



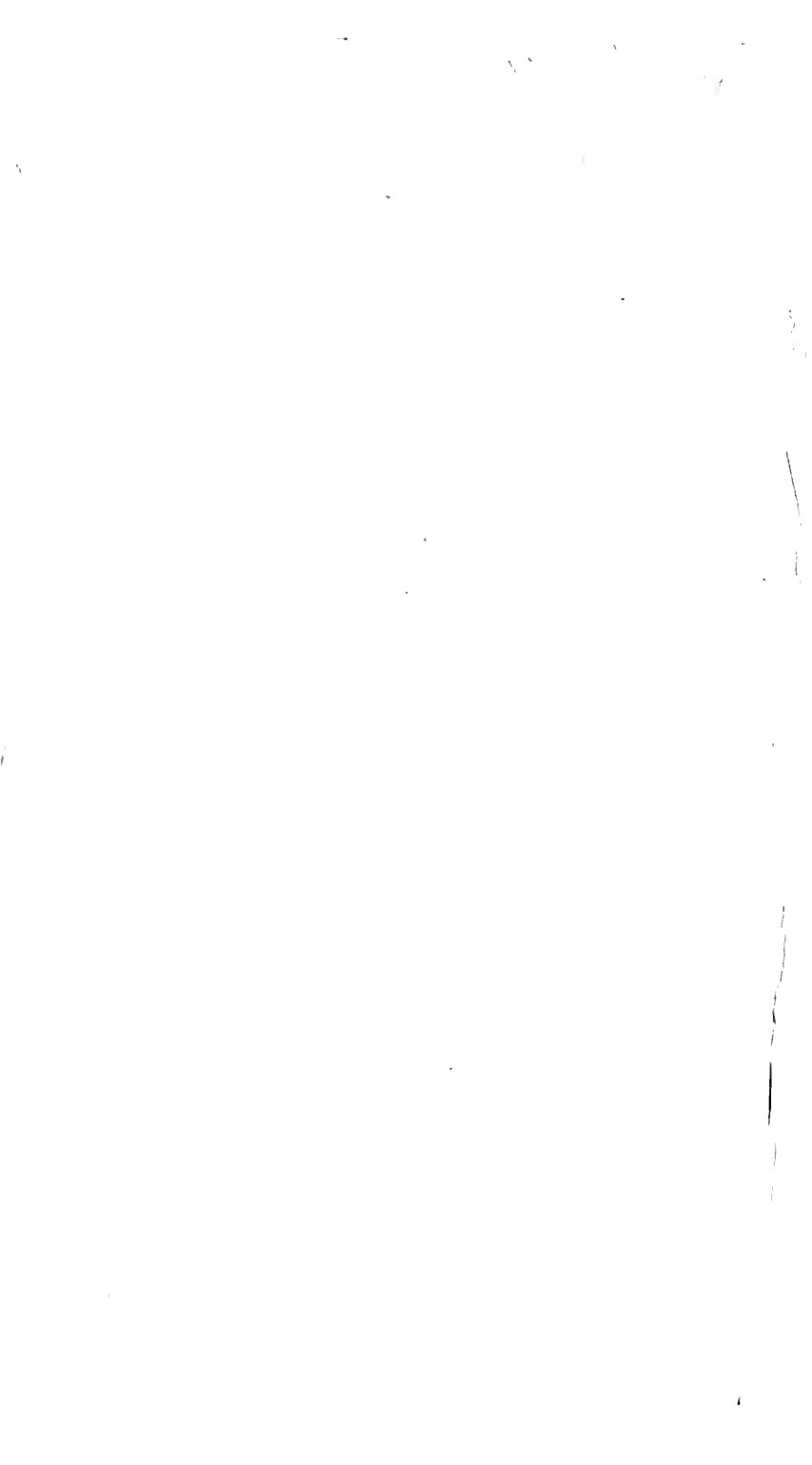
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A

**LETTER**

TO THE

**REV. WILLIAM E. CHANNING,**

ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS LETTER TO THE

**REV. SAMUEL C. THATCHER,**

RELATING TO THE

**REVIEW IN THE PANOPLIST**

OF

**AMERICAN UNITARIANISM.**

**BY SAMUEL WORCESTER, D. D.**

PASTOR OF THE TABERNACLE CHURCH, SALEM.

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BOSTON:

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1815





REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE read your Letter to your Friend and Brother the Rev. SAMUEL C. THATCHER, with some pleasure and with much regret. The causes of the one and of the other will in part be laid open in the subsequent remarks, which I have thought proper to address in the form of a letter to you. I need make no apology: the subject is deeply and extensively interesting; and involves considerations of infinite moment to the general cause, to which you and I profess to be sacredly devoted. Nor shall I make any professions of candour, or charity: for I have been taught by the best of books, that "charity vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself unseemly; from other books I have learned, that high professions too often serve to cover a temper very different from that which "is not easily provoked," but "suffereth long and is kind;" and I am thoroughly convinced, that persons who have the greatest confidence in their good dispositions, do not always know "what manner of spirit they are of."

I wish it to be understood, distinctly, that I have no connexion, or privity in this business, with the writer of the Review, which is the subject of your strictures. I write not in his behalf; but in behalf of the general interests of truth, and justice, and mercy. He probably will answer for himself; and to him I shall leave the particular vindication of himself, his statements and conclusions, his spirit and style: a labour which does not belong to me, and which I should be less disinclined to undertake, were the Review in all respects exactly such as I could wish it to have been. It might perhaps have been better, had the Reviewer been less intent on exciting those whose cause he espouses, and consulted more the conviction and benefit of those against whom his animadversions are directed.

With what justice, and to what extent, a similar remark might be applied to your Letter, you, my dear Sir, and your friends will consider. It cannot, however, but be regretted,

that you should have found it necessary to sit down to write, while breathing an atmosphere to which you were not accustomed;" while perturbed with the feelings which, in spite of all your efforts to restrain them, are so copiously infused into the entire body of your Letter. But all reasonable allowance should be made for the urgency of the case. Had you waited till the excitement had subsided, your opportunity for preventing or counteracting the impressions which the Review was likely to make, might have been lost. I frankly confess that a similar reason has induced me to avail myself of the earliest remission of other pressing calls of duty, for bestowing some attention on your subject. Could you, however, have waited till the cool of the day, though probably your Letter would have been less animated, and less adapted to a particular purpose, it would not. I am persuaded, have displayed less of the meekness of wisdom, or been less correct in its representations.

You bring, dear Sir, against the Reviewer an accusation of "falsehood:" an accusation certainly of no trivial kind, and never to be lightly preferred against any one. "The Review," you say, "asserts, 1. That the ministers of this town [Boston] and its vicinity and the great body of liberal christians are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word. 2. That these ministers and liberal christians are guilty of hypocritical concealment of their sentiments, and behave in a base, cowardly and hypocritical manner." In these two assertions, especially in the first of them, it should seem, lies the alleged falsehood of the Reviewer. These also make the first two heads of your Letter. The 3d is this: "Christians are called to come out and separate themselves from these ministers and the liberal body of christians, and to withhold from them christian communion." Under these three heads in their order, the remarks which I have to submit to your consideration, will chiefly be arranged.

1. Does the Reviewer then assert, "That the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word?" This you affirm; and to support the affirmation, you quote from the Review the following passages. "P 267,

“We feel entirely warranted to say, that the *predominant* “*religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. “Belsham’s sense of the word.’ P. 254, ‘We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter, to speak of the first as certain, “that Unitarianism,’ meaning Mr. Belsham’s, ‘is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of “Boston.’ P. 271, ‘The liberal party mutilate the New “Testament, reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of “the gospel, and degrade the Saviour to the condition of a “fallible, peccable, and ignorant man.’” These passages I shall briefly consider; but not in the order in which you have chosen to arrange them: for I am not satisfied that it was quite right, to place the passage, quoted from the 267th page, in which there is no mention of Boston, before the one, quoted from the 254th page, and which refers to Boston directly. By this arrangement, with the help of a clause which you have thought proper to insert in the second passage, you have given to the three passages an aspect which, I believe you will readily perceive, does not belong to them. I think it more fair to consider the passages in the order in which they stand in the Review, and to refer them severally to their proper connexions.

The first passage then is this: “We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter, to speak of the first as certain, that Unitarianism is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches in Boston.” Is this, Sir, an assertion, “That the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham’s sense of the word?” You will please to observe, that no mention is here made of “the vicinity,” or of “the great body of liberal christians.” The remark is limited to Boston. Further, it is not said that “the ministers, i. e. all the ministers, even of Boston, are Unitarians. The word “predominant” is evidently restrictive, and implies, that they were not all intended to be included. Further still, it is not said that *any* of the ministers of Boston are Unitarians, “in Mr. Belsham’s sense of the word.”

Does the *connexion*, then, warrant the broad construction, which you have given to the passage. The Reviewer pre-

sents a letter, written by Dr. Freeman of Boston to Mr. Lindsey of London, in which, after mentioning the "avidity" with which the "Unitarian Tracts," received by him from Mr. Lindsey, were extensively read, and the "impression which they could not fail to make upon the minds of many," Dr. Freeman says, "From these and other causes the Unitarian doctrine appears to be still upon the increase." "It flourishes chiefly in New England; but not much in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, or the western counties of Massachusetts. A few seeds have been sown in Vermont, and an abundant harvest has been produced in the vicinity of Boston, and in the counties directly south of it." Immediately in this connexion, the Reviewer says, "How far the sentiments in question have spread in Boston, has been often a subject of inquiry, and not unfrequently of debate. Mr. Belsham will inform us. If, says he, I am not greatly misinformed, divine worship, in many of the principal churches in Boston, is carried on upon principles strictly, if not avowedly Unitarian." The Reviewer then adds, "If any thing be lacking in Mr. Belsham's account, it is supplied in a letter to him, by William Wells, Esq. of Boston, a gentleman who, from his extensive acquaintance with books and men, and his distinguished zeal in the cause of Unitarianism, may well be supposed to give as exact a picture as any man living could draw." In this letter, which the Reviewer gives at large, Mr. Wells says, "Most of our Boston clergy and respectable laymen (of whom we have many enlightened theologians) are Unitarians."—"I may safely say, the general habit of thinking and speaking upon this question, in Boston, is Unitarian." Upon this the Reviewer remarks, "Such is the testimony in the case under consideration;" (viz. "How far the sentiments in question have spread in Boston;") and we presume that no man in his senses will hesitate for a moment to give implicit credit to such witnesses." Here comes the passage in question: "We shall feel ourselves warranted hereafter to speak of the first as certain, that Unitarianism is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of Boston."

Now, dear Sir, you will permit me to ask again, and to

ask very seriously, does the *connexion* warrant the broad construction which you have given to this passage? A construction which the *terms* of the passage, by themselves, certainly do not warrant; but upon which you have grounded the heavy accusation of falsehood. Is not the inquiry, in this connexion, limited expressly to Boston, to the exclusion most clearly of "its vicinity," and of "the great body of liberal "christians" elsewhere? Does not the Reviewer come to the conclusion, expressed in the debated passage, explicitly upon the ground of the adduced testimony of Mr. Belsham and Mr. Wells, in addition to that of Dr. Freeman? And does he not use the name Unitarian as unrestrictedly, as it is used by Mr. Wells himself, who must very well have known how Mr. Belsham would be likely to understand him? Upon what principles, then, of fairness or of truth could we be justified in alleging, that the Review here "asserts, that the ministers of Boston and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians are Unitarians, in Mr. Belsham's sense of "the word."

Before I dismiss this point, I must be permitted to ask further—Is not the Reviewer fairly borne out, in the declaration which he does make, respecting Boston, by the testimony upon which the declaration is made? Had he not a right to consider Dr. Freeman, Mr. Belsham and Mr. Wells, good authority in the case? Does he say more than what their testimony, particularly that of Mr. Wells, evidently warrants? Why then the heated indignation against *him*, while none is expressed against *them*? Why the strenuous endeavour to inflame and direct the resentments of the ministers and people of Boston against *him*, while *they* are treated with such exemplary forbearance?—Nay, rather, what occasion for any indignation, or resentment, either against him or them? Do you not, Sir, yourself mean to concede as much respecting Boston, as he asserts,—when you say, "The word *Unitarianism*, as denoting opposition to "Trinitarianism, undoubtedly expresses the character of a "considerable part of the ministers of this town and its vicinity?" I dare not, indeed, affirm that you, do; especially since you think it proper to add in the same sentence,—"and the common-

wealth." I have great satisfaction in the confidence, that Unitarianism is not the "predominant religion" among the ministers and churches of this commonwealth, and in the hope in God that it never will be. I do suppose, however, that you have great satisfaction also in the confidence, that it "is the predominant religion among the ministers and churches of Boston." But if so, what can be the reason that the true statement of the fact should produce such an unusual intensity of heat in your mind?

The next passage to be considered is this: "We feel entirely warranted to say, that the *predominant religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian, in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word." Does this "assert, that the ministers of Boston and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians are" of this character? Certainly, Sir, you will not hesitate to admit that, by itself, it does not. Does it then, when taken in connexion with the former passage? The former passage instead of helping to extend the sense of this, evidently serves to restrict it: for that passage plainly imports, that the ministers and churches of Boston are not all Unitarian, even in the general sense of the word. In each of these passages the restrictive word, "predominant," is used; and in the latter passage, to give it the greater force of restriction, it is printed in Italicks. The utmost then, that can be fairly made out from the two passages together, of assertion in regard to the ministers and churches of Boston, is, that the majority of them are Unitarian, and that the greater part of the Unitarian majority hold with Mr. Belsham. All this might be true, and yet not half of those ministers and churches be Unitarians of this character. Yet you, my dear Sir, have emphatically represented that, in these passages, "the Review asserts, that the ministers of Boston, with the ministers of the vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians are Unitarians in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word;" and, under cover of this representation, have, in your haste, most earnestly accused the Reviewer of falsehood.

I have stated the *utmost* that can fairly be made out towards what you allege. But the passage under consideration admits of an interpretation, still less favourable to your allegation.

It may mean a "predominance," not in point of *numbers*, but in point of *influence*: and from the connexion this should seem to be its real meaning. After stating, "We feel entirely warranted to say, that the *predominant religion* of the liberal party is decidedly Unitarian in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word," the Reviewer proceeds to shew the grounds upon which this declaration is made. He adduces the *Monthly Anthology*, the *General Repository*, and the *Improved Version of the New Testament*; publications which, as he supposes, were put forth and patronized by "the most prominent clergymen and laymen of the liberal party,"—men "who have the entire control of the college." And, after saying what he judged requisite, respecting the Unitarianism of these publications, he concludes thus: "It appears, then, that the "College and nearly all the influence of the liberal party "through the medium of the press are in favour of Unitarianism. If individuals dislike Mr. Belsham as a leader; if they "are not willing to be classed among his followers; let them "declare their own opinions openly." Here then, we have evidently an explanation of what the Reviewer meant, by "Unitarianism in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word being the *predominant religion* of the liberal party:" that it is *predominant* in point of "influence," having "the most prominent characters" for its supporters and abettors. This, as you will readily acknowledge, might be true, though not one half, not one quarter of "the great body of liberal Christians" were Unitarians in this sense. And, Sir, that it is not actually true, nothing which you have advanced goes to shew.

What, however, the real truth in the case is, I will not take upon me to say: but I must say, that I do not see that the Reviewer may not have been perfectly honest in the opinion which he has expressed; perfectly honest in declaring that he "feels himself entirely warranted to say" what he does say. If his opinion is a mistaken one, yet an "unperverted mind" will admit, that the grounds on which it was formed have at least the appearance of some solidity; and it would require, it should seem, no uncommon share of "the meekness of wisdom," no extraordinary effort of that "charity which hopeth all things," to refrain from charging him with falsehood.

One other passage, under this head, remains to be considered: "The liberal party mutilate the New Testament, reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and degrade the Saviour to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man." This is the last of the three passages which you have cited to shew that the "Review asserts, that the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the great body of liberal Christians are Unitarians in Mr. Belsham's sense of the word," and upon which you ground your principal accusation of falsehood. But is it here asserted, that all the individuals of the liberal party actually do the things, and all of them, which the party is said to do? Is this a fair interpretation of the passage? Or if it admits of this, does it fairly admit of no other?

The apostles, Sir, as you very well know, repeatedly charge the Jewish rulers and people, generally, even "the great body" of the nation, with having "crucified and slain the Lord of life and glory." Yet, as you also know, but a very small part of that great body actually imbrued their hands in his blood. But some of them did; and of the rest, some more, and others less directly, consented to the deed. Hence they were generally involved in the guilt, and brought under the charge; and upon the great body, eventually, "wrath came to the uttermost." Such was the judgment of the apostles; and such the judgment of Him, whose throne is established in righteousness.—And, Sir, if among the liberal party, the things charged by the Reviewer are done; if some of the party do actually "mutilate the New Testament, reject nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and degrade the Saviour to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man,"—and of the rest, some more, and others less directly, consent to all this; if, as a party, or as individuals of the party, they bear no decided testimony against these deeds, and do nothing effectually to secure, or to purge themselves from the guilt of them; then, is it not true, and right, and proper to say of the party generally, that they do these things? and will they not generally, with all who adhere to them, be held to answer for them at the bar of the righteous Judge?



But are not these things done?—I tremble, my dear Sir, while I put this question to your conscience:—tremble, not because I feel that I am doing wrong; but because I consider it a question of infinite solemnity.—It surely will not be denied, that “the New Testament is mutilated;”—it will not be denied, that “the Saviour is degraded to the condition of a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man;”—nor should it any more be denied, that “nearly all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel are rejected.” I do believe you will yourself admit, that nearly all the doctrines are rejected, which, by the venerable founders of the New England churches were held as fundamental;—which the great body of the Protestant churches, since the Reformation, have held as fundamental.

How great a proportion of the liberal party actually do all this, and to how great an extent the rest of them consent to it, I would be devoutly thankful, that I am not particularly concerned to determine. But I must seriously ask, whether, from the representations made in your letter, were there no other means of judging in the case, there would not be most fearful reason to apprehend, that you and your liberal brethren generally have done but very little, to secure yourselves from the general charge, or, I must add, to purge yourselves from the general guilt?—It grieves me, dear Sir, to state, that in your Letter you tell us, in so many words, that “to believe with Mr. Belsham is no crime:”—by which I understand, no sin;—no offence against God—against Christ—against the Gospel—against the cause and kingdom of truth and holiness.—No sin—no offence, to hold Christ to have been no more than “a fallible, peccable, and ignorant man;”—to discard those parts of the New Testament which assert his pre-existence, his miraculous conception, his divinity, and his atonement, as either spurious, erroneous, or extravagantly hyperbolic;—to deny that his death was an expiatory sacrifice for sin, that “we owe him any gratitude for the benefits which we are now receiving,” that “we have any reason to hope for his future interposition;—to deny the inspiration of the Scriptures generally, and reject all the fundamental, all the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel!—You are also most studiously careful, most exquisitely tender, lest any “state-

ment you make should be considered, as casting the least reproach on those amongst us, who believe in the simple humanity of Jesus Christ;" and, of course, agree with Mr. Belsham, if not in all, yet certainly in the most material articles of his creed.—Most studiously careful, most exquisitely tender, lest you should wound their feelings, abridge their influence, or hinder their success in propagating their sentiments! And from other parts of your Letter, it would seem that such has been the uniform feeling, and conformable to it the uniform practice, not only of yourself, but of your liberal brethren in general.

Now, Sir, if such is the real fact, however small a proportion of the liberal party those may be, who actually do the things in question; yet is it not perfectly correct to say, generally, that the liberal party do them. And if so, where is the foundation for the serious charge of falsehood, so vehemently urged against the Reviewer?

You are pleased to say, (p. 7.) "The conduct of the Reviewer, in collecting all the opinions of that gentleman," Mr. Belsham, "not only on the Trinity, but on every other theological subject, in giving the *whole* collection the name of *Unitarianism*, and in exhibiting this to the world as the "creed of liberal Christians in this region, is perhaps as criminal an instance of unfairness, as is to be found in the records of theological controversy." Upon this permit me to ask,—Did you overlook that Mr. Belsham exhibits the opinions, thus collected, not as peculiarly his own, but expressly as the sentiments of the Unitarians generally? Have the goodness to observe his phraseology: "The Unitarians generally believe," &c. "The Unitarians maintain," &c. "The Unitarians disavow," &c. Was it not right for the Reviewer to consider Mr. Belsham, at present the head of the party certainly in England, as good an authority for determining what Unitarianism is, in the nineteenth century, as "Dr. Mosheim" or "Miss Adams?" and right also to give the people some distinct information on this subject? Is not the fact well known to you, that *Unitarianism* is a "name," not opprobriously given to that class of professed christians by their opponents, but eagerly claimed, and strenuously as-

serted by themselves? Are you not also perfectly aware, that after the denial of the essential divinity and the proper atonement of Christ, the descent to the lowest degree of Unitarianism is extremely easy, and often most rapid? That among those, who reject these primary doctrines a peculiar brotherhood is at once established? and that any differences of sentiment which may exist among them, are considered by themselves from the highest to the lowest, as comparatively unimportant,—and are so considered also by their opponents the Trinitarians, who regard the denial of these doctrines as subversive of the very foundations of the gospel? In what then consists the extreme criminality, with which the Reviewer is so warmly charged?

To conclude this head. You have accused the Reviewer of falsehood, in “asserting, That the ministers of Boston and its vicinity, and the great body of liberal christians are Unitarians in Mr. Belsham’s sense of the word.” I trust it has been made clear, that this accusation is unfounded: that he does not make the assertion which you allege that he makes; and in that what he does assert, in the passages cited by you, he is in part justified by your own concession, and in the rest borne out by the testimony of liberal gentlemen, and by principles of fair interpretation,—I frankly confess that I did regret, when I first read the Review, and I do still regret, that he had not expressed himself with more studious care, and more circumspect qualification. But for the heavy accusation, which you have preferred against him, and for the uncommon heat with which it is urged, I am utterly incapable of discerning any solid reason. “A man who is governed by christian principles, will slowly and reluctantly become the accuser of his brethren.” This sentiment, Sir, I quote from you with most hearty approbation. Near it, however, is a passage, which I quote with no common sensation of pain. “That he,” the Reviewer, “intended to deceive I am unwilling to assert; but the most charitable construction which his conduct will admit is, “that his passions and party spirit have criminally blinded “him, and hurried him into an act, which could have been “authorized only by the strongest evidence, and the most im-

“partial inquiry. The time may come, when he will view this transaction with other eyes; when the rage of party will have subsided; when the obligation of a fair and equitable temper will appear at least as solemn as the obligation of building up a sect; when misrepresentation, intended to injure, and originating, if not in malignity, yet in precipitancy and passion, will be felt to be a crime of no common aggravation.”—God in mercy preserve me from the desire of applying this passage. But, my dear Sir, I must be permitted to intreat you, at some favoured moment, when passion is hushed, when conscience is awake, when God and eternal things are in view, very seriously to consider, whether it might be applied with greater justice to the writer of the *Panoplist Review*, than to the writer of the *Letter to the Rev. Mr. Thatcher*.

II. In the second place you allege, that “the Review asserts, that the ministers of Boston and the vicinity, and the most considerable members of the liberal party, operate in secret, entrust only the initiated with their measures; are guilty of hypocritical concealment of their sentiments; behave in a base and hypocritical manner, compared with which Mr. Belshan’s conduct, rotten as he is in doctrine to the very core, is purity itself.”—Such, you are pleased to add, “is the decent language scattered through this Review.” And in a note, at the bottom of the page, you throw together a number of severed phrases, selected from various parts and connexions of the *Review*, and represent them all as having been applied by the Reviewer, directly to yourself and your clerical brethren generally of Boston and the vicinity, together with the most considerable members of the liberal party at large.

You are perfectly aware, Sir, how easy a thing it is to select from any book detached sentences and members of sentences, and so to arrange them as to give them a very different aspect and bearing, from what they have in their proper connexions. A more striking example of this kind I have seldom if ever witnessed, than the one which you have afforded in the instance now before us. Of all the quotations which you have made from the *Review*, as the basis of your

accusation under this second head, I think I may safely affirm, there is not one sentence, or scrap of a sentence, which appears in your Letter, with the same aspect and bearing as in the Review. When I first read them in your Letter, I felt, I confess, no small degree of excitement in regard to the Reviewer; and no little surprise that I could have read the Review without a similar excitement. But not less was my surprise, when, on turning to the Review I perceived how very differently they there, in their proper connexions, appeared. My limits will permit me to present but a few of them here.

Speaking of the Stone Chapel, the Reviewer remarks, "We must say that the conduct of this society and their minister, in coming out openly and avowing their sentiments to the world, is vastly preferable to a *hypocritical concealment of them*. The words in Italicks are those which you quote, as being applied by the Reviewer to "the ministers of Boston," &c. but no such application of them is made by him.—Of a remarkable letter, written by a clergyman in this country to his friend in England, and published by Mr. Belsham, the Reviewer says, "The object of Mr. Belsham in publishing it was, to chastise the Boston clergy for their *cowardice in concealing their religious opinions*." This expresses what the Reviewer supposed to be Mr. Belsham's opinion of the Boston clergy: and I presume, Sir, you will admit that he was warranted by the documents before him, in believing that such was Mr. Belsham's opinion, and such his design in publishing the letter. "The idea that a minister believes the truths of the gospel to be of infinite importance, and still conceals them, is *incompatible with either fidelity or integrity*." Here the Reviewer expresses a general sentiment, without applying it; a sentiment which you, Sir, I doubt not, will readily acknowledge to be just.

My principal reason for selecting these passages, rather than others partly quoted by you, is, that they could be presented in their proper connexions and aspects in fewer words. These, however, will be admitted, I trust, as a pretty fair sample of the whole.

After making such quotations of detached sentences and scraps of sentences, as you thought proper, to shew that the Reviewer had charged you and your liberal brethren with a “hypocritical concealment of your sentiments,” you proceed to notice the proofs upon which he rests this charge. These, as you state, are “a Letter from Dr. Freeman, and the letter of Mr. Wells to Mr. Belsham.” These Letters you very dexterously despatch; excepting that you quote from that of Mr. Wells a particular passage, for the purpose of shewing “the method,” as you say, “in which it is distorted by the Reviewer.” This letter the Reviewer gives entire, and I believe correctly; but afterwards he does quote the passage in question with some variation. The quotation however is made, not, as you represent, for the purpose of supporting the charge of hypocritical concealment, not in any connexion with this topick; but most plainly for the purpose of making out a list of epithetical and encomiastick descriptions, given by Mr. Wells of gentlemen of the liberal party; and the passage is so shaped, as to be the more conveniently arranged in the list. This alters the case materially. The Reviewer does not bring forward a passage in a “distorted” form, for the purpose of proving a charge of hypocritical concealment. But you have accused him of doing this; and to give the accusation the deeper impression, you utter yourself in the following remarkable terms: “An unperverted mind turns with sorrow and disgust from such uncharitable and disingenuous dealing; and why all this labour to distort what is so plain? the object is, to fix the character of knaves and hypocrites on a large class of christians and christian ministers. I might here be permitted to dip my pen in gall; but I do not write for those, whose moral feeling is so dull, as to need indignant comment on practices like these.”—And certainly, Sir, this passage of yours needs no “comment” of mine. I can only deplore and deprecate the state of mind from which only it could have proceeded.

I mean not, dear Sir, to deny that the Review does charge ministers, and perhaps others, of the party called liberal, with want of openness and clearness in avowing and explaining their sentiments; nay, with designed “concealment” and cul-

pable disguise. Nor will I dissemble that I have felt no little regret, that its language on this subject had not been in a style of less repulsive freedom and apparent asperity. I am fully aware that this is tender ground; and I feel most deeply the difficulty and the delicacy of the subject.

It does, however, appear to me very clear, that Dr. Freeman, Mr. Wells, and Mr. Belsham did suppose, and that in the documents on which the Reviewer principally relies as his vouchers, they do represent, that liberal ministers and other liberal gentlemen have judged it proper, not to make ordinarily a free and full disclosure of their sentiments: that they have in fact thought it expedient to temporize. Whether, in this opinion of you and your brethren, those gentlemen are correct or not, you must have been apprised, that the opinion is not peculiar to them, but very extensively prevalent: prevalent, not among those only, whom you would consider your adversaries, but also among your friends. Hundreds and hundreds of times have I heard it uttered from various quarters, and with various expressions of approbation and disapprobation; and never, in any debate or conversation, as I recollect, have I heard the truth of it denied, or called in question. It seems indeed to have been received as an established, uncontested fact, that ministers of the liberal class were not accustomed to be unreserved and explicit in the publick avowal and declaration of their sentiments. I confess to you, Sir, that I had so received it; nor did I ever imagine that in so receiving it, there was any thing injurious or uncharitable; for I did suppose that you and your liberal brethren held it as a maxim, founded upon reasons satisfactory to your own minds, that a degree of reserve and concealment, greater or less according to circumstances, was prudent, and justifiable, and praiseworthy. In this supposition I have been from time to time strengthened, by conversations with respectable individuals of the class, and not a little confirmed by what I have occasionally heard from the pulpit. I have now in very fresh remembrance some sentiments to this effect, delivered in a sermon which I heard at an ordination in Boston a few months ago; and in which the preacher very distinctly, and with considerable amplification, held forth

that, though in some places it might be well, and “contribute to the faith and virtue of the people,” for a minister openly and plainly to declare his sentiments, yet in other places it would not be prudent or proper: and in regard to this, the gentleman then ordained was affectionately and earnestly advised to regulate himself, according to the habits of thinking and feeling, the prejudices or freedom from prejudice, which he should find to prevail among his people.

Judge then, Sir, of my surprise, when I read, in your Letter, what I understood to be intended as an absolute denial, that any such reserve or concealment had been practised. After some reflection, however, I discerned, or thought I discerned, very clearly, the foundation of the apparent contradiction. The primary question between you and your opponents on this subject is, What is to be understood by a minister being open, clear, and faithful in the avowal and declaration of his sentiments? Upon this question there is evidently, between you and them, a real and material difference of opinion; and this difference is very manifestly the foundation of the apparent contradiction between you and them on the question, whether you are open, clear, and faithful, or concealed, indistinct, and unfaithful.

You are perfectly aware, that the ministers, called orthodox, are accustomed generally to preach out their sentiments without reserve, perhaps sometimes without prudence. They do not shun to declare unto the people all the counsel of God, as they understand it. They do not avoid preaching any doctrine, which they find to be revealed in the word of God, either because that doctrine is mysterious, or because it is denied by some and doubted by others; but the very circumstance of its being denied or doubted, is with them a reason why they should be the more particular, and the more earnest, in shewing its truth, in obviating the objections against it, and in so instructing their hearers upon it, as to promote the increase of their knowledge and the establishment of their faith. These ministers, therefore, are accustomed to use great plainness of speech, endeavouring to make themselves well understood upon every subject: to let it be distinctly known what they believe concerning mankind, their fallen



state, their native depravity and practical sinfulness, their guilt and their condemnation; concerning Jesus Christ, his person, his offices, his atonement, and the nature and the way of the great salvation by him; concerning the Holy Spirit, his personal divinity, his official power and grace, and the nature and importance of his work in renewing, sanctifying, and sealing the heirs of salvation; and concerning the Gospel generally, its infinite importance as “the wisdom of God and the power of God” for the recovery of lost mankind, its doctrines, its precepts, and its institutions.—Accordingly these ministers are understood; and in general their people and others are left in no doubt as to what their sentiments are.—This, Sir, is what they understand by ministers being open, and clear, and faithful in the avowal and declaration of their sentiments.

It is otherwise, however, with you and your liberal brethren, as appears most clearly from your Letter.

In repelling the charges of the Panoplist Reviewer, you first make what would seem to be a Confession of Faith; and then proceed to shew the manner in which you and your brethren perform your ministry.—To your friend Mr. Thatcher you say, p. 7, “We both agreed that a majority “of our brethren believe that Jesus Christ is more than “man, that he existed before the world, that he literally “came from heaven to save our race, that he sustains other “offices than those of a teacher and witness to the truth, and “that he still acts for our benefit, and is our intercessor with “the Father. This we agreed to be the prevalent sentiment “of our brethren.” You then mention “another class of liber- “al christians, who, whilst they reject the distinction of three “persons in God, are yet unable to pass a definitive judg- “ment on the various systems, which prevail, as to the na- “ture and rank of Jesus Christ;” and “another class” still, “who believe the simple humanity of Jesus Christ.”—“As “to myself,” you say, p. 12, “I have ever been inclined to “cherish the most exalted views of Jesus Christ, which are “consistent with the supremacy of the Father; and I have “felt it my duty to depart from Mr. Belsham, in perhaps “every sentiment which is peculiar to him on this subject.”

Then, including yourself with your brethren of the three classes, you say, p. 13, "We are accustomed to speak of the Father "as God, and of Jesus Christ as his Son, as a distinct being "from him, as dependent on him, subordinate to him, and deriving all from him."

Such is your Confession of Faith: and for this Confession I, dear Sir, for one, most sincerely thank you; and hundreds and thousands of christians, I am persuaded, will thank you. It will serve to relieve us from much of the uncertainty, and much of the embarrassment, which, until now, we have felt in relation to you and your liberal brethren.—One great point is clear:—You hold Jesus Christ as "a being" entirely "distinct from God," and, like all other creatures, entirely "dependent."—Of course, you will, doubtless, not hesitate to acknowledge what I have certainly very great sorrow in stating, that the doctrines of atonement by his death, and justification through faith in his blood, as held by orthodox christians in all ages of the church,—together with all the truths and sentiments—all the powerful motives to repentance, faith, and holiness, depending on those cardinal doctrines, at once fall to the ground before you! Thus much is plain; thus far the matter is settled in regard to yourself, and in regard also to your liberal brethren, in so far as you were authorised to speak for them. To what extent you were thus authorised, I know not; but would devoutly hope, not to the extent which your manner of speaking would seem to import. Yes, Sir, most devoutly would I hope, that there are some among those whom you would wish to include in your liberal party, who will revolt from your statement; who will protest against being numbered with you; who will yet awake from the enchantment, more fatal than that of Armida, under the power of which they have too long been held.

Still, however, I find in the terms of your creed, a great want of clearness and precision; great indistinctness and ambiguity. What are we to understand by "Jesus Christ being more than man?"—by his "literally coming from heaven to save our race?" What is he more than man, and how does he save? What "other offices does he sustain than those of a teacher and witness to the truth?" Upon these, and oth-

er points comprised in your statement of the sentiments of the liberal party in general, you leave us in utter uncertainty. In your statement of your own sentiments, your ambiguity is not less remarkable. Were it not for what you say in another place, we should not know what you mean by "the supremacy of the Father:" whether a supremacy in office, such as Trinitarians admit; or a supremacy in nature, such as that of the infinite, independent Creator in relation to his finite, "dependent" creatures. "I have felt it my duty" you say, "to depart from Mr. Belsham, in perhaps every sentiment peculiar to him on this subject." Might not Dr. Priestley, with perfect truth, have said this? Is there a Unitarian in the world, even the closest follower of Mr. Belsham, who might not say the same? Undoubtedly there is no man living, who does not "depart from Mr. Belsham, in every sentiment which is *peculiar* to him." But what are the sentiments peculiar to him? None of those certainly which are exhibited in his Unitarian creed.

Now, dear Sir, if such ambiguity, such want of distinctness and clearness, such apparent (I mean not to say dishonest) "concealment," is found in this Confession of your Faith; a confession, made on an occasion so urgent, when you seem to have felt yourself called upon for a publick and explicit declaration of your sentiments; would it not be reasonable to conclude, that on ordinary occasions you are certainly not less reserved, indistinct, and ambiguous: nay, that you have acquired a habit of expressing yourself on the doctrinal subjects of religion, in a manner not to be clearly understood. That such is the real fact, is manifest from the representation which you give of the manner, in which you and your liberal brethren perform your ministry.

The sum of this representation, which you have spread over several pages, is this: That you and your brethren studiously refrain from encountering the opinions of any of the various denominations of Christians, who differ from you; and are accustomed "to urge perpetually those truths and precepts," which to be sure you call "great," "about which there is little contention." But what are those great truths and precepts, about which there is little contention, and which

you perpetually urge. Certainly not any of the primary, not any of the peculiar doctrines or institutions of the gospel: for not one of these can be named, about which there has not always been, about which there is not still *great* contention. The doctrines concerning the Saviour's person and character, his priesthood and atonement, his offices and work;—the doctrines concerning the moral state of mankind,—regeneration by the Holy Spirit,—justification by faith,—pardon and eternal salvation through the merits of the one Mediator,—the resurrection of the body,—and the final judgment,—the “everlasting destruction of them that obey not the gospel:” all these, as you will readily admit, are subjects of continual and earnest contention among those who profess to be christians. These doctrines then, according to your own representation, you and your liberal brethren carefully refrain from bringing into discussion before your hearers: or, if you mention them at all, yet only in such a manner, as not to come into conflict or collision, with any who differ from you on these great and cardinal points.

But, Sir, set these doctrines aside, and what is then left of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What is there left, but mere natural religion—called indeed, in this enlightened age, *rational christianity*?—If in your preaching, these doctrines are kept out of sight, or treated only in a manner so general, so vague, so ambiguous, as not directly and manifestly to clash with any of the various and opposite opinions, held by professed christians respecting them: if you dwell “perpetually” on other topics; is it then strange, that your people and others are left in utter uncertainty, as to what you believe on these momentous points, and that you are considered as wanting in openness and clearness, and as practising reserve and concealment?

“In this avoiding controversy,” you say, p. 15. “we have thought that we deserved not reproach, but some degree of praise for our self denial.” For myself, I had understood from the Scriptures, that it required christian “self denial,” not to shrink from an open avowal of our faith in the doctrines of the gospel, and from holding forth the faithful word in the face of opposition; but cordially to embrace

them, openly to confess them, and meekly and charitably, yet firmly and courageously to "contend" for them. And you will pardon me, Sir, if I do not yet see that much "praise" is due for *your* "self denial." You tell us explicitly, that "to believe with Mr. Belsham is no crime." In your Sermon on infidelity, you also say, p. 13, "For these," (reasons previously mentioned) "and other reasons, I am unwilling to believe, that infidelity has no source but depravity of heart, and that it can never be traced to causes which may absolve it from guilt." It must be admitted indeed, that you do not regard with quite equal kindness, those who believe in Calvinism; as is manifest from some very strong expressions of antipathy, and from your representation, than which I am grieved to say, I have seldom if ever seen a more "distorted" and injurious one, of their sentiments. Is it, however, a crime to believe in Calvinism? when, in your estimation, it is none to believe in the lowest Unitarianism,—and may be none to be an infidel. I presume that, notwithstanding the vehemence of your antipathy, you will hardly say it is. But if, in your estimation, error of all kinds is innocent, then where is your "self denial" in refraining from assailing it, and where your claim to "praise" for "avoiding controversy."

There is still another point of view, and that a very serious one, in which your "self denial" and your claim to "praise," should not fail to be considered. If, indeed, to believe in error is "no crime," then to believe in the truth is no virtue. But, Sir, is it so represented in the word of God? Did Jesus Christ and his apostles conduct their ministry, and enjoin it upon others to conduct theirs, in the manner in which, as you represent, you and your liberal brethren conduct yours?

Jesus Christ says, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and will not come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." Is not truth light, and error darkness? Does then the great Teacher from heaven here represent a belief in error to be no

crime?—a belief in the truth to be no virtue? Or does he limit the remark to infidelity?—which in your Sermon before referred to, you allow may sometimes proceed from “vice.” What is his meaning when, in his commission to his apostles and ministers, he says, “He that believeth,” (in the truth undoubtedly) “shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned!” What is St. Paul’s meaning, when he says, “Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,—God shall send them strong delusion to believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness?” And St. Peter’s, when he says, “There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” If this language sound harsh and unfashionable, I trust, Sir, you will have the goodness not to impute the fault to me; and that you will not on account of any unpleasantness in the language, refuse to give attention to the momentous sentiment contained in it.

Did the apostles, then, studiously “avoid controversy?” Did they “seldom or never refer to any different sentiments embraced by other” professed “christians?” Never “attempt to refute” error? Never assail any “system which they did not believe?” or any “denomination that differed from them?” Did they refrain from preaching high and mysterious doctrines, lest they should “perplex, and needlessly perplex a common congregation, consisting of all ages, capacities, degrees of improvement, and conditions in society?” Did they, “in compliance with a general system” of conduct, adopted by them, cautiously “exclude” from their preaching all controverted points, give up as unimportant and unprofitable every doctrine which any individuals, or bodies of professed christians had ventured to deny or oppose, and “persuade themselves that the best method of promoting the holiness and salvation of mankind” was, “to urge on them perpetually those truths and precepts about which there was little contention?” Had they done so, possibly they might not have been “made the offscouring of all things,” and been exposed

to "death's oft;"—but have "enjoyed singular prosperity," "found themselves respected by all classes of society," and been "distinguished by the eminent," and by those whom the world would call "the enlightened and the good." But did they not act upon an entirely opposite "system?" Did they not preach, "with much contention," a doctrine which was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,"—a doctrine which was "every where spoken against?" Were not their Epistles all of them controversial, in a greater or less degree, and some of them almost entirely? Did they not zealously contend for sentiments which were denied and opposed,—and the more zealously in proportion as the opposition was more powerful and determined? Did they not earnestly "denounce" false doctrines and false teachers? warn the churches and all men against every prevalent error? and with the utmost solemnity say, "If we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed!"

Though the apostles were invested with an extraordinary authority, yet you will certainly admit, that, in their love and zeal for the truth, and (due allowance being made for change of circumstances) in the manner of performing their ministry, they are examples for all the ministers of Christ.—If then, my dear Sir, you and your liberal brethren have chosen to adopt "a general system" of conduct in the ministry, altogether different from theirs, we must entreat you not to think it strange, if there are some who cannot accord to you all the "praise," which you "have thought that you deserved." And notwithstanding the assurance and the pathos, with which you make your "appeal" to your people, you must not expect that the minds of all will be entirely relieved from the painful apprehension, that both you and your people may be under some deception; or from the distressing doubt, whether, at the appearing of the Lord Jesus, you will be able in his presence to say to them, "We take you to record this day, that we are pure from the blood of all men; for we have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

III. "The Reviewer," you say, "having charged us with "holding the opinions of Mr. Belsham, and hypocritically

“concealing them, solemnly calls on christians who differ from us in sentiment, to come out and be separate from us. “and to withhold communion with us.’” Upon this topick your zeal rises to its utmost height. And it is, Sir, I confess, a subject most deeply interesting, and of a nature most strongly to excite the sensibilities of the soul. Here lies the danger. Upon this subject, it is extremely difficult to keep the passions still, and to attend with calmness, and meekness, and impartiality to the unadulterated dictates of reason and of scripture. Yet scarcely can another subject be named, which more imperiously demands to be considered with the most dispassionate, docile, and unbiassed mind. I am fully aware that there have been, in all ages, that there are in the present age, rash and fiery zealots, who are never more in their element, than when engaged in strifes and contentions, sowing discord among brethren, and rending the churches of Christ piecemeal. Such spirits are not easily restrained and regulated, by the counsels of the more temperate, and considerate, but not less conscientious, and firm, and faithful. I am no less fully aware, that there have been in all ages, that there are in the present age, zealots of a quite different character, but not less rash and fiery, who are always ready to raise the cry of bigotry, illiberality, fanaticism, and persecution, against every measure and attempt, though conducted with the best spirit, and with the utmost prudence and regularity, for maintaining the cause of truth, and promoting the purity, order, and prosperity of the churches.—It would be lamentable, Sir, indeed, should you descend from your proper elevation, and lend yourself, with all your weight and influence, to give a deeper tone, and a wider extent to a cry so senseless and so unholy.

It is to be lamented, that on a subject of this serious and momentous kind, you should have thought it proper so entirely to dispense with argument, and with all the scriptural considerations which, in relation to this subject, so forcibly press themselves upon the conscience and the heart; and to indulge so freely in vague declamation, poignant invective, and fervid appeal to popular prejudices and passions. I know full well, and too many know, that this is the way to strike the minds of that great majority of mankind, to whom thought and reflec-



tion are irksome; the method best adapted for the support of a bad cause. I am fully aware of your advantage in this respect. But, Sir, a minister of Jesus Christ should esteem it a higher honour and a nobler achievement, to enlighten the understanding and correct the conscience of a single individual, than to rouse the passions and inflame the prejudices of thousands.—Declamation is always, for a very obvious reason, difficult to answer. Yours however, under the present head, is evidently bottomed on several *assumptions*, which I deem utterly inadmissible, and some of the principal of which I propose to consider.

In the first place, you manifestly assume, that the points of doctrine, upon which you and your liberal brethren differ from your opponents, are comparatively small and trivial; not “practical,” but speculative merely, and such as do not materially affect christian character.—I trust, Sir, it has been made plain, under the preceding head, that this ought not to be assumed. According to your own concession, the party in whose behalf you plead, generally deny the essential divinity of the Saviour, and hold him to be a being entirely “distinct from God”—entirely “dependent,”—in other words a mere creature.—But, Sir, between a being essentially divine, as by us the Saviour is held to be, and a mere creature however “exalted,” there is, as you will readily admit, an infinite disparity. The Saviour, then, whom you acknowledge, is infinitely different from Him whom we acknowledge and adore. *Your rock is not as our Rock, you yourselves being judges!* As your acknowledged Saviour is infinitely inferior to ours, so too are the offices and the work which you assign to him. You doubtless do not suppose, that by any mere creature, atonement could be made for the sins of an apostate world, of sufficient merit for the pardon, sanctification, and eternal salvation of all who should trust in him; therefore, if you hold to atonement in any sense, yet unquestionably not in the sense of a proper propitiatory sacrifice. Upon this denial of atonement, must follow of course the denial of pardon, procured by the blood of Christ,—of justification solely through faith in him,—of redemption from eternal death unto everlasting life by him. Connected and, gener-

ally if not invariably, concomitant with the denial of these doctrines, is a denial of the Holy Spirit in his personal character and offices, and of the renewal of mankind unto holiness by his sovereign agency, as held by orthodox christians.

Now, Sir, are these small and trivial points of difference between you and us? The God whom you worship is different from ours; the Saviour whom you acknowledge is infinitely inferior to ours; the salvation which you preach is immensely diverse from that which we preach. Though you call Jesus Christ master and Lord, and profess to believe in him and to love him; yet you do not, with the disciple who had long doubted, call him your **LORD AND YOUR GOD**; you do not believe on him for a salvation, meritoriously procured by his atoning blood, his vicarious merits; nor do you love him with supreme affection, or “honour him as you should honour the Father.”

Are the doctrines then, about which we differ, merely speculative? Are they not *practical*, most vitally and essentially practical? Do they not go home to the heart directly, and claim an empire over all the affections and powers of the soul? Is not a doctrine which essentially concerns the object of our worship, practical?—when, if we are wrong in regard to the object of our worship, we can hardly be right in any part of our religion. Are not the doctrines, which affect directly the very foundations of our faith, practical?—When a true faith is the grand requisition of the gospel, and the vital principle of all holy practice, of all the works which are good and acceptable in the sight of God.

Hitherto, Sir, I have proceeded upon the ground of your general statement, and held more particularly in view your higher classes of liberal christians. But it is not to be overlooked, that you make your remonstrance against “separation,” not in favour of those higher classes only, but equally in favour of the lowest:—of those who believe in the “simple humanity of Jesus Christ,”—who agree most nearly with Mr. Belsham; nay, Mr. Belsham himself, and those who agree with him entirely, were doubtless not intended to be excluded. You put in your earnest plea for the whole. The question, then, is a short one. Is not Mr. Belsham’s gospel, as set

forth in his creed, *another gospel*, than that which Paul preached? If you are not willing to admit this; yet surely you cannot hesitate a moment to admit, that it is another, than that which is held by orthodox christians,—which is preached by orthodox ministers:—essentially different in every particular from the foundation to the top stone. One or the other of these schemes, then, must be what St. Paul denominates “another gospel,” and against which, and its abettors, he solemnly pronounces his apostolick anathema. The leading doctrines of Mohammed are not more diverse from the orthodox views of christianity, than are those which you would have us hold in our fellowship. The followers of Mohammed believe in Jesus Christ as a good man, and a great prophet; and are accustomed to regard him, I believe, with as high veneration, as are the lower Unitarians.

Does it not then infinitely behove both you and us, instead of uttering vague declamations, and impassioned appeals, most seriously to weigh the very forcible declarations of the ingenuous Mr. Belsham himself: “Opinions such as these can no more harmonize with each other, than light and darkness, than Christ and Belial. They who hold doctrines so diametrically opposite, cannot be fellow worshippers in the same temple. It was expedient that they should separate.”

Another of your evident assumptions is, that every separation between professed christians is unjustifiable; a criminal “schism,” the guilt of which is chargeable upon those who insist upon it as requisite. Schism, Sir, in the scriptural sense, I certainly hold to be no light matter. But what is schism in the scriptural sense? Is it not a rending, a disruption of *the body of Christ*, or of his true church? But are all who call themselves christians really members of the body of Christ? Do they all *hold the Head*? Do the scriptures teach this?—Do the scriptures represent that all separation from those who call themselves christians, all withdrawing of fellowship from them, is schismatick, is “heretical?” Do they enjoin upon the churches to hold in their fellowship all who profess to be christians, however corrupt in sentiment they may be?—Do they not on the contrary constantly insist on *belief in the truth*, as the very foundation of christian charac-

ter and of christian fellowship? and as solemnly warn the churches to keep clear of error as of other sin? as earnestly exhort them to be steadfast in the truth, as in that holiness of heart and practice, to which the truth is conducive and absolutely necessary?

If then, in obedience to the scriptures, and with the spirit, and in the manner which the scriptures enjoin, churches that are sound in the faith, separate themselves from such professed christians as deny all the fundamental, all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, are those churches justly chargeable with the guilt of schism and heresy? Is an orthodox church to be charged with schism and heresy, for withholding fellowship from a church professedly of the sentiments of Mr. Belsham's creed? or for excluding from its communion, in the regular way of christian discipline, individual members who professedly hold the same sentiments! Or are members of Unitarian churches to be charged with schism and heresy, if, in the meek and faithful spirit of the gospel, they ask for dismissal, and regularly withdraw from a fellowship which they believe to be not that of the apostles and prophets?

How, indeed, is the fellowship for which you plead to be maintained? Upon this point you and your liberal brethren have taken care that we should be pretty fully informed. The orthodox churches must give up their creeds and covenants, their Psalms and Hymns and Doxologies; must cease to insist on, as important, the great doctrines which they now hold to be fundamental and essential to the christian faith; must exclude from their pulpits all mysterious and all controverted doctrines,—all that are not included in what is fashionably called liberal or rational christianity; must consent, in a word, to have their preaching and worship conducted on such principles, and in such a manner, as will not disturb the minds of liberal christians, or Unitarians of any class!—Is not this, Sir, precisely the way most distinctly marked out, and most strenuously insisted on, in your periodical publications, in your ordination sermons, and in all your discourses and conversations on this subject? If the orthodox ministers and churches will only consent to all this, the thing is done; all will be love, and peace, and fellow-

ship. That is, if they will consent to yield up as unscriptural or unimportant the doctrines of faith and the principles of worship, which they now hold most essential to christian character, devotion, and practice,—to hold it “no crime to believe as Mr. Belsham believes,” and to worship as he worships; and thus cease to be orthodox, or in any respect materially different from those called liberal christians; all the difficulty will be removed, and the way will be open and easy for an established and permanent fellowship, between them and Unitarians of all degrees.—Yes, Sir: and if Unitarians would cease to be Unitarians, and become orthodox christians, the way would be equally unobstructed.

But here lies the difficulty. The orthodox ministers and churches will not consent thus to yield up their faith and their worship: and from the earnest and abundant labour and pains which you and your liberal brethren have employed, to bring them to these terms, it is manifest that, unless they will consent, you do not yourselves suppose there can be fellowship between you and them. Because they do not consent, you continually charge them with being bigotted, illiberal, uncharitable; and now seem disposed to charge them even with schism and heresy. But, Sir, if on account of their steadfast adherence to their faith and worship a separation and non-fellowship ensue, does it not deeply concern you, as well as them, very seriously to consider on which side the guilt will lie? Unquestionably, notwithstanding any thing which you have said of your own, or quoted from Dr. Campbell, it must lie on that side, which the Redeemer and King of Zion shall judge to have removed itself from the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Your last assumption which I shall particularly consider is this: That it can be only from a bigotted, uncharitable and malignant spirit,—a “proud, censorious and overbearing temper,” that a separation can be proposed.—In this as well as in what you say on the subject of schism and heresy, you seem to forget that your liberal brethren in England have not only proposed a separation, but have actually carried the proposition into effect; and that your heavy charges against your opponents here, recoil with all their force upon

your transatlantick friends. This, however, is no concern of ours.

We have been, my dear Sir, so long accustomed to hear the vehement charges of uncharitableness, illiberality, and bigotry, vociferated against us from your quarter, that we have ceased to be greatly disquieted by them. We “hear the angry thunder murmur at a distance, with as little concern as if it were the thunder of the pope, from whom it seems indeed to be borrowed.”—The *reason* of these charges has been explained in the foregoing remarks. Your modesty and consistency in them are notable. You set out with asserting, that religion consists in charity; in charity, to be sure, in your own sense of the word; you then claim all this same charity as belonging to yourselves, and allow none of it to us: and thus, in effect, you deny that we have true religion. Yet the very reason why we are thus “denounced” as destitute of charity is, that we do not, as you allege, allow the genuineness of your religion. You may then deny the genuineness of our religion, and yet be most charitable; but if we entertain any doubt of the genuineness of yours, we must be utterly destitute of charity!

There is no word more abused than charity. Its scriptural meaning, as you very well know, is love; holy love to God and men: that love which is “the end of the commandment” and “the fulfilling of the law.” In this sense it is indeed the essence—the sum of religion. Is it then a violation of the great law of love, for the friends of truth to decline communion with its rejecters?—We have nothing to do here with slight diversities of opinion; with differences about modes, or forms, or inconsiderable points of faith or practice. Our concern is with differences of a radical and fundamental nature; such as exist between orthodox christians and Unitarians of all degrees, even down to the creed of Mr. Belsham: for to this point you have yourself fairly reduced the present question.—Yes, Sir, the simple point here at issue is, Whether it be a violation of the law of love, for believers in the true gospel of Jesus Christ, to separate from believers in another and an opposite gospel? If yours is the true gospel, then ours is another; if ours is the true gospel,

then yours is another. In either case, the great question respecting fellowship remains the same.

You will certainly agree with me, that whatever tends directly to the maintenance and promotion of truth, cannot be incompatible with love to God, or love to men. Jesus Christ came into the world to bear witness to the *truth*. His apostles were appointed to be witnesses to the truth; which they were to propagate at every hazard, and which they, like their divine Master, finally sealed with their blood. His church was established to be "the pillar and ground of the truth." The great design of the christian ministry in all ages is, to maintain and promote the truth. It is by means of the truth, that the glory of God is advanced in the world; and that mankind are guided into the way of peace, and sanctified for the kingdom of immortal glory. Love to God and men requires, as a duty of primary obligation, that the churches of Christ, the ministers of the gospel, and all christians should do what they can for the promotion of truth.

We advance then to another question: would it conduce more to the promotion of truth for the believers in the true gospel, to hold fellowship with the believers in another gospel, than to separate from them?—We have seen in what way only this fellowship can be maintained. If it is to be maintained, the principal doctrines of the gospel must cease to be clearly preached; divine worship must cease to be conducted on principles distinguishingly christian; every principle, or truth which is controverted, must be yielded up, as no longer to be urged or defended; and the friends of truth must conform to the abettors of error. All this must take place to a degree proportionate to the extension and closeness of the fellowship.—But is this, Sir, the way to maintain and promote the truth in the church and in the world? Is it not rather the way to extinguish at once the light of the ministry, the light of the church, the light of the gospel? to throw back the children of light into darkness and the shadow of death, and to leave the prince of darkness to triumph in an unlimited and undisturbed empire?—Would not the first and most certain effect be, the general prevalence of the opinion and the feeling,—already, alas! too

prevalent,—that truth is not worth contending for, that the great doctrines of the gospel are of very little importance? What then would be the consequence?—Shew me a man who cherishes this opinion, this feeling, and I will shew you one, who, far from going to the cross or to the stake, like the apostles and the host of holy martyrs, will make no sacrifice, no exertion, for the spread or the support of the truth: nay, one, who is already himself bound hand and foot with the silken cords of error, and whose “deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” And let this opinion and feeling generally prevail, and where shall we find those who will be “valiant for the truth upon the earth?”

“Whatsoever maketh manifest is light.” Would not the separation in question make manifest? Would it not serve to hold up the distinguishing truths of the gospel and to shew their importance, to the greatest advantage and with the best effects. Would it not tend to wake up the slumbering multitude, to excite them to earnest and serious inquiry, and to prevent their perishing for lack of knowledge, “fast by the oracle of God.”

Is it then certain, that a proposal, that even an earnest call for this, can only proceed from a “malignant, proud, and censorious spirit?” Is it certain, that such a proposal or call might not proceed from the same spirit of holy charity, which ruled the hearts and fired the zeal of the apostles and faithful brethren of the primitive times, and of the distinguished ministers and confessors of the Reformation? the spirit which achieved such wonders for the honour of Christ and the salvation of men; but which in those illustrious periods, as it has been in all succeeding ages, was violently denounced, as the spirit of fanaticism, malignity, and pride.

Far be it from me to stand forth the advocate of a violent system of denunciation and exclusion,” or of rash, disorderly, or uncharitable measures. I am fully aware that there is danger, great danger on this hand. And did it belong to me to assume prelatial dignity, and like you to give, *ex cathedra*, “admonitions” to my brethren, the sum of my advice and exhortations should be, Brethren, “let all things be done de-



cently and in order;”—“let all your things be done with charity.”—The spirit of christianity is not to be violated; the rules of the gospel are not to be disregarded; the vastly interesting considerations, belonging to the subject on the one side and on the other, are not to be treated with lightness.

But, Sir, the differences which exist between the Unitarians and the orthodox christians are certainly of a nature, to demand the most serious and earnest attention. They concern, most directly and essentially, the glory of God, the honour of the Saviour, the welfare of the church, and the salvation of men. In comparison with these, the difference between Dissenters and Episcopalians, between Pædobaptists and Anti-pædobaptists, are matters of mere feature and complexion. Utterly in vain is the attempt to put these differences out of sight, to conceal their magnitude and momentous consequences; or by a raised cry of bigotry, illiberality, and intolerance, to divert the publick attention from them. They must and will be fearlessly discussed and seriously considered; and ministers and churches, professed christians and all others, must and will be brought to the solemn decision,—whether they will be for Christ or against him,—whether they will receive and hold fast his truth, or despise and reject it,—whether they will bow to his authority and trust in his grace, or refuse to have him to reign over them and condemn his salvation.

In the mean time, Charity, heaven-born Charity must be allowed to weep and lament over the inroads of error and the desolations of Zion. Yes, Sir, charmed not at all with the so loudly chaunted praises of increased “light,”—abashed not at all by the disdainful sneers at imputed fanaticism,—she will weep—that her adored Lord is denied his divine honours, in the beloved city of our solemnities, where our fathers saw his glory, and delighted to celebrate his wonderful works of love and mercy.

Thus, Sir, have I attended, amid various unpropitious circumstances, to some of the principal things in your Letter. There are others which I certainly deem not unexceptionable, but which my design does not require, nor my limits permit me particularly to notice. If in any instance, I have misapprehended you, misrepresented you, or done any injus-

tice to you or to others, I can truly, I think, say it has been unintentional; and to correct any error, or redress any wrong would afford me real pleasure.

I have done what I have felt to be a painful duty. The Lord pardon what is wrong,—and prosper what is right. And may the Spirit of truth guide us into all truth, and cause us to “see eye to eye,”—keep his people from falling, fill the churches with light and peace, and make his word mightily to grow and prevail.”

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

With sentiments of affectionate respect,

Your friend and brother,

SAMUEL WORCESTER.

Salem, July 15, 1815.

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### POSTSCRIPT.

I FIND I have a part of a spare page, and have thought fit to occupy it with some smaller matters.

You say, p. 6, “Dr. Watts in the latter part of his life was decidedly an Unitarian.”—I am amazed that such an assertion could have been hazarded by you: an assertion, which Mr. Belsham, strongly desirous as he was to make out something in favour of his cause, from Dr. Watts’s last thoughts, durst not make. From what Mr. Belsham has presented on this subject, I should certainly conclude, even had I no other means of judging, and I believe every candid person would conclude, that the vague reports, so industriously circulated, of the Unitarianism of Dr. Watts, are most unsolidly founded, and most injurious to the memory of that great and good man. That he had a peculiar manner of explaining the mystery of the Trinity I do not deny; but, after no little attention to the subject, I do deny that there is any proof of his being a Unitarian; and am firm in the belief, that “he maintained to the last the true divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

In your zeal to strengthen your cause, you have numbered with Unitarians “Dr. Barnard;” I suppose the late Dr. Barnard of this town, whose name I would never mention, but with particular affection and respect. I have great satisfaction in being able to assure you, that Dr. Barnard, but a few months before his death, explicitly and emphatically denied his being a Unitarian, and professed his belief in the essential divinity of Jesus Christ. If you wish for more proof to the same effect, it can be produced.

Of “President Willard,” whom you also place on the same list, I am not able to speak with the same positiveness; but from information, on which I place great reliance, I believe you are not warranted in numbering him with Unitarians.

The manner in which you have denounced the Panoplist, demands, I think, your most serious reconsideration. To denounce with a spirit so violent, and upon grounds so unsolid, a publication of such well earned reputation, and such extensive usefulness, is to assume a responsibility of no ordinary kind.

I have seen your “Additional Remarks;” and you must permit me to say, that I think neither yourself, nor the President of Harvard College, nor any friend to you or him, will long regard it with much complacency. What you say on the subject of “ESPIONAGE,” is truly remarkable. I really did not know that there was any law of God or man, forbidding people to remark on *public performances*, or to *publish* what they hear delivered in *publick*. If I have transgressed, in mentioning what I have, of a Sermon, which I heard at an Ordination, I hope that my utter ignorance of the law will be admitted to due consideration.

S. W.

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