew that dangerous consequences flow from the Author's views of repentance. His question answered. As probable that the *carnal penitent* will perish, as the person whom he *supposes* to draw an inference from the Author's doctrine. What is necessary to give any weight to Mr. K's supposition. The supposition no presumptive argument against the truth of the Author's doctrine. The supposition shewn to be absurd, but not surprising. *Guarding* the gospel. Much zeal for *Calvinistic* doctrines consistent with disbelief of the Gospel. The pernicious consequences with which

Mr.

Mr. K's doctrine of repentance is pregnant. The awful case of a person who shall believe what Mr. K. says. Peculiar offensiveness of a testimony against false religion. Impossible to know what Mr. K. includes in his idea of repentance, but that he certainly excludes what is necessary to constitute true repentance. That Mr. K's repentance cannot spring from love to God. His attempt to change the question in debate. That question stated anew. Mr. K's argument from the parable of the Prodigal. His strange note of admiration. His argument resolves itself into one which has been exposed in the preceding letter. The design of that parable. Danger of misinterpreting parabolic narratives. A passage in the epistle to the Hebrews considered. That it stands in direct opposition to Mr. K's ideas of repentance. All men alike warranted by the Gospel to comply with the Apostle's exhortation. That believers alone do comply with it. Various characters to which the greatest promises are made in Scripture, belong to none but believers of the Gospel.—*Postscript.* The CHRISTIAN OBSERVER. The ideas of its conductors, and their numerous preliminary steps to conversion. The curious nature of some of them. DR. KIPLING. Monks of la Trappe. The Reformation.

A

SIXTH LETTER,

&c. &c.

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

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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?

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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 show of learning, I could here easily, like them, display a great deal more of it than I possess. But upon this *little* question—any detail'd 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. Zan.* p. 639. and to any or all of the following compilers of Lexicons to the Greek Testament—*Schwarz, Schleusner, Krebs, Parkhurst, Stock*; and even *Minterl* 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*”

“ *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 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*

tual blessings of the Messiah's kingdom :"—that is, Sir, its precise amount was in short this—*Be- come 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 disbelieve 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

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; and 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 assertion in a mass of error and misrepresentation, to which it becomes necessary for me to avert.—Quoting a passage from my Address (page 37. 2d. ed.) 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.

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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—thro' 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,
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* See Postscript.

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);—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

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*." (Heb. 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.

nally. 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 and a new spirit shall be given to
 “ him from above; is there not a much greater
 “ probability that such a man’s heart should be-
 “ come more and more hardened through *the*
 “ *deceitfulness of sin*, than that he should be fur-
 “ prised into that happy state, on which (*I must*
 “ *say*) he would so presumptuously speculate?”

—And so *must I say*. Presumptuous speculation

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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 who are 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

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

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believes

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 be 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, altho’ 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 surpris’d 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

—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 who 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 nowhere 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,

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 *sup-*
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pose 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 sins, in order to 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
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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,—tho' 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

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

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 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

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 tho' 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 upon 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* (what-

ever

ever 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 (page 42)—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

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 favorite 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, unpeakably 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 apostacy 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

for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah's kingdom." You have failed in the attempt: and all such attempts, however plausible 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 minutiae 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 Epistle 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

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 blessings 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

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 (Hebrews 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 *sinners* unto 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

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 UN-EELIEF, 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 serving, 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,
October 5th, 1803.*

JOHN WALKER.

POSTSCRIPT.

POSTSCRIPT.

IF the Reader wish to see exemplified that class of men whom I have described, (pp. 14. & 22.) let him read almost any of the *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*

minary 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

—(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,—tho' 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 altho' 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—(chaunting 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.

A
SEVENTH LETTER

TO
ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A.

BEING THE LAST OF A

Series of Letters

TO THAT

GENTLEMAN,

OCCASIONED BY HIS REMARKS ON THE AUTHOR'S
EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS

TO THE

METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

BY JOHN WALKER, B. D. & F. T. C. D.

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. Matt. 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 as the ministers of righteousness. 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

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C O N T E N T S.

Mr KNOX's mistake. CALVIN. The divine appointment of *means* as well as of *ends* admitted by the Author. Mr K's conclusion refuted by the very principle from which he attempts to deduce it. The probability admitted that no *respectable* Calvinist agrees with the Author. Mr Richard Davis. Mr. K's error about the character of CORNELIUS. Want of *sobriety* commonly imputed to Christians. The Author perfectly serious in an assertion which has offended Mr. K. That assertion considered. Its logical *truth* incontrovertible. Its *importance*. That all systems of *false* religion lead alike to eternal ruin. That this *must* be so, if the Gospel be indeed a revelation from God. The *liberality* of other creeds a demonstrative evidence that they are not of God. Popery. That all systems of religion different from that of the Gospel are systems of idolatry. Pagans. Mr. POPE's Universal Prayer. The variety of Gods worshipped by professing Christians. Their false Gods neither merciful, nor righteous, nor true. Those characters of the *true* God discovered only in the Gospel. Man's natural *hatred* of the true God exemplified in the ULSTER HERDSMAN, and Mr. FLETCHER. The Gospel reveals a *way* of justification and salvation essentially different from every false system of religion. The fundamental principle upon which the Author is at issue with Mr. K. and the Methodists. Mr. K's interpretation of the Author's offensive assertion. Mr. K. introduces into it a question, with which it stands unconnected in the Author's Address. Puts upon the Author an ambiguous sentiment, which in one sense he does not hold; and an ambiguous assertion, which would probably be mistaken. The question which Mr. K. opposes to the Author's offensive assertion. The small number of believers. Mr. K. exposed to the force of his own question. If all who are *pious* and *moral* be in the way of salvation, the Bible

ble must be given up as *false*. How true religion is to be estimated. The fallacious way in which Mr. K. estimates it. That the *practice* of professors will not warrant us to rate the number of real Christians higher. The scriptural fruits of faith. The things which are commonly substituted for them. The folly and wickedness of concealing the faults of the number of real Christians, thro' fear of being charged with illiberality. A deistical objection against the Gospel considered. Borrowed by the Arminians. RICHARD BAXTER. Westminster Assembly. *Liberal* sentiments in religion. *Catholic* mode of interpreting Scripture. The Author not involved in the inconsistency which Mr. K. supposes. Mr. K's two questions answered. St. Peter. *Honesty* of unbelievers. How Mr. K. has observed the Methodists. His Letter mischievous in its tendency. Different objects of Mr. K. and of the Author. The Author's advantage over Mr. K. accounted for. The Author invites correction of his mistakes. The controversy not ended. Not about any *obscure* or *uncertain* truth. An objection stated and answered. The Author's expectation that the sentiments which he maintains will receive a farther discussion. Reasonable to expect this at least from the learned and able ministers of Religion who deny the truth of his sentiments, and consider them dangerous.—*Postscript*. The ground of *unity* in the Christian Church. *Schisms* and *schismatics*. False teachers to be marked and avoided. The great instrument which they employ against the Gospel. HEART-RELIGION. The use which the opposers of the Gospel make of this *good word*. Their contemptuous application of the term HEAD-KNOWLEDGE to the FAITH of the GOSPEL. Their popularity and success.

SEVENTH LETTER,

&c. &c.

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 enquire. 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

part where he begins to treat of *repentance*. (1. 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 it, 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 to 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

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 enquiry—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.

on. 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 CONSEQUENT-
 " LY where he determines to bring an indivi-
 " dual to the living 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 *Ly* 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 ineffec-
 tual 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 asser-
 tion 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 discov-
 ered.

vered 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 alledge 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*
“ *ing* 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 non-conforming 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

gainst 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 willingly divide with a contemptible Mr. Richard Davis, of Rothwel 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-deeds 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

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 profelytes 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 *lesse 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*.

bility. 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 falshood of which must be determined by a very different criterion, from that which you would try it by.

The assertion occurs in my *Address* (page 34. 2d. Ed.), and is this—“ that there is a greater
 “ difference between the way of a sinner’s justifi-
 “ cation 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 farther 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 arrelled 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 curbin my own sober persuasion,* and that I was *not deliberately in earnest.* Believe me, Sir, I was ; and am deliberately

rately 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.

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 deciliveness 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 false religion to that of the gospel—is only a *seeming resemblance*; 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

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

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 *illiberality* 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 dishonorable 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—"Who so 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 falshood 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

* 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 senti-
ments

its infatuated followers from searching that word. Nor has this usurpation of the functions 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—“whofo believeth shall be saved, and whofo 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.

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ment 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.*

ation. 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." (Ps. 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 adored;
By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage;
 JEHOVAH—*Love—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.” (Ps. xcvi. 7.) “They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” (Ps. cxxxvi. 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.” (Is. 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 mens 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. 50. 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*. (Hebr. iii. 12. I 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 *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 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 12. Rom. i. 25, 28.)

But perhaps, Sir, you will demand—‘what is that falseness in the notions that any professing *Christians* form of GOD, which can authorize
you

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 *finner*—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.

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 which 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—(pp. 35, 36. 2d. Ed.)—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,

“ that he is to do *do.*”—I observe that “ they
 “ only differ with respect to the *degree* and quan-
 “ tity 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 be-
 “ ing—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, RIGHTE-
 OUSNESS AND ETERNAL LIFE ARE REVEAL-
 ED AS THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IN CHRIST
 JESUS TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS, WITH-
 OUT CONDITION OR EXCEPTION, WHO BE-
 LIEVES THE DIVINE RECORD CONCERNING
 THE SON OF GOD. In fact, Sir, in this sim-
 ple 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 sal-*
 “ *vation.*”

“*vation 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,

dervaluing, 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 amongst 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”—be-
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cause 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

yourself from the word of God, against the imputation 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 *morality* 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, Musselmens 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 *morality*. 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

rend 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

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 falshood in them,—and perhaps if I were acquainted with them, I should be unable to point out any falshood 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

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*
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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. And 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?

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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—
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“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*,

ous, 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
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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 a 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
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word of God, but I would *really* reject them. Men *shall* yet know, whose word shall stand,—the LORD'S or theirs. (Jer. xliv. 23.)

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 men 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 falshood.

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,—(see for instance p. 46. 2d Ed.)—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
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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
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spirit.”

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 sword*. 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 aimable—respectable—and useful,—you seem to have given yourself little trouble to enquire 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*,
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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 favorable 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 thro' inadvertency or ignorance. For the detection of any such errors—by friend or foe—either in a public answer, or by a 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
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bout that “faithful saying, and worthy of all acception, 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 acception*, it must be—not an 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 acception*, 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.”

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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

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 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,

JOHN WALKER.

Trin. Coll.

Nov. 1st. 1803.

POSTSCRIPT.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE Apostle Paul (Rom. xvi. 17, 18.) 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 sollicitude 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

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 enquiry, 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 successfully use at this day, than that which I have mentioned, (p. 31.)—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*,

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 asserters 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.

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The circumstances, under which they have been written, were in general so unfavorable, 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. I perceive also that several typographical errors have escaped me ;—most of which however are such, as will occasion no difficulty to the intelligent reader. He is requested to correct the following :

ERRATA.

- Letter I. page 13. line 14. for *applied* read *implied*.
 Letter II. p. 12. l. 27. for *respectable* read *respectful*.
 Letter III. p. 33. l. 10. for *their* read *there*.
 p. 36. l. penul. for *testament* read *statement*.
 p. 40. l. 24. for *continued* read *continue*.
 Letter IV. p. 23. l. 20. for *reality any* read *reality of any*.
 ib. l. 26. for *world* read *word*.
 p. 31. l. 29. for *they bear as creatures* read *he bears as a creature*.
 Letter v. p. 7. l. 22. for *of Gospel* read *of the Gospel*.
 p. 33. l. 18. dele *they*.
 Letter vi. p. 13. l. 29. for *avert* read *advert*.
 p. 18. l. 9. for *who are ever* read *to whom it is ever*.
 ☞ a similar correction is needed p. 5. l. 29. & p. 21. l. 30.
 p. 37. l. 14. for *unto* read *into*.
 p. 40. l. 2. read *God's grace*.

F I N I S.



H I N T S

ON

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP:

ADDRESSED TO THE

SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

OF

ALL BELIEVERS,

ESPECIALLY IN *DUBLIN*.



Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. Pl. cvi. 47.

Now, therefore, thus saith the LORD of hosts, consider your ways. Hag. i. 5.

D U B L I N :

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1804.

H I N T S, &c.

WE have seen, within these few years, a growing *union* of the professors of Evangelical Truth, for the purpose of propagating the Gospel, where it has not yet been heard: and this has been a matter of joy to many Christians, and justly considered by them as an indication of an approaching revival.—But do we not still want a closer *union* among those, who know that truth, for the purpose of their mutual advancement in the knowledge and practice of it? Without this, may we not be sending the Gospel to others, and losing sight of its glorious excellency ourselves? may we not be busily engaged in the bustle of outward exertion in our Lord's cause, while that cause is declining in our own souls? The most experienced Christian will be most sensible of the possibility and danger of this.

This address is not intended for mere *professors* of the Gospel: it is for those who “know the grace of God in truth.”

Christians ! let us consider whether we have not been neglecting a union, to which we are not invited alone by expediency, but impelled by the obligation of our Lord's authority in his word. Is it *there* left as a matter of indifference, whether we should maintain *fellowship one with another*, or not ? That we are all "one in Christ Jesus" is a glorious truth :—but from this very truth is derived in Scripture the obligation of mutual *communion*. Is this scripturally attained by the communion of *some Christians*, belonging to particular congregations ; while they are unknown even by face to *other Christians* in the same city ?

It is not the design of this address to say a word against the diversity of ministers, under which different Christians sit. Let them continue their attendance upon those ministers of the word, under whom they find most benefit ; and the diversity of ministerial gifts may be profitable to the church at large. But while we *hear* Paul—and Apollos—and Cephas, as we are severally led,—let us not say that we are *of* Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, so as to be kept from fellowship one with another.

When we consider the precepts of our Lord and Master to his disciples ; when we consider the common character of his disciples—their common faith and hope—their common destination, can
we

we believe that there ought to be disciples of his *in the same City*, who know nothing of each other, never meet with each other, and have no opportunity of comforting or edifying one another? Was it so of old in the primitive church? When the Apostle addressed his letters to the church of Christ at Corinth, at Rome, at Ephesus, at Philippi, at Colosse, at Thessalonica,—have we not reason to be sure that, how many soever preachers of the word there were at any of those places, *all the Christians* of each place assembled themselves together, and had more or less knowledge of, and communion with each other?

Is not this a general Christian duty? and is not the long neglect of it one of those “desolations of many generations,” which we have to expect will be repaired by the great head of the church? an evil which (as far as we see it) ’tis now time for us, in his name, to correct? Has not the neglect of this duty originated in a defect of Christian unity, love and sympathy? and has it not awfully contributed to encrease the evils, in which it originated? Has it not led to a too general forgetfulness of many precepts and exhortations in the word of God, which seem to be antiquated, because they have been so long overlooked?—those which call upon Christians to “build up each other” in their most holy faith.

—to “bear one another’s burdens”—to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep”—to “warn them that are unruly”—to “comfort the feeble-minded and support the weak”—to be “kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another”—to “consider one another, that they may provoke unto love and to good works”—to “strive together for the faith of the Gospel.”—Have not many of those precepts, which are directed to *all Christians*, been left as it were to the *Ministers* of Christ? and all too much neglected both by ministers and people? Are not the poor of the flock almost unknown to their more wealthy brethren? And does not even that Christian *intercourse*, which does subsist among the upper ranks of life, too often degenerate into the indulgence of private friendship and self-gratification, through the *partiality* with which the objects of it are selected?

These are questions, which are earnestly recommended to the serious consideration of those, who truly love our Lord Jesus Christ:—who know his love and desire to follow him fully.—If they be answered by your consciences as it is believed they must be answered, let us proceed without delay, taking shame to ourselves for having flumbered so long,—to seek more of *Christian fellowship*;—fellowship founded, not upon our connection

nection with any particular congregation in this city, but upon our *union in Christ*; fellowship, therefore, not confined to Christians of our own party, or agreeable to our own natural taste, but extended to all, who are partakers of the same “precious faith.” Let us commence our attempt upon this broad and plain principle of Scripture; aiming in it singly at our mutual edification and the glory of the Lord, and regulating it by *his word* alone, which we shall find sufficient for our direction without forming any new rules.

Some will be ready to object, “what! gather together *all the Christians* of Dublin into one place? where will you find a place large enough to hold so many thousands?” Alas! may it not be rather asked, where are all those thousands of Christians—of real believers—acquainted with “the truth as it is in Jesus”—avowing that truth and walking in it? Where are all those thousands of happy, holy, heavenly-minded, loving, lowly souls? It becomes not us to attempt a calculation of their numbers in this City:—but the enlightened observer, who looks abroad and takes the word of God for his rule of judging, can scarcely be apprehensive that a place cannot be found large enough to hold them.

It is in the places where the true gospel is preached, that we may scripturally expect to find
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the Christians of Dublin ; for they will know and love that “ joyful sound,” which they have heard and believed. Let us look at the assemblies in those places at any time, except on sabbath mornings, when traditionary custom is known to bring a promiscuous mass of professors. Let us look at them on the evenings of that day ; and except where the novelty or popular talents of preachers may collect a crowd, whose absence at other times proves that it is not “ the love of the truth” brings them together then, might not all the assemblies be contained without much inconvenience in some one of the houses ?

But even of those, who appear in the evening assemblies of God’s people, how many would be found upon examination *ignorant* even of the first principles of the Gospel of Christ ?—opposing some of its fundamental truths which assert his grace and glory, or so indifferent about them as to manifest, that they never discerned them in their reality and importance. How many more who make a profession of evangelical knowledge, and are perhaps foremost in the use of evangelical terms, would be found to contradict their profession by the *earthliness* of their minds—the *ungodliness* of their walk—the habitual indulgence of one form or another of the fleshly mind ? Of *such* professors there are enough and more than enough ;

enough ; but it is to be feared that the real possessors of the truth in this city may yet be addressed as a *little flock*.

Let not that little flock continue so scattered one from another ; let *them* seek to find out and edify each other : and let them not be discouraged by the smallness of the number, who may be willing to unite with them in the attempt ; nor seek to have any united in it but those, whom there is scriptural reason to consider as of one spirit, and cordially concerned in the object we propose. With such alone you can have real Christian fellowship, and the aspect of the present times seems to call for your coming out, not only from the unprofessing, but *professing* world.

At the same time, in thus gathering together you will have need to guard against the evil of thinking hardly of those, who do not join your Christian Society. Many real Christians, through the infirmity of the flesh, may be kept back by mistake and prejudice ; many also by remaining unknown to you. Judge not brethren, but go on yourselves (as many as see it their Christian duty and Christian privilege) to meet together, for the united worship of your Lord, and fellowship with each other,—to know—to love—to walk with each other as brethren : and the God of peace and love be with you !

BRETHREN,

BRETHREN,

WE read (Acts xix. 8, 9.) that the apostle Paul went into the synagogue at Ephesus, “and spake boldly for the space of three months, “disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers “were hardened and believed not, but spake “evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and *separated the disciples*, “disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.” I have for some time been encreasingly convinced that some such attempt ought to be made, to *separate the disciples* in this city; and that it is necessary, in order to their walking more fully according to the rule of Scripture. I formerly endeavoured to direct your attention to the subject by the preceding address, published originally in the Hibernian Evangelical Magazine: and the design of the following pages is, to bring it again before your view, with such additional observations as appear to me most important.

In any such attempt, few things are of more consequence than that all, who engage in it, should understand what they are about; and should undertake it with scriptural views of the object; that they should be aware of the character

rafter of persons whom it concerns,—of the end to be proposed by their uniting together,—of the means by which that end is to be pursued,—and of the rules by which they are to be regulated. Erroneous conceptions upon these points have often prevented the usefulness of such attempts, and in not a few instances rendered them productive of more mischief than good; while persons undertook to *form* what are called *churches*, under such views as were calculated to turn them aside “from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus,” or to amuse them with what was little better than a new plaything.

As to the word CHURCH, I would observe that in the original it means nothing more than an *assembly*, or congregation of persons, collected together for whatever purpose. Accordingly in the 19th chapter of the Acts, it is three times applied to the tumultuous assembly at Ephesus brought together by Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen, v. 32, 39, 41. This observation may, at first view, appear merely verbal; but it will be acknowledged to be far from unimportant, by those who consider what a veil of mystery has hung upon various questions connected with the subject, which an attention to the plain meaning of the word rendered CHURCH will at once draw aside. Christians are exhorted (Hebr. x. 25.)

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not to forsake “ the assembling of themselves together;” and wherever they *assemble* or *meet together* for Christian purposes, there is all that is meant in Scripture by a Christian CHURCH.

Brethren, the object of this address is not to engage you—to form what does not already exist in this city. We must suppose that there are already Christian Churches here, or assemblies of Christians. My object is to direct your attention to the scriptural principles, which ought to regulate you in your *assembling* together. If any one chooses to call this *forming a church*, I shall not differ with him about the name; but let not that phrase obscure the simple meaning of the thing.

I have already mentioned my persuasion that the disciples of Christ in this city ought *all* to aim at meeting together in one body, for the purpose of Christian fellowship. Their union with each other for this purpose will not at all do away the important uses of the several *mixed assemblies*, in which the word of God is read and preached. Paul continued to dispute daily in the school of Tyrannus, after he had *separated the disciples*. Nor will it prevent the disciples themselves from continuing to attend, in such mixed assemblies, on the ministry of any preachers of the Word, whom they find most profitable;

as we may readily conceive that the disciples at Ephesus, after they were brought together in a separate meeting, continued to be present while the apostle, in the school of Tyrannus, was “disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.” The union to which I call you with each other is not to be founded on a connection with any one preacher of the Word; and therefore need not detach you from connection with any other. It is to be founded on your connection with the one Lord, whose disciples you are. Your “gathering together upon Christ Jesus,” (2 Theff. ii. 1.)—your being one in him—is the only scriptural ground of your gathering together in outward fellowship as his disciples. All believers collectively, from their being brought together in Him into one spiritual body, are therefore called in Scripture his *Church*, or *Congregation*: and it is as such that believers, in any one place, are called to assemble themselves together.

In such a separate assembling of yourselves as I speak of, the persons with whom you are to unite are *all whom you have scriptural grounds to acknowledge as disciples of Christ*, who can and will associate with you; and *none else*. I say *all* such; for if you exclude any such, the bond of your union becomes of necessity something else,

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than your connection with the Lord Jesus Christ as his disciples. For if that be the one ground of your union, none must be debarred from uniting with you, whom you acknowledge in that character. And I say that *no others* are to be received into it; for this again would change the bond of union, or would be acknowledging as disciples those, whom the Scriptures do not warrant you to consider as such. And this, however common, is a most awful departure from fidelity to the word of your God, and from love to the souls of men.—It is a very different thing, where no such *separation* of real disciples is intended or professed.

But it is important to observe, that to constitute a person such as you are bound to receive into your union, it is not necessary that he should really be a disciple; or that you should have demonstrative evidence of his being so. This it is impossible at present to have. We are called to “judge nothing before the time,” when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. All that is necessary is, that the persons whom you receive should be such, as you are bound by Scripture to acknowledge as Brethren. And here it is of the last importance, that your judgments should be regulated by the word of God, and by it alone. According to it, all who *believe the*
Gospel

Gospel are taught of God,—are born of God,—are among the many Sons whom the Lord Jesus will bring to glory. The first enquiry therefore must be—what that *Faith* is, which the person confesses with his mouth;—whether it be *the Gospel*—the *only* Gospel of the *only* true God. I would ask—not, as too many have done, what fine story he can tell of himself and his own experience, but—what says he of CHRIST? The profession, upon which persons have been too long admitted as fellow-disciples, is a profession of something about *themselves*: the profession, upon which alone they can scripturally be admitted, is the profession of what they think about CHRIST.

If that confession of the mouth be agreeable to the truth of the Gospel, and if its sincerity be not contradicted by any decisive evidence in their walk inconsistent with the character of a believer, I am bound to receive them as brethren beloved, and to walk with them as such; however *weak* in the faith they be, and however *young* in the Christian life. And to this I am bound, in submission to the authority of God's word, and in the regulation of my judgment by it,—notwithstanding any prejudices I may have entertained against their character before,—notwithstanding any dissimilarity of their

natural character to my taste,—and notwithstanding the conviction that I may perhaps at the great day (or even before it) discover that I am mistaken in the present hope which I form of the Grace of God in them. This conviction only calls me to watch over all in love; but does not warrant me to repel the scriptural evidence upon which that hope is to be formed, as long as this evidence is exhibited. And so long, and in proportion to its clearness, I am called to rejoice over them and embrace them in my heart; without giving way to the suspicion or evil surmising, that is contrary to the open kindness of brotherly affection.

The same fidelity to the truths of God binds me not to receive or acknowledge as brethren any, who do not exhibit that scriptural evidence of discipleship, who do not confess with their mouth the faith of the true Gospel; and this, however high their reputation for religion among men—whatever prejudices I may have before entertained in their favour, however grateful to my taste their natural character may be, however I may be a favourite with them or they with me.

The same principles mark the necessity of Christian *discipline* to be exercised over the disciples, when they have been separated and assembled

bled together as fellow-disciples. Those who either openly swerve from the faith, or wilfully persist in walking contrary to the true faith which they profess, must be cut off from the union; but not until the methods of Christian reproof and admonition have first been tried and have failed.

But here the lowly tenderness of Christian love, and the soundness of scriptural judgment, are especially requisite. We must take heed that we usurp not dominion over the faith of our brethren, by attempting to impose on their *belief* any principles, that are not essential to the Gospel. We must remember also that, among those who believe that Gospel, there are various degrees of clearness of insight into divine truth; and that those who are *weak in the faith* are to be received,—“but not to doubtful disputations.” (Rom. xiv. 1.) We must beware of imposing on their *practice* the traditionary precepts of men, in place of—or in addition to—the divine rule of love.

All who really know the Lord, who really believe his Gospel, love him in sincerity; and love his people for his name's sake: and their reigning desire is to follow him fully, walking in the ways of *all* his gracious precepts. But we must remember that there are various de-

degrees of the “knowledge of his will;” and that the flesh in all his people upon earth “lusteth against the spirit:”—that altho’ the declaration stands sure to all the feed, that “sin shall not have *dominion* over them,” their state here is yet a state of “striving against sin;” and that according to *the grace given* unto every man—according to his strength and maturity in the life of faith,—the fruit of the Spirit is produced in various degrees.

We need therefore to beware of rashly confounding the *opposition* of the flesh in our brethren, with its *reign*—with their “yielding themselves servants to obey” it. We need to keep in memory that those who are *strong* are called “to bear the infirmities of the weak;” and that, while we are bound not to countenance the evil of any appearance of the flesh, but on the contrary to admonish one another in love,—it is not at the same time every appearance of the workings of the flesh that can afford a scriptural ground, for ceasing to consider the person in whom they appear as a Christian brother: and that even where we see one of our brethren most grievously wounded by the enemy, “overtaken in any fault,” the rule of Scripture stands—not—cut him off at once from your body—but “ye that are spiritual *restore* such an one in
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the spirit of *meekness*, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. vi. 1.) We must remember that, while we are called to exhort one another and to pray one for the other that we may "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," it is by *love* we are called to serve one another; with all patience and long suffering and compassion and tender-heartedness, "forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us."

The one *end* of that outward union, to which you are called, is this—that you may glorify God and edify one another by WALKING TOGETHER AS BRETHREN. To that one end every circumstance in your union is to be directed and subservient. For the prosecution of that end it is, that your *separation* from those who do not believe, appears to me to be necessary. Without this separation you cannot *come together* as brethren;—you cannot know one another;—and therefore cannot discharge the various offices of love, to which the disciples of Christ in the same city are scripturally called.

For want of such a separation of the disciples, even those who do happen to know each other, and who meet together in the same mixed assembly, are precluded from observing many scriptural

tural precepts, which are of permanent obligation, though they have lamentably passed into oblivion and difuse. How, for instance, in the present scattered state of Christians—mixed in their assemblies with unbelievers,—can that divine rule be observed which is given Matth. xviii. 7. ? How can the more opulent act as Christians, in distributing freely and chearfully to the necessities of the poorer Saints ; when these—secluded from the knowledge of the former—pine perhaps in poverty, unobserved by all but those who are as necessitous as themselves ? How can we, correspondently to the rule of Scripture, “ weep with those that weep, comfort the afflicted, support the weak, warn those that are unruly, bear one another’s burdens, &c.”—while we are ignorant perhaps of each other’s persons, and still more of each other’s circumstances and course ;—except so far as a few happen to be thrown together, by a simularity of taste, or equality of ranks in human society ? And can any of you, my brethren, who consider the walk to which believers are called, and its connection with the glory of our Lord and the prosperity of our own souls ;—can any of you who observe how this walk is impeded by the want of such a *separation of the disciples* as I speak of,—can you longer willingly

lingly hold back from thus associating yourselves together ?

Yet, in the attempt, you will be exposed to much opposition and reproach and gainfaying, especially from false professors. The *fellowship* with each other to which you are called, founded on the *truth* as it is in JESUS, and influenced and regulated by the precepts of his word—is calculated to exhibit the Gospel of his grace in its genuine simplicity ; and to mark its opposition to all the corrupted systems of religion, which go under the name of Christianity. And the more his Gospel is so exhibited, the more will it irritate and offend and disgust those who believe not. But “ fear not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings ;—but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and let him be your fear :” and remember Him who hath said—“ whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven ;” but “ whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father.” Mat. x. 32. Mark viii. 38.

But, in entering upon this walk of brotherly fellowship, you need to count the cost in another respect ; and to be assured that it cannot be maintained,

tained, without a continued *denial of yourselves*. The principles of the Gospel which must be brought into practice, in maintaining it, are such as our fleshly nature continually revolts against: and the application of them to the regulation of your walk, which this union will require, is likely to bring out to your own view many forms of the selfishness and pride of your hearts, which perhaps have been little discovered hitherto; and to “prove the sincerity of your love.” It is always contrary to flesh and blood to follow his steps, who came “not to be ministered unto but to minister;”—to “seek not our own—but every man another’s wealth;”—in honour to prefer one another;—to be ready to every good work, and every the lowest office of love, in ministering to the household of faith. In short, it is only so far as you walk in the Spirit—the spirit of faith in Christ Jesus—that spirit which is always opposed to every principle and tendency of your own,—that you will or can maintain that walk, which it is the design of your union to promote. They will greatly err, who shall attempt to join you without having that spirit; and as long as you walk together according to the rule of God’s word, such persons will find little in your union to gratify them.

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And remember, brethren, that the outward fellowship one with another, on which you are addressed,—not being a matter of *human* institution but of *divine* appointment,—needs not to have rules invented by men for the regulation of it. It has often happened that *churches* have been so *formed*, that the minds of their members have been more directed to the particular circumstances of their organization—the forms they were to observe—the officers they were to employ, &c. than to the great object for which Christians are called to associate together. And thus it has often happened that something under the name of a CHURCH was *formed*, which was indeed the formation and work of man:—something which its members thought was made very closely on a scriptural model, because they had a number of officers and forms under scriptural names,—but which was yet a lifeless and most imperfect representation of what the scripture means by a *Christian church*. Keep in view, brethren, why you are called to be a church,—that is, to assemble yourselves together. Keep in view the scriptural object of your union: keep in view the description of persons, with whom you are called to associate: keep in view the scriptural principles, which are to regulate you in your walking together as brethren: and you will
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then find that the other rules, about which so many perplexing questions have been raised, are very few and very simple.

As to your assemblies, it is plain that you are to meet together on the first day of the week, to join in worship—and in breaking of bread—and in speaking from the word of God to your mutual edification, according to the utterance and wisdom given unto any of you. As to other circumstances in your meetings, let expediency determine them, so far as they are left undetermined by the word of God. We find that the disciples of old met together, sometimes privately; sometimes in places, which any who pleased were allowed to enter. Perhaps, in this city and at this time, you will find a middle course for a while most expedient. It seems to me undesirable that your meetings should be either so private, as to give just room for misrepresentation; or so public, as to attract the notice of a promiscuous multitude. But especially remember, after you have assembled together, that you have but used an instituted *mean* for exciting those brotherly affections, which are to influence your daily walk towards each other.

As to what are called church-officers, and church-government, according to my views of the subject, little need be said. Judge ye, from
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the Scriptures, what I shall say. It seems to me that almost all who have written on the subject have perplexed it, by some fundamental error in their enquiries. It seems to me that there is no such thing countenanced in Scripture, as what is implied in the expression *church-officers*, or in the idea of *governing* a church by their *authority*. All the members of a Christian assembly are Brethren; and as such on a perfect equality: and the authority of God's word is the only authority they have to acknowledge. The persons who have been too long called church-officers, and have too long acted as such, are represented in scripture in a very different character and a very different office,—even in that of SERVANTS to the church. Such indeed, acting according to the spirit of their office—according to the Spirit of Him who, in the days of his flesh, was among his disciples “as one that *serveth*,”—are to be “esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake.” But as to *authority*, they have no more than any of those unto whom they minister.

With respect to the *number* of such servants, and the particular offices in which they minister, it appears from the true nature of their character that they *ought to vary*, according to the varying circumstances and occasions of various churches. The idea that all churches, or assemblies of

Christians, should have the same number of nominal servants and in the same nominal offices, appears to me as absurd—as that all families, in human society, should have the same number of servants, none more and none fewer than another. According to the *occasions*, brethren, in which you need to be served, and according to your opportunity of finding persons *qualified* to serve you,—look out among yourselves for men who will undertake the service.

But some will say—‘is not this a departure from the rule of Scripture?’ From what rule of Scripture? Where do the Scriptures prescribe the number and nature of the servants, that Christians shall employ in their assemblies?—‘But the description, which they give of the apostolic constitutions in this matter, is designed for a rule to which we ought to conform.’ That every such description is designed for the instruction and benefit of Christians in all ages, I readily admit: but I deny that the Scriptures of the New Testament give any such description of the servants employed in the churches, which were settled by the apostles, as was ever designed to be imperative on Christians, to employ in all cases servants of the same description and the same number. Those who affirm that there is laid down in Scripture any

one such model of church-government (as it is called) lose sight of what the Scriptures expressly declare about the nature of those who minister in the churches of Christ, as the *servants* of the churches among whom they minister. For if they be servants, it is preposterous to suppose that their number and offices should not vary, according to the circumstances and occasions of the churches. And I do not wonder that men who look in the Scriptures, for what the Scriptures never were designed to prescribe, should involve themselves in endless disputes; and be unable to come at any satisfactory solution of their enquiries.

I consider the Episcopalian—the Presbyterian—and the Independent—as all alike fundamentally erroneous, as to the principle on which they proceed in their respective systems: and while each overturns the arguments of the other, each attempts to establish a system, which is as baseless as that which he subverts. Thus, for instance, with the Presbyterian and Independent, I consider it absurd to say that every Christian church, or assembly, ought to be under what is called *Episcopalian* government; or, in plain and scriptural language, under the oversight of one person who is employed to superintend the concerns of several churches. For—what if there

be not *several churches*, so adjoining or connected, that one person can be employed to take the oversight of any common concerns of all? Shall it be necessary to employ a servant under the name, whose office shall be merely *nominal*? But against the Presbyterian and Independent, I say that it is unscriptural and absurd to assert, that—in any case where the occasions of several churches require it—there ought not to be a person in such a character and office as is called Episcopal: and I smile at the arguments, by which they endeavour to prove the *unlawfulness* of Episcopal government; or to shew that Titus, for instance, was not employed in such an office. The word rendered *Bishop* means nothing more than an *overseer*; as it is indeed rendered, Acts xx. 28: and it is applied in Scripture indifferently to those who had the oversight—either of a single Christian assembly, or of several.

Let it be remembered that a *Christian church* is not made for its servants; but that the servants are appointed for the use of the church: and this principle, plain and simple as it is, will go farther to terminate the disputes about church-government, than all the numerous volumes which have been written on the subject;—but not by determining the controversy in favour of any one system of it now existing.

Nor

Nor do I contend for a greater latitude here, than I can prove that the Scriptures allow. Do we not find that, in the churches under the immediate direction of the apostles, the number and offices of their servants *varied* with the circumstances that required their service? Was it until circumstances required it, that servants were appointed in the church at Jerusalem to manage the distribution of their public fund? Acts, vi. 1, &c. And yet who will say, that the church was imperfectly constituted before? or that there must be, in every church, such servants—whether they are wanted or not? And let it be observed that the word *Deacon* has been, by some, absurdly appropriated to servants in some such office; whereas in Scripture it is applied indifferently to all the *servants* of the church; and is borrowed by the apostle Paul himself, to denote his own employment in the ministry of the gospel. Ephes. iii. 7. Col. i. 23, 25, &c.

If these things be so, Brethren, you need not in your assembling yourselves together as disciples—separated from them that believe not,—perplex yourselves with a variety of intricate questions, which have long been agitated and never satisfactorily solved. Remember, that if

you knew the exact form of church-government instituted by the Apostles in any of the churches which they settled,—you might have precisely the same set of servants, under the same names of office; and yet there would be no *true Christian Church*, unless they were true believers who assembled together: and your Church, even though it consisted of true believers, would be *absurdly* organized if you had nominal servants, in imitation of those which were appointed in the Apostolic Churches, without any real *need* of their service. And remember that there would be a *true Christian Church*, wherever true believers assembled together,—though they should not have one of the disciples called to any distinct office or service from the rest. And that there were such Churches in the apostles' days, I cannot but think probable, when I read in Scripture of Churches—or assemblies of believers—in the house of such or such a disciple.

Let us suppose that the Gospel was brought to a town or neighbourhood, where but six individuals received and professed it. According to the ideas of some, there would scarcely be a sufficient number of disciples—supposing them all males—to form what they think the essence of a Church, to constitute the *officers* necessary to
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its organization. Yet who, that regulates his judgment by Scripture, will say that these six disciples might not—ought not—to meet together for Christian fellowship,—to join in worship and in edifying one another,—“ in breaking of bread and in prayers;”—though no one of them had the pastoral oversight of the rest, or was set apart for any peculiar work of service in their assembly? Who will say that—thus meeting together—they would not be a Christian assembly, that is—a Christian Church?

Undoubtedly, “ when the number of the disciples was multiplied,” occasions would occur that would call for the appointment of servants, to minister to the Church. And according to those occasions, and according to the qualifications of any of the disciples to fill these stations of service, servants ought to be and were appointed. And the mention made in Scripture of their respective offices, as far as we distinctly understand them, ought to be attended to by Christian Churches now, as suggesting the enquiry—whether they do not need persons to serve them in similar capacities. But among the various devices, by which Satan has long obscured the real character and glory of the Christian Church, that idea has been most successfully employed

ployed—that a certain set of *officers*—(falsely so called)—or *servants*—is necessary to constitute a Christian Church. Those who find their interest in keeping up the idea, will probably be very angry at this plain protest against it : and others may be startled at a representation that will seem to be novel ; though I think it as old as the apostles. But search the Scriptures, Brethren ; and see whether these things be so, “in nothing terrified by your adversaries.”

I have mentioned that your union ought to embrace all persons in this city, whom you have scriptural reason to acknowledge as *believers of the Gospel*. And if so, the *one* basis and the *one* bond of it must be—your agreement in the truth of that Gospel ; *without including any thing, in which real believers may conscientiously differ*.

Thus, for instance, some think that none but adults ought to be baptized : others think that, in the apostles' days, the infants of those adults who received the Gospel were baptized with their parents ; and some again doubt whether our Lord intended at all that the institution of baptism should be of *permanent observance* in his Church, —where the divinity of his mission has been for ages generally acknowledged ;—conceiving that it was designed only as an open acknowledgment

ledgment of it, by those who *had been ignorant* of or *had denied* his mission. Some contend that baptism ought to be administered only by immersion in water : others, while they admit that this was the mode originally practised in the apostolic days and in the Eastern countries, deny that this is necessarily included in the meaning of the word rendered to *baptize* ; and conceive that the application of water—whether by immersion or affusion—is all that is imported by the word, or essential to the symbolical significancy of the rite. Well, Brethren, it is not my intention to attempt deciding these controversies. But shall the disciples of Christ be kept asunder by such diversities of opinion ? I only ask it to be granted, that a person adopting any of these opinions may be one of his *disciples* ; and they must have a most unscriptural view of the nature of his kingdom, who conceive that it consists in any matter connected with these questions. If not, then will you reject from your union those, whom the Lord has received, and with whom you profess to be of one Spirit,—because they hold a different opinion from you on these questions ? Nay ; “ let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind ; ” but let him not usurp dominion over his Brethren, by imposing his sentiments here on their minds.

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The *simplicity* of the *ground* of your union is most needful to be maintained; as it will affect the whole of your fellowship one with another. You will alike depart from that simplicity, if you introduce into it the peculiar principles either of Pædo-baptists or of Antipædo-baptists,—so as to exclude from outward fellowship with you those disciples of Christ, who adopt the opposite opinion. The ground and bond of your fellowship one with another would then be—not your agreement in *the truth* as it is in JESUS, not your being one in him,—but your agreement about a matter altogether distinct from the Gospel of his Grace.

It has been long so common to make such matters the basis of Church-fellowship, that if you adopt the course, which I recommend as scriptural, you will probably be spoken against—and your union will be decried—by the zealots of *all parties*. And the more decisively it is founded upon the *faith* of CHRIST and his saving *truth*, the more offensive it must be to all who disbelieve that truth. But fear not, Brethren; “be strong in the Lord;”—“hold forth the word of life”;—“be patient toward all men.” Let the *word* of your GOD be “a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your paths.” Follow
him.

him fully. Let neither fear nor shame hold you back from confessing his name before men: and, in due season, ye shall reap—if ye faint not.

DEC. 31, 1803.

FINIS.









