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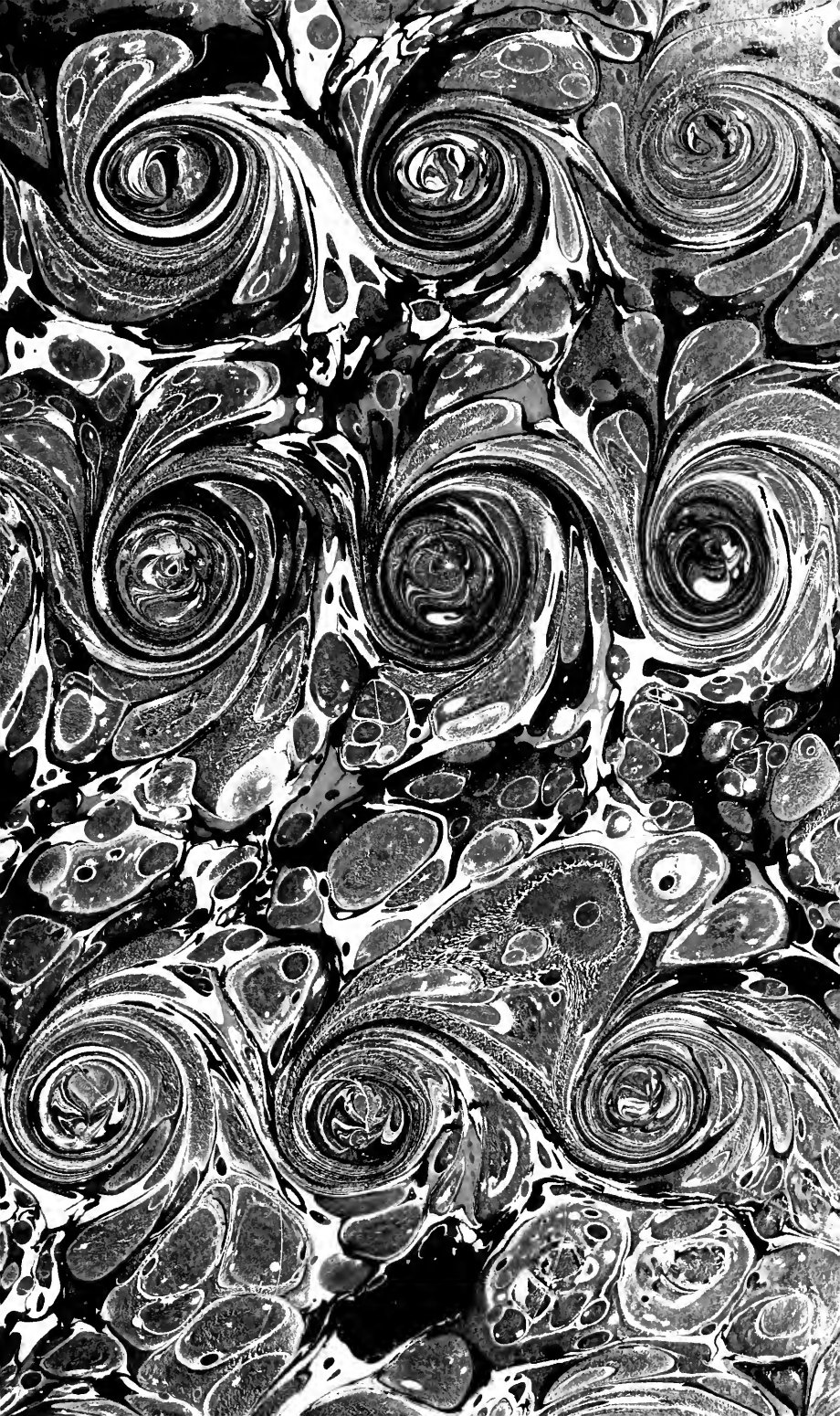
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REMARKS
ON
METHODISM;
INTENDED
TO SHEW ITS DISCORDANCE
In certain Points,
WITH
THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.

By a Minister of the Church of England.

“ All Errors, Sects, and Heresies, as they are mixed with some *inferior truths*, to make them the more *passable to others*; so do they usually owe their original to some *eminent Truths*, (either *misunderstood or misapplied*) whereby they become less *discernible to their own Teachers*: whence it is that such *Teachers, both deceive, and are deceived.*”

Bishop Saunderson's Preface to his Sermons.

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THE following tract is not occasioned by the love of controversy, nor by any aversion to a single individual of the Methodistical persuasion; but solely by a desire of promoting the cause of true religion.

Fanaticism and Infidelity are its most dangerous enemies: but in this nation, if the latter abound, the former does much more abound; and whether it be not the most dangerous of the two, let those who have considered its influence and effects determine. The reasoning unbeliever has been refuted time after time, and on the ground of fair argument, on which alone he affects to stand.—His cause is hopeless. The Fanatic corrupter of religion is not so easily corrected. He not only rejects argument on the plea of inspiration, but poisons the source of that pure stream, of which the other vainly attempts to resist the current.

The perverter of Christian principles is therefore the most formidable, as well as the most insidious enemy of Christian truth.

The superstitious frauds of Popery have almost entirely destroyed the sincere profession of the gospel in Catholic countries; and the vain pretensions of Enthusiasm threaten the speedy extermination of it in the Reformed church. Many are disgusted by its arrogant presumption and affected piety; but more are misled by its claims to extraordinary illuminations and peculiar grace.

Hence, with the most charitable disposition towards the Methodists, we may be allowed to expose the pernicious tendency of their tenets and their preaching; calculated on the one part, to increase scepticism and profaneness, and on the other, to create that blind infatuation which has heretofore been the scourge and terror of mankind.

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REFLECTIONS

ON

METHODISM,

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIANITY CONFORMABLE WITH REASON AND MORALITY.—DISCORDANT OPINIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE DOCTRINES OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.—THE SOLUTION OF OBSCURE AND DIFFICULT PASSAGES, BY A REFERENCE TO THOSE WHICH ARE MORE CLEAR AND INTELLIGIBLE, THE OBVIOUS REMEDY FOR SUCH DISSENSIONS.—THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORK EXPLAINED.

THE pretensions of a sect, which peculiarly assumes to itself the title of evangelical, obviously suggest an inquiry, on what grounds these pretensions rest: and whether those teachers, who claim exclusively that sacred appellation, do really inculcate the doctrines of Jesus Christ. This, according to the tenor of the gospel, might seem no difficult or perplexing question. That heavenly dispensation was

preached to the poor and ignorant, “as a light to them who sat in darkness.” The evidences of its truth, therefore, are proposed in the clearest, and most intelligible form; and our blessed master establishes the faith of his disciples on the miracles he wrought. “The works that I do, in my father’s name, they bear witness of me.” * And again, “if I do not the works of my father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know that the father is in me and I in him.” † A test more infallible in itself, or more easily comprehended, by men of all capacities, could not have been devised. ‡ And

* John x. 25.

† John x. 37, 38.

‡ That there are mysterious points in holy scripture which are the proper object of Christian faith, is no objection to the credibility of the gospel, nor any exception to the clear revelation it contains; because mysteries are inseparable from religion. Yet, an author, to whom the public is much indebted for his forcible exposure of Methodism, reasons thus: “As mysteries cannot be made manifest, they of course cannot be understood; and that which cannot be understood, cannot be believed, and can consequently make no part of any system of faith, since no one, till he understand a doctrine, can tell, whether it be true or false. Till then, therefore, he can have no faith in it, for no one can rationally affirm that he believes that doctrine to be true, which he does not know to be so; and he cannot know it to be true if he does not understand it. In the religion of a true Christian, therefore, there can be nothing unintelligible, and if the preachers of that religion do not make mysteries they will never find any.” *

* Hints by a Barrister, part iii. p. 19.

with regard to those qualifications which might best dispose his hearers to receive the word of

This position is equally untenable on the grounds of natural or revealed religion. In saying, "that which cannot be understood cannot be believed," &c. if the writer mean to assert that nothing is a proper object of faith which we cannot fully comprehend, we dissent entirely from his opinion. The evidence of revealed truth may be incontrovertible, while the subject of it is incomprehensible. Otherwise, the being of a God would be incredible; for surely no one pretends to understand the mode of his existence; and whether the Divine Nature, which is one in essence and substance, reside in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or only in a single person: the difficulty of understanding the mystery of his existence is equally great.

If the barrister's argument intend no more than this, that we cannot believe any proposition, except we understand the terms in which it is conveyed, there is no question about it. "But if our assent be required to a proposition which hath some meaning and no inconsistency in it, and is undeniably asserted in a revelation well proved: but only, we have no other evidence for it, nor should of ourselves ever have imagined any such thing; indeed, should have thought it very unlikely, and still cannot thoroughly comprehend it, or so much as guess at the reasons, the manner, the circumstances of what we are taught: All this is absolutely no foundation for our disbelieving it. Nay, though we should see difficulties and objections against it, which we could not particularly answer, we should allow them only their proper weight, which may be far overbalanced by the general attestations given of its divine authority."*

There must be mysteries in that, which infinitely exceeds the utmost stretch of human capacity. For as the wisdom of the creature cannot understand wholly and absolutely the

* Archbishop Secker's Sermons, vol. iv. serm. xviii.

God, our Lord declares, that “the seed which bare fruit an hundred fold, are they, who, in an

counsels of the Creator, which therefore can only be revealed in part, while “we see through a glass darkly,” a mystery must consequently intervene wherever the Divine Nature or designs become inscrutable. “The preachers of the Christian religion do not make mysteries;” but the error lies in adopting mysteries to the exclusion of what is not mysterious,—in rejecting those plain rules of a holy life which are manifestly revealed,—and in resolving the terms of salvation into mysticism.

These observations may not appear misplaced at the beginning of this treatise, when it is considered, that the denial of mysteries in the doctrine delivered by Jesus Christ, is to a certain extent, an impeachment of that gospel which contains them; and that the intelligent writer who has so pointedly exhibited the falsehood, folly, and pernicious tendency of Methodism, has advanced some opinions, which the advocates of that sect have not failed to remark, as tinctured with Socinianism; and have thence taken occasion to stigmatize his whole performance.

Since this note was written, the barrister has repeated his assertion, that Christianity contains nothing mysterious; with more sophistry than argument, he says, “To talk of mysteries of revelation is a perfect solecism; a mystery revealed is a mystery no longer; it would not be more absurd to talk of a concealed discovery,” &c.* We talk not of the mysteries of revelation, but of those points which were mysterious before that revelation unfolded them; or which are still mysterious because they are not fully revealed; but are involved in those truths, and inseparably connected with those articles of faith which are incontestably established. Thus we believe our Saviour’s declaration, “I and my Father are one,” because he has proved his “words to be spirit and truth.” But how the

* Hints, part iv. p. 48.

honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”* **H**ow accordant is this with the natural apprehensions of man, whose virtuous propensities are engaged in the support of that holy religion, for which a moral disposition is declared to be the most suitable preparation! What perfect harmony subsists then between that light of truth which God hath graciously revealed through Jesus Christ, and that light of reason, the judge of truth, which he first inspired when man became a living soul! There is no discrepancy between his former and his latter gift; his ways are always equal, just, and true. To evince the authority of his gospel, he appeals to the evidence of our senses and rational faculties; and for the practice of its precepts, he requires

Father and Son are one, (*et*, one thing, or substance,) is a mystery, which when the barrister has explained, we will allow his defiance to be something more than a mere bravado:—“ I will defy any one to produce any doctrine that our Saviour ever delivered, that contains in it any thing incomprehensible, or that has any thing of mystery in it.”† Had he confined his assertion to the practical doctrines of the gospel, there would have been no difficulty in admitting it.

The church of England is much beholden to this learned advocate of its rights and interests; but really it is rather too friendly in him to defend its cause by attacking its creed; and to profess “ his faith and attachment,” while he undermines the principles on which it is established.

* Luke viii. 15.

† Hints, part iv. p. 57.

“ an honest and good heart.” Thus, by the divine goodness, under the directing influence of the holy spirit, the knowledge of the truth is placed within the reach of our understanding, and the observance of its laws is subject to the power of our will: Whence our Lord addressed this pressing question to his unbelieving hearers: “ Yea, and why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?” *

But notwithstanding the plain and obvious doctrine of the gospel, what unhappy dissensions prevail among christians, with regard to the interpretation of the sacred text? Divisions which are daily increasing, and which seem more likely to terminate in the breach of all charity, than in reconciliation and brotherly love.

In this state of religious discord, it becomes the express duty of every christian, to separate, as far as may be, the truth which is in Jesus, from the errors which overcloud it. To compare the terms and conditions of salvation, promulged by Christ, with the tenets which are taught by those who now profess themselves exclusively the preachers of his gospel; and to distinguish him who speaketh of God, from him who speaketh of himself. This mode of treating a subject so important in its nature and its consequences, seems the more necessary: First, because nothing but the word of truth, contained

* Luke xii. 57.

in the New Testament, can satisfy a sincere christian in the discussion of such a subject: Secondly, because, strange as it may appear, the simple and positive declarations of Christ and his apostles, have been too much overlooked, if not absolutely disregarded; where their authority, and that alone is decisive. This error, it is well known, has been occasioned by a misinterpretation of some passages in the epistles of St. Paul. In those epistles, as another great apostle observed, immediately after they were written; “there are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other scriptures unto their own destruction.”* And in these days it is too evident, that certain tenets, which have been imputed, and falsely imputed to St. Paul, are so much insisted on, that the writings of the four evangelists are almost superseded by the commentary of Calvin.

Let it not, however, be supposed, that to disapprove of the imputed meaning is to dispute the undeniable authority and genuine doctrines of that apostle, whose inspired eloquence, whether it be applied to refute the errors of judaism,—to convince the unbeliever,—to illustrate the gospel of his blessed master,—or to enforce those moral precepts with which he concludes every epistle, has all the characters and energy of

* 2 Peter, iii. 16.

truth. But his earnest expostulation with the Corinthians deserves to be very seriously considered in the present distracted state of religious opinions: “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” *

That the tenets he inculcated are indisputably true, and evangelical, who will deny? And if this be the case, how can his epistles be considered otherwise than as being in perfect unison with the whole tenor of the gospel, delivered by the four evangelists? In regard to the terms of salvation, strictly the same; in regard to occasional points that occurred between him and the churches, which he addressed, in perfect harmony. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?” † Such is the modest language of this inspired writer: being the minister of Christ, he could inculcate only the word of Christ, as necessary to salvation. Whatever is contained in his epistles must be construed therefore agreeably to the purport and intent of the gospel; or, if interpreted in a different sense, must be false, because truth is uniform and consistent; a supposition which an infidel may cherish, but which it would be blasphemous for a christian to entertain. ‡ Yet the unhappy

* 1 Cor. i. 13.

† 1 Cor. iii. 5.

‡ The epistles may contain additional doctrines, but doctrines that are perfectly accordant with those which Christ

schisms which divide the church have generally arisen from an exposition of the doctrines insisted on by St. Paul, in contradiction to those delivered by Christ himself. This fruitful source of error

himself promulged. This is the amount of all that can be truly said with regard to any apparent difference between these writings and the gospels. And to such farther enunciations of his word by the mouth of his inspired apostles, our Saviour directed the expectation of his disciples in his last valedictory address, recorded by St. John:—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."* Had Lord Bolingbroke chosen to consider this, and examined the real argument of St. Paul, he might have spared the malignant sarcasm, which exposes his own ignorance, while it calumniates the apostle as a preacher of new doctrines, contrary to those of Christ. "St. Paul," he says, "might very well talk of *his* gospel, even in contradistinction to that of Christ; since he taught several doctrines which had no foundation in that of Christ; and others, as I have said, that were directly repugnant both to the word and example of the Messiah."—*Essay IV.* vol. iv. 4to. edition.

Notwithstanding this, Sir Richard Hill refers to the noble writer, as authority in favour of Calvinism: "Even Lord Bolingbroke says, Paul taught Predestination, and then arraigns his impudence for teaching it. However, *fas est et ab, hoste doceri.*"†

Now if Lord Bolingbroke's premises were true, his conclusions would be just; if St. Paul did really deliver those

* St. John xvi. 12, 13, 14.

† Sir Rd. Hill's Preface to Babington's Sermon, p. 9.

would be cut off, if one fixed standard of interpretation were admitted, *viz.* that the plain, indisputable sense of many passages in the New Testament being certain, other passages which are more obscure should be explained by a reference to such clear and explicit declarations. When, for instance, it has been expressly asserted, that “God will have all men to be saved,”* it cannot be supposed that the author of this assertion would say elsewhere, he willeth certain persons to be damned; and thence, such texts as these, “What, if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction!” † and, “therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” ‡ Such texts as these evidently impart a very different meaning

doctrines, which this infidel writer, and the Methodists say he did, they certainly were repugnant to the word and example of the Messiah; and the apostle subjected himself to that curse which he so solemnly denounced. 1 Cor. ix. 16. Galat. i. 8, 9.

But wisdom is justified of her children. St. Paul did not contradict his divine master, whatever his mistaken friends may say *for* him, or his bitter enemy *against* him. By Lord Bolingbroke he is scandalously misrepresented; and by the Methodists he is exposed to the slander of malevolent revilers. Such is the defence of christianity furnished by these zealots! Alas!—*Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis tempus eget.*—They must not venture to take up the weapons of infidelity, in order to protect our holy faith.

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

† Rom. ix. 22.

‡ Id. ix. 18.

from that eternal reprobation which has been established as an article of faith by Calvin and his followers, on the authority of the great apostle. For, “since in all other cases it is allowed to be one most reasonable and just method of interpretation, (if not the only one,) to explain such passages of any author as are obscure and difficult, by such other passages in the works of the same author as are more clear and perspicuous:” * Surely in this case, where a divine revelation is unfolded, where such high and mysterious matters as the being and attributes of God, his will and providence, are the subject matter of discourse;—where thus the infinite perfections of the creator are laid open to his imperfect creatures, so far as human language will permit; (and how inadequate is it to so great a work!) surely in this case, with humble reverence, and conscious ignorance, we should modestly receive the clear enunciations of our heavenly teacher, acknowledge their authority and truth; and from their unclouded lustre, attempt to derive a light which may elucidate more abstruse and darker intimations. Surely we shall not presume to oppose our notions on peculiar points of doctrine, to the evident manifestations of his will; nor pass over with negligence the most positive commands, while we insist only on those intricate matters,

* Bundy's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 443.

which neither engage us to lead a holy life, nor prepare us to die in the Lord.

That the express declarations of Christ and his apostles, which enforce the indispensable necessity of moral goodness, founded on the principle of Christian faith, in order to the attainment of salvation, carry with them an infallible assurance of the divine will, is generally admitted. It might be hoped then, that their authority would be deemed sufficient, and the conclusions thence arising completely satisfactory. That whoever receives them as the oracles of truth, would be steadfast and immoveable in the persuasion which they inculcate, that the unlearned in particular, who are ignorant of many things which are requisite for the solution of scriptural difficulties, would rest and confide in the plain rule of faith and practice, established by the gospel, and depend on the promise of Christ, that "his words will not pass away." When any passage occurs of which the meaning is less obvious, their own incapacity might be reasonably acknowledged, as the cause of such obscurity. And should any text that is more abstruse, seem irreconcilable with those which convey one clear, direct, indisputable sense, their belief in the unchangeable will, and unerring word of God, might convince them that the difference is not real, but apparent only; and they might well tremble at the thought of attributing a diversity of doctrines

to their divine instructor, being assured, that “as God is true, his word toward them was not yea and nay; but that all the promises of God, in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God.” *

Were this principle of faith, humility, and piety, impressed on the professors of religious truth, they would no longer perplex their minds with things that exceed their comprehension; but would “receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls.”

The preceding observations may not appear inapplicable to the purpose designed in this humble attempt, to contrast the fundamental doctrines of christianity, delivered by Christ and his apostles, with those which are maintained by many modern teachers—self-entitled evangelical. Such a comparison will enable us to decide whether the tenets peculiar to those teachers be the gospel of Christ or not; and if they appear repugnant to it, there will be no difficulty in deciding which is false;—a criterion that has the advantage of being level to every capacity. Nor is it unreasonable to expect, that those opinions, however authoritatively urged, which oppose the doctrine of sound words contained in the gospel, would be retracted as untenable and false; and that those Christians who mistakingly pervert it, would

* 2 Cor. i. 18, 20.

acknowledge their own error, and the infallible veracity of their divine master;—that touched, like Satan, by Ithuriel's spear,

————— “for no falsehood can endure
Touch of celestial temper, (they would) start,
Discovered and surprized.”*

or if their own prejudices are incurable, at least, that their unscriptural preaching would no longer lead astray a multitude of followers.

* Milton's *Paradise Lost*, book iv.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION AND GRACE CONTRASTED WITH THE OPINIONS OF METHODISTS.—THEIR PRIMARY ERROR IN CONSIDERING FEELING AND EXPERIENCE AS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR CONVERSION.—THE ABSURDITY AND CONTRADICTION WHICH ARE CONSEQUENT ON THIS DELUSION.—THE DIFFUSION OF ITS PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE.

IN order to reduce this subject into some order and method, (for it is impossible to follow the incoherent tenets of the Methodists through all the wilderness of their opinions,) it may be proper to discuss the points in question distinctly; and they naturally fall under these several heads, *viz.* regeneration and grace; foreknowledge and free will; predestination and election; justification, faith, and good works. These are indeed weighty matters, to which we approach with humility and diffidence. But they have been lately expounded with so much clearness and ability by an eminent and learned prelate, that the difficulties attending them are obviated; and the true doctrine contained in those comprehensive terms is so fully established, that it can no longer be mistaken or misapplied by the candid and unprejudiced christian. Still as they

are made the cause of strife, rather than of Godly edifying; any attempt, however imperfect, to represent the erroneous construction of them, by which a numerous sect justifies its peculiar tenets, may not be wholly unserviceable to the cause of true religion.

The article of regeneration, or a new birth, with which that of grace* may properly be

* *Grace*, (*Χαρις*), says Paekhurst, denotes, 5thly, the gracious unmerited assistance of the holy spirit in his miraculous gifts; Rom. xii. 6. 1 Cor. i. 4. (comp. v. 7.) Eph. iv. 7. 1 Pet. iv. 10. But though I firmly believe his blessed operations or influences on the hearts of ordinary believers in general; yet that *Χαρις* is ever in the New Testament used, particularly for these, is more than I dare, after attentive examination, assert.—*Lexic. ad Verb.* This learned man refers to Whitby, and his opinion is confirmed by Pyle.—Vid. James iv. 6. But as the term is identified by the Methodists with the inward operation of the spirit, it is treated here under that idea. A full account of its various meanings is given by Dean Stanhope in the following words, admitting this questionable signification:—

Grace in the general notion of it, denotes favour and kindness, freely bestowed; and in this sense the grace of God imports that affection and good will which he bears to men, and all those benefits proceeding thence of his own mere motion, and as a free act of mercy.

2. The grace of God in a more restrained sense, is frequently set to signify the gospel of Jesus Christ. So stiled, because the terms and privileges of that salvation tendered by it, are the effect of his infinite and undeserved goodness; the knowledge and publication of it imparted to whom, at what time, and in what measure he pleases; and the blessings and rewards of it, when so imparted, (though to such indeed covenanted mercies, if they perform their part,) yet still so

joined, obviously presents itself first to our consideration ; of which the true scriptural doctrine may be collected from the following texts. It is thus stated by St. John, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* Here those who

vastly disproportionate in value to their best services, as to deserve the name not of *wages*, but of *gift*.

3. The grace of God does sometimes signify a certain inward working of his spirit in and with the minds of men, which by suggesting, and disposing them to comply with reasonable arguments and good motions, renders the outward ministry of the word, and other means instituted for our salvation, persuasive and successful. This is represented as the principle of goodness and spiritual life. By this the saints "are what they are." "This quickens those that were dead in trespasses and sins." By this God "works in us that which is acceptable in his sight; even to will and do, of his good pleasure:" and by "growing in this," we persevere in well doing, and "are kept from falling from our own stedfastness." Thus our being and living, and moving in a spiritual sense and capacity, our beginning, our proceeding, our finishing as we ought, all are owing to that grace and spirit of God in our souls. †

The notions of divine grace thus distinctly stated by this excellent commentator, appear little understood by those enthusiasts, who are for ever repeating that word, as if it were a charm, without any definite idea of its meaning.

* St. John i. 12.

† Stanhope's Commentary on the Ep. for the First Sunday in Lent.

believe are called regenerate, or born again, and have power to become the sons of God; not as Jews by the law of Moses, nor as mere men by the law of nature, but by the grace of God; who hath declared by his Apostle, that “ he willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth :”* and “ who giveth his holy spirit to them that ask him,”† according to his express promise, “ Ask and it shall be given you.”‡

So general and unlimited is the privilege of regeneration; the manner in which it is applied and the seal by which it is confirmed, are related in the third chapter of St. John’s gospel: where our Saviour having said, “ Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” thus explains his doctrine, “ Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God :” (Vers. 3, 5.)

Baptism and the Holy Ghost then are requisite to constitute a Christian, that is a regenerate person, one dead to the world and living unto God: not that it *secures* his continuance in this justified state, but *enables* him to persevere in it, and be saved. This is plain, simple, and intelligible. The natural man cannot become spiritual, holy, good, without faith in Him “ who justifies,” without washing away his sins in baptism, and calling on the name of the Lord:

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

† Luke xi. 13.

‡ Matt. vii. 7.

whence alone he can receive “the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry *Abba, Father.*”*

To this blessed change he is led by the preventing grace of God, who hath not only revealed the word of truth in the gospel, but gives sufficient grace to all who will embrace it, by the assistance of which they may become heirs of his everlasting kingdom.

Contrast with this scriptural account the strange opinions entertained by certain teachers on this article of faith. In entering the sanctuary, they stumble at the threshold, and never afterwards recover their steps. Departing from the true doctrine that baptism is the means of grace, and the pledge of it; and that those who have received sanctification by this sacrament, are regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ’s church; that hence they become sons of God, and have power to do “his will from the heart,” as the obedient children of a merciful father: departing from this sound principle of faith, they rest their hopes of heaven on feelings or impressions, the supposed proof of an instantaneous conversion, which takes place long after baptism, and their admission into the christian covenant.† So that the humble and sincere be-

* Titus iii. 5.

† Dr. Paley, in his seventh Sermon, has cleared this subject from that confusion in which the methodistical writer have involved it. He shews that the division of mankind into two classes, the converted and the unconverted, is too abso-

liever, who endeavours to fulfil the condition of that covenant, but does not experience those

lute, and leads to a conclusion too universal. That Christians, piously educated, do not fall under either description. They are not converted, because they cannot be sensible of such a religious alteration, as can possibly be called conversion: they are not unconverted, because that implies reprobation. That all have been born again, i. e. have had the spirit imparted to them at some time or other, as in baptism, is certain; but that is not attended with a sensible change, here intended by conversion, nor is any such radical change necessary to Christians, who have grown up in a religious course; no, nor even possible. Real changes must take place, where errors in opinion and practice have prevailed, and all cannot be educated in error, on whatever side truth be supposed to lie. Our preaching should be not conversion to all, but to all conversion or improvement. This is proved from the gospel. Wicked persons must be converted, in order to be saved; there must be a revolution within, and of this they must be sensible at the time, and remember it afterwards. Those who allow themselves in any particular sin may be converted, and such conversions may be sudden, as well as lasting, and the fruits will prove it. But improvement is necessary to all."—This abstract, imperfect as it is, will set the matter of which it treats in a proper light. Conversion, according to the account here given, is as distinct from the compulsory grace of Calvinism, as it is opposite to the self-sufficiency of Pelagianism. And though we reject the opinions of both those sects, we neither deny the internal succours of the spirit on the one hand, nor the use of our natural faculties on the other. We admit, with Dr. Paley, that as conversion is necessary to the habitual sinner, so the time when he began to amend may be ascertained, like all other periods of change; but here we stop:—We affect not to have been converted by a *perceptible impulse* of the spirit; we pretend not to have received forgiveness, much less to have been assured of it, by a *mo-*

emotions, to which, from constitution, he may be a stranger, is a hopeless outcast, a condemned reprobate. And to this forlorn and desperate state are those reduced, however humble, pious, and sincere, who are not conscious of a divine impulse. Dr. Hawker, the Vicar of Charles, in Plymouth, after having said, that “to be perfectly satisfied in our mind of the great truths

mentary and *irresistible* act of grace.—The doctrine of conversion is treated in the clearest manner, and with the most accurate knowledge of the subject, by Archbishop Tillotson, Sermon 55th, whose discourses on “The Nature of Regeneration, and its necessity in order to justification and salvation,” contain an admirable exposition of the whole matter, placing both its real import, and the gross misapprehensions of it, in the fullest and strongest light. His motives for examining this point at large, are thus modestly and candidly expressed:—“That I have so long insisted upon this argument, and handled it in a more contentious way than is usual with me, did not proceed from any love to controversy, which I am less fond of every day than other; but from a great desire to put an end to those controversies and quarrellings in the dark, by bringing them to a clear state and plain issue, and likewise to undeceive good men, concerning some current notions and doctrines, which I do really really believe to be dishonourable to God, and contrary to the plain declarations of scripture, and a cause of great perplexity and discomfort to the minds of men, and a real discouragement to the resolutions and endeavours of becoming better. Upon which considerations I was strongly urgent to search these doctrines to the bottom, and to contribute what in me lay to the rescuing of good men from the disquiet and entanglement of them.”—Serm. 56.

Had the Archbishop lived in our days, would he have been less *urgent to put an end to these controversies and quarrellings in the dark?*

of the gospel, and to be as perfectly convinced of having a personal interest in all the blessings of the gospel," is an object of the first concern, adds the following extraordinary assertion: "That every truly regenerated believer in Christ hath those evidences in his own experience, is what I not only affirm from the authority of the holy word, (whatever reproaches it may bring upon me from the carnal and ungodly world) but I venture to believe that the facts themselves are so fully and circumstantially proved to the believer's own experience, in the daily occurrences of his life, who is made the happy partaker of such unspeakable mercy, that they require nothing more than the suitable attention of the mind, in order to ascertain their reality."* Such is the fundamental principle of this divine; and this confused passage, which, however, is one of the clearest in his book, is a proper introduction to all that follows. It intimates that in every regenerate christian his own experience is the test not only of divine truths, but of his personal interest in all the blessings of the gospel, that is of his own salvation. The daily occurrences of his life, and the suitable attention of his mind, will ascertain the certainty of these *facts.*" The regenerate christian must have this experience; and this experience, therefore, is a

* Preface to a Pamphlet, entitled, "The Spirit's Work in the Heart."

necessary criterion of a regenerate christian. Those persons, who having adopted the doctrine of St. John, considered themselves as born again by the sanctification of the spirit, because they had been baptized in the name of Christ, and believed his word, are informed, by a new evangelist, that this is no pledge, or, at least, an insufficient pledge, of the divine favour. The sensible experience of grace is the only assurance both of faith and hope: the only proof of a regenerate state! so that the calm dispassionate believer, who obeys the laws of the gospel, and practises the duties it enjoins, may still be an alien from Christ, if his temperate imagination do not discern the *fact* to be otherwise in the daily occurrences of his life, that is in those emotions, which are peculiarly termed *experiences*. Let not the reader suppose that good works are intended by such occurrences, those are professedly disclaimed, and out of question: but, the Doctor's meaning will be best explained, so far as it is explicable, by some passages in the treatise itself." "If," he says, "I do not greatly err, from the very first traces of the renewed life, until that grace is consummated in eternal glory, there may be found, more or less, in the circumstances of every believer's experience, a multitude of the most sweet and precious instances."*

* Spirit's Work, &c. p. 20.

Reader, shall I possess so much influence with you, as to prevail upon you to look into the workings of your heart for those decypherings of the blessed spirit.* For as in the greatness and sovereignty of this almighty character, he testifies for all the sacred persons of the godhead, and to them, in the heart of the believer; so he no less gives assurances to all the covenant-promises of redemption, that they are “yea and amen in Christ Jesus.” And without this precious testimony of the spirit, the believer, in the seasons of soul exercises, would neither be enabled to see them in their fulness, or discover their suitableness and sufficiency to his own case and circumstances, much less to find the privilege or the power of pleading for the fulfilment of them before the mercy seat.”† Reader, do you know what these things mean? Do you know what it is at times to mourn the absence of the blessed spirit, when you come before the mercy seat, and pine under the sensible abatements or with-drawings of his influences? Can your closet witness for you or your bed in the night-watches how self-abashed you have lain before the high throne, when a sense of sin, and a conscious distance from God hath forced your heart to cry out, like the church of old, “The comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me!” Alas! if you are altogether ignorant of

* Spirit's Work, &c. p. 26.

† Id. p. 29.

such soul exercises as these, how shall you ever have a proper estimate of divine gifts; or learn the immense difference between those heart-straitenings and bondage-frames well known to the true believer in prayer; and that freedom of soul under the actings of grace, in which as the apostle saith, “Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”*

I have found this office in the spirit’s work at times so very interesting and precious (if I may venture to say so) in my own experience, that I cannot but beg to recommend it to the reader’s notice, with the more particular attention. My memory of divine things is so treacherous, that, like a sieve, every thing valuable runs through it, and leaves nothing of the finer parts behind.”† An unfortunate confession! “If, perchance, I should be addressing a heart, somewhat like my own, prone to the forgetfulness of divine things, and who feels a partiality from the consciousness of it, to this feature of office in the Holy Ghost’s ministry, there is a method I would recommend to him, which, under grace, I have found useful to myself in this particular; to bring to remembrance again the things of God; and that is, by committing to his keeping for a future day of necessity, what our memories are too treacherous to keep for ourselves. We should do in this instance by God the Holy Ghost, as

* Spirit’s Work, &c. p. 34, 35.

† Id. p. 38.

well-taught children do by their parents. Whenever any thing valuable is given them, they put it into their parents' possession to preserve for them until they want it. Reader, let you and *I* do the same: Let us commit into the hands of the Holy Ghost all those precious things which he hath mercifully taught us in respect to our salvation; and blessed spirit, I would say:"* &c. &c. One quotation more from this specimen of methodistical orthodoxy, (if the reader's patience be not already exhausted,) will shew his ability as a commentator, as well as an evangelist. "My brother, is it your happiness to be thus taught of God? and have you this testimony to the work of the spirit in your heart? Let this be the standard with *you* at least, for ascertaining all the doctrines proposed to you by men:—Put that question, which Paul the Apostle proposed as the first, and most important of all questions to the church of Ephesus, to every one who would tempt you to swerve from the truth once delivered to the saints: Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? This will be the only method to prove the doctrine, whether it be of God; for the time is arrived, which the apostle predicted, "when men will not endure sound doctrine." And it is in vain to oppose argument to argument, for even the scriptures themselves are perverted and wrested by the several advocates

* Spirit's Work, &c. p. 39.

of the various heresies of the present day, to countenance their several tenets. But in the blessed spirit's work in the heart, there can be no possibility of error. And when the word and the testimony are confirmed by his almighty assurance, they exactly correspond, like as the impression made by the seal on wax, manifests their relation to each other. And this is what, if I mistake not, the apostle meant, when he said, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established. The heart which is taught of God is one, the word of God is another; and God himself the Holy Ghost is the third, who sets to his seal in the heart all the great truths, as yea and Amen in Christ Jesus."* What an extraordinary gloss!

From these extracts, which are thus largely adduced, both because it would scarcely be credited by many readers, that such divinity existed if it were not placed before their eyes; and because their author stands foremost in the ranks of methodism, and is a principal pillar of that church:—The tenets of his coadjutors, (which shall hereafter be considered) as well as his own, may be justly estimated, on that most awful and important subject above mentioned: the influence of the divine spirit: most awful in itself, but how debased, how vilified by such presumptuous familiarity! Could it have been believed, did not

* Spirit's Work, &c. p. 42, 43.

their own words testify against them, that such confused, unmeaning, and fanatic rant, should pass current as the very essence of christianity? This maze of error would be as unaccountable, as it is inextricable, did not Dr. Hawker, by his own avowal, give us some insight into his mental incapacity. "His memory of divine things" he tells us, "is so treacherous, that, like a sieve, every thing valuable runs through, and leaves nothing of the finer part behind." What wonder, then, that instead of refined gold, we find the coarsest dross! But, in the name of Religion, is a person, thus deficient, qualified to instruct others in its most valuable doctrines, which, according to his own acknowledgement, he forgets himself? Since the blind cannot lead the blind, without the utmost hazard, can the forgetful teacher assist the recollection of his disciples, and direct it to the indispensable principles of christianity? or, is it consistent with that modest humility, which would most become him, to attempt so great a work? Is it reasonable that he should expect the holy spirit to supply his natural defects, when, in spite of those defects, he assumes the high prerogative of ghostly wisdom, and delivers his opinions as if they were the indisputable oracles of truth? A heathen poet would suggest a more prudent conduct :

Metiri se quemque suo modulo ac pede verum est.

In order to relieve himself from that difficult and perplexing obstacle of his favourite theory, called Reasoning—Dr. Hawker says, “It is in vain to oppose argument to argument, for even the scriptures themselves are wrested by the several advocates of the various heresies of the present day, to countenance their several tenets.” This might have been supposed a sufficient cause for confuting such erroneous interpretations of holy writ, by more convincing arguments, drawn from the source of truth. But, no: This is a test which the author’s divinity will not bear. His favoured heresy must have the immediate aid of heaven. He asks but one immediate question, “Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?” We know what that inquiry in the methodistical sense implies: “Have you felt the irresistible impulse of the divine spirit? Have you experienced the precious evidences of his truth in the daily occurrences of your life? Let this be your standard for ascertaining all the doctrines proposed by men.”* But what if some humble unassuming Christian should not be conscious to himself of these “practical, experimental lessons taught by God the spirit?”* What if he do not perceive “the blessed spirit witnessing his adoption-character,* and dare not assert an appropriating right to call Jesus, brother, kinsman, husband, friend?”* What if he be

* Spirit’s Work, *passim*.

without these “truest evidences of soul-experience;” and have not discovered so much sweetness in a promise and its contents so exactly suited to his own case and circumstances, as if it had been purposely written for him?”* Why then, adds Dr. Hawker, “I pity the man who is altogether unconscious of this work of God the spirit in the soul, and hath yet to learn what his influence means, when drawing nigh the mercy seat.”* This is gentle treatment where nothing less than utter reprobation was to be expected. His pity, however, is such as is shewn by a spectator to a condemned criminal whose doom is irreversibly fixed. For according to him, “Every truly regenerated believer in Christ hath those evidences in his own experience;”* and we know, from a higher authority than Dr. Hawker’s, that “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The evidence of the new birth being resolved solely into the sensible experience of it, which, in his opinion, is necessarily felt by the “truly regenerated believer;”* it follows that the wretched man, who is unconscious of this work of God, is excluded from the kingdom of heaven. This is the unavoidable conclusion resulting from the premises of a writer, who ventures to advance this bold unqualified declaration, “That an infallible method is discovered at once to secure

* Spirit’s Work, *passim*.

from the *possibility of apostacy*, and to afford comfort and satisfaction to the believer's own mind concerning the great truths of God, namely, from the spirit's work in the heart.* How naturally does this remind us of those infallible remedies, which are daily announced by other empirical doctors of great note, not less versed in the science of medicine, than is the vicar of Charles in that of divinity!† The pompous and high sounding apostolic address by which this "infallible remedy" is ushered into the world, might well make one exclaim with profound astonishment,

Quid dignum tanto, feret hic promissor hiatus ?

“ To the church of Christ throughout the earth, grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied!” The note of admiration is Dr. Hawker's own, as well as the salutation; Is he amazed at his own sublimity? Then follows the performance, thus solemnly announced, with this exordium: “ I send

* Spirit's Work, &c. p. 6.

† In treating lightly any circumstances belonging to a subject, which regards the sacred principles of our holy faith, we tread on tender ground, and may stand in need of some apology. But when it is considered that such wild fanaticism admits no other kind of argument, and that serious reasoning would in this case be entirely misapplied and lost: the liberty, which is taken here, and in some other instances, it is hoped, will not appear improper. In fact, the cause of religion is no more injured by the ridicule of enthusiasm, than that of reason is by the means which are used to cure the ravings of a disordered mind.

forth this little tract:" the poet's answer to his question, will suggest itself to every reader:

Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.

But puerility and bombast are not the greatest defects of this writer; for he appears to contradict his own assertions, on a point which is of infinite moment to our frail imperfect nature. "Man is not only altogether as passive in the new creation as in the old, but he is altogether as unconscious of it."* Leaving the first position uncontroverted at present, we scarcely need observe how repugnant the second is to the feeling and experience of which these preachers boast. Many pages are employed in resolving the influence of the spirit entirely into feeling, by the same author, who here asserts, "That these acts of the spirit are all wrought by his almighty power, at a time and in a manner perfectly unperceived and unknown to the soul.* Thus, in another passage, even of this very tract, he speaks another language. "If you say, how shall the soul know when it is the spirit's work, and not man's?" The answer is direct. "The very state of the soul will readily distinguish the Lord's absence from his presence.†" When the spirit returns, (and well is it for sinners that he doth not wait for their first approaches to return,) he comes with a quicken-

* Spirit's Work, p. 19.

† Id. p. 42, 43.

ing, illuminating, and reproofing power,* of which the inspired person cannot be unconscious, if he will listen to his sage instructor, who thus admonishes him: "Do you feel the rising desire, the awakening prayer opening in the soul, that Jesus would again draw you with the cords of his love, that ye might run after him? Go then, my brother; go to the still waters and the pastures of his ordinances, beside which Jesus feedeth his flock, and maketh them to rest at noon.—Depend upon it, these feelings of your's are among the first intimations of his blessed spirit's work on the soul.—Every sweet movement you feel is from his blessed spirit, who turns the heart,"† &c. So far, then, is the time and manner of the spirit's agency from being unknown to the soul, that it is assured by feelings of his first approach, and every "sweet movement" that he makes. We are afterwards required to *seek* those out-pourings of the Holy Ghost,‡ yet we had been previously informed that man is "altogether passive."—From these unfounded assumptions of spiritual wisdom, not less contradictory than absurd, let us turn to the real doctrine of Jesus Christ, and guide our souls by that unclouded light, which will at once dispel the mists of doubt and error, and direct us in the way of truth.

We are taught in holy scripture, that the

* Id. p. 42, 43.

† Id. p. 47.

‡ Id. p. 54.

“ Righteousness of God by Jesus Christ is unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* That he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.† That by one spirit we are all baptized into one body.‡ That by baptism attended with repentance, and faith working effectually (*ενεργουμεν*) by charity,§ we shall be saved; having become new creatures by the mystical washing away of sin, when we were admitted into the christian covenant, when we were born again of water, and the holy spirit,”|| and rendered meet for the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. We believe, therefore, that being thus made members of Christ, we partake of his grace, even as they who pretend to more extraordinary endowments. “ That unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ;¶ which grace is sufficient for us, if we grieve not the holy spirit, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption;*** wherefore receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, *let us have grace*, since God hath placed it in our own power: “ whereby we may serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”†† Since God

* Rom. iii. 22, 23, 24. § Gal. v. 6.

** Id. 30.

† Mark xvi. 16.

|| John iii. 5.

†† Heb. xii. 28.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

¶ Ephes. iv. 7.

hath been gracious to all, let us all be obedient to him. “For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto *all* men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly.”* If we thus do, we shall obtain the recompence of reward;” but if professing that we know God, in works we deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate;† “then we do despite to the spirit of peace, and shall be judged worthy of the sorest punishment.”‡

These are the doctrines which we receive and teach; they are in admirable harmony with each other, as well as with the perfections of God, and the imperfect nature of man: worthy of the Creator who revealed them, and adapted to the creature to whom they are applied: calculated to promote the great ends of true religion, glory to God, peace on earth, and good will amongst men: to humble our vain hearts, to excite our most earnest diligence, to animate our devotions, inflame our gratitude, and raise our affections to things above. This we aver to be the purport of that gospel which hath brought life and immortality to light; and we venture to assert, that if the style and matter of the Methodistical teachers on this awful subject be fairly compared with the tenor of that gospel, they will appear a vile and spurious copy of a divine original.

* Titus ii. 11, 12.

† Id. 16.

‡ Heb. x. 29.

The following extraordinary account of regeneration will evince the truth of this asseveration. “Where once, says Dr. Hawker, a spirit of grace, hath quickened, animated, and renewed the soul, which was before dead in trespasses and sins, and united it to the person of the Lord Jesus, the life of grace which originates in the Almighty Head, is diffused through all the members of his mystical body, and preserves them in an union with him and with each other. Hence, that sympathy and affection which takes place between them, by which, both in sorrow and joy they feel alike, and weep or rejoice together.” The Almighty Head feel sorrow and weep!! “And this certainly forms, as well it may, every believer’s own personal experience, when, from the spirit’s teaching, he is enabled to discover his being gathered out of nature’s corruption, and can trace his affinity and connection with the Lord Jesus, from the uniformity of heart and mind between the head and its members.” *

This rhapsody is founded on St. Paul’s just and beautiful description of a truly christian community: “In which, whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

* Hawker’s Union with Christ, p. 14.

This sympathy of christians with each other, * the Doctor converts into an entire sympathy “between the Almighty Head and the members of his body.” He brings down the impassible nature of the Godhead to suffer the sorrows of repentance and of shame: to partake in the rapturous extasies, or return the sighs and groans of his infatuated creatures. He asserts an uniformity of heart and mind between them; that is, between Christ and the new evangelists; for they alone can be esteemed worthy of so great a privilege, or capable of attaining it: “They feel alike, and weep or rejoice together; and this certainly forms, as well it may, every believer’s own personal experience!”

On the same subject he enlarges afterwards; and though the reader must be wearied by the quotations that have been already taken from this writer’s works, yet it is so necessary to prove his opinions by his own words, that another passage or two must be brought forward to place them beyond all doubt: “They whom the Lord Jesus,” he says, “hath united to himself, by the Holy Spirit’s work on the heart, are as sensible of this spiritual union from the unity of sentiment and affection, as the natural affections in common life, testify the degree of attachment. When once a truly regenerate soul can echo to the language of the church, and say, “I am my

* 1 Cor. xii. 26, 27.

beloved, and my beloved is mine, when the interest of one becomes the interest of the other; and so intimately blended are their desires, their affections, their pursuits, that while Jesus is present the soul rejoices; when he is absent the soul mourns. As these are never the effects of natural causes, and these sweet flowers of grace grow not in nature's garden, the possession of them affords so charming a testimony of grace, wrought in the heart, that there can be no possibility of mistake or delusion." * This strain of tender and impassioned language, to which a much harsher name might justly be applied, is exceeded, if possible, by the following marvellous account of a doctrinal point alluded to before. "Neither are these all the effects of this soul-refreshing doctrine: it is a sweet addition to it to consider, that the Lord's people, in consequence of this union with the person of the Redeemer, not only partake in his merits, but he graciously participates in their sufferings. The foot indeed cannot be supposed to be crushed, but what the head must feel."

That Christ "entered not into his glory before he had suffered pain," is a truth we all acknowledge; but that he suffers after his exaltation into the kingdom of heaven, is an article of faith peculiar to the new evangelists: his

* Union with Christ, p. 17. † Id. † Id.

office there is to succour all those who suffer for him, but not to suffer with them.

Yet it seems, according to Dr. Hawker, that such an union with Christ as he has above described, "can be the only possible means of enjoying communion with God. All preparations short of this are, in fact, no preparations at all; you may have in them the *form*, but not the *power* of godliness: and were they multiplied by thousands, and followed up with ten thousand sacraments, ordinances, prayers, and the like, yet void of this sweet life-giving, soul-enriching principle, they tend only to carry the heart *from* God, instead of bringing it to him."*

Thus are the ideas of this writer on the subject of regeneration, and the communication of the Divine Spirit, too explicit to need any comment; and too extravagant to admit of any palliation. Had he intended to make the gospel a laughing-stock for infidels, or to expose its most sacred and mysterious truths to mockery and insult, he could not have circulated effusions more likely to produce that deplorable effect. If they should appear to have been cited more copiously than the case required, let it be considered, that unless the wild fancies of enthusiasm are brought home to the conviction of Metho-

* Union with Christ, p. 31.

dism, as they stand attested by the confession of its advocates, we shall be charged with a misrepresentation of their opinions, or a misapprehension of their meaning. Let it be considered also, that these are not merely speculative points, but are embodied with the practical tenets of their professors, and the moral conduct of their numerous disciples: that they are authoritatively laid down as the indisputable positions of a true Christian's creed; and that a denial of their validity, and their exclusive claim to an implicit assent is reprov'd as a sin approaching to blasphemy—a sin neither to be forgiven in this world, nor in the next. Were they the sentiments of Dr. Hawker alone, or cherished only by his select friends—were they the secret companions of his closet, or the solace of his literary hours, the public would not be much concerned with his favourite lucubrations: but since he is the established minister of an extensive parish, and is listened to by a congregation of admiring auditors, who adopt his notions, as if they were the substance of holy writ, and the dictates of the Divine Spirit—since his occasional visits to the metropolis are announced as the harbingers of glad tidings, and thousands who press into the fold of such a pastor, surrender their souls entirely to his guidance or controul: the spiritual influence arising hence is so widely diffused, that his merits should be duly appreciated,

and his capacity for religious instruction generally known. It is presumed, no doubt can exist on these points amongst any persons, but those to whom his discourses are particularly addressed.

Eripitur persona, manet Res.

CHAPTER III.

THE SIGNS AND PRIVILEGES OF REGENERATION INSISTED ON BY METHODISTS.—NOT ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, NOR WARRANTED BY HOLY WRIT.—THE IMPORT OF THE ASSURANCES WITH RESPECT TO DIVINE GRACE DELIVERED BY THE EVANGELISTS.—THE TRUE CRITERION OF A RENEWED LIFE, AND THE DANGEROUS FOLLY OF SUPPOSING IT TO CONSIST IN SENSIBLE EMOTIONS.

THE opinions maintained by the Methodists with regard to the signs and privileges of regeneration, are calculated to perplex and confound the sober-minded member of the church of England. He has been taught, that being brought to Christ in baptism, and admitted by that holy sacrament into his church, he thence became “regenerate, dead unto sin, and capable by God’s grace of living unto righteousness; of crucifying the old man, and utterly abolishing the whole body of sin.”* “Baptism,” says the article, “is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive

* Service for the public baptism of infants.

baptism rightly are grafted into the church : the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed ; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God." *

This is the language of the church, and consonant, as we believe, both to the language and spirit of the gospel. The position of the Methodists bears another character. In a pamphlet published a few years ago, with this magnificent title, "An Apology for the Church of Christ and the Church of England," † this principle is asserted.

* Article XXVII.

† This work bore the name of a Mr. Willat, but was generally attributed to a more *learned* writer. The Rev. Mr. Cecil, late preacher at St. John's chapel, Bedford Row, and author of the *Life of the Hon. and Rev. William Bromley Cadogan*, was supposed to have been the real editor or chief contributor to this work. That zealous minister is now numbered among those whose probation is past, and whose sentence is yet to come. May the Father of Mercy extend to him, and all who embraced his doctrine, that blessing, which is not limited according to their narrow conception of that divine attribute, but is as infinite as God himself!—It was addressed to the rector of St. Giles's, Reading, and contains a series of remarks on a sermon preached by him at the Bishop's visitation, 1798. It was deemed a weighty performance by the Methodists, and may be considered as a standard of their faith. It carries with it some shew of Christian knowledge, but none of its substance ; misapplying the terms, and misinterpreting the sense of scripture ; and is calculated,

“ In order to ascertain my election, I must first prove that I am *effectually called* out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel; so that through an efficacious supernatural call by the Holy Ghost, termed regeneration, I might manifest to the world that I am one whom the Lord has adopted into his family.*

We had been led to consider baptism as the sign and pledge of this regeneration, whereby the promises of the spirit are visibly signed and sealed; and having been instructed, that these privileges of grace and salvation were vouchsafed to us in the baptismal covenant, we did not contemplate the necessity of any other “supernatural call by the Holy Ghost, termed regeneration:” but being persuaded, that we were thereby enabled “to lead a godly and a Christian life,” we have sought no other “proof of an effectual call,” than this; viz. “to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.”

If that essential duty were performed, then, with all humility, conscious of our own imperfections, yet trusting in the atonement of our blessed Saviour, we hoped to be justified by his grace, which alone can sanctify us, and all the

like other treatises of the same description, to perplex the ignorant, to disturb the diffident, and embolden the wicked, by raising its own scheme of grace on the ruins of true religion, reason, and morality.

* Willat's Apology, p. 51.

elect people of God. But this by no means corresponds with the creed of Methodism; this will not support their doctrine of the divine decrees, nor warrant them to set the seal of election on whom they please.

Yet to those members of that sect, who profess the doctrines of the church of England, the argument drawn from its articles and liturgy must, upon their own principles, be conclusive.* Now, if the baptismal service do not

* The Bishop of Lincoln has shewn the scriptural doctrine of regeneration in its true light by such undeniable evidence, drawn both from the New Testament, and from the articles and liturgy of our church, supported by the primitive fathers, that it is sufficient to refer the reader to his exposition of this subject.* The result, as he states it, is, that neither scripture nor the writings of our church authorize us to call upon those who have been baptized, whether in their infancy, or at a mature age, to regenerate themselves, or to expect regeneration, through the workings of the Holy Ghost;”†—“that regeneration of those who are already baptized by the forcible operation of the spirit, is one of the doctrines by which the weak credulity of unthinking persons is imposed upon in the present times;”‡ and that “regeneration, in its true sense, signifies an inward effect produced by the Holy Ghost through the means of baptism, whereby the person baptized exchanges his natural state in Adam for a spiritual state in Christ,” &c.§ Yet a minister of the church of England avows a different opinion: “It hardly need be said that the ordinance of baptism, however administered, is not the regeneration by the spirit.”—“No doubt,” he adds, in order, it may be supposed, to ob-

* See “Refutation of Calvinism, chap. ii. on Regeneration.”

† P. 92.

‡ 94.

§ 95.

explicitly declare, that the new birth takes place in the administration of that holy sacrament,

viate certain objections, "baptism is (as circumcision was) the outward sign of regeneration. But they who are satisfied with the outward sign, without the inward spiritual grace, should return to school or to the nursery, and learn over again a part of their catechism, which they have no doubt forgotten; for it expressly states the inward and spiritual grace of baptism to be "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."*

Now this concession is all we contend for. We are not satisfied with the outward sign, but as it indicates an inward grace; as a means whereby we receive that grace, and a pledge to assure us thereof. But if we receive it by these means, we are regenerate; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; members of that spiritual body, of which he is the head; in one word, Christians, and entitled to the glorious privileges of Christians, if we live according to that holy ordinance; for being by nature born in sin, we are hereby made the children of grace. We bear on our body the sign of the cross, the mark of our Lord Jesus, in token of our devotion to his service; and we rely entirely on that divine grace which is communicated to the soul by the blessed Spirit, into which we are baptized.

Mr. Scott tells us what regeneration does not signify, *viz.* "not merely reformation;"—"nor conversion;"—"nor does it consist in any kind of impressions, or new revelations;"—"nor are new faculties communicated in this change." So far, then, we are agreed. But when he defines it to be "a change, wrought by the power of the holy spirit in the understanding, will, and affections of a sinner, which is the commencement of a *new kind of life*, and which gives another direction to his judgment, desires, pursuits, and conduct;" † we cannot sub-

* Scott's Essay on Regeneration, p. 200.

† P. 303.

the expression, "seeing now this child is regenerate," has no signification; will the Metho-

scribe to his opinion. If regeneration were such a complete and absolute transformation as is here described; if the understanding, will, and affections of the sinner were thus radically changed, his judgment, desires, pursuits, and conduct must needs be directed by their impulse. This necessary effect would unavoidably follow a prevailing cause; for what is there, under the divine appointment, which can influence the choice, or regulate the conduct of man, but one or all of these faculties? And if the holy spirit works such a change in them, as gives them a new and heavenly direction, then is the sinner safe and secure from a possibility of relapsing into wickedness. But were this the case, what occasion would there be for those exhortations which are addressed to the regenerate? "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds;" for it will not be disputed, that the "beloved of God,* called to be saints"†—"who had received the spirit of adoption, whereby they cried, "Abba, Father; the spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit, that they were the children of God."‡ It will not be disputed, that such Christians were regenerate.

The source of confused ideas and false tenets, on this subject, is a departure from the true meaning of scriptural terms, and thence a misapprehension of scriptural doctrines, accompanied with a great deal of contradiction. Mr. Scott had formally declared that "regeneration does not merely signify a reformation of the outward conduct, or a ceasing from vice to practise virtue."—"Nor does it consist in any kind of *impressions or new revelations.*"—Yet he tells us, the regenerated person "possesses, as it were, a *whole system of sensations*, of which he formerly had no conception," and speaks of him as a "person who has recently experienced this saving

* Romans xii. 2.

† i. 7.

‡ viii. 15, 16.

dists say that one new birth is insufficient, and urge that it must be repeated? That is not

change." Thus reducing it to feeling and experience. He says again, "we *must be changed*, or we cannot be either holy or happy." This is very true in a general sense, for we must "repent, or perish." But as the phrase is intended here to express regeneration, it is misapplied.

The introduction to Christianity, under the influence of the Holy Ghost in the baptismal covenant, which is properly termed regeneration, does not necessarily produce this happy effect; which if it do ensue, is not regeneration, but repentance. The renewal of the mind is not inherent in the new birth, but consequent upon it; and results from those means of grace, when they are productive of their due effect. But why should the word regeneration be interpreted, as inevitably involving them? All the arguments for divine grace may be urged without straining that word to imply what it does not imply, in the language of holy writ. And the occasion which is given to the fanaticism of the credulous and the blasphemy of unbelievers, by resolving the new birth into *sensations and experience*, should restrain its advocates from countenancing such chimerical fancies as bring discredit on their profession, and injure the holy cause which they so vehemently endeavour to promote.

It is but justice, however, to Mr. Scott, to observe that he has objected to those delusions which prevail almost universally among the more ignorant part of his peculiar disciples, and which are supported, it may be feared, although unintentionally by his own opinions. "Regeneration," he very truly says, in a passage already quoted, "does not consist in any kind of *impressions or new revelations*; any successions of terrors, or consolations; or any whisper, as it were, from God to the heart, concerning his secret love, choice, or purpose to save us. Many such experiences have been related by those who still evidently continued the slaves of sin; and "Satan

agreeable to scripture, or to common sense, unless they intend to argue, that by relapsing into sin we become dead unto righteousness and forfeit the privileges of the new birth, which can only be recovered by repentance, through the assistance of the holy spirit; and this we readily

transformed into an angel of light," has done immense mischief in this way: for the confidence of these persons seems in general, to be rather the effect of delusion and self-flattery, than an express design of imposing upon other men. Some of these things indeed (as terror, and consolation succeeding it,) commonly accompany a saving change; others, which are evidently enthusiastic, *may*, nevertheless, be found in the case of some who are really born of God: yet they are neither regeneration itself, nor any effect or evidence of it; but rather a disgraceful and injurious appendage to it, arising from human infirmity and the devices of Satan."*

How pleasant it is to see a ray of truth break through the clouds of error! But what a sad reverse to find "the fathers and our pious reformers" traduced, in order to weaken the argument drawn from their authority. "Indeed, the fathers, as they are called, (that is, the teachers of the christian church, during some ages after the death of the apostles) soon began to speak on this subject in unscriptural language: and our pious reformers, from an undue regard to them and to the circumstances of the times, have retained a few expressions in the liturgy, which not only are inconsistent with their other doctrines, but also tend to perplex men's minds and mislead their judgment on this important subject."† To such censorious remarks on those wise and holy men, does a minister of the church of England descend, as a cover for his dereliction of that doctrine which their superior knowledge of the truth has sanctioned and affirmed.

* P. 202.

† P. 201.

admit, but we apprehend something more is implied in “that efficacious supernatural call, which they term regeneration.”

The reasoning pursued by the author above mentioned, and the instances brought forward in confirmation of it, are exactly suited to the opinions he maintains. After having said, that very frequently the objects of mercy are some of the vilest and most notorious for their sinful and profligate lives and conversation, and having instanced Manasseh, and Mary Magdalen, and the thief upon the cross, he adds in a note, “The work of the Lord is the same *now* that it was *then*, and the spiritual operation of his grace must display itself now in the conversion of notorious sinners, as much as it did formerly.” There are very many living witnesses to this truth, who may be addressed by their spiritual pastors and teachers in the same language which St. Paul used to his Corinthian converts: “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.”—1 Cor. vi. 11.

An example and text of scripture are thus cited in a manner which tends to encourage the most *notorious* sinners, and to sanction the absolution pronounced on them by these Protestant Popes. Now, first let us take the scriptural account, and then the inference which they draw from it. The history of Manasseh will be found,

II Chron. xxxiii. 12. That of Mary Magdalen, Luke vii. 37, and that of the thief upon the cross, Luke xxiii. 43. Each of these instances undoubtedly shews, that great offenders, upon turning to God, have been forgiven. But their cases were peculiar. Not only had the guilt of all been incurred before they were enlightened by the gospel; but the two last received pardon immediately from him who had power on earth to dispense that blessing, and knew the hearts of those who might deserve it: and the first, notwithstanding his Jewish obstinacy, manifested his contrition by the most undeniable tokens of sorrow, prayer, and humiliation.

These examples were therefore singular, and the error lies in making them a ground of confidence to those who have sinned against the light and authority of the gospel. In teaching such unhappy persons that a sudden impulse of the holy spirit, will convert them at once, and enroll them in the number of the elect; and in depreciating “a moral and virtuous deportment.”*

But, it is the common argument of the new evangelists to vindicate their doctrine by such a kind of exemplification, and thence to draw a general conclusion in favour of their votaries. Mr. Rowland Hill has applied it to this purpose, in his village dialogues, an extract from which

* Willat's Apology, p. 37.

may serve as a corollary to Mr. Willat's proposition.

Thomas Newman, a convert to his creed, speaking of *Mr. Lovegood's* sermon, says, "he shewed all the Bible over, that never did poor sinner sue for mercy but he had it. He told us of Manassch, of Saul, the Philippian gaoler, and the thief upon the cross: that all these poor bleeding penitents were at once accepted, without any other righteousness but what was to be found in him who died to justify the ungodly; and that *whosoever*, and again he said it, "whosoever cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out." Oh! what a time of love was this! How Edward looked at me, and I at him; while we both began, for the first time, to look to Jesus Christ, who died for the redemption of our poor ruined souls.

Farmer.—And was this all you did for your salvation?

Thomas.—Why master, nothing more could be done; for the love of Christ broke our hearts into a thousand pieces: from that moment we felt the chains of sin drop off from the soul, and we were at liberty to love and serve the Lord. For now we began to experience what it was to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. "Old things passed away, and all things became new."*

* Village Dialogues, vol. i. p. 30, 31.

There is no need to dwell long upon this passage, since the remarks already made on the preceding extract from Mr. Willat's apology may be applied to the village dialogues. Let it merely be observed that the multitude of Mr. R. Hill's proselytes is easily accounted for, on the principles here avowed. Is there an ungodly person in the world, whose ignorance and self-deceit are equal to his wickedness, that will not eagerly resort to the standard which this hierarch hath set up?

We are justly alarmed by the allurements of Papal superstition; but, surely there is no less cause of alarm from blind fanaticism, while Methodism is thus attractive; and while it proposes terms of salvation, easier even than those which are sanctioned by the church of Rome. That church must abolish the performance of penance and pilgrimages, the counting of beads, the aspersion of holy water, and the repetition of Rosaries and Ave Marias, in order that the Catholic communion may cope, upon equal ground, with a sect which maintains such doctrines as these: viz. "That never did any poor sinner sue for pardon but he had it,"—without any righteousness but what was to be found in Christ: and "that nothing more can be done for our salvation."

Wonderful is the effrontery of these teachers, in asserting that the "work of the Lord is the

same now, that it was then :”* the same new miracles have ceased, and the gospel of Christ is fully revealed, as it was during his ministry, and first promulgation of the gospel! When extraordinary gifts of the spirit were dispensed, and the sinner was called from the darkness of Pagan ignorance, or Jewish error, to the light of knowledge, and of truth. This unwarranted position would indeed excite surprize, if any presumption were surprising in these mistaken men.

The text by which this opinion is supported, *viz.* 1 Cor. vi. 10. if compared with the context, proves the very reverse of the doctrine respecting regeneration and grace, which it is quoted to

* The author of “Christianity not founded in Argument,” says Bishop Law, to give this extraordinary scheme of his a scriptural air, lays hold on some passages of scripture history, and draws in several detached parts of texts, about the spirit of God, or such as sound that way, which he applies to this point indiscriminately, whether they concern those ordinary assistances, and imperceptible operations, that may be expected from the Holy Ghost, in every age; or are confined to his extraordinary miraculous gifts, that were, we think, peculiar to the first publication of the gospel, and produced those wonderful effects which this writer alludes to, and which he with some modern sectaries seem still to claim, upon that ever weak foundation, of believing strongly that he has the same, without being able to bring any of the same proofs in justification of such his belief. Well might the bishop term this “a self-destructive scheme.”—*Law’s Theory of Religion*, p. 21.

prove. The Corinthians were "yet carnal," iii. 3. of which their "envying, strife, divisions," were a melancholy instance: but what then? Were they unregenerate?—Were they unredeemed? Far from it. The inspired apostle convinces them of the contrary in this earnest expostulation, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" iii. 16. And again, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God, in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." vi. 19, 20. Were not these sufficient assurances of their regenerate state? Not only had they been *washed*, but *sanctified*, not only *sanctified*, but *justified*, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of God. Still they were not treading in the steps of their blessed master, and consequently not walking in the way of salvation. "I speak to your shame," says St. Paul, vi. 5. "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another." 7. "Nay ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" 8, 9.

Let this be a warning to these rash and inconsiderate teachers; first, that they endeavour to comprehend the entire import of holy writ; and next, that they lay aside all confidence of

boasting. Since if they be gifted in as great a degree as the first converts to christianity, still they may “do wrong;” and be wanting in that charity which is the condition of their obtaining mercy; and although bought with an inestimable price, yet even *they* may “perish for whom Christ died.” viii. 11.

Our Saviour* hath said indeed, “All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me;”† and again, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:”‡ and it is well known to what purpose these texts have been perverted: but whatever countenance they have been considered as affording to the Methodistical doctrine of the new birth and irrelative grace, the many clear and decisive assertions of the same divine teacher, in other places, which entirely overthrow it, clearly prove that no such article of faith was intended here. The passages above cited, are moreover perfectly accordant with those numerous texts of scripture which are altogether irreconcilable with the favourite dogma of the new evangelists. St. Paul illustrates the meaning of our Lord,

* “No man,” saith our Lord, “cometh unto the Father but by me.” St. John xiv. 6. As by faith in Christ, we are led to God, so by the testimony which the Father hath given of the Son’s divine mission and authority, are we led to Christ. It is very injurious to the cause of truth, to strain the terms in which it is conveyed beyond their proper meaning.

† John vi. 37.

‡ 44.

when he says, “As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God;”* and we are assured by the highest of all authorities, that “he giveth his spirit to them that ask him.” †

God is undoubtedly the author of every good and perfect gift: to him, therefore, be the glory. The means of grace and salvation, and every faculty we possess, are equally derived from him; and all who make a right use of these blessings, will embrace and ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, revealed by Jesus Christ: and being thus redeemed from death, are given to him by God the Father both now and for evermore. There is one infallible rule laid down by our Saviour, which, if observed, would prevent all misapprehension. “He that is of God, heareth God’s word;” ‡ and “he that keepeth my saying shall never see death.” § God has graciously vouchsafed to “draw all men unto him,” through the atonement of Christ, who was “lifted up,” || as he himself also assures us, for that very purpose, and those only that “resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” The 39th and 40th verses of the 6th chapter of St. John’s gospel throw light upon each other. “This is the Father’s will; that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day: and this

* Rom. viii. 14.

† John viii. 47.

‡ John xii. 32.

† Luke xi. 13.

§ 51.

is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* So that, "all which the Father hath given me, is equivalent to this expression, "Every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him;" for the same thing is predicated of both. The just conclusion therefore is, that instead of testifying the new birth by any sensible and immediate infusion of the holy spirit; and instead of limiting it to a few persons arbitrarily chosen by God, the gospel has extended this grace, and salvation consequent upon it, to all christians whatsoever. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." † And our Saviour's expression implies the unbounded efficacy of his merciful dispensation. Παν ὁ διδωσι μοι ο Πατρι. ‡ "All," § without restriction, and with-

* John vi. 40.

† Mark xvi. 16.

‡ John vi. 37.

§ Bishop Latimer, in his Sermon on Matt. xxii. 2, says, "The promises of Christ our Saviour are general; he made a general proclamation, saying, 'Whosoever believeth in me hath everlasting life.' He saith, 'Come to me all ye that labour, and are laden, and I will ease you.' Mark, here he saith, 'Come all ye;' wherefore then should any man despair, or shut himself out from the promises of Christ, which be general, and pertain to the whole world? He that leaveth his wickedness and sin, and is content to mend his life, and then believing in Christ, seeketh salvation and everlasting life by him, no doubt that man or woman, whosoever they be, shall be saved." Yet this the Methodists would persuade us is a novel doctrine, and taunt us with the title of *Universalists*; of which more hereafter.

out exception, "all that the father giveth me:" that is, according to the context, "*Every one* which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* He shall partake of a joyful resurrection; but on this condition, "that he have done good,"† for otherwise, "he will come forth to the resurrection of damnation."

Regeneration, as we have before stated, in its strict and primary sense, takes place in the sacrament of baptism, when we are born of water and the spirit, and become new creatures, the adopted children of God through Christ; when we are admitted into the christian covenant, renounce the devil and all his works, and are spiritually transferred from the fellowship of the world into the communion of saints: qualified to exercise the same holiness in this life; and if we do so, entitled to the same happiness in that which is to come. This is so great a change, so complete a transformation from a carnal to a spiritual, from an earthly to a heavenly state, that it might justly be called regeneration, or a new birth.

But it is not denied, that those who having been thus made "members of Christ, and children of God," and having afterwards lived in wilful negligence of the gospel, or in disobedience to its laws, are recalled from a course of sin, and renewed in the spirit of their minds; It is not

* 40.

† John v. 29.

denied that such persons are converted, restored to the principles and practice of Christianity, and to all the privileges of the gospel covenant. If it be the pleasure of certain professors of that gospel to call this reformation a new birth, let them employ that term, but let them not attach to it a meaning and an application which the scriptures never warrant.

“Except ye be converted,” says our Lord, “and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*

Lowliness and meekness, humility and innocence, are the best proofs of a regenerated mind. But these endowments are not the effect of an involuntary and overruling impulse. Neither conversion from Judaism and Heathenism to Christianity, from unbelief to faith, nor from a vicious to a virtuous propensity, is any where declared in scripture to be the immediate work of the holy spirit, without the concurrence and co-operation of man.

“There have been many,” says Dr. Waterland, “both in former and latter times, who have laid great stress upon I know not what sensible emotions or violent impulses coming upon them at times, which they boldly and rashly impute to the holy spirit: presuming also to date their conversion or new birth, (as they call it) from such fanciful impressions. There is not one syllable in sacred writ to countenance the notion

* Matthew xviii. 3.

of such impulses ; it is all mere fiction, invention, presumption, exceedingly dangerous in its issue or tendency.* For by that blind rule, a man may very easily mistake the suggestions of Satan for divine impulses ; therefore, if they do indeed feel any emotions extraordinary, the first and most important inquiry is, whether these emotions are not really Satan's illusions, rather than divine impressions ; or, whether they are not rather marks of possession, than inspiration ? Confidence is no argument in a dark affair." There is but one certain rule whereby we know when we are led by the spirit ; and that is the rule of God's commandments. When we so think and so do, as the spirit of God has directed in God's holy word, then and then only are we sure, that we are led by the spirit, or born of the spirit." † St. John has said all in a very few words :

* Speaking of the inward light to which some Methodists pretended, Johnson said, " It was a principle utterly incompatible with social or civil security.—If a man pretends to a principle of action of which I can know nothing, nay not so much as that he has it, but only that he pretends to it, how can I tell what that person may be prompted to do ? When a person professes to be governed by a written ascertained law, I can then know where to find him."—*Boswell's Life of Johnson*, p. 343, 4to. edition.

† " You have two ways," says Bishop Sherlock, with his usual perspicuity, " of judging yourselves, which must both concur. You have inward and outward signs of grace : the inward signs are, a pure conscience, a sincere love for God and religion, and whatever tends to the glory and honour of your Maker ; the outward signs are, acts of obedience conformable to the inward purity and love of your mind. These are fruits

“ Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin;” * that is, doth not allow himself in any known sinful practices. There is the mark, and the only true mark of regeneration, and the spiritual life. Let every man examine himself by this rule; and when they can, upon sure grounds, speak peace to their own consciences, then let them attribute the glory of it to God’s holy spirit, for that is right; but let them not blaze it out to the world, however certain they are of it; for that will be seeking honour of men, and endeavouring to share with the holy spirit in that glory, which belongs to him only; and it will be forfeiting the favour of that very spirit whereof they so proudly boast.

I am well aware that the false pretenders to the spirit have often laid hold on that text of

by which you may judge yourselves. Our Saviour tells us, “ that we may know men by their fruits:” much rather may we know ourselves by our own fruits; especially when we may know the stock too from whence they grow, the motions and workings of our own heart.

“ Hence, it appears, that the evidence of the spirit is not any secret inspiration, or any assurance conveyed to the mind of the faithful; but it is the evidence of works, such as by the spirit we perform; and therefore the only sign of sanctification is holiness, and the only mark of grace is to obey from the heart the word of God: and therefore they err, not knowing the scriptures, who from this or the like passages, imagine, that the spirit ever gives, or was ever designed to give, inward assurance or certainty to men of their future state.”—Discourse viii. on Romans viii. 16.—‘The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.’

* 1 John iii. 9.

St. John, warping it unnaturally, so as to draw it to favour their own fond delusions. They first take it for granted that they are born of God; (which is their fond presumption,) and then, they conclude that they are without sin. This is vilely perverting, and abusing the text: for they ought first to know that their ways are right, and then to draw their conclusion; and not vainly presume that they have the spirit, and then from thence to conclude that their ways are right.

But such has often been the self-delusive method of vain pretenders; and they have sometimes carried it so far as to argue, that since they are saints, and born of God, (that is, in their own fond imaginations) they cannot be guilty of sin: but let them do what they please, the spirit is to warrant and sanctify all; for God sees no sin in his saints. How dangerous a principle this is; how productive of all ungodliness, and of the most shocking impieties, was too sadly seen in the last century, and stands upon record in histories of those distracted times."*

The whole discourse, from which this large extract has been made, well deserves the attention of those who would adopt a correct standard of judging on this fundamental point of religion; the error against which, we contend, cannot be more clearly stated, or more justly reprov'd.

* Waterland's Serm. on 1 John iv. 1.

CHAPTER IV.

THE METHODISTICAL DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION AND GRACE TENDS TO DISCOURAGE GOOD RESOLUTIONS AND VIRTUOUS ENDEAVOURS, AND TO CREATE VAIN CONFIDENCE AND VAGUE PRESUMPTIONS. VARIOUS INSTANCES OF ITS EFFECTS.—INFATUATION OF METHODISTS EXEMPLIFIED IN THEIR SUBSTITUTION OF FEELING FOR REPENTANCE.—THE WICKED RELEASED BY THIS DELUSION FROM THE FEAR OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

THE opinions which are maintained by the Methodists, tend most evidently to undermine the foundation of true religion, by discouraging all virtuous endeavours, and assuring unconditional forgiveness to the worst of men, as the immediate effect of their regeneration: yet Mr. Styles has ventured to say, in his Letter to a Barrister, “I challenge you to produce, from any accredited writer on the side of evangelical truth, a single sentence, which by any ingenuity of interpretation can be made to favour the sentiment, that the atonement of Christ ‘alters the nature of sin, annuls the solemn declaration of God, that in a future life he will render to every man according to his works; or that is in any way opposed to the doctrine of repentance, or refor-

mation of life.'”* This is a bold challenge, and may be fairly met.

Sir Richard Hill, a gentleman possessed of some learning, and liberally educated, insists on absolute, controlling grace, in a manner which is wholly irreconcilable with “the solemn declaration of God, that in a future life he will render to every man according to his works.” This author, we may presume, is an ‘*accredited writer*’ † with those of the same persuasion, and his decision is therefore entitled to the more consideration.

He thus addresses Mr. Daubeny: “The utmost you will allow Christ to have done for sinners is, that he has obtained for them a possibility of salvation; but their being made partakers of that salvation, and being brought to the possession of it, depends upon themselves; a very pleasing, pride-soothing conceit,” &c. “A possibility of salvation must end in an impossibility of salvation.”—“The first covenant was all of works, the second all of grace; but there never was a third covenant between the two, or patched up by faith and works joined together:

* Styles’s *Vindication of Evangelical Preaching*, &c. p. 82.

† It is extremely difficult to ascertain what *writers on the side of evangelical truth are accredited*; but the author of *Willat’s Apology*, speaking of *Sir Richard Hill’s* publication, says, “the *whole* of which, I conceive, is most satisfactory, interesting, and evangelical.” This testimony, we presume, will not be disputed by the advocates of *evangelical truth*.

so that if that grace and love, which before all worlds gave Christ for sinners, do not also give Christ to sinners, by working in them that true justifying faith, through which alone they become one with him, and have close union with him, they must for ever remain at a distance from him, and strangers to all hopes of happiness by him:” * thus confounding *causal* and *final* justification, and renouncing works, which although they have no efficacy with regard to the first, which is entirely gratuitous, are yet positively enjoined as necessary towards the last, which is conditional; this writer “*does annul* the solemn declaration of God, that in a future life he will render to every man according to his works.” He adds a new article, that God must give Christ *to* sinners, in order to their election; it is not enough that he gave himself *for* our sins.” (Galat. i. 4.)

There must be, according to the methodistical doctrine, a special gift, a personal gift, super-added to that “*full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, which Christ made upon the cross, for the sins of the whole world;*” otherwise there is no union with him: and “*that professor in religion,*” says Dr. Hawker, “*who is unconnected by any vital union to the † person of the Lord Jesus, stands in the*

* Sir Richard Hill's Apology, p. 40, 41.

† Why a *personal* union should be insisted on by these writers, when a *spiritual* union with Christ is all which the

church's garden but as a stick, supporting indeed, (if it can be called support) the tender plant of the gospel with his unmeaning hand." *

Now, were this intended to import the same meaning as that declaration in our communion service, "If with a true penitent heart, and lively faith, we receive the holy sacrament, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us;" the doctrine would be unexceptionable: but this does not come up to Sir Richard Hill's sense of a "real union or fellowship with Jesus Christ; an experience of being born again of the spirit." † No: there must be feeling, sympathy; a perceptible impulse, an overpowering act of grace: that, and that alone, will be sufficient. "I can form no idea of grace," he says, "but as it conquers whatever opposes its progress; if it do not, then *grace is no more grace*; and the power of nature in man overmatches the power of God

language of scripture suggests, it would be difficult to say, did not the doctrine, which that expression is intended to support, explain it. Enthusiastic and mystical opinions must be couched in new-fangled phrases, or they will not obtain currency: and nothing is more observable than the perversion of scriptural terms, and the use of words in a sense unwarranted by holy writ, to which the Methodists have had recourse, in order to convey their strange notions of regeneration and grace. Numberless instances of this will be recollected by any one who is familiar with their works. We admit a spiritual union with our blessed Lord in the fullest sense; but what a *vital union to his person* means, we confess ourselves unable to comprehend.

* Union with Christ, p. 10.

† Apology, p. 134.

in willing a conversion which he cannot effect, and is therefore obliged to give up in disappointment.”*

This language is as extraordinary as the sentiment it expresses; a text or two from scripture will shew that both are alike unwarranted by holy writ. † “Thy will be done,” says Christ;

* Preface to Babington’s Sermons, annexed to the Apology, p. 8.

† It is astonishing, that any one who has read the Bible, should not perceive and acknowledge, that the whole code of the divine laws is in direct contradiction to the dogma of irresistible grace, and founded entirely on the principle of freedom and volition in man. “Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me.” Exodus xix. 5. This is the condition of reward; “Because I called, and ye refused.” Prov. i. 24. This is the just cause of punishment, held forth alike to Jew and Christian. The disciples of Christ “received grace for obedience to the faith,” Rom. i. 5. but this obedience was free, and if it were refused, then they “received the grace of God in vain.” And this rendered the sinner inexcusable, because he would “not obey the truth,” when every motive that could influence a free, rational, and accountable agent was proposed to his choice, his understanding, and his conscience. Yet *the power of God was not overmatched by the power of man; nor was the Almighty obliged to give up his purpose in disappointment.* What profanation does the supposition carry with it!

The distinction between that divine power, which absolutely controls all nature, and that gracious purpose which ordained that rational creatures should be free agents, the Calvinists will not see nor apprehend. It is clearly stated by Archbishop Secker, whose explanation of it is well worthy their consideration.

plainly intimating that it may not be done. “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost,” says St. Stephen; “as your fathers did, so do ye.”*

The strangest point of all, however, is, that the advocate of controlling grace should deny that it is perfect. He does not hesitate to say, that “grace, as well as nature, is liable to mistakes in conduct.”† This wonderful assertion is occasioned by his zeal to excuse the errors of his brethren; some of whom “may, in the juvenile warmth of their hearts, and in the fervour of their *first love* and religious affections, have fallen into imprudencies,” &c.‡ Here was a dilemma. The propagators of Methodism were certainly actuated by grace; that could by no means be given up; yet they had acted wrong: how then does their advocate extricate himself from this embarrassment? By transferring the fault from them to divine grace! the blasphemous tendency of which it is needless to remark; the passage itself will prove to what shockingly profane expedients the defence of a favourite opinion will reduce even a religious mind.

“What God wills to do himself, that he doth accordingly, both in the army of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand. But what he wills us to do, that he only requires of us, as we value his favour, or fear his displeasure; leaving us designedly that power of not doing what he bids us, without which doing it were no virtue,”
Lecture XXXI. on the Church Catechism.

* Acts vii. 51.

† Apology, p. 206.

‡ Id. id.

“ Grace, as well as nature, is liable to mistakes in conduct; and it would be hard indeed to make no allowances for, but to punish with rigour the actings of the former, and to palliate or pass over unrebuked the follies or even the vices of the latter.”

This is a strain of reasoning that could scarcely have been expected from one who had said, “ God is jealous of his own honour and sovereignty, and the Redeemer will not suffer the jewels to be plucked from his crown of grace, and placed on the sinner’s head.” *

Could it have been imagined, then, that not only a jewel of grace should be placed on the sinner’s head, but that a debased jewel should be placed there by Him, who is the sole author of every good and perfect gift? That he should bestow a defective, insufficient grace, liable to mistakes in conduct, nay, as liable as our frail nature is, which it was especially designed to correct and amend, and lead into the way of truth; or, according to Sir Richard Hill, to control by an invincible necessity? Where is the holy reverence, where the humble faith of this pious writer? for pious undoubtedly he was. Yet his own argument might lead us to a different conclusion, and might induce us to exclaim with unaffected sorrow and amazement,

Heu pietas, heu prisca fides?

* Apology, p. 80.

Here we leave Sir Richard, that we may proceed to notice the productions of his brother, the Rev. Rowland Hill, who resembles him in principle, and maintains that principle through all its consequences. In his *Village Dialogues*, Thomas Newman is the first instance given of the manner and efficacy of the new birth. In his unregenerate state he met with a dangerous accident. "And what thoughts I then had," he says, "no mortal can tell. I thought these words sounded like thunder in my ears—'lost once, lost for ever!'" Notwithstanding this warning voice, he soon forgot his vows and good resolutions, for which he afterwards assigns the reason—"I have since found, that all our resolutions to mend our ways come to nothing, *till God changes the heart*; and so it was with me,"* &c. At length this period arrived, and on hearing a sermon of Mr. Lovegood's, who "wept like the rain, as a father would over a dying child he dearly loved,† he began for the first time to weep over his sinful state." The dialogue is thus continued.

Farmer.—Thomas, why should you cry? You should not be melancholy, for I dare say God Almighty will forgive you.

Thomas.—Why, my dear master, I know he *has forgiven me*, and, like poor Magdalene, it is fit that I should weep as she did, out of love

* *Village Dialogues*, fifth edition, vol. i. p. 21.

† *Id.* p. 26.

to him that loved her so much, because she had so much forgiven.*

That Mr. Lovegood's sermon might affect his hearer with a godly sorrow, we will not deny; but the intimation, "that all our resolutions to mend our ways come to nothing," not through our neglecting the means of grace, and wilfully continuing in sin, but because God hath not "changed the heart," is an excuse for all iniquity, on the ground of our inability to avoid it; and an imputation on the goodness and justice of God, who "is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it." †

This is the consolation and encouragement afforded by St. Paul to the Corinthians, when he tells them, "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

Mr. Rowland Hill would deprive the humble and contrite heart of this consolation, and instead of it, buoy up the presumptuous enthusiast with a confident assurance of the divine favour. Having shewn that the sinner *can do nothing* "till God changes his heart," he farther intimates that he *need do nothing* afterwards to secure his pardon; since the passive object of this grace asserts, "I know he has forgiven me." Nor is it easy to decide, whether it be a more dangerous persua-

* Village Dialogues, fifth edition, vol. i. p. 26.

† 1 Cor. x. 13.

sion, that the sinner must sit down hopeless and impotent, waiting for the influx of the spirit, and defending his guilt by the plea that he has not received it, and that his wickedness is therefore unavoidable; or that he may speak peace to his soul, and rise up before his Judge with an arrogant conviction that he has received it, and that his forgiveness is at once complete. The obvious consequence of either opinion is this, that virtue and vice are equally the effect of a controlling cause; that the one is necessary, and the other worthless; and thence all virtuous endeavours are discouraged and repressed. How rashly this divine intermixes the agitation of an infirm mind with the motions of the spirit, may be seen in the instance of one whom he styles “a most lovely boy, who, though once inclined to be very wicked, yet his heart became so tenderly impressed with the Saviour’s love to fallen sinners, that he would be frequently quite overpowered by the tender feelings of his own mind.* This dear child,” it seems, “was too full of heaven to live long on earth. Before he died, he called his brothers and sisters round his bed, and told them all that he was going to his dear Saviour, who had pardoned his sins and changed his heart.” †

Had this youth been animated by a less sanguine temperament, instead of assurance that he was already pardoned, he might have felt an

* *Id.* p. 115.† *Id.* p. 116.

apprehension that he was already condemned. The deceitfulness of feeling, especially when the spirits are much affected, may elate us into groundless hope, or sink us into deep despair.

Another instance of the same kind is that of an old lady, the widow of a dissenting minister, of whom Mr. Lovegood says, "I well remember how affectionately she looked up at me, and wept so painfully, that she even bedewed my hands with her tears. What a sweet proof was this of the loving and uniting spirit of the gospel among all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity!" * In her dying moments she becomes quite rapturous, and exclaims, "This is not dying—believers never die—I am just going to enter the presence chamber of my Lord—Oh, this precious believing in the Son of God—he sheds abroad this his most precious love in my heart, and I feel it like a warm coal of living fire, while I am struggling in the cold arms of death!" †

Thus are the meek contrition, the humble hope, the pious resignation of a dying penitent entirely set aside. We are accustomed to pray in this manner over a sick or dying Christian: "Renew in him most loving Father, whatever hath been decayed by the fraud and malice of the Devil, or by his own carnal will and frailness;—consider his contrition, accept his tears, assuage his pain;—impute not unto him his

* Vol. iii. p. 22.

† Id. p. 23.

former sins, but strengthen him with thy blessed spirit, and when thou art pleased to take him hence, take him unto thy favour, through the merits of Jesus Christ. *

But that supposed acceptance which is determined by feeling, supersedes these sighings of a contrite heart, and emboldens it to entertain the most presumptuous confidence. What edification is such a conviction, where the rational faculties seem entirely subdued, likely to produce? Were the salvation of the soul to depend upon it, as the Methodists would fain persuade us; and were there no regeneration, unless accompanied by such impassioned and vehement ejaculations, still the present peace of the departing spirit is no more secured than his everlasting peace, by the test of what they call experiences. For after all their descriptions and affirmations of it, nobody can tell on what evidences of this spiritual impulse he may undoubtedly rely. They deny that baptism is regeneration, and they also deny that it consists in reformation: they will not admit that outward acts betoken it, nor are they agreed what inward emotions certainly evince it. One should imagine that the anguish of a contrite heart must have appeared an undoubted testimony of divine grace to those who resolve it entirely into feeling, and divest mankind of all freedom in thought and will. That they, at least, would

* Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

have attributed the sinner's groans and lamentations to the influence of that divine power, who, according to their creed, controls the motions of the soul with an arbitrary hand. But no: the abhorrence of sin, the pangs of remorse, and the sorrows of despair, may distract the guilty bosom, without the presence of a renovating cause, which they term regeneration. And this we believe to be the case, that the reflections of a wicked mind may move it to cry aloud for mercy, although the holy spirit do not cleanse its thoughts. But how does this accord with the doctrine of the new evangelists, who attribute no volition, no choice, no aversion to man, but assign every impression immediately to God? They will probably introduce another agent, the evil spirit, as the author of those agonies which torment a desponding sinner: but if he change his just fears for unreal hopes, if dissolved into extasy and transports, he profess to be inspired with a triumphant kind of rapture, which can be compared to nothing but delirious phrenzy; this they will pronounce to be the work of the Holy Ghost, the token of God's favour, and the earnest of salvation. That this is not an unfounded supposition, will appear from the account given by themselves in various instances, of persons suddenly transferred into the number of the elect, and thence assured of present pardon and future glory.

The Evangelical Magazine,—the repository of Methodistical experiences, and the medium through which they are conveyed to all the members of the *congregational union*,* contains numberless cases in which the precise moment of the new birth is ascertained, and the happy convert assured of his sudden transition to a state of grace. But before we take a view of them, let a different object be considered. The description given in the *Village Dialogues* of a poor wretch who had been convicted of a capital offence, and after his reprieve, is represented as a real penitent, confessing his sins with unspeak-

* The enlarged scale on which Methodism is now propagated throughout this country, may be in some measure estimated from the establishments which have been set on foot to strengthen and extend its empire. To give the scattered societies of this sect a corporate system and a more combined energy, they are now collected into one vast ecclesiastical assembly, called, “*The general Union of Congregational Ministers and Churches throughout England and Wales.*” And that the diffusion of those publications which animate this body, with a zeal for the cause of evangelism, may be promoted with a correspondent spirit, that office is undertaken by “*the Society of United Theological Booksellers.*”

It is questionable what period may elapse before these engines are capable of subverting the ecclesiastical establishment of this kingdom; but that after they have acquired sufficient power, their force will be employed in shaking the foundations of this venerable fabric, is a point too certain to be deemed problematical. And since the desire seems so vehement, may it not be feared, that its accomplishment, whenever the means are fully prepared, will be attempted with all the fury of a holy war.

able anguish, and making vows of reformation. "And then he cried," says Mr. *Lovegood*, "which pleased me most of all, 'but none of these resolutions will ever do, if God does not change the heart:' adding, "oh, Mr. *Lovegood*, pray, pray, above all things, that God would change my heart.

Mr. Worthy remarks on this, "One would hope that he would hardly have expressed himself in such language without somewhat of the grace of God." *

Mr. *Lovegood* had before made this sound observation: "I have a long time learnt not to draw hasty conclusions from appearances of this sort." A remark so just, demands our unqualified assent. But how does the observation, or the relation which suggests it, agree with the opinions maintained in the *Village Dialogues*, and in the other effusions of Methodism? The heart of the culprit above-mentioned, as to the sentiments which now prevail in it, is evidently changed; yet it is implied that God, who, if the doctrine of that sect be true, has given the heart neither will nor power to correct itself, has not yet changed it! Their creed acknowledges as well as ours, that from God's blessed spirit "all holy desires, and all good counsels proceed," although we differ much in regard to the manner of his operation: yet the repentance and good resolutions of this sinner are mentioned *doubt-*

* *Village Dialogues*, iv. 212, 213.

ingly, as tokens of that grace! Had the sorrowful crying of the prisoner been converted into a frantic exclamation of enthusiastic joy;—had he said, like Thomas Newman, “I know he has forgiven me,” his salvation would have been deemed secure. Such is the criterion of feeling or experience. We shall now see how it is exemplified in the *Evangelical Magazine*.

“Mrs. *Letitia Parsons* was the subject of early convictions, but permitted at times to go great lengths in sin, and during her *unregeneracy*, she was often alarmed by dreams, and terrifying apprehensions of the badness of her state, which often led to a temporary reformation.”*

It may surprise the reader, who is unacquainted with the lore of Methodism, that this good lady should have early convictions, and be led to any reformation, while she was unregenerate, and utterly alienated from that divine spirit “who alone shows to them that be in error the light of his truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness.”† But, it seems, her unregeneracy appeared in this: “She was endeavouring to establish a righteousness of her own by the works of the law, having no idea of the precious blood of atonement by which guilty sinners are brought nigh unto God.” She had not learned the evangelical creed: “that we make a bad hand of it when we reform our-

* *Evangelical Magazine* for May, 1809.

† Collect for the Third Sunday after Easter.

selves;”* and that the moral law has been totally excluded from having any thing to do in a sinner’s pardon and acceptance.”† She had not yet heard this edifying advice,—“Come then (to Christ) you who never came before. You shall have heaven if you come. Think not foolishly first to mend yourselves, and then come to him; you will never be better till you do come.

“Come needy, come guilty, come loathsome and bare,
You cannot come too filthy; come just as you are.” ‡

She did not yet know that this was the amount of the glad tidings announced by Jesus Christ! Her conversion, however, at length took place. “When about thirty years of age, the Lord in a more especial way revealed himself unto her. The set time being come, to favour her soul, a passage of scripture (Cant. iv. 6. until the day break, and the shadow flee away,) being applied with peculiar energy, set her soul at a happy liberty, about which time she was brought to hear and attend the glorious gospel;” that is, of course, to hear a Methodist preacher. The conclusion of the article relating to her is, that “her great conflict of mind, peculiar deliverances, and divers consolations she at times enjoyed, appear in an eminent point of view, from a number of detached scraps of paper found in her pocket-book after her decease, which may

* Village Dialogues, iv. p. 179.

† Sir Richard Hill’s Apology, p. 132.

‡ Burder’s Village Sermons, vol. ii. p. 86, 5th edition.

be called *Ebenezers*, registering the time and place when the Lord graciously appeared on her behalf."*

The periodical work from which this account is extracted, and of which it is said, the "circulation, continues to enlarge," exhibits in almost every page the grossest specimens of a fanaticism which is gradually undermining both the principles and the practice of the gospel. The delirium of sickness, the *ægri somnia*, and all the ravings of a distempered mind, are reported as undoubted proofs of a spiritualized and heavenly state.—"I have not seen Jesus as he is," says the Rev. J. Parkin, "but I have had a sweet interview with him; I have been holding sweet converse with my Saviour—If he does not receive me into his presence, I hope he will into his anti-chamber."†

Mrs. Davey said, with sweet composure of soul, "Jesus I love thy charming name,

'Tis music to my ear;"

and then turning to her husband, "Ah! how little do I love Jesus,—I don't love him enough."

But *Mrs. Elizabeth Reeve* exulted, saying, "My Jesus is all my desire; I long to be with him, that I may see him face to face, without a veil. I am fixed on the rock, I am going to glory!"

* Evangelical Magazine, May, 1809, p. 201.

† Evangelical Magazine, June, 1809, p. 227.

More happy but not more secure
The glorified spirits in heaven!

I embrace Jesus in my arms," &c. *

"Lord's Day Morning, April 16, *Elizabeth Portlock* was remarkably favoured with the manifestations of her Redeemer's grace and mercy, and was enabled to express the feelings of her heart, to the astonishment and joy of those who were present with her:—"I never thought dying was like this!" She said, "Oh! 'tis glorious dying! I am going to heaven—I am going to glory—I shall soon be there.

Soon shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest.

If I did not believe that my name was written in the Lamb's book of life, this room would not contain me. In a few moments I shall be in glory! Sweet Jesus! Sweet Jesus! He is precious! He is precious!" †

"*Mrs. Paynter*, upon hearing these beautiful lines—

The soul that on Jesus has lean'd for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes:
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

appeared in extasies;—after this, with considerable difficulty, she spoke as follows: "I am numbered to enter into the feast; I must be

* *Evangelical Magazine*, July, 1809, p. 288.

† *Evangelical Magazine*, October, 1809, p. 419, 420.

married this day; I shall be with him, and he with me."*

“*Captain Perry* was a gentleman of rank, and what is commonly called a man of pleasure: he entered into the army when young, and almost immediately gave himself up to folly and dissipation; gratifying to the extent of his ability every appetite of fallen nature. The follies of youth, and the sins of riper years, cut short the day of life, and caused his sun to go down at noon. Seeing himself on the verge of the grave, and his soul unfit to stand before God, he attended the preaching of the gospel, which seemed to make some impression upon him; and all hopes of recovery having fled, he sincerely determined to seek the knowledge of salvation from the friend of sinners.”†

This miserable man, then, who was emaciated by disease, and terrified by approaching death, finding that he could no longer enjoy the pleasures of sin, “determined to seek the knowledge of salvation from the friend of sinners;” undoubtedly the best, the only means of comfort to a guilty and despairing soul. But although he might be expected to cry out for mercy, and implore forgiveness, yet that he should “close his mortal career with the language of triumph”—good heavens! what an instance of grace is this. Such, however, is the purport of

* Evangelical Magazine, April, 1811, p. 141, 142.

† Evangelical Magazine, July, 1811, p. 265, 266.

the narrative; viz. that Capt. Perry, after he had passed his life in a course of abandoned profligacy, and “belonged to a society or class of men, the members of which, and he among the rest, bound themselves in solemn league against God, and agreed to work all manner of abominations, and to vie with each other who should most grieve the spirit of God”—after all this, became in his last hour a chosen vessel of divine mercy, which was communicated to him by a species of inspiration. “One night he awoke, and broke out in a rapture of praise, saying, Glory, glory for ever be to my redeeming God! Oh, for power to praise the sin-pardoning God! On being asked if he was asleep, he answered, No; but I feel what language cannot express. Were I possessed of the powers of an angel, and the eloquence of all the heavenly host, I could not make known to the sons of men what love and joy I feel within my soul: I can scarce bear in the body what love I feel at present; my tottering frame can scarcely bear these raptures of love;” * with more to the same purpose. The voice of conscience indeed sometimes sounded an alarm. “About noon, the fourth day after his conversion, he awoke out of his sleep, deprived of his peace and confidence. Never was such distress seen: he cried aloud, “I have lost my peace! I have lost my peace! I have lost my God! I have lost my all!” But conscience

* Evangelical Magazine, July, 1811, p. 266.

was immediately silenced by ‘some pious friends who attended him, and encouraged him, by saying it was the work of the enemy, and that God would again restore him to peace.’*

Good creatures! they spoke peace where there was no peace; they would fain have quieted that “troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” But their endeavours for awhile were ineffectual. “They sung and prayed with him; and never did they witness such struggling and agonizing of soul for deliverance. It was now that the sins of his youth stood in dreadful array before his mind, and that the powers of darkness appeared to be let loose against him. In this state he continued from Wednesday till Sunday.”†

Then, however, his confessor, Mr. Wood, prevailed over the *enemy*, by telling him “the gospel held forth pardon to the vilest of the human race; that salvation was of grace alone, without money, and without price; and therefore free for every guilty soul,” &c. Upon which the dying man “cried aloud in the language of joy and confidence, ‘I do believe it, and I shall never more feel darkness: let all come in now, and I can and will declare what God hath done for my soul.’ Thus the prey was taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered. Life now sunk apace; yet while he could articulate,

* *Evangelical Magazine*, July, 1811, p. 267.

† *Id.* p. 267.

he continued saying, ‘ Praise the Lord, oh my soul! Glory, glory be to God! Thus

on his lips,
His dying lips, the sound of glory quivered;

and with this language of triumph he closed his mortal career.”*

The lesson of religion and morality taught by this profane relation is, that the worst of men may be certainly persuaded that their sins are forgiven, may dismiss the terrors of a future judgment, and close their career in triumph; although their repentance be deferred till the hand of death has seized them, “and all hopes of recovery have fled!” The observation which such a case suggests are very obvious; and let it be remarked, that this is not a solitary case; examples of a similar kind, but not equally aggravated, for that could hardly be, are scattered throughout the obituary of the *Evangelical Magazine*.

“*Mrs. Martha Paul*” was a very different character; “she was blessed with a religious education, through which she obtained a reverence for God, his ordinances and his people.” She was to outward appearance blameless, and made choice of God’s people for her constant companions at all times, and in all places, avoiding the company of the world, and shun-

* *Evangelical Magazine*, July, 1811, p. 268.

† *Evangelical Magazine*, August, 1811, p. 307.

ning every appearance of evil.”* Yet this virtuous woman suffered the same spiritual agonies, and was regenerated in the same crisis as the abandoned libertine above mentioned. During her last sickness, “The Lord began to operate powerfully by his spirit on her soul, and caused her to tremble before him on account of her sin. She was afraid she was going to die, and that if she did she would go to hell. She then broke out in an agony, and cried to the Lord for mercy. The Lord heard her cry, answered her supplications, pardoned all her sins, shed his love abroad in her heart, and caused her to rejoice with joy unspeakable. The change, indeed, was very apparent, for naturally she was timid and bashful; but all her fears fled away, and now she could proclaim the loving-kindness of the Lord to her soul with confidence and courage. A friend called at night to see her, and when he was praying, she seemed lifted up above every earthly object, saying often, ‘I will go, I will go!’ On being asked where she would go, she said, to heaven!” †

Rebecca Gwennap's history furnishes an exception to the general rule of *experiences*. From her infancy she evinced a pious disposition, so that it was impossible for her friends, and very probably for herself, to fix the precise era of her conversion.” ‡

* Evangelical Magazine, August, 1811, p. 307.

† Id. p. 308.

‡ Evangelical Magazine, June, 1809, p. 247.

This was extraordinary indeed, according to the creed of Methodism: but it appears that she was of a melancholy temper, and being exhausted by a lingering consumption, was rather depressed with imaginary terrors, than elated with false confidence. "She complained that Satan had been endeavouring to persuade her she was on a wrong foundation, and of darkness of soul, saying, 'Satan has been accusing me of hypocrisy; but,' said she, 'if I perish, it shall be at the feet of Jesus.'"

However, before her departure, she took courage, and exclaimed, "Soon the conflict will be over, and the battle won, and then I shall enter into the joy of my Lord, all through rich grace," &c.*

"Mrs. Blow's first hearing (of the doctrine of grace) was attended with such strong emotions, that they moved her whole frame, shook her pride, and brought her down to be saved in God's own way; yet at seasons she resolved to hold out, and began to spurn at the sovereignty of grace." She had a will of her own, it seems, and was not overpowered yet; "she wandered from place to place, seeking rest, but finding nothing to fill the void: at length she determined on taking a seat in the chapel, saying, 'Here will I worship till I die.'" She still exercised that abjured principle, the power of choosing for herself; but as it led her to a conventicle, all

* Evangelical Magazine, June, 1809, p. 248, 249.

was well. After this, the “effects of divine grace were remarkably clear in her humility. In one of my visits,” adds her biographer, “she said to me, ‘I have peace with God, pardon through blood, and righteousness divine to appear in heaven. I will not stand in my own righteousness before my Judge—no, no :

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauties are, my glorious dress.’ ”

Her ecstasy increased towards the last, when she “had a sharp conflict with Satan;—and after prayer she exclaimed, ‘I conquer! My Jesus is near—it will soon be over—my adversary is fled—I shall soon be in glory!

O! what hath Jesus brought for me
Before my ravish'd eyes?
Rivers of life divine I see,
And trees of paradise!

Lifting up her withered arms, she cried out—

I'll clap my wings, and soar away,
And mingle with the blaze of day.”*

Can one read such relations as these, without reverting to the apostle's caution against those, “who having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts?” Can we too earnestly

* Supplement to *Evan. Mag.* 1809, p. 549.

exhort our brethren, and more especially our sisters, in the apostle's words, "From such turn away."*

These specimens will probably be considered more than sufficient to evince in what manner the influence of the holy spirit is represented by the editor of this periodical and *popular* work, as deciding the salvation of the departing soul.

This article forms a material part of its contents; and it is observed by a writer, who appears to think that the notice of such cases is still too limited, "that the Evangelical Magazine would prove a suitable repository for these histories of converting grace; and the religious public would be much obliged to ministers and others, who would favour this work with short accounts of this description," &c.†

Certainly, these records of infatuation would best become a publication that propagates more extensively than any other those erroneous doctrines from which they all proceed: but what a ministry must that be, which can lend the weight of its authority to such delusions?"‡

* 2 Tim. iii. 5, 6.

† Magazine for March, 1810, p. 104.

‡ A writer on "Sudden Conversions," in this very Magazine, exposes the danger and absurdity of publishing "so liberally and incautiously" these marvellous accounts. "On reading in our works," he says, "the obituaries of those who are said to have been converted in their *last* days, I have asked, 'Supposing such conversions real, what good can their publication do?' I deny, however, that you can have full

They are not more absurd, than pernicious and degrading to the Christian character; they

proof that such repentances *are* sincere. We have seen in our experience persons as apparently converted as any there, who have upon recovery lost all traces of seriousness. And what proof can you have that the repentance of those who die is not equally unsound? And why we should obtrude on the public as unquestionable verities, accounts of conversions which are liable to such serious doubts, I know not. It is, I suppose, to magnify the grace of God. I think its natural tendency is to make our enemies despise us as presumptuous, in determining without the means of forming a judgment: and to encourage men in health to put off to a dying moment the vast concerns of an eternal world. The *manner* in which some of these sudden and late conversions are stated, is dreadfully exceptionable. One would imagine, that in visiting a condemned malefactor, whose whole life has been marked with crimes of the deepest dye, the only object was to make him contented and happy.

I should feel much more satisfied in reading that such a man died under deep impressions of guilt, and with trembling anxiety for his eternal happiness, than that he went to the gallows with all the triumph of a martyr; and at the place of execution sung louder than all others, "From thee, my God, my joys shall rise," &c.

The writer then instances a criminal, in whom there were "extraordinary, and, as it appeared, unquestionable marks of a saving change: he seemed fully prepared to say in sight of the gallows, 'I am happy, I am going to die!' The next morning a pardon arrived; he was soon discharged.

The night after his discharge he spent in rioting and drunkenness; and in about twelve months he was again tried, convicted, condemned, and executed.

Why don't we learn prudence and modesty from such lessons as these? My two great objections then to such publications, are, that we decide with certainty, where it is impos-

represent it under a mask, whose distorted features exhibit nothing but deformity. It may at-
 tainable to ascertain the fact; and that admitting the fact, the
 circulation *may* do much harm, and can do but little, if any
 good."*

This paper was occasioned by the Bishop of London's pri-
 mary charge. Had the author's opinion of conversions been
 generally received among the Methodists, his lordship would,
 in that respect, have had little ground of censure or complaint.

But from the complexion of the Evangelical Magazine, it is
 very evident, that is not the case. The same extravagancies
 are still inserted, notwithstanding the judicious observations
 above mentioned. But what apology can be made for
 the evangelical editor, who, after giving a place in that
 publication to these well-grounded objections, still continues
 to circulate the extravagancies which they condemn. The
 story, for instance, of Captain Perry! Does he think it proper
 to infuse the bane, because he has applied the antidote? Does
 he not know that the most numerous class of his readers will
 swallow all the fanatic tales, which he disseminates, without
 attending to the remonstrance of his sensible correspondent?
 And does he think it consistent with his religion, to proselytize
 the credulous and ignorant by holy frauds? Surely, the
 Bishop of London had cause "to rank such sudden conver-
 sions among the follies of Methodism," not to call them by a
 harsher name.

The fact is, that the doctors of this sect do maintain the
 frequency and certainty of such absolute conversions, particu-
 larly at the close of life. "How many," says Dr. Hawker,
 "like the thief on the cross, or like the jailor at Philippi,
 have been *surprised into grace* at such seasons, by the sove-
 reignty of Him, 'who calleth things that are not, as though
 they were!'" †

* Evangelical Magazine for May, 1811.

† The Poor Man's Evening Portion, p. 456, cited in the Evan-
 gelical Magazine for June, 1811.

tract the staring wonder of the infatuated zealot, but disgusts the sober reason of those who worship God in spirit and in truth. Even the common feelings and natural apprehensions of mankind are outraged by these descriptions of wild and frenetic agitation. The temperate influence of religious wisdom is lost in the tumult of religious madness.

We see a number of guilty and accountable creatures entering into eternity, and going to appear before their Almighty Judge, without humble penitence or reverential awe; uttering their ejaculations more like the enthusiastic worshipper of a false God; *Evæ Bacche fremens!* than rational believers in the true. It is indeed, most melancholy and distressing, to see this dance of death performed with such vehemence of tone and gesture; to view the professors of our holy faith, in the crisis of their dissolution, fluttering and singing like poetic swans. But alas! the subject is too serious for mythological allusion—sit Dicto Venia!

Those who have finished this period of trial, in whatever religious persuasion they may have lived or died, are summoned before that impartial tribunal; where, if they have nothing else to plead but their own confidence in their regeneracy, it may be feared, they are very ill prepared for the just decision that awaits them. When their Lord comes to reckon with them, and they are required to give an account of their

stewardship, it will not be enough to say, ‘ Lord, we have been washed in thy blood; we have been justified by thy death; and are clothed with thy righteousness: all this hast thou done for us, and therefore we could do nothing for ourselves. Lo! there thou hast that is thine.’ If this be the only account which they can give of the improvement of those talents committed to their trust by God, may he not answer, “ Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; and in punishment of such passive and stupid negligence, may he not pronounce that dreadful sentence, “ Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness?”

God forbid that we should anticipate such a judgment, with regard to any of our fellow-christians and fellow-sinners. We will hope that their hearts were sincere though their understandings were deluded, that the tempest of passion did not entirely extinguish the spark of repentance. Indeed, it is evident from what is said at times, of their “ darkness of soul”—“ their conflicts with Satan”—and “ his accusations of hypocrisy”—that the power of conscience was still active in some of these misguided persons, and excited those apprehensions of futurity which are natural to sinful man. “ For the fears of another world will ever and anon be stirring and crowding themselves in, and will fret and gall the sinner sorely, and make his

thoughts troublesome to him. An uneasy bed, a broken sleep, a sudden affliction, a “hand writing on the wall,” will sometimes force us, whether we will or no, to smite upon our breasts, and reflect sadly upon our past dishonourable misdeeds and the fatal issue of them; and very often our own conscience will fly in our face, notwithstanding all our arts to divert it, and our charms to lull it asleep.” *

But, the mischief is, and indeed it is most serious, that these pangs of an upbraiding heart, are coloured over by the new evangelists, with a false pretext, as if they were produced by the artifices of the tempter to lead us *from* Christ, and were not what they really are,—the reproaches of conscience, which should lead us *to* him, with unfeigned repentance.

By this perversion of truth, the dying man is encouraged to reject and silence his bosom-monitor; is deceived with vain assurances, that the terrors of the Lord are the machinations of the evil one; and, like an intoxicated criminal, enters into eternity unconscious of his danger. Thus is a death bed, on which the contrite penitent should lie, humbled, but not in despair, converted into a scene of mental disorder and turbulent exultation. The still voice of reason and reflection is drowned in this turmoil, and the delirious sufferer dreams that his salvation is thus accomplished.

* Calamy's Seventh Sermon:—on a Death-bed Repentance.

“And would this do, it were indeed a very fine and subtile management of things, for thus we might have both the pleasure of being wicked and the hopes of being saved: we might spare ourselves all the trouble of religion, and yet not miss the reward of it; live all our life long without God in the world, and yet die at last in the Lord.” *

The excellent author, from whom this and a former citation is extracted, furnishes a complete, though it may be an indirect refutation of the Methodistical doctrine, with respect to sudden conversions, particularly in the last hour. For if his reasoning be immediately applied to a death-bed repentance, it will apply at least as forcibly to a death-bed, without repentance. And it is very remarkable how exactly his allusion to the Roman Catholic usage tallies in this particular with the practice of the Methodists. “There is, indeed, another church in the world that can teach men to be saved on a death-bed, even without repentance, which hath found out ways to make it not only possible, but very easy for any ungodly wretch to secure himself from hell, at length, when he comes to die, by less than half an hour’s work: but, *we have not so learned Christ*, nor dare we be so false to our trust, or to the souls of men, as to give them certain assurance of everlasting life on any other terms than a constant, habitual obedience to the

* Calamy’s Sermon.

laws of the gospel. The only certain way to die well is to live well."*

One more passage from the same preacher, who may be truly called a preacher of righteousness, will not be unacceptable to any reader who "has renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully."† "Nothing," he says, "hath done more mischief in the world, hath made Christians more lazy and secure, or given greater occasion to that prevailing religion without virtue amongst us, than this one principle that we are converted (as 'tis usually called) by those operations of God's spirit, wherein we are wholly passive; so that it is in vain to strive, contend, and labour for the making ourselves holy, as we must do for the attaining of any other perfections and accomplishments, since the habits of all goodness are supernaturally infused into us. But this is all but fancy and idle talk, for the spirit of God works not now-a-days but according to the methods of reason and discourse; assisting us, while we sincerely use such moral means, as religion teaches, or reason prescribes; and that with as much diligence, vigour, and constancy, as if we had no assistance at all, but were left wholly to ourselves; so that the way to recover ourselves to a christian temper of mind, after a vicious course of life, is in truth the very same

* Calamy's Sermon:—on a Death-bed Repentance.

† 2 Cor. iv. 2.

by which a man recovers his health, after a long disease, *viz.* by God's blessing upon the diligent use of fit means; and any other way is now no more to be expected, than prophecy or miracles." *

Were the arguments of this good and learned man, and the evangelical truths which they support, duly considered, the errors of enthusiasm would vanish away, as mists before the sun.

* Tenth Sermon on Repentance.

CHAPTER V.

METHODISTICAL DOCTRINES OBTRUDED ON THE SICK AND DYING.—THEY SUPERSEDE A FINAL JUDGMENT.—A REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF METHODISTICAL INFATUATION.—RELIGIOUS DUTIES ESTEEMED OF NO ACCOUNT.—PRACTICAL EVILS RESULTING FROM SUCH ERRONEOUS OPINIONS.—SELF-EXAMINATION REPROBATED.—PERCEPTIBLE ILLAPSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.—ITS ABSOLUTE AND IMMEDIATE EFFECT, IN CONVERTING SINNERS.—REPENTANCE CONFOUNDED WITH REGENERATION.—COMPULSORY GRACE.—INFUSION OF THIS DOCTRINE INTO THE MINDS OF CHILDREN.—ITS PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE.

IT has been shewn in what manner and to what extent the ideas which the Methodists entertain of regenerating grace, militate against that reformation of life, which is the great end of true religion;—against that exhortation of the prophet, “Repent, and *turn yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin:”*—against the purport of the gospel which taught both Jews and Gentiles “that they should repent and turn to God, and *do works meet for repentance.*” They deem it necessary to characterize the lives, and even the exits of their deluded votaries, by marks which are at utter

* Ezekiel xviii. 30.

variance with the principles of our holy faith. Hence, as we have seen, the sick chamber is disturbed, and the mind of its languishing inhabitant dejected with new terrors, or elated with groundless hopes. Into this sanctuary of pious grief and resignation, do these visionaries intrude, and suggest to the sick and dying their own fanciful ideas of grace and union with Christ. When the regular minister of the church has done his office, and has required the sick person “to examine himself and his estate, both towards God and man; so that accusing and condemning himself for his own faults, he may find mercy at our heavenly Father’s hand, for Christ’s sake:” and has given him this comfortable assurance:—“Know you certainly, that if you truly repent you of your sins, and bear your sickness patiently, trusting in God’s mercy, for his dear son Jesus Christ’s sake, and render unto him humble thanks for his fatherly visitation, submitting yourselves wholly unto his will, it shall turn to your profit, and help you forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.”*

When this lesson of self-examination and reproof, of resignation, humility, and repentance, has been inculcated, and on these grounds, hope and confidence revived; the gospel-minister, as he chooses to call himself, not unfrequently gains admittance, and obliterates the impression of this

* Visitation of the Sick.

important truth, by questions such as these: *
“Have you any soul-experiences? Are you heart-feltly acquainted with the precious tokens of the Holy Ghost? Have you felt the grace of God converting your soul? Are you sympathetically united with Christ; washed in his blood; clothed with his righteousness?”

This is the import of his interrogatories, accompanied with certain promises of salvation, if the patient can answer, *yea*, to these enquiries, and threats of condemnation on the contrary. Hence the astonished Christian, who humbly trusted that by faith, repentance, and charity, he should die in peace with God, his neighbour, and himself, now finds that this confidence is void; that something more is necessary,—a *conviction* “*of his personal union with Christ,*”—“*an assurance that Christ is formed in his heart the hope of glory.*” †

With this sort of ghostly counsel, is intermixed much of that enthusiastic rant, which confounds the understanding, and misleads the conscience; but not a word of the conditions necessary to salvation: they are cancelled and annulled by the imputed righteousness of that meritorious cause, which indeed *alone* renders them efficient, but still requires their performance at our hands. Yet this is termed peculiarly gospel doctrine;

* It is well known by those who visit the sick, that this is no uncommon case.

† Hawker's Union with Christ, p. 25, 54.

and our blessed Lord is represented as declaring, "The single qualification I expect, is to believe the gospel, and even that my spirit shall bestow."* Repentance and charity, then, are entirely excluded, and faith abstracted from works, and converted into the presumptuous confidence of a heated imagination, opens the door of heaven to the guilty soul.

Did ever Pope or council propound a doctrine more pernicious? Do extreme unction, or absolution, administered by the Catholic confessor, embolden the wicked to meet his Judge, and enter unprepared into eternity with more fallacious assurances? What is the difference to the deluded sinner, whether he be acquitted by the last office of the Romish priest, or of the gifted Methodist? In either case, he is equally deceived; and whether an outward form or an inward feeling be substituted for true repentance, whether priestly craft or blind fanaticism supplant the genuine knowledge and practice of religion, the error is alike fatal and irretrievable. "For the gospel promiseth not eternal life and glory to any but to persons who are qualified for it, by holiness, humility, purity, meekness, justice, patience, temperance, charity; and God will judge every man according to his works, and the deeds he hath done in the flesh." This is the condition, these are the terms on which we may expect with confidence the approbation of

* Prop against Despair, p. 15.

our Judge; and when we have failed in the performance of this necessary duty, (and who, alas! has not?) by earnestly repenting of our sins, by resolving to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking henceforth in his holy ways, we may still obtain his favour and forgiveness, through the mercy of our Redeemer. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad."*

This most important article of faith, the very basis of Christianity, which is thus distinctly stated by our church, "Forasmuch as after this life there is an account to be given unto the righteous Judge, by whom all must be judged, without respect of persons;"† and of which this awful account is given by St. John: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books *according to their works*. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged *every man according to their works*."‡ This solemn truth is utterly perverted by the sophistry of Metho-

* 2 Cor, v. 10.

† Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

‡ Rev. xx. 12, 13.

dism, in regard to those who are “united with the person of the Lord Jesus.”—“As in the instance of the resurrection, so also in the event of judgment which is to follow, their case is peculiarly secured from even the apprehension of condemnation, in consequence of their union with the Lord; for though all must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to those things done in the body, yet to them it is to receive the reward of their Redeemer’s merits, not to be arraigned for their sins, and to await the issue of their trial.”*—“This view of that great day of God is sweet and consolatory” indeed to those who are released by it from the terrors of a future judgment; in contemplation of which, the stoutest heart should tremble, and the least guilty of us sinful creatures stand appalled. But how does it agree with the word of Christ? Does he inform us that we shall receive the reward of *his* merits, and not of *our own* deserts? that we shall not await a trial? or, “that he will reward every man according to his works?”† St. Paul well knew the doctrine of his divine Master, when he said, “that every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour; and that if any man’s *work abide, which he hath built upon, Jesus Christ, he shall receive a reward.*”‡

* Hawker’s Union with Christ, p. 28.

† Matt. xvi. 27.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 8, 14.

How dares any teacher, then, who professes to be either of Paul or of Christ, attempt to abolish that belief which they so forcibly inculcated, as being the only motive sufficient to restrain the wickedness of man?

Yet to overthrow this simple, reasonable, and most awful doctrine, is the tendency, if it be not the design, of Methodism; and to effect it, are the principles of Christianity unhappily perverted.

The delusion is carried on through life and death; nor does it end there: the departed saint is made to address his brethren on earth from the mansions above, and to assure them that their fond imaginations are all realized in heaven. In the collection of "Religious Tracts," called "The Cottage Library,"* there is a letter, entitled "The Triumph of Glory," left by the Rev. S. Hayward for a friend after his decease, and addressed as from the celestial mansions;" in which, after describing the felicity "that grace has exalted him to," in strains of rapture, he thus concludes: "Fly away, ye lingering moments, and bring my dear Fido, and my other dear friends, to the arms of Jesus. Farewell, till I see you here. Go on your way, rejoicing, Christ has your inheritance safe in his hands, and ye shall surely have it. Oh! love him, love him more and more, and lay yourself out for him. My love to your dear companion; tell her

* Part i. No. iii.

to press forward, and she shall not be disappointed. Adieu, Adieu!

Your eternally affectionate
and triumphant brother,
S. HAYWARD."

When the rich man in the parable,* proposed that Lazarus should be sent from the mansions of bliss, to testify unto his brethren, lest they also should come into the place of torment, he urged this reason for his request; "If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Now since we are all gone out of the way, and if we say that we have no sin, deceive ourselves: since, therefore, all have urgent need of repentance, it would have been more agreeable to Christian humility, had brother *Hayward* taught his sublunary friends that salutary practice, which the rich man trusted would result from the certain knowledge of a future state. But not one word of this does his epistle from the skies inculcate; no virtue is enforced, no vice reprov'd; no sorrow for sin, no fear of punishment, no terrors of the Lord (which even the inspired apostle knew, and therefore persuaded men) are held forth as means or motives to repentance. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well," forms no part of this valedictory salutation. And why should it? The triumphant saint was assured of going to heaven, while he was a militant saint on earth, and wrote his letter by anticipation; and he ad-

* St. Luke xvi. 19.

dresses his living friends as equally assured of it with himself. This is perfectly consistent, and the antinomian scheme is thus complete. It has a beginning, a middle, and an end, which harmonize together; and good works, voluntary or active virtue, have no part in working out the salvation of the elect. Indefectible grace, necessary perseverance, and unconditional salvation, are their indefeasible privileges: sin they must not, fall they cannot. The contention amongst them is, not who shall be most zealous in the discharge of moral and religious duty, but “who shall strike the loudest string, and sing grace! grace! the loudest.”*

That the rhapsody, called “The Triumph of Glory,” should flow from the pen of methodistical inspiration, is not surprising; but that it should be delivered from the pulpit of the established church, may well occasion both wonder and indignation: yet such was really the case, as the following note, which is subjoined to the letter, testifies:

“N. B. The above letter was, soon after Mr. Hayward’s death, read from the pulpit of St. Saviour’s church by the late excellent Mr. T. Jones, chaplain.”

Some ignorant people mistaking the matter, raised a report that Mr. J. said he had received a letter from glory; but the fact was as here stated.”† It is very probable, not only that

* Triumph of Glory, p. 6.

† Id. id.

some ignorant persons raised such a report, but that many others would readily believe the *fact*; for an infatuated mind will believe any thing. How much then does it concern those who are “the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, of whom it is especially required that a man be found faithful;” how much does it concern the pastors of our church “to charge some that they teach no other doctrine” than that which Christ and his apostles taught; “neither give heed to fables, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith.” What this godly edifying is, the great apostle immediately explains: “Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.”*

The inference which must unavoidably be drawn from the doctrine of the Methodists by those who embrace it, is, that their own religious acts are of no efficacy in promoting their salvation. This indeed is explicitly acknowledged by their most approved instructors. They declare that “acceptance with God is looked for, not in the duty, not in the ordinances, not in repentings, and tears, and services, and prayers, and

* 1 Tim. i. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

sacraments, but wholly in the Lord Jesus." * As some qualification of this anti-scriptural position, Dr. Hawker adds, "These indeed, as so many gifts of the holy spirit, are sweet effects of divine love, and evidences that a spirit of grace is wrought in the heart, but not in the smallest degree the cause of salvation." †

What impression this gloss is calculated to make upon the minds of ignorant and unthinking men, is evident enough: they will naturally conclude that no one can help himself in the performance of his duty, or, that if he can, duty is of no avail. We may be told that Christ is the sole cause of our salvation. This is an indisputable truth, in its proper signification; but has he not appointed the means of salvation also? and do they not consist in those very instances of religious duty, which are thus disparaged, in repentance, prayer, and in the holy communion? Are not these sacrifices with which God is well pleased? Are not these services accepted by him as an offering of a contrite heart, thankful for his mercies, and obedient to his laws—and may we not thence "look for acceptance with God," through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ?

But as this doctrine is stated by Dr. Hawker, how can the vulgar and undiscerning part of mankind distinguish truth from falsehood, when their trust in the Redeemer is opposed to that

* Dr. Hawker's *Union with Christ*, p. 33.

† *Id.*

religious practice which he himself required as the earnest of our faith and hope in his atonement? When “to ascertain the fact, on which all depends, “whether the spirit of Christ dwell in them,” the fruits of righteousness are not considered a sufficient test: but “if he convinces you,” says this teacher, “of your emptiness, and the Saviour’s fulness, and is bringing you daily, and sometimes hourly, in a way of sweet barter, to resign your sins for his righteousness, &c. &c. these are sweet and precious proofs of an union with his person.”* After saying this, he adds, “I do not know whether I sufficiently explain myself by these terms to the apprehension of every reader.”† Alas! if the learned writer “do not know,” the unlettered reader might inform him, that when the divine simplicity of the gospel is thus obscured, no intellect can discern its heavenly light. When the leader is blinded by these vain conceits, what sight can the blind follower have, or how shall he escape those errors in which his guide himself is lost? But the consequences do not end here: the mistakes of a deluded mind under the influence of religious zeal, usually produce the worst practical evils, by distorting the word of truth, and propagating the most pernicious doctrines. Thus, speaking of divine grace, the author above mentioned says, “As no merit of man induced God to be thus bountiful, so no demerit prevents

* Hawker’s Union, &c. p. 32.

† Id. p. 33

man from receiving such clemency. These are indeed glad tidings of good things, and great joy to all people, to tell a poor sinner, that no sins are too great,—no life too impure,—no offences too many, or too aggravated to prevent the blessed influence of gospel mercies.

But only reverse the case, and suppose that some qualification of merit is necessary in the objects of this favour, and that these mercies are suspended on the performance of such and such duties: What a vast alteration would it make in the circumstances of the gospel! “It is matchless grace.” He subjoins, “unspeakable grace indeed, when that grace riseth higher and higher, in the proportion as the miserable objects of sin and iniquity have sunk lower and lower. But if it reaches only to such an extent, or, if it be clogged with certain limitations, that the objects of it be found qualified to receive it, it loses its very name, and ceases to be grace. ‘Grace is no more grace, if it be of works.’” (Rom. xi. 6.) *

How does the prospect of human depravity expand under the influence of these antimonian tenets? How rapid may be its progress, encouraged by such promises; its extent how universal! The doctrine is so strongly recommended to the heart of man, by the corruption that works within, and the temptations that beset it from without, that it may be feared, no arguments

* Prop against Despair, p. 10.

will prevail against such seductive preaching. If truth, however, must be rejected, at least, let scripture be fairly stated.

Now, the text from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, with which this divine endeavours to support his reasoning, has no relation whatever to the point in question. The apostle intended to shew that the works of the Jewish law were not entitled to the favour manifested by the gospel, or the mercy which it dispensed. That this people, therefore, were not chosen by God, in reward of their works; but that the remnant of them who embraced the gospel, were "according to the election of grace; and if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise, grace is no more grace." The privileges and performances of the Mosaic law, could not give them a title to the blessings promised by Jesus Christ; which were the effects of his free grace alone; and of which, there would have been no occasion, could the observance of that law have been effectual to salvation.

Now what authority does this passage of St. Paul afford to the dangerous tenets which it is cited to enforce?

The conclusion to which all their reasoning tends, is this:—The grace of God is absolute, and his acceptance of sinners unconditional. What corruptions does this short theorem include? Dr. Hawker disclaims the exercise of our own endeavours, and thus applies his doctrine

to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. "The only actual preparation for every duty or ordinance of worship in our approach to God, must originate in the sweet influences and teachings of the Holy Ghost; and if so, what a mass of weakness and folly, (to speak the least offensively of it) must be that swarm of books called *Weekly Preparations*, which human wisdom hath drawn up for the use of communicants?"* Our own preparations then are folly, because the spirit actuates us. Human diligence is superseded altogether by the divine impulse. Thus argues the evangelical preacher: but what says the evangelical prophet? "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well." † And the apostle James, "Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts ye double-minded." ‡ And the apostle Paul: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." § And that venerable church, of which Dr. Hawker is a minister, in her exhortation before the holy communion, by which we are enjoined: "so to search and examine our own consciences, that we may come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, in the marriage-garment, required by God in holy scripture, and

* Union with Christ, p. 35.

† St. James, Ep. iv. 8.

† Isaiah i. 16, 17.

§ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

be received as worthy partakers of that holy table.”*

It should seem, from these authorities, that the holy spirit left some kind of preparation to the agency of man; nor would he otherwise have said, by the mouth of the prophet Haggai, “Consider your ways:” nor would the psalmist have acted as he did, agreeably to this principle: “I called mine own ways to remembrance, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” †

His conduct, according to Dr. Hawker’s judgment, was weakness and folly. And our Saviour, when he asked that pointed question, “Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?” ‡ may be arraigned by the same casuist, for attributing some capacity to the human mind of judging what is fit to be done. *A week’s preparation*, indeed, may be insufficient of itself to qualify us to be meet partakers of the holy table; nor do we insist on it as absolutely requisite to reclaim the wicked, or confirm the good. But is it weakness, is it folly, during

* It can hardly be necessary to remind Dr. Hawker, that this exhortation is founded on the authority of St. Paul, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.”* But there is a general rule, given by the son of Sirach, which he appears to have forgotten: “Before thou prayest, prepare thyself; and be not as one that tempteth the Lord.” †

† Ps. 119.

‡ Luke xii. 57.

* 1 Cor. xi. 28.

† Eccl. xviii. 28.

that time at least, to consider our ways and call them to remembrance, before we turn our feet to that awful testimony of divine grace—the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of Christ? The true preparation for it we believe to consist in repentance and amendment of life, in faith and charity: not merely in perusing “the books called Weekly Preparations.”

But why should the pious christian who needs this aid of his devotions, be treated as a fool and formalist? Why may he not employ it to assist him in the serious work of self-examination?

To shew this author’s sentiments in their full scope and real import, the following declaration soon after presents itself to our notice:—“I do indeed desire to be understood, as very highly reprobating that preparation which is in man, because I learn, from an authority not to be questioned, that the preparation of the heart is from the Lord.” *

He reprobates that which prophets and evangelists have required of us; nay, which Christ himself repeatedly commands, when he says, “Watch”—“Be ready,” or prepared; “take heed to yourselves.” And the neglect of which he thus severely threatens:—“That servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” †

* Union with Christ, p. 38.

† Luke xii. 47.

This doctrine is highly reprobated by his *illuminated* disciples, to whom he might well address this merited reproof. “How is it that ye do not understand? Having eyes, see ye not, and ears, hear ye not?”

These teachers have the art of opposing different parts of scripture, but not of reconciling them to each other. To reconcile seeming inconsistencies, an intimate knowledge of the whole scheme of Christianity is requisite; that by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, the true meaning may be extracted, and scripture may become its own interpreter. But to affix a peculiar unqualified sense to each text, which appears to favour our own prejudices and passions, is the easy business of every enthusiastical sciolist. And such an one will hastily conclude, that as “the preparation of the heart is from the Lord,” our Saviour had no meaning when he condemned the servant who did not prepare himself. No meaning should we say? or rather, that he condemned him for not doing what he was unable to do? They will not admit that God hath vouchsafed to us the means of grace during this period of trial, and that we are empowered to improve them as a preparation for the attainment of our reward; but will gravely tell us, that this “frame of mind is not induced by our prayers, our repentings, tears, humiliations, preparations, and the like: for, alas! a man may run through the whole of these in self-

preparation, and yet be wholly unprepared by the Lord."* May he so? He may bring forth the fruits of the spirit, and yet not have the spirit: he may do what is enjoined by Christ, without whom we can do nothing, and yet not be strengthened by his might! We had been taught that we should be known by our fruits; but it now appears that our fruits are no criterion of our spiritual state. But this conclusion results naturally enough from the premises of a reasoner, who assumes that "grace is shewn in a sovereign way; not waiting the return of the backslider; not withholding his mercy till that mercy is implored; but bestowing it very frequently without application, without the smallest pretensions to his favour, and at a time when we have done nothing to merit his returns of love, but have done every thing to deserve his severest displeasure."*

The conditions of the gospel are thus annulled, and the sins which it forbids virtually encouraged, under the pretence of preaching exclusively its holy precepts. There is some detailed advice given by this pastor to his flock, "in respect to the particular time of receiving the communion, whether at the *first* or *last*, or any *intermediate* table," which evidently supposes the illapse of the spirit to be felt by the communicant; and shews how that sensible impulse is believed to operate in the act of divine worship.

* Union with Christ, p. 45.

“The plan I should observe myself,” he says, and this is grave authority, “should be to go to the table in that moment when I found my heart most drawn towards it; so that if in the early season of administering, I found grace much in exercise, I should then desire to draw nigh. If, on the contrary, a deadness or indisposition prevailed in the early part of the service, I should wait for another table, lying low in the mean time before the Lord for his quickening influences.” If this, and some other expedients suggested by him, prove unsuccessful, “I should still hope,” he adds, “in the very moment of receiving, the Lord might manifest himself to the soul. That sweet expression directed by the minister, and personally applied by the holy spirit, ‘The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee,’ hath been found to awaken desire, when every other hath failed; and prompted the soul to cry out under its influence, Lord! how is it thou thus manifestest thyself to me, and not unto the world?”* † Now, what

* Union with Christ, p. 62.

† In the Evangelical Magazine for May, 1811, p. 183, we have an instance of the disappointment which sometimes succeeds these warm desires, in the experience of Mrs. Evans; who “thus writes on her return from her first attendance on this ordinance: ‘While at the Lord’s table, I was in great distress, for fear I never should meet him whom my soul loveth. I did not find that comfort and pleasure which I expected; I believe, I expected too much.’” Poor soul! what a pitiable object is the tender conscience, when thus harassed by fanatic

warrant is there in the word of God, what pretext does it afford for this visionary transport? What grounds are there in our Saviour's institution, or in St. Paul's account of this blessed sacrament, on which this qualification of *feeling* can rest? A criterion, which would send only enthusiasts to the Lord's table, and keep all sober-minded Christians from it. If Dr. Hawker's congregation observe his directions, "lying low before the Lord for his quickening influences, till *desire* is awakened," (which it seems may chance to happen, from "a nearer view of the altar, and the sight of others waiting round the cloisters of our Bethesda")* and in the mean time have no freedom to approach:† it may be feared that the presumptuous alone, whose imaginations are warm, and passions strong, will be impelled to communicate; and that the devout and

fears. "Not experiencing, on one sabbath morning, that satisfaction she longed for, she writes thus: 'What a dreadful sabbath hath this been to me thus far! Oh! may the evening of it be better improved.'"

These distresses of mind are related of a person "who prayed, hoped, and rejoiced in all-sufficient grace." But what can be said in favour of a persuasion which excites such terrifying thoughts, or in justification of any Christian minister, who inflames the morbid passions of a superstitious mind:

Qui pectus inaniter angit;
Irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet
Ut Magus?

* Union with Christ, p. 61.

† Id. id.

timid Christian, the humble and contrite heart, would long continue in that prostrate state.

How different is the language of our excellent liturgy, and the preparation it requires of those who approach the altar!

“Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort, and make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon your knees.”* Such is the voice of true religion, prompted by that divine spirit, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Let the discourses of those teachers, who call themselves evangelists, be compared with it, and there will be no difficulty in deciding which is conformable to the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, the essential principles of Christianity disappear, when touched by the talisman of Methodism. Conversion does all at once in the day of grace: “And then only can it be said to be the *day of grace*, when God the Spirit makes sinners willing *in the day of his power*. And whenever this blessed day of grace comes, (that is, when sinners are made *willing in the day of God's power*) it can never be said to come too

* Communion Service.

late.”*—“The dying thief,” and “the labourers in the eleventh hour,” are instanced to support this argument of compelling grace!

Mr. Burder furnishes an example of “a young gentleman, whose sensual lusts were extremely violent, and who procured an entire female skull, and every morning, before he went out, spent some minutes in surveying it; expecting that the sight of so unpleasing an object would operate as an antidote to the power of that temptation, to which he was so subject. But, alas! his corrupt inclination still prevailed, and he sinned as frequently as ever; so he gave away the skull, finding it did him no service. Afterwards, God was pleased to convert him; and vital grace did that for him, which a dead skull was unable to effect. His easy besetting sin had no more dominion over him, from the day that the Holy Ghost laid effectual hold of his heart.” † This disgusting story is introduced into a sermon, intended, of course, for the perusal of both sexes: but how little is it calculated to restrain licentiousness! how offensive to virgin modesty!

It is a suitable illustration, however, of the *gospel-doctrine*, which it exemplifies. The most incorrigible sensualist was converted in the day of grace, not because he repented, and endeavoured to reform himself; that point was given up, and he continued to indulge his passions in

* Prop against all Despair, p. 32.

† Village Sermons, v. iii. p. 114.

defiance of his reason and conscience, till “the Holy Ghost laid effectual hold of his heart;” not as a co-operating assistance, but as an arbitrary power.

Thus, when the emaciated libertine has wasted life and strength in his debaucheries, after he has corrupted others, and destroyed himself, his last miserable moments, and all the bitterness of remorse and shame will be converted into joy and exultation, if he listen to this consoling preacher.

“Come then by faith to Jesus; tell him of the power of thy sins, and of thy inability to destroy them; plead the fulness that is in him for thy supply; beseech him to subdue thine iniquities, and leave the matter in his hands. His grace is sufficient for thee, his strength shall be perfected in thy weakness.”* This is the great pillar of Methodism, the foundation and support of the new evangelical church. It is no wonder that thousands and tens of thousands assemble within its walls, when they are assured, that “whoever, under a sense of his sin and misery, flies to the refuge of his Saviour’s arms, is gladly received and freely pardoned. In the fountain of his blood, he is washed from all sin; in the righteousness of Jesus, he is justified from all accusations: he is no longer in a state of condemnation; he has passed from death unto life. And what condition can equal this?”† Well may he

* Village Sermons, v. iii. p. 116.

† Id. v. ii. p. 142.

ask the question: and surely, if eternal life and present peace had been offered to mankind by Christ in this large, unqualified manner, without terms or conditions, it would not have needed the testimony of martyrdom, and the authority of miracles to recommend it to the acceptance of the world: nor would it have been so obstinately opposed by flesh and blood, by the rebellion of human nature against that commandment which is holy, just, and good. The revelation of Christ would have been too agreeable to those general and depraved propensities, which debase the heart, if the lusts of the flesh could thus be reconciled with the joys of the spirit; the pleasures of the world with the felicity of heaven. The guilty and self-convicted conscience would have flown to the refuge of the Saviour's arms, and have sheltered itself under the shadow of his imputed righteousness, in the worst periods of a degenerate age. How cheerily would the sated voluptuary have exclaimed, "What condition can equal this!"

It is true, these new evangelists will sometimes argue that "repentance is regeneration,"*

* That repentance is very inaccurately termed regeneration by those writers who have applied it in that sense, has been plainly shewn by the Bishop of Lincoln, in his excellent Refutation of Calvinism, p. 83 et sequent: This subject has also been discussed in a clear and satisfactory manner by the Rev. Theophilus St. John, in his Sermon on the New Birth.* His

that it means a *change of mind*, and it is impossible that a man can live in sin, when by the grace of God he is utterly set against it, by being thus renewed in the spirit of his mind.*

It might have been supposed the next concession would be, that repentance is a condition: "No," says Mr. Hill, "what you call conditions required of us, I call gifts bestowed by him; repentance is his gift. Christ is exalted a Prince and Saviour to give repentance."†

By the common misapprehension of these teachers, a scriptural text is cited to contradict its own meaning. The whole sentence, of which this passage is a part, runs thus: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins."‡

"The council and the senate of the children of Israel," who sat in judgment on St. Peter, when he made this declaration, afford no testimony in favour of his doctrine, as it is interpreted by Mr. Rowland Hill: "for immediately after they had heard it, they took counsel to slay the apostles."§

If Christ had given them repentance, according to his sense of that expression, this might

conclusion that regeneration, according to scripture and the liturgy of our church, takes place in the sacrament of baptism, appears fully established.

* Village Dialogues, vol. iii. p. 152. † Id. id. p. 143.

‡ Acts v. 31. § Id. v. 33.

well have appeared a very extraordinary effect of it: the malicious and obdurate guilt of the Jewish sanhedrim would have been an astonishing proof that they were no longer sinful, but truly penitent.

Does not this account of those who “rejected the counsel of God against themselves,” evidently prove that the gift of repentance was not absolute, but conditional; granted to those who would fulfil the terms on which it was bestowed, and thus “save themselves from an untoward generation?” Christ was exalted, to give to Israel and to all mankind the means of repentance, and forgiveness of sins upon repentance. And when we pray for this gift in our litany, we farther pray that God would endue us with the grace of his holy spirit, to amend our lives, according to his holy word.”

Now, the change of mind, termed “repentance,” and the change of conduct, which is its necessary consequence, termed “amendment of life,” are wrought in us undoubtedly by the grace of God, without which neither of them could be effectuated; and therefore we entreat God for that gift from which they both proceed. But the improvement in these virtues, our adoption of holy resolutions, and our progress in a better course of life, are not the thing given, but the use made of it: the power is from God, the application of it from ourselves.

Conscious, however, that our success is attributable to his assistance, we pray that he will complete what is in some measure already begun; for our very prayers are an evidence that we are not altogether aliens from God, not altogether destitute of saving grace: we pray that repentance may have its perfect work, and bring forth in us the fruits of a good life. But this doctrine of scripture will not be easily reconciled with the creed of Mr. Hill. "Repentance," he says, "is regeneration;" but it signifies little by what name it is called, since, according to his scheme of Christianity, it is the effect of compulsory, irrespective, arbitrary grace.

In his sermon, entitled, "An Apology for Sunday Schools," * a conversion is mentioned of

* The instruction of the lower classes by Sunday and weekly schools is so agreeable to the principles of christianity, of reason, and of true political wisdom, that it needs no apology, but is entitled to our warmest wishes and most earnest endeavours for its success. But inasmuch as early education has the greatest influence upon the habits and conduct of maturer age, and consequently upon the state of society at large; insomuch should it be most cautiously guarded from perversion, and directed to the advancement of virtue and of truth. The prejudices which have been raised against it, are easily accounted for, when we find that such doctrines as those here alluded to, are propagated among thousands of ignorant children, who are thus taught to consider their destiny as inevitably determined by arbitrary power, and that "it is in vain for them to resist the resistless grace of God."

When this lesson, with the inferences usually drawn from it by the Calvinistical Methodists, has been sedulously inculcated,

“one, profligate in the extreme, who was a remarkable instance of divine grace: the faith of

and no stress has been laid on our Saviour's instant exhortations to love and to good works, what regard will be paid to that divine morality which is summed up in this most comprehensive rule of virtuous practice:—Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them? This may be called “the poor thin morality, which an Atheist may practise;” but it is so essential to the well-being of mankind, that many serious persons have felt little inclination to encourage those seminaries in which it is depreciated. Nor will their objections be diminished by the reflection, that the scholar is there also alienated from the established church: that he is taught, even from his cradle, to look upon the clergy, as apostates, and corrupters of the word of God; and therefore, as objects of abhorrence rather than veneration. A persuasion which is always followed by another prepossession, *viz.* that the government which maintains such an establishment, is radically defective, and requires to be purged from these dregs of corruption which render it unworthy of the attachment of the evangelical brotherhood.

These are sufficient causes for the distrust and apprehension with which these schools have been viewed by many persons who are religiously disposed. But the proper conduct which these circumstances suggest, is not the suppression of such charitable institutions, but a zealous endeavour to counteract these elements of religious dissent, and civil discord, by diffusing the true knowledge of the gospel, and disseminating the word of Christ pure, and unadulterated by false interpretation: in a word, by establishing parochial schools, under the inspection of those ministers who are scoffingly denominated “a moralizing priesthood.”

Since this note was written, the system of National Education for the Infant Poor has been brought forward with so much success, that the purpose to which it points has been in

the gospel brought her to Jesus, and a long train of sister graces adorned her life, and followed her to the grave. She lived godly and died triumphantly; and all that knew her were constrained with admiration to say, ‘What hath God wrought?’ Can the advocates of mere

a great measure realized, and promises, under divine Providence, the best security against those dangers which might otherwise arise from a misguided and fanatic multitude.

“We are a religious as well as civil community,” says an accurate observer of human nature, “and rules have been established for our guidance in both: nor could it be otherwise, for the people will have some imaginations or other concerning the invisible world; if you do not provide them with a rational system, they will run after conjurors, diviners, tales of fairies and apparitions, and lie open to the first crafty or enthusiastic deceiver who wishes to make dupes of them. Therefore, the polity of a nation would be grossly defective, where no provision was made for instructing the ignorant, warning the thoughtless, and educating children: but how can such provisions be made without a summary of doctrines, and set of articles composing the system to be taught? Or would you have a law enacted, that the people shall be duly instructed, and that parents shall educate their children, without giving the least direction in what manner the instruction and education shall be carried on? But if the system of doctrines established is believed beneficial by those who have it in charge to make provision for the public welfare in all its parts, it is natural as well as incumbent on them to have the benefit secured by the protection of the laws; and this is all that is ever aimed at.”* Yet we are accused of bigotry, if we act on this wise and religious principle.

* Tucker's *Light of Nature* pursued. Abridgement, p. 420.

reason or morality produce such miracles of grace and mercy as these?" *

Such conversions may have taken place, and we hope, have often been the fruit of true contrition, assisted by the Holy Spirit. That there is joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth, we are taught by Christ; and that to whom much is given, the same loveth much. But it is nowhere intimated in scripture, that such repentance is the effect of a force that subdues the freedom of man by an irresistible impulse: far otherwise. "Repent, and *turn yourselves* from all your transgressions, saith the Lord God, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and *make you* a new heart, and a new spirit." † The inference which Mr. Hill draws from the case, which he has stated, is in direct opposition to that suggested by the prophet: a direct denial of free agency in man; and an assertion, no less positive, that God compels the sinner to be saved. "What shall we say to these things?" he subjoins. "Is it possible to contradict matters of fact? In vain then does the sinner strive to resist the resistless grace of God. It sweetly disarms resistance, and leads us cheerful captives in the silver chains of obedience and love, while we are made

* P. 25.

† Ezek. xviii. 30, 31.

Christ's willing subjects, in the day of his power." *

With what propriety the "sinner, striving to resist," can be called "a willing subject of Christ," let those explain who can reconcile such glaring contradictions.

That the minds of youth should be imbued with this tincture of fanaticism, before they know how to distinguish truth from falsehood, when reason is beginning to dawn and the passions to play, is an evil, pregnant with the most fatal consequences. After being taught to surrender their natural faculties, and trust entirely to supernatural light, how easily will they be wrought upon under such an infatuation, by the craft and subtlety of the devil, or man? What a fruitful harvest of iniquity may this seed of enthusiasm produce? The presumption it generates in the tenderest bosoms, is exemplified in the history of a child, named Mary Bartlett, who had been "admitted to the **Tabernacle Benevolent Daily School**, and was reserved to be one instance among many, of the vast advantage to be derived from schools, founded on the principles of the gospel." The advantage this poor child received, was a confident persuasion that she was favoured with a divine revelation, and that her sins were forgiven. It is related, that "on the

12th of July, she heard the Rev. John W——s preach, previous to the Lord's supper, on 1 Cor. xi. 35, and it appears, that at this time, the Lord was graciously pleased to reveal himself to her, as he does not unto the world. On her going home, she was observed to retire immediately to her room; and when she came down, she said, 'This has been a blessed day to me. God has pardoned my sins, through the blood of atonement!'"* Nurtured in the same seminaries, how many are instructed in the same principles, and cherish through life the dangerous opinions to which they lead—opinions dangerous to the best, but to the worst and most depraved, pernicious in the extreme! To the authors of such erroneous tenets, this warning denunciation would not improperly be applied—
"Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues and say, *He* saith, Behold I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore, they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord."†

* Evangelical Magazine, June, 1809, p. 243.

† Jeremiah xxiii. 31, 32.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTRINES FOUNDED BY METHODISTS ON DETACHED OR IMPERFECT TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE CONTRADICTED BY THE CONTEXT.—THE EARNEST, OR WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT, MISAPPLIED, TO FAVOUR THEIR NOTIONS OF DIVINE GRACE.—THEIR OPINION OF “TRUE-HEART RELIGION!” OF SALVATION UPON MERE BELIEF, WITHOUT ANY REGARD TO GOOD WORKS.—SUDDEN TRANSITION FROM A STATE OF SIN TO A STATE OF GRACE.—CONFIDENCE OF METHODISTS THAT THE NEW BIRTH ENSURES SALVATION, AND THAT NO FARTHER CARE IS REQUIRED FOR ITS ATTAINMENT.

IF the purport of scripture be compared with the comments of Methodism, it will invariably be found that the sense of the context will overthrow the peculiar doctrines grounded on particular texts, by the theologians of that persuasion; and in no case does the true meaning of any passage of holy writ support the opinions which they have endeavoured to confirm, by citing detached and unconnected phrases of the sacred writers; as one instance in point: there is no passage in scripture more frequently quoted by them than the latter part of verse 7 of the 1st chapter of the 1st Ep. of St. John—“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.” But the former part is not less generally omitted:

and the reason is obvious, for a condition is assigned in it. Now, conditions they deny, and therefore do not scruple to give out a garbled text of the apostle as a rule of faith. The context is this: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." In the 9th and 10th verses of the second chapter, St. John illustrates the import of his expressions, "walking in darkness and walking in the light," by these familiar, but impressive instances: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." On this alternative does the efficacy of Christ's blood, as applied to the case of each individual, by the wise and gracious appointment of the all-merciful Redeemer himself, expressly depend. If we perform the condition required on our part, we shall obtain the remission of sins promised on God's part; the blood of Christ will then wash out our sins, we shall then be purified from all iniquity, and lay hold on the hope of eternal life, by living in holiness and godly love.

But notwithstanding the doctrines which Methodism peculiarly inculcates, are so entirely subversive of the terms of the gospel-covenant, that the slightest comparison will shew their repug-

nance to each other, yet such is the confidence of that sect in their own infallibility, that they will not suffer the sense in which they are pleased to interpret the holy scriptures to be questioned. Not only do they deny that "God willeth all men to be saved;" and that his grace, without which none can be saved, is impartially bestowed on all who *will* receive it; but they taunt those who believe God's mercy to be over all his works, and class them in the same rank with unbelievers. "Put the case," says Dr. Hawker, "that the reader himself is the very subject of divine grace we have been speaking of, and in relation to the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart, can adopt the motto in the title-page of this little book, and say, 'The spirit itself beareth witness to my spirit;' let the patrons of modern infidelity advance what they please to deny all revelation, or the advocates of *universalism* to confound it, this is a testimony which will stand by him against all. He can humbly assume the language of the apostle, and from the same unquestionable authority say as he did, 'I know whom I have believed, for he that wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of his spirit.'"*

Under the shelter of the apostle's name, a meaning is given to his words which he never intended to convey. It was not an imaginary feeling, or experience of the spirit, or what is

* Hawker's Spirits' Work on the Heart, p. 41.

now called "soul-experience," "sweet and precious instances," "decypherings of the spirit," "the sweet lessons which he instructeth his people in;" it was not the idea which such phrases are designed to excite, that the great apostle impressed on the Corinthians: much less did he intimate "that the sweet influences of the spirit would secure the believer from the possibility of apostasy:" and, least of all, did he confine his saving power to a handful of men, who conceive themselves the highly-favoured objects of his grace. No; St. Paul's argument is vitiated with no such absurdities; nor were his views of the divine goodness circumscribed within such narrow limits. The context will best explain the purport of the text.

"We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened; not for that we would be unburthened, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing," *i. e.* he that fits and prepares us Christians for this immortal state, "is God, who has also given unto us the earnest of his spirit;"* *i. e.* his spirit is an earnest of our immortality, since our conversion to the gospel of Christ, which has revealed that happy state, is effected by the miraculous attestation of the spirit to all its glorious truths, particularly that of the resurrection from the dead: "therefore we are always confident—we labour

* 2 Cor. v.—4, 5, 6, 9, 20.

that we may be accepted of him—we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*—we beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.†—Here is no appeal to passionate feelings as an earnest of the spirit, no assurance of our election arising from such feelings, no arbitrary choice of the objects of his favour, no intimation that it is confined to a few chosen vessels, or that it supersedes our own endeavours to make our calling sure. Quite the contrary; the apostle's argument is utterly inconsistent with the opinions which it is brought to support; and with all the wild and dangerous assumptions that are built upon them.

Mr. Burder argues on the same grounds, that religion, or, as he calls it, “true-heart religion,” is not shewn by prayer, repentance, and good works, which he disparages as “empty boasts.”—“Consider,” he says, “what your religion consists in, and what you depend upon. Is it that you were born and bred a Christian, that you were baptized, that you have gone to church or meeting, that you can say the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments; that you have taken the sacrament, been sorry for your sins, and do to others as ye would be done unto—or that you have done your best, and put your trust in God? Are these your pleas, is this your religion? Then pardon me, if I speak the truth in love, and tell you plainly this will

* 2 Cor. v. 4, 5, 6, 9, 20. † 2 Cor. vi. 1.

not do. These empty boasts prove that you are a stranger to *true-heart religion*. All these things you may imagine you have done; but if this be all, it is only crying, Lord, Lord! Had you gone much farther than this, and equalled the pharisees in their zeal and devotion, all would be insufficient without a conviction of your sin and misery; a heart humbled for your iniquities; a view of the only way of salvation, through Jesus Christ; and that faith in him, which purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. Be not deceived then, satisfy yourselves with nothing short of that which Christ will accept and approve: this is doing the will of God, which will, as you have now heard, requires in the first place believing in the Lord Jesus, coming to him as a guilty, helpless sinner, and receiving him as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Come, then, my fellow-sinner, to Jesus, beg of him to wash you in his blood, beg of him to give you his spirit,"* &c.

This is the preacher's comment upon the text from Matthew, c. vii. v. 21, a text of which, by way of introducing his own exposition and inference, he has completely inverted the meaning. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Thus spoke Christ; but his expounder changes, by a stroke of his pen, *doing*

* Burder's Village Sermons, vol. ii. p. 22, 23.

into *believing*. “This is doing the will of God, which, as you have now heard, requires in the first place believing in the Lord Jesus.”

No doubt, God requires faith as the foundation of all religion, but what has it to do with the text? Our Saviour is inculcating throughout the seventh, and the two preceding chapters of St. Matthew, the principles of practical Christianity. Accordingly he says, “Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments,” *viz* the moral commandments in the law and the prophets, (see chap. v. v. 17,) “and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.”* These principles the new evangelist sweeps away at once, and tells us plainly this will not do, and intimates that Christ will not accept or approve our good works, which in the sixteenth verse of this chapter we are so emphatically called on to exhibit. This is the way with these gifted teachers; they first puzzle the plain sense of scripture. give a wrong clue to their followers, and then lead them blindfold through a maze of errors.

But what is most extraordinary, Mr. Burder supposes, in the passage above mentioned, every duty discharged which God enjoins, every act of faith which Christ appoints; he supposes that a person has not only been educated in Christian principles, and observed the solemn ordinances of our holy religion, but that he is sorry for his

* Matt. v. 19.

sins, lives in charity, does his best, and trusts in God; and notwithstanding is void of that saving faith from which all these virtues flow. To the same purpose he repeats, "Others think that because they belong to a good church, and have been baptized; and say their prayers, and take the sacrament, all is well with them; while they are strangers to *heart-work* in religion; were never alarmed on account of their sins; never humbled for their sins; never fled to Jesus for refuge from their sins; and never knew any thing of that great change of heart, called in scripture regeneration, or the new birth."

Here the secret meaning of this declaimer against practical piety starts up in something like an intelligible shape. *Heart-work* in religion consists not, according to his doctrine, in faith, repentance, and good works, as those terms are commonly understood; but in what he calls regeneration, which is not the regeneration of baptism, but an imaginary spiritual infusion, that changes the heart by an instantaneous motion, and is peculiarly entitled the new birth.

These fathers of the new faith admit that we may partake of the sacraments, believe the word, and obey the commands of Christ, and yet deny that we are Christians, renewed by the spirit of holiness. They confound these evidences of our trust in the mercy of our redeemer, and of our devotion to his service, with pharisaical pride,

tell us that “these are empty boasts;” (we boast not of them,) “and prove that we are strangers to true *heart* religion.”

Let them, however, inform us, by what species of casuistry we can communicate at the Lord’s table, “without flying to Jesus for refuge;” or repeat those impassioned confessions: “Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, &c. &c.” and again, “We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies,” &c. without a “conviction of our sin and misery; a heart humbled for our iniquities; a view of the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ.” Did they affirm that there are some formal hypocrites who pretend to be thus religious, we should lament, but not dispute the fact. But this is not their meaning; they do not suppose any insincerity in the case; but, on the contrary, that we are “sorry for our sins, and have done our best,” and yet they exclude us from the privileges of the gospel covenant; they shut the door of salvation against all who have not felt as they feel, nor experienced what they experience. The deluded people who listen to them are taught to think that godliness is a sort of enthusiastic transport, which they are persuaded is an immediate operation of the spirit; that this is what Christ will accept and approve; that this is

heart-work in religion ; this is regeneration ; this is the new birth.

Consistently with this opinion, the author of "Village Sermons" assures his convert, that the "sinner, however deeply dyed in sin, double dyed and drenched in the most enormous aggravated bloody sins, shall upon believing, be as thoroughly discharged from the guilt of them as if he had never sinned at all." And afterwards addresses him in these congratulating terms of absolution : "Believer, all hail ! Blessed art thou whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity. Happy art thou. God gave to thee to see thy sins, to feel thy sins, to lament thy sins. God opened thine eyes to understand his gospel. God enabled thee to come with all thy sins to Christ, and believing in him thou hast passed from death unto life, and shall *never* come unto condemnation. Admire the love of God. Admire the blood of Christ. Admire the grace of the holy spirit.

And let your glad obedience prove,
How much you owe, how much you love."*

Obedience, then, is a contingent act of the acquitted sinner, and altogether subsequent to his attainment of present pardon and of future bliss. St. Paul declares that Christ "became the author

* Village Sermons, vol. iii. p. 129, 130.

of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”* But the village preacher does not urge the “believer” to prove his sincerity by this unquestionable test, till he has pronounced him “as thoroughly discharged from the most enormous aggravated bloody sins, as if he had never sinned at all.” The culprit who had long known his master’s will, and his revelation against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, though loaded with the most heinous and unrepented guilt, upon his mere belief, passes instantly from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. To lead his “happy” hearers to this conclusion, the preacher had before informed them, that “We are not to suppose some men obtain mercy because they have not sinned so much as others.”†

The text of St. John, which Mr. Burder weaves into his discourse, will be found upon examination not to strengthen the thread of his argument, nor to suit the colour of his reasoning, Our Saviour declares, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”‡ The “hearing of his word,” implies not only receiving his commands with our ears, but admitting them into our hearts; the expression is cleared from all uncer-

* Heb. v. ix. † Vill. Serm. v. iii. p. 127. ‡ St. John, c. v. 24.

tainty, by the fifty-first verse of the eighth chapter of the same evangelist, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." To keep (*τηρειν*) is to observe. to embrace, and hold it fast, to make it the governing principle of our lives. But this condition the village preacher does not condescend to notice. Our blessed Lord affirms that salvation is granted unto all men who will hear and obey his word, believing that it proceeds from God. That on these gracious terms not only the Jews are delivered from the curse of the law, but the whole world is no longer subject to that, which was entailed upon the descendants of Adam: that all are alike entitled to the promise of eternal life, through faith in Christ, if they live worthily of their holy vocation. These comfortable words are represented in quite another light by this interpreter. He will not allow that the believer will be saved, unless he believe the doctrines of Methodism. He may have heard attentively, with an obedient and faithful mind, the saying of his divine teacher, and yet lie under the sentence of condemnation: but the moment he approves the calvinistical interpretation of it, he is hailed as one of the elect, and passes from death unto life.

It is much to be lamented that this expositor of scripture did not carry his eye forward to the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses of the same chapter, from which he has borrowed an

imperfect text. He would there have read, “That the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” A due consideration of this awful enunciation might have induced him to pause before he positively denied, “that the tears, or prayers, or reformation of any man can merit favour at the hands of God, that all these and every thing else that looks like merit must be renounced altogether.”*

Now surely there is some merit in doing good, if it obtain the reward of immortal life. We do not assert that there is an intrinsic worth in any of our actions, but if there be an imputed worth, and if they commend us to the divine favour, shall we say that they have no desert? Since our salvation depends, through the alone *absolute* merit of Christ, on the performance of good works, to what does this derogation of them lead, but to the discouragement of virtuous resolutions, and a holy life? The intention of those who promulge such doctrines may be strictly religious, but they are not the less mischievous on that account. When a vulgar, unreflecting mind has imbibed this dogma with implicit confidence, “That one man is pardoned rather than another, is a matter of mercy alone,” † what will be the

* Village Sermons, vol. iii. p. 127. † Id. Id. Id.

conclusion? Will it not obviously be inferred, that the labour of love and of good works is vain? This is the consequence of that fatal misapprehension which confounds the preventing and assisting grace, which has placed all sinners in a state of reconciliation with God, upon their admission into the Christian covenant, with that grace which is consequent only on repentance and good works, *viz.* final pardon, and a heavenly recompense. And hence the guilty wretch is emboldened to rush into the presence of his maker, “with all his crimes full blown;” rather to rejoice in the recollection of his iniquities, which have called forth such an instance of over-ruling grace, than to bewail them with that true contrition of heart which God will not despise. Can vice and profligacy desire a more secure retreat from the anguish of remorse, and the terrors of judgment, than this assurance: that “the most enormous, aggravated, and bloody sins are instantly and irreversibly forgiven?” This doctrine the village preacher founds on the eighteenth verse of the first chapter of Isaiah, “Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,”—to which he rejoins, “Lord I come at thy call; my sins are indeed as scarlet; for thy name sake make them white as snow: my crimes are red like crimson; O wash me in the fountain

of the Saviour's blood, and they shall be as wool."*

To any reader unacquainted with the context, it would naturally occur, that the prophet had promised this gracious effect of divine mercy to those who are "washed in the fountain of the Saviour's blood." Instead of which, the verses which immediately precede the text, assign a very different ground of hope and consolation. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together"—and so forth. These exhortations to repentance, purity, justice, and charity, are entirely overlooked, as if they had no weight nor place in the view of the prophet, who has been eminently and properly distinguished by the title of *evangelical!* His inspired language is thus perverted by a writer, who presumes to say of his own discourses, that he "has reason to believe the Lord, the spirit, has condescended to make them extensively useful!" †

Extensively circulated they may have been, but their extensive utility is a questionable point, which a few more extracts will probably determine.

In adverting to the instantaneous effect, which is attributed to converting grace, in transmuting

* Village Sermons, vol. iii. p. 130. † Preface to vol. v.

the hearts of the most inveterate sinners; it is impossible not to recollect the well known passage of the prophet Jeremiah:—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." *

This expostulation, not less remarkable for its beauty than its truth, might suggest this obvious reflection, that habitual wickedness is not so easily relinquished; nor regeneration, as the Methodists understand the term, so immediately accomplished as they imagine. Mr. Burder, however, not only insists on the sudden transition by which a sinner becomes a saint, but enters into a minute description of the manner in which it is effected. "Regeneration is a great change: It makes a man quite the contrary to what he was before; as contrary as east to west; north to south; light to darkness; flesh to spirit. It is such a change as if a negro should become white, or a lion become a lamb. In a word, God takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. It is an universal change, a new creature, a complete creature; not a monster with some human parts, and others wanting." †

How edifying is all this! But let us proceed to the application of this doctrine. "You must be born again: do not think that outward reformation, or morality, or religious professions,

* Jeremiah xiii. 23.

† Village Sermons, vol. i. p. 76.

or religious duties are sufficient. All these are short of this inward spiritual change. You must be born again. As sure as there is a God in heaven, you must be born again, or you can never go to heaven." *

We had before been cautioned "to avoid the common mistake, that baptism is regeneration;" † and here we are taught that it does not consist in "living unto righteousness:" neither the sign, nor the thing signified: neither the admission into the covenant of grace, nor the leading of a godly, and a christian life, is a sufficient proof of a regenerate state. Although you may have attested your new birth, by these evidences, once deemed infallible, you are yet to be born again. For you are directed "to fall down on your knees before God, and earnestly desire him to make you a new creature. He can do it in an instant. And as for you, who have experienced this blessed change, forget not to give God the glory, and take the comfort of it to yourselves. Are you born again? Then heaven is yours." ‡ Not only is sensible experience made the test of regeneration, but, that having been felt, there is no possibility of relapse, the great object is infallibly secured, and "heaven is yours." Thus are the most saving truths converted into the most pernicious errors. Prayer to God for his assisting grace, to renew in us a right heart and

* Village Sermons, vol. i. p. 83, 84.

† Id. id. p. 84.

‡ Id. id. p. 83.

a right spirit; and gratitude for that inestimable blessing, without which our best endeavours would be vain; are constantly enjoined by the ministers of our church, as the dictates of true religion. But what a turn is given by the Methodists to this sound and salutary doctrine! Humility is changed into presumption, and gratitude into self-congratulation.

This vain confidence of boasting is the only security from despair in this world, and condemnation in the next. "As sure as there is a God in heaven, you must be born again;"—born in the sense above explained, "or you can never go to heaven."

In another of these sermons, the doctrine of St. Paul: "Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his,"* is thus familiarly applied: "And, now, dear immortals, what do you think of these things? Seeing that having the spirit determines your state, how is it with you? Have you the spirit? It may be known; it ought to be known; for our all depends upon it. Heaven is ours if we have the spirit. Hell will be ours if we die without it. And as to those who have obtained this greatest of all blessings, who have the holy spirit; what more can be said to you? Survey the wonderful gift with grateful acknowledgment. What has God wrought? Deny not from *false humility*, the heavenly benefit. Have you experienced those

* Rom. viii. 9.

sacred effects of the spirit, which have been so frequently mentioned? Here then is the broad seal of the majesty of heaven, securing your relation to Christ, and your title to mansions of glory.*—It is difficult to do justice to these passages, and they are left to the reflection of the reader. †

* Village Sermons, vol. i. p. 95, 97.

† Cromwell, in his last illness, asked Goodwin, one of his preachers, “if the doctrine were true, that the elect could never fall, or suffer a final reprobation?”—“Nothing more certain,” replied the preacher. “Then am I safe,” said the protector, “for I am sure that once I was in a state of grace.”* What a lesson does this short anecdote teach those who maintain the doctrine of indefectible grace? The arch hypocrite, after all his atrocities, consoles his dying moments with a bold and impious assurance, confirmed by the authority of his saintly confessor.

The cruel slaughter at Tredah and Wexford (see vol. vii. p. 170) was obliterated from the records of his conscience by this stroke of self-deceit; the panoply of grace repelled those “compunctious visitings,” which might otherwise have awakened it to a late repentance.

The crafty delusion practised on Fairfax, who was cajoled into prayer for divine illumination, while the fatal blow was given to the unhappy Charles, which he would have endeavoured to avert, did not cost the usurper a moment’s anguish: no; nor the execution itself. Such complicated guilt will fanaticism expunge from the recollection of the criminal,

And with this sweet, oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff,
Which weighs upon the heart.

* Hume’s Hist. vol. vii. p. 285, last edition.

We will only observe cursorily, what will hereafter be shewn more at large, that St. Peter thought it not only possible, but necessary, to say *something more* to those who were “elect through the sanctification of the spirit.”*

He did not caution them against humility, but required them to be “clothed” with it. He did not puff them up with a persuasion that their salvation was accomplished, but said, “If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”*

And again—“Seeing ye have purified your souls in *obeying* the truth, through the spirit, unto unfeigning love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”*

Thus did that truly-inspired evangelist exhort even those who had been “born again,” and “had purified their souls in obeying the truth, through the spirit,” to love and to good works. Nay, he admonished them “to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear;” and for this weighty reason, because “the Father without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work.”

But this, we are now told, is not gospel-doctrine; this is not preaching Christ! The spirit

* 1 Peter, c. i. v. 2. v. 17. v. 22, 23.

of modern evangelism has superseded that which spake in time past by the prophets and apostles, and the Son of God himself. This seducing spirit speaks a different language from that of St. Peter, the rock on whom our Lord promised to build his church, and vainly endeavours to prevail against it. "Are you born of God, then heaven is yours. The righteousness of Christ is your *title* to it, but herein is your *fitness* for it. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; it follows, therefore, if he be born again, he shall see it. God has made you to differ from the mass of mankind."*

* Village Sermons, vol. vii. p. 84, 85.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ERROR OF METHODISTS IN CONFOUNDING CAUSAL AND FINAL JUSTIFICATION.—THE LATTER SHOWN TO DEPEND ON THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIANITY.—UNION WITH CHRIST NO UNFAILING ASSURANCE OF IT, ACCORDING TO ST. PAUL AND ST. PETER.—MORAL FITNESS A REQUISITE QUALIFICATION FOR THE DIVINE FAVOUR.—THE CLERGY CALUMNIATED AS PREACHERS OF NEW DOCTRINES.—OPINIONS THAT WERE HELD IN THE REIGNS OF ELIZABETH AND JAMES I. UPON THIS SUBJECT, AS RECORDED BY FULLER AND STRYPE.

THE great and fundamental error which betrays the Methodists into these false and dangerous opinions, appears to be this: they do not distinguish the general and unlimited act of mercy, even the atonement, which justifies all who believe the gospel, from the particular influence of divine grace, which accompanies those only who continue in the practice of religious duty, or having neglected it, repent and amend their doings, and thus become qualified for the recompense of the just.

To throw a fuller light, therefore, on the point at issue between us, it will be necessary to touch briefly on the doctrine of justification, which although it be a separate article, is intimately connected with this subject.

Causal or present, and final or future justification, are two things: the first is the work of God's mere grace, the last depends subordinately on the will of man. "The word Δικαιωω," says * Parkhurst, † "is most usually applied to *evangelical justification*; to justify, to esteem, pronounce, or declare just or righteous, to acquit or

* Lexicon ad verb:

† The authority of this learned and pious man will hardly be disputed; and his humility, the usual attendant of true excellence, well deserves the notice, and challenges the imitation of those who are little acquainted with that eminent christian virtue. "For my own part," he says, "as long as I continue on this side the grave, I expect and desire to continue in the condition of a learner. Sufficient, abundantly sufficient honour is it for me," he modestly subjoins, "if I have been able, *for the benefit of all who understand English*, to produce a tolerable Hebrew Lexicon, and such as may initiate my readers in the true knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures. But why speak I of honour or reputation among men? Alas! the fashion of this world passeth away; which great and indisputable truth should remind us all "to seek that honour which cometh of God only." May *I* then express an humble hope, that my labours in this blessed harvest will be graciously remembered by the Lord of that harvest, and yield me comfort in that day, which cannot be very distant, when all creature-comforts will and must fail; and *He alone, who expired upon the cross*, can, through the consolations of the *eternal spirit*, support the *pardoned sinner*. — Preface to Heb. Lexicon, p. ix.

If this quotation, the matter of which is so truly *evangelical*, should induce one preacher, who arrogates that title, to consult the letter, and imbibe the spirit of this pious interpreter of holy writ, it may happily recover a soul from the error of his way.

absolve from past offences, and accept as just to the reward of righteousness. In this view it is plainly a forensic term. It is in the New Testament applied either to *present justification* in this life, Acts xiii. 39. Rom. v. 1, 9. viii. 33. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Tit. iii. 6. James ii. 21, 24, 25. et alibi; or to *final justification* at the last day, Matt. xii. 37. comp. Romans ii. 13.

This distinction harmonizes many passages of scripture, which, without it, might be thought repugnant to each other.

If it be considered that the community of Christians was a new state, or society, from which Jews and Gentiles were alike aliens, and strangers to the covenant of promise,* proposed to them by the gospel: but that “now through Christ, both have access by one spirit unto the Father, and are therefore no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God:” † It will not be difficult to understand the value of that blessing which is granted to us on our admission into the “covenant of promise:” a blessing of inestimable worth; for by that grace, we are *saved* through faith. We should have still remained *far off* from the communion of saints, “having no hope, and without God in the world,” had we not been thus made “fellow heirs and partakers of the divine promise in Christ, by the gospel.” ‡ To this privilege we are entitled

* Eph. ii. 12.

† Id. 18, 19.

‡ Id. iii. 6.

through baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We thence become members of a heavenly community,* and possess all the benefits of that holy state: our names are written in the book of life: we are delivered from the bondage of corruption, and the power of darkness; and translated into the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Of this regeneration, baptism is the sign and pledge; denoting our adoption as the children of our heavenly father; our election as the disciples of his dear son; and our fellowship with his holy spirit. But, notwithstanding, we are grafted into the body of Christ's church, and so far sanctified, chosen, and justified: yet are we still probationers; still bound to press forward towards the high prize of our calling; and to walk worthy of our vocation; for otherwise, we shall have no future inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Should the remission of sins that are passed, which is our primary justification, not be followed by works meet for repentance; our acquittal at the great day, that is, our final justification, will be forfeited and lost. We shall then be liable † to that wrath which

* Vid. Philip. iii. 20. Where "conversation"* might be more properly rendered "community," or, the state of which we are citizens.

† Archbishop Tillotson long ago distinguished justification into *first*, and *final*. The *first* as implying our faith and repentance; the *final*, our solemn acquittal, and absolution at

cometh upon the children of disobedience: and as we have partaken of their sins, shall have our portion with them in punishment.

Hence we may easily apprehend the extent and import of the apostle's meaning, when he addresses the converts to christianity *generally* as "the beloved of God: the called: the saints."* "As them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus." † "As justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." ‡ And further, when he says, "we give thanks to God for you *all*,—knowing, brethren, beloved in God, your election. §

They had all been saved by grace, through faith, from the curse to which all were subject, and were "received into the ark of Christ's church;" but it was incumbent on them to be "stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity;" if they would "finally come to the land of everlasting life."

Did they maintain this Christian course, and after being united to their divine head by the sanctification of the spirit, was their conduct worthy of that holy communion? They were, in one sense, already "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, de-

the great day; which, in scripture, is called ³salvation and eternal life.* Had this definition not been overlooked, what a strife of words would so obvious a distinction have prevented?

* Rom. i. 7.

† vi. 11.

† 1 Cor. i. 2.

§ 1 Thess. i. 2. 4.

livered by the father, from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear son, in whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."* They were restored, that is, to a capacity of happiness, by the remission of sins that are past, through the propitiation of the redeemer: a grace which is universal; for, "by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon *all* men unto justification of life."† But, did they all, according to the apostle's prayer, "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God?"‡ A qualification this, essential to their being *finally approved* by him who is of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity." We shall find, from the subsequent parts of each epistle, that they were deficient in this essential point, since the holy penmen remonstrate with them on account of their failure, in the strongest and most impressive terms. The twelfth and following chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans are alone sufficient to confirm this observation; and so writes he in every epistle. He tells the Corinthians who are "sanctified and called," that they are "still carnal,"§ because "there is among them envying, strife, and divisions." Yet he says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth

* Coloss. i. 12, 13, 14.

† Coloss. i. 10.

‡ Rom. v. 18.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4—16.

in you?" Now as "the carnal mind is enmity with God," and attended with a curse, for "to be carnally minded is death;" and as even those who are spiritual, may still become carnal, and defile the temple in which the spirit dwells; and "if any man defile the temple, him shall God destroy," it is a necessary consequence, that those who are called and sanctified, are still liable to sin, and to its fruits; that is, to death eternal. Whence, the minister of Christ, so far from daring to say to the most unworthy believers, "Your title to mansions of glory is secured, and heaven is yours," should rather advise the best Christians "to take heed lest they fall, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure;" grounding his exhortation on this infallible and awful truth: "That God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality,—eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil."*

Thus does St. Paul affirm, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He sets before the "elect, the justified," the dreadful penalties of sin, and he charges them with the commission of it. "Now ye do wrong," he says, and instances many heinous offences

* Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

which prevailed amongst them, and aggravates the enormity of their guilt by this pointed question: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?"* Our union with him then is no security; the in-dwelling of the spirit is no security; but St. Paul's entreaty is, "We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." †

The epistles of St. Peter are pervaded by the same argument, couched in that unaffected, yet glowing and energetic language, which as it conveys the genuine sentiments of an inspired writer, might well put to shame the ignorance of foolish men who pretend to that sacred character. He calls the Christians, who were scattered throughout divers countries, generally, and without exception, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit;"—"Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;" and speaks of them as "kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation, as receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls." ‡ He entitles them, "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people:" § distinctions high as those, to which the new evangelists lay claim. But having dignified them with such glorious appellations, as converts to the christian faith, he

* 1 Cor. vi. 15.

‡ 1 Peter i. 2, 3, 5, 9.

† 11 Cor. vi. 1.

§ ii. 9.

gives them this warning in particular: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief."* Of what crimes, then, may the saints be guilty? How necessary is it for him "who thinketh he standeth, to take heed lest he fall."

The apostle says, "Baptism doth now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;"† and speaks of the virtue of that baptism as consisting "in the answer of a good conscience." Mr. Burder gave us a different account. The privileges granted to believers are mentioned as including "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these they might be partakers of the divine nature."‡ But what is the inference? No vain confidence in their regenerate state; no "leaning by direct acts of faith upon the person and righteousness of the mediator;"§ no assurance of an unconditional and indefectible title to salvation. Instead of this an earnest persuasion to the practice of all virtue, which "he that lacketh is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. ||"

* iv. 15.

† iii. 21.

‡ 2 Ep. i. 4.

§ Hawker's Union with Christ, p. 58.

|| 2 Ep. i. 9, 10, 11.

The spirit which breathes in these epistles, will fully establish what was briefly intimated before, that we have something more to do when we are born again, than to “survey the wondrous gift,” and say with complacent satisfaction, “Heaven is ours.” We are taught by the apostle to practise those virtues which adorn a holy life, and spring from a sincere faith, through the sanctification of the spirit, but which depend on our own diligence, activity, and free choice; whence he enforces this duty with great earnestness, “*Διο μαλλον σπουδαζετε* ;” an expression which is feebly rendered in our translation, “Wherefore the rather give diligence;” for it imports that zealous intention of mind which impels us forward the more vehemently towards the prize of our high calling, from a persuasion that our own efforts will ensure success.

The awful description of the general dissolution is emphatically applied to the same purpose: “Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. Beware lest ye fall from your own stedfastness; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Such is the discrepancy between the doctrine delivered in the New Testament by those who drew their knowledge of their Lord and Saviour

from his living word and quickening spirit; and that doctrine of absolute grace which makes a "complete creature" at once, and afterwards assures a never-failing perseverance to the saints. When those who disseminate these tenets, assume the hallowed name of evangelists,* under the plea of preaching exclusively the word of salvation, is it too severe to say of them in the language of the apostle, that "they are wells without water, and speak great swelling words of vanity?" †

* Mr. Merryman in the Village Dialogues,* says, "Indeed, sir, I had no conception at first that there could be any other evangelists than the writers of the four gospels." The reader, as well as Mr. Merryman, may now be convinced that there are *other evangelists*; but O! how fallen! how changed!

Far be it from us, however, to charge them as a body, with wilful falsehood, or premeditated delusion. Their errors, it is admitted, are errors of the understanding, rather than the will; they may be guided by conscience, but a conscience that is misinformed; they may believe and act according to their judgment, but a judgment which is misled by prejudice and ignorance; and which "confounds obstinacy with conviction. Many opinions pass for judgment, that are the pure result of humour, inclination, passion, interest, or hasty choice; and a judgment formed from a light then present to the mind, may be changed afterwards with reason, upon an extrinsic, as well as intrinsic evidence. When such evidence hath been exhibited, and men are not stirred up by it, to examine their former tenets, or to recede from what they did once imbibe, they have just cause to doubt the sincerity of their hearts, and to suspect that worldly considerations have a part in their persuasions."—*Chandler's Defence of Christianity*, p. 342.

† 2 Pet. ii. 17, 18.

* Vol. iii. p. 42.

Nothing is more clearly affirmed in scripture, than that “ grace may become void, that the spirit may be quenched ; and that present justification is not a proof of ultimate salvation : no more than the remission of sins past implies the remission of sins future : nor is there any one passage in the New Testament, properly understood, which warrants an opposite conclusion. And that the special aid and continued assistance of the holy spirit are not granted irrespectively, our Saviour plainly intimates, by making the love and obedience of his disciples a qualification for that gracious gift. “ If ye love me keep my commandments, and I will pray the father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”* He also mentions prayer as the means of obtaining it. “ How much more shall your heavenly father give the holy spirit to them that ask him.” † And St. Peter testifies that “ the spirit is given by God to them that obey him,” *viz.* Christ. ‡

In the parable of the marriage feast, we are told that “ they which were bidden were not worthy ;” and that “ many are called, but few chosen :” § because as the context shews, they have not on a wedding garment ; they live without holiness ; and therefore though called by the gospel, and invited to partake of those blessings which are reserved in heaven for the righteous, are disqualified for that happiness by living un-

* John xiv. 15, 16.

† Acts v. 32.

‡ Luke xi. 9. 13.

§ Matt. xxii. 8. 14.

worthily of their vocation, and are cast into outer darkness.

The history of the centurion relates, that “his prayers and alms went up as a memorial before God.”* They commended him to the divine favour, for “he was a just man, and one that feared God;” and the apostle declares that “in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” In confirmation of this truth, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word;” of whom the centurion had said before, “We are all here before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”

In this account there is an enumeration of several qualifications:—A devout and charitable temper in the centurion: a readiness to hear the things commanded of God, in his attendants: nay, the fear of God and work of righteousness in *any one*: to which succeeds the testimony of the Holy Ghost, “which fell on all them which heard the word.”

Whether these preparatives be called qualifications or not, is immaterial; the thing itself is clear, that grace is not arbitrary and irrelative in bringing us to Christ, and sealing us unto salvation. That the worthiest and unworthiest of men, are not alike the objects of wrath, or mercy, without regard to their fitness for the one or the other.

* Acts x. 4. 22. 33. 35. 44.

If it should be imagined that the case of St. Paul is an exception to this rule, we have no hesitation in affirming, that it is a remarkable confirmation of it. “He obtained mercy,” he says, “in that he did it,” *viz.* opposed the gospel “ignorantly, in unbelief,”* “concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.” † When he was chosen by God to know his will, and to be his witness unto all men, the secret motives and intents of his heart were regarded by the great searcher of hearts; and in this as well as in other respects, he was a “pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on Christ, to life everlasting.” ‡

St. Paul was actuated by an honest, though mistaken zeal, in resisting the truth: he had “lived in all good conscience before God,” during his devotion to the Jewish law; and after his conversion, the same earnest desire of doing God service, (for it was still the same in principle,) was applied to the propagation of the glorious gospel committed to his trust. Hence, “he laboured more abundantly than all the apostles, and was at last justified in saying, with ardent and pious exultation, “I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: hence forth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day.” §

* 1 Tim. i. 13. † Philip iii. 6. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 16. § 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

The “ grace of God given to St. Paul, and the spirit of wisdom and revelation, with which he preached among the gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, by the effectual working of his power,” is an instance therefore of divine mercy, bestowed on a devout, sincere, and conscientious man. It is an apt illustration of that saying of our blessed Lord, which refers the knowledge of divine truth to the previous disposition of the heart: “ If any man will (*Θελῶν*, *i. e.* desires, or chooses to) do his will, he shall know my doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”* He shall possess that wisdom which will lead him into all the truth; save him from error, if he will learn it; and from condemnation, if he will obey it. This, indeed, is the tenor of our Lord’s repeated declarations. “ Take heed,” he says, “ how ye hear, for whosoever hath, to him shall be given.”† Care on our part, and a prudent use of the means already vouchsafed to us, will procure for us a more enlarged assistance, according to the testimony of St. John. “ As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”‡ And this is perfectly agreeable to the divine justice, since good and bad men, seek or refuse the truth, even as they are disposed to observe or disobey it. “ Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light,

* John vii. 17.

† John i. 12.

‡ Luke viii. 18.

lest his deeds should be reproved: but he that doeth truth, cometh to the light.”*

In the introduction to the sermon on the mount, what is assigned as the occasion of blessedness, but the right disposition of the heart? “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” &c. And pardon is promised to us on this single condition:—“If ye forgive men their trespasses.” Thus did he, who brought life and immortality to light, explain the means of grace and salvation: yet, if we *so* preach, and persuade others *so* to believe, we are accused of apostasy to Christ, and of substituting a “heathenish morality” for the vital spirit of the gospel. Our Saviour indeed supports us by his authoritative assurance. “My words, they are spirit, and they are life:” and however we may be traduced, we feel it our duty to obey him rather than man; for we know that “his words will not pass away.”

The censorious and uncharitable manner in which the advocates of Methodism decry the preaching of the clergy, in general, or at least, that sound part of them who deny that the doctrines of Methodism are the doctrines of the church of England; and the church of Christ is clearly exemplified in a pamphlet † noticed above, which undertakes the defence of them, as if they were one and the same.

The writer of this work boldly assumes, that the preachers who enforce practical virtue as

* Jobu iii. 20, 21.

† Willat's Apology.

the great object of Christianity, are apostates from the true faith; mere moralists in doctrine, and infidels in opinion. In confirmation of this sentiment, he adds the following note to his fourth letter:—"I am surprized that in this enlightened age, people are so blind as to affirm, that the *doctrines of the gospel*, are new doctrines, and that those which *moralists* hold out, are the original; but notwithstanding *the doctrines of the gospel* are now charged with *enthusiasm* and *fanaticism*, yet at the Reformation, in the times of Queen Elizabeth and James I. there were no other doctrines generally heard or approved of; but the spirit of innovation crept in afterwards, and in a great measure supplanted the gospel of Christ in the church. But it is remarkable, that no *operation* of God's holy spirit, no *good effects* have appeared to attend the *new mode* of preaching, while that which I seriously apprehend to be the *true gospel of Christ*, is mighty indeed *in operation*, and testifies by its *beneficial consequences*, that its author is divine.

This is the strongest proof, that the *moral preaching* is a *novel system of theology*; for as we can only know a good tree by its fruit, so we can only know true religion by the effects it has on the hearts and lives of men; and if the effects are the same as they were in the apostle's days, as to the common operations of

the spirit, it must be concluded that this is the gospel of Christ, and not the other.”*

It is obvious to remark on this passage, that the question is begged *in principio*. The first sentence is a fallacy: it is taken for granted that the doctrines of Methodism are the doctrines of the gospel, and then surprise is expressed that they should be called new doctrines. But the wonder is misplaced, it lies all on the other side; for it is astonishing indeed, that “in this enlightened age” people should be so blind as to affirm that these “*new doctrines* are the word of Christ.”

Nor is it true, that “at the Reformation, in the times of Queen Elizabeth and James I. there were no other doctrines generally heard and approved of.” Our liturgy and articles demonstrate this assertion to be false. To enter deeply into this subject is foreign to our present purpose; and the controversy in which it is involved has been brought to so complete an issue by the late publication of a learned prelate,† that it might be deemed superfluous to mention it. But since this objection, however groundless, is per-

* P. 44.

† Refutation of Calvinism by the Bishop of Lincoln. The Dean of Peterborough, Dr. Kipling, in his “Articles of the Church of England, not Calvinistical,” has also contributed so materially to the vindication of scriptural faith, as it is professed in our liturgy, and preached in our pulpits, that he deserves to be noticed with particular esteem.

petually urged against the clergy of the established church, and is considered to be the head of their offence, it is not unimportant to observe, that a complete refutation of it is furnished by a well-informed and impartial writer, in his "Church History" of those times, when it is said that one kind of doctrine alone "was heard and approved of."

"Now also, (anno Elizabethæ 38) began some opinions about predestination, free-will, perseverance, &c. much to trouble both the schools and the pulpit; whereupon Archbishop Whitgift called an assembly of divines at Lambeth, who resolved on the nine articles, thence called the Lambeth articles." These, it is well known, were designed to maintain the peculiar opinions of Calvin, and to establish them as the principles of the church of England; and the proposed addition of them is in itself an argument that the same tenets were not inserted in the Thirty-nine Articles. It does not appear, however, from the historian's relation, that they were "generally approved of," or acknowledged; "for when these articles came abroad into the world, men's brains and tongues, as since their pens, were employed about the authority of the same, and the obedience due unto them. Some almost equalled their authenticalness with the acts of a synod, requiring the like conformity of men's judgments to them; others maintained the contrary. But a third sort, offended with

the matter of the articles, thought that the two archbishops and the rest at this meeting deserved censure, for holding an unlawful conventicle: for they had not express command from the queen to meet, debate, and decide such controversies. Those of the opposite party were not solemnly summoned and heard, so that it might seem rather a design to crush them, than to hear the truth." *

This report deserves the greater attention, because though Fuller treats the subject with extreme caution, yet he evidently favours the authors of the Lambeth articles, and says, "their testimony is an infallible evidence, what was the general and received doctrine of England in that age about the forenamed controversies;" † notwithstanding his own statement plainly contradicts this conclusion. That statement, there-

* Fuller's Church History, book ix. p. 229, 30, 31.

† Id. id. p. 232.

† This assertion of Fuller's is nearly equivalent to that which we are combating, and very probably, the source from which it was derived. It is a remarkable instance of the bias by which even an honest mind is warped in favour of its own prejudices; for that it is wholly untenable, the premises on which his conclusion rests, sufficiently evince. They amount to this; that an unauthorized assembly of divines passed certain resolutions agreeable to their own opinions, in order to suppress the opinions of their opponents.

The very act of this meeting, and the motive which called it together, shew the prevalence of those sentiments which it condemned. This, as will presently be seen, is confirmed by Strype.

fore, is in direct opposition to the bold and unwarranted declaration, "that in Elizabeth's reign there were no other doctrines generally heard and approved of:" and in James the First's reign the Hampton-Court conference will convict Mr. Willat of palpable misrepresentation.

In that conference, Dr. Reynolds* proposed an alteration of the sixteenth article to this effect: "Whereas it is said, *After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace*, those words may be explained with this or the like addition, *yet neither totally nor finally*; to which end it would do very well, if the nine orthodoxical assertions concluded on at Lambeth might be inserted into the book of articles."

The Bishop of London replied, "Upon the first motion concerning falling from grace, may your Majesty be pleased to consider, how many in these days neglect holiness of life, presuming on persisting in grace, upon predestination, *If I shall be saved, I shall be saved*. A desperate doctrine, contrary to good divinity, wherein we should reason rather *ascendendo*, than *descendendo*; from our obedience to God, and love to our neighbour, to our election and predestination. As for the doctrine of the church of England touching predestination, it is in the very next paragraph, viz. *We must receive God's promises in such wise*," &c.

* Dr. Reynolds was a non-conformist.

King James: "I approve it very well, as consonant to the plan of St. Paul, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."*

"It appears that "the Nine Assertions" were drawn up to appease a dispute in the university of Cambridge, against a proposition there delivered by the dean of St. Paul's, *viz.* "That whosoever, though before justified, did commit any grievous sin, as adultery, murder, &c. do become, *ipso facto*, subject to God's wrath, and guilty of damnation until they repent. Against this doctrine some did oppose, that persons once truly justified, though falling into grievous sins, and though they never repented of them, through forgetfulness, or sudden death, they nevertheless were justified and saved." King James.—"I dislike this doctrine, there being a necessity of conjoining repentance and holiness of life with true faith; and that is hypocrisy, and not justifying faith, which is severed from them." †

"It may be observed," says Strype, "concerning the seventeenth article, which treats of *predestination* and *election*, that it is drawn up without any mention of *absolute reprobation*, or decreeing the cause thereof, which seems to have been to prevent any scruple that might arise to any Protestant against subscribing the said article: for we are to know that among those that now professed the gospel, and had suffered persecution

* Book X. p. 11.

† Id. p. 13.

for it under Queen Mary, there were considerable numbers differing from the rest, that followed some foreign divines of great name in the point of predestination, denying the doctrine of God's being any cause of the sins of men, and thereby of their damnation."* The same author, in his *Life of Whitgift*, says, "That till about the year 1595, Calvin's way of explaining the divine decrees was not entertained by many learned men in the university of Cambridge;" and again, "Although Calvinism prevailed much in her (Elizabeth's) reign, both in the schools and in the pulpit, yet it was not understood to be certainly the sense of our articles, even by those who held this doctrine." Nay, they acknowledged "That indeed the book speaketh very dangerously of falling from grace, which is to be reformed, because it too much inclineth to *their error*," meaning the error of those who are now called Arminians. †

By God's blessing, the "Nine Assertions of Lambeth" were never sanctioned by authority, nor received as articles of our church; and happy had it been if the opinions to which they

* *Annals*, ch. xxviii. p. 293. A.D. 1562.

† *Life of Archbishop Whitgift*, p. 35, 435.—These passages from the *Life of Whitgift* are cited by Dr. Nowell in his *Answer to the author of Pietas Oxoniensis*, where several other extracts from the works of our reformers prove them to have been no less repugnant to the tenets of Calvin, than the clergy of the present day.

relate, and which have continued “to trouble both the schools and pulpit,” had sunk with them into neglect and silence; but the subject under consideration is pregnant with too many evidences, that these obnoxious doctrines still disturb the peace and union of those who profess one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHARGE AGAINST THE CLERGY, AS THE AUTHORS OF A NEW DOCTRINE; GROUNDED ON THE PLEA, THAT NO SPIRITUAL EFFICACY ATTENDS THEIR PREACHING.—THE SUCCESS OF METHODISM FALSELY ATTRIBUTED TO THAT EFFICACY.—ZEAL WITHOUT CHARITY, DANGEROUS AND UNCHRISTIAN.—MORAL DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL MAINTAINED.—CONDEMNATION DENOUNCED BY THE METHODISTS AGAINST THOSE WHO TEACH IT.—THE CLERGY ASSAILED WITH OBLOQUY AND INSULT.—REASON VILIFIED BY METHODISTS.—ITS PROPER EXERCISE IN THE SEARCH AND DEFENCE OF TRUTH, COMPATIBLE WITH SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION.—CAUTION AGAINST IMAGINARY EXPERIENCES.—THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE A TEST OF SANCTIFICATION.—THE HUMBLE HOPES AND SINCERE ENDEAVOURS ARISING FROM CHRISTIAN FAITH.

THE digression into which we have been led, seemed necessary, to vindicate the ministers of the established church from a false and frequently-repeated imputation; and to make way for a fair and impartial view of such unjust conclusions as are drawn from their supposed desertion of those evangelical principles which they have solemnly vowed to maintain. They are taunted and reviled as the authors of a *new mode of preaching*, namely, *moral preaching*, which is

scornfully termed a *novel system of theology*; and it is averred to be so because its impugner assumes, “that no *operations* of God’s holy spirit, no good effects have appeared to attend it, while that which he apprehends to be the true gospel of Christ is mighty indeed in *operation*, and testifies by its *beneficial* consequences that its author is divine.”

Certainly the operation has been extensive, and the consequences important, but whether they have been beneficial, is a question on which we must beg leave to differ from these confident assertions. It is matter of reasonable inquiry, at least, whether the absolution of the Methodist may not be equally seductive with that pronounced by the pope; and the seal of election affixed by the former, as favourite a sanction of unrepented sins as the indulgence granted by the latter? If men are taught that iniquity and salvation are compatible, or that the damnable sins by which the guilty are polluted, may be suddenly washed away, it signifies not whether it be by *holy water*, or *the pretended oil of grace*; whether they be justified by works of *supererogation*, or *the arbitrary imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ*.

Tenets are not the more true, because they are popular; and when the weakness or wickedness of men is flattered by a doctrine which indulges vice and folly, a strong presumption is naturally raised against its truth. Indeed, the very advo-

cates of Methodism sometimes attribute its widely-spreading influence to other causes than the operation of the holy spirit.

The Evangelical Magazine for October, 1809, p. 408, contains a remarkable paper, in which several reasons are assigned for the large attendance upon *gospel-preachers*. They are briefly these: 1. Curiosity; 2. Fashion; 3. Worldly interest; 4. Doctrines alluring to the carnal man; 5. Energetic style of worship; 6. Double service on the sabbath; 7. Natural conscience; 8. An indistinct sort of hope which carnal persons feel in associating with the godly; 9. Despair. The exposition of the fourth cause deserves particular attention, as coming from the pen of a new evangelist: it is thus stated. "Perhaps, without allowing for their spiritual influence upon the mind, we may say there is something in the nature of gospel-doctrines highly attractive to some states of the carnal man: they hold forth pardon, free pardon, for all manner of sin and iniquity; they point to mercy exercised, without regard to human merit, ready for the vilest publican, as for the most moral pharisee. They represent the Almighty God, as operating with his influences in a sovereign and uncontrollable way, giving all grace, strength, and mercy, as seemeth him good.

Pity that such divine truths should be abused! But to some this seems a most easy and convenient sort of religion; they would like to be

saved, and have no trouble about it: so they understand the proposition; they find sinners at the eleventh hour may be saved. To continue in sin is exactly what they wish; and as the greatness of sin is no bar to mercy, but God is indeed honoured by saving the chief of sinners, they hope to be saved, I had almost said *for* their sin; and as no merit or righteousness can have a share in obtaining *justification*, they feel easy in neglecting uncomfortable duties. Such as are yet ignorant that not justification alone, but holiness also is salvation, conceive great hopes and feel much peace in the confused idea they have thus formed of the gospel; prefer it much to that sort of laborious morality, which those who know not the gospel as the source of living morals, must preach upon. This sensation and mistake cause many to desert other places, and come where they think they have discovered the easiest mode of obtaining heaven."

This is a fair and just account of the motives which induce a multitude to follow the teachers of Methodism: it reminds us of the just observation of Dr. Johnson, "To find a substitution for violated morality, is the leading feature in all perversions of religion."*

The success of gospel-preaching, as it is falsely termed, being admitted, for indeed it is too notorious, does it follow then that the consequences are beneficial?

* Boswell's Life of Johnson, p. 345, 4to. edition.

Their advocate argues that they are so, on a supposition which, if it were well grounded, would be *conclusive*. “If the effects are the same as they were in the apostle’s days, as to the common operations of the spirit, it must be concluded, that this is the *gospel of Christ*, and *not the other*.*

But, as we cannot allow that *imaginary* impulses of the Holy Ghost, that presumptions and arrogant claims to the divine favour, and an exclusive title to the inheritance of the saints, are *beneficial consequences*, so we must consider the *effects* as somewhat dissimilar from those blessed fruits which evinced the inspiration of apostolic men.

The criterion established by St. Paul does not consist in the emotions of an impassioned mind, or in the vain glory of imputed righteousness. He declares the fruits of the spirit “to be love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.” Where these virtues are manifested, there we acknowledge the influence of that holy and efficient cause; “for as we can only know a good tree by its fruits, so we can only know true religion by the effects it has on the hearts and lives of men.”

In this we fully agree with our opponent. But what, if the contrary vices should appear! “Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying;” which the apostle

* Note, p. 44.

instances as the works of the flesh. From what spirit do these proceed, and what evil consequences do they portend? *

When the hearts and lives of men are reformed, then, and then only is the spirit proved by its fruits: but Methodism does not seem to have wrought this reformation. "The end of the commandment is charity;" and "charity vaunteth not itself, thinketh no evil, is not easily provoked." Far from condemning and putting ill constructions on the motives and conduct of any one, it rather "covers a multitude of sins."

As "faith worketh by love, so there can be no true faith where love doth not exist; and a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price," will always accompany this pre-eminently christian virtue. The absence of meekness, gentleness, and mutual forbearance, betrays the want of charity. † There may

* It is not meant to charge the Methodists generally with all these vices; but it should be considered that any one of them infringes what St. James calls the "Royal law—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

† Nightingale, in his "Portraiture of Methodism," gives the following opinion:—"Of evil speaking, I believe, it may be fairly said, that it is the great besetting sin of Methodism. Certainly there are few professing Christians, so much guilty of slander and back-biting, as these people. They exercise this disagreeable propensity, even against their own friends: what then have those to expect, whom they regard as enemies?"—p. 338.

Mr. Styles, in his answer to the Barrister, has shewn, what they have to expect:—"You rise so distinctly before me," he

be fervent zeal; but what is that in a christian view, without discretion, humility, and above all, brotherly kindness? It is that alas! which has inflamed the fury of infatuated men, during the ages of persecution against those who dissented from the opinions that happened to predominate: which has armed the inquisition with the instruments of torture: which lighted the fires that consumed a Cranmer, a Ridley, and Latimer, and converted even *Calvin* into a sanguinary persecutor!

We must hesitate, therefore, in admitting that his rule of faith, is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and no other, till we see the genuine spirit of the gospel actuate his followers.

But while they continue to decry *moral preaching*, as inconsistent with the doctrine of the gospel, what concord is there betwixt them and Christ?

says, “as a false accuser of the brethren; as an unsightly, hideous offspring of the *father of lies*, that I cannot but view you with the mingled feelings of disgust and horror.”—Postscript, p. 86.

Again, he says, “You seem to be deficient in no quality of savage nature. You are alike distinguished by the meanness that creeps, and the ferocity that devours.”—p. 131.

Does not Mr. Styles know that such abuse is not only repugnant to the charity, which is peculiarly inculcated by the gospel; but that it proverbially betrays a weak cause?

“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work.”—Ep. Gen. of St. James, c. iii. 15, 16.

After we have read his sermon on the mount, and are then informed, that such preaching is not evangelical, we could almost imagine ourselves carried back to those dark ages, which disgraced the Christian church, when the word of God was made of none effect, by the traditions of its deluded professors.

O, blessed Saviour! shall we renounce thy divine morality, and shut our ears against that heavenly voice, which taught us “to do to others as we would have them do to us?” Which gave us this practical admonition, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments:” An admonition, which is thus explained:—“Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness: honour thy father and thy mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”* Shall we brand such holy precepts with this profane stigma,—*a novel system?*

Yet, on this mistaken notion, a general charge is brought against the established clergy, as being false to their trust, and apostates from their blessed master. “There are many, very many, who do not preach the gospel,” says our accuser; and addressing himself to † Mr. Eyre, in particular: “If you have not kept back any of the peculiar doctrines of our holy religion, you must have preached the doctrines of the cross; and then you must have had your lot

* Matt. xix. 17, 18, 19.

† Willat's Apology, p. 78.

among those who now differ from you." * The Methodists alone then profess the religion of Christ! Again, he says, "I tremble when I read that part of your discourse, where you assure us, that your people, for years, have looked up to you, as a dispenser of *true knowledge*. This, however, I must needs say;—my feelings are too acute; nor can I find language strong enough to paint the horror of my thoughts, when I calculate the value and worth of immortal souls, and their danger of perishing for lack of true knowledge." † Intimating plainly enough, that Mr. Eyre's flock will be doomed to perdition, on account of his anti-evangelical doctrine. ‡

The parable of the ten virgins is explained in

* The clergy are thus reduced to a dilemma: first, they are accused of not preaching the gospel; which charge being denied, they are then told, they must have held the opinions of the new evangelists.

It is hoped that these pages will in some measure shew the very reverse of this allegation to be the fact; and that we oppose the pretenders to evangelical doctrine, because we maintain the truth, according to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

† Willat's Apology, p. 92.

‡ "Our modern innovators," says Abraham Tucker, "pronounce upon every thing with the peremptoriness of an absolute monarch; and I have been informed, that one of them in particular, if any body scruples doing as he desires, never stands to reason the case, but tells him with a confidential air, "You'll be damned if you don't." This was all the pope ever had to say: yet we know too well, what a mighty influence this little terrifying word gave him over kings and states, and all temporal affairs.—*Light of Nature pursued*, abrid. 415.

the following manner:—"Five of them were wise, and five foolish: the wise are said to have taken oil in their lamps, the oil of grace, as well as the lamp of profession; and when the bridegroom came they were ready; they went in with him to the marriage, and the *door was shut*. The foolish virgins had also a lamp of profession, but alas! none of the oil of grace; they professed to believe, but they believed not to the saving of the soul," &c.*

The purpose for which the parable is thus interpreted will soon appear. Mr. Eyre had recommended "less vehemence, and more candour;" on which the writer observes, "the candour of a blinded world is to *hope the best* of all, let their sentiments in theology be ever so heterodox. This is not the candour of those who have been convinced of sin, and have found that *in Christ there is salvation, and in none other.*" †

This censorious remark being closed, according to usage, with a scriptural text, might lead an

* Willat's Apology, p. 116.

† The following opinion is of a very different cast; it proceeded from that sound judgment and christian temper which distinguished the great and unanswerable advocate of evangelical truth:—"Though we wish heartily that all controversies were ended, as we do, that all sin were abolished, yet we have little hope of the one or the other, till the world be ended. And in the mean while think it best to content ourselves with, and to persuade others unto an *unity of charity and mutual toleration*.—Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, &c. p. 84. ed. 1638.

unwary reader to suppose that there is some connection between that undeniable truth, "there is no salvation but in Christ," and the illiberal sneer which it is intended to support; and that St. Paul's declaration, "Charity hopeth all things," is irreconcilable with the doctrine of St. Peter, which is thus wrested and opposed to it.

"The candour of the blinded world" may be understood in an irreligious sense; but a vague term is not sufficient for an argument. Let us look to the candour of a Christian, and that will give us a more definite idea. "Judge not," says our Lord, that ye be not judged:—and why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye." *

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another;—by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." † And more immediately to our present purpose, is this salutary counsel of St. James:—"My brethren be not many masters, (*i. e.* teachers, ‡) knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation; for in many things we offend all. Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good understanding, his words with meekness of wisdom, &c." The characters of which are thus beautifully expressed:—"The wisdom that is from above, is first

* Matt. vii. 1, 3.

† Διδασκαλοι.

‡ John xiii. 34, 35.

pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy: and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace." *

From these declarations of Christ and his apostles, it should seem, that rashly to arrogate the teacher's office; † to pass an unqualified judgment on the heterodox, and condemn those who differ from us; to mark with severity the errors of our brethren, whilst we overlook our own: in a word, to decide the worst, rather than

* Chap. iii. 1. 13. 17, 18.

† Stanhope, in discoursing on St. Paul's 1 Cor. chap. xiii. observes on that quality, by which charity is distinguished, as "vaunting not itself." That "the word in the original* is obscure and ambiguous, but seems here chiefly to denote (with the negative) sedateness and prudence, meekness, and modesty; not being rash, and forward, and assuming; "not exercising ourselves in matters too high for us;" not thrusting into business beyond our capacity and sphere. By this we preserve order and public peace, and contentedly keep within the bounds of that station which the providence of God hath called us to. Private men are satisfied with obeying, and those who have no lawful authority, with learning. The one does not aspire to government in the state, nor the other usurp the office of teachers in the church; for where these things are inordinately arrogated, the persons guilty of it, betray a spirit manifestly defective in this divine virtue, by aiming at posts which they are by no means qualified for, and so introducing mischief and confusion."—Comment on the Ep. for Quinquagesima Sunday, sect. 4.

* *ἰσπερευεται.*

to hope the best of all, is utterly repugnant to that candour recommended by our divine master and his apostles.

But as there certainly are some “damnable heresies, brought in by false teachers,”* it might be thought, that those to which the term heterodox is here applied, are of that number. It is proper, therefore, to inquire who are particularly pointed at, under that denomination; and this will appear from page 116.

Mr. Eyre had said, “You differ a little in some few points from us.” To which his adversary replies: “It will not be difficult to prove that you differ from us, in many great points; yet with that kind of charity, I wish ever to reprobate, you hope at last to meet together at the same end of the journey. It is my wish, as much as it can be yours, that we may meet at last, in the same world of endless joy and peace; yet it must never be allowed, that characters holding sentiments so opposite, ever can arrive at the end of the same journey, † as you term it, unless their sentiments as to the essentials of their creed correspond. ‡ To be sure, in one

* 2 Pet. ii. 1.

† Mr. Eyre had said the *same end* of the journey.

‡ On this principle, what will be the fate of the Methodists themselves? They differ, it is well known, in the most important points; and while the disciples of Whitfield assert the doctrines of irresistible grace, the perseverance of the saints, imputed righteousness, unconditional election and reprobation, and consequently absolute predestination.

sense, we may meet at the end of the same journey; and this may be illustrated by the parable of the ten virgins."

Thus is scripture perverted to cover a censorious zeal; and the kind of hope of one Christian minister, rebutted by the intolerant deprecation of another. He reprobates such charity, and *damns* with faint wish, for he adds, "it must never be allowed;" and pronounces with the most calm indifference, that awful judgment which belongs to God alone, as the certain doom of those whose sentiments, as to the *essentials* of their creed, do not correspond with his own. So that the amount of all is, that the author and his Calvinistical brethren will be saved, and such men as Mr. Eyre will be lost! Thus is that merciful dispensation abrogated, by which God

The strict followers of Wesley deny these articles of faith, not to mention several other points of difference which subsist between them. "Can characters holding sentiments so opposite, ever arrive at the same end of the journey?" Either the one party or the other, must, by their own acknowledgment, go away into everlasting punishment.

But their dissensions suggest a more safe and reasonable conclusion, *viz.*—That their pretensions to the special guidance of the spirit, are manifestly false. The Holy Ghost is expressly called, "one and the self-same spirit;" and there can be no doubt, that he leads those who are illuminated by his unchangeable light, into one and the self-same truth. Yet, if the Methodists are all directed by his motions, truth, divine immutable eternal truth, must be diverse, and "God the author of confusion." To such impious profanation does the unwarranted presumption of enthusiasm lead.

“ willeth all men to be saved,” and that command violated, in which he says, “ condemn not that ye be not condemned.”

The interpretation of the parable above mentioned, may agree with the creed of the interpreter, but does not accord with the meaning of its divine author. Let any one read the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, and judge whether, as the lamp denotes the profession, the oil do not denote the works of christianity. A sense which is confirmed by the following parable of the talents, and the impressive lesson of benevolence which is delivered in the conclusion of that chapter:—“ I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat,” &c.

To talk therefore of the *oil of grace*, in discussing this subject, is to divert the mind from the momentous duties of religion, to an imaginary unction, which is thus administered to the deluded soul.

In objecting to such infatuation, there is no derogation from the efficacy of divine grace, much less any denial of its influence; but a real exaltation of its holy office, as intended not to supersede good works, but to promote them. “ That being justified by this grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.” To which end “ we affirm constantly,” as the apostle directed Titus, “ that they who have believed in God, may be careful to maintain good works;” and we assert upon his au-

thority, that “these things are good and profitable unto men.” *

So far we confess the allegation to be true, that we are guilty of preaching moral doctrine; but is it therefore true that we do not preach the gospel? By what evidence is it proved that mere morality alone is taught in our churches; or that “dissertations upon the beauties of a Socrates, a Seneca, a Zeno, or a Plato are substituted for plain theological discourses?” †

Moral preaching, it is known, was the more generally adopted and approved, on account of that disgust which the cant of puritans ‡ excited;

* Ep. to Titus iii. 7, 8.

† Willat's Apology, p. 89.

‡ For a specimen of their style, which resembles very nearly that of the modern evangelists, the reader is referred to Echard's “Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy.” In his observations upon the answer to that work, amongst many other instances of their absurdity is the following. “It happens that I have now by me a book called ‘Apples of Gold for young Men and young Women:’ a book so famous among them, that it has to my knowledge deceived the world to no less than eight editions; and yet when we look into it, (notwithstanding the subject is very large and profitable,) we shall there find little besides *Christ, the soul, conscience, faith*, and such like very good words, over and over repeated to very small purpose, and as often ushered in with an engaging and crying introduction of “Ah! young men,” and sometimes “Ah! young men and women.” It is all one, sir, where you open the book, his *rhetorical* humour is so very much the same. “Ah!” says he, (p. 181,) “young men, young men, if you must needs be leaning, then lean upon precious promises, lean upon the rock that is higher than yourselves, lean upon the Lord Jesus Christ, as John did;

and as extremes usually produce extremes, the subject might not always be treated with an

John leaned much, (John xxi. 20,) and Christ loved him much. Ah! lean upon Christ's wisdom, lean upon his power, lean upon his purse, lean upon his eye, lean upon his righteousness, lean upon his blood, lean upon his merit." And whence do you think, sir, came all this idle rant about leaning? Only from John's being placed next to our Saviour at supper, and laying his head or elbow in his bosom; therefore young men must run their heads into our Saviour's purse, and put their elbows into his eyes. And from this place of scripture alone, arises all their insignificant canting about a believer's leaning and rolling on Christ, it being no where else mentioned in the whole New Testament.—Edition of 1693, p. 116, 117, 118.

With regard to experiences, and other terms now so much in use, they are nothing more than the old puritan cant revived. Witness another passage from the same author: "An old disciple, an old christian is rich in spiritual experiences. O, the experiences that an old Christian hath of the ways of God, of the workings of God, of the word of God, of the love of God! O, the divine stories that an old Christian can tell of the power of the word, of the sweetness of the word, of the usefulness of the word! O, the stories that he can tell you concerning the love of Christ, the blood of Christ, the offices of Christ, the merits of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of Christ, and the influences of Christ! O, the stories that an old disciple can tell you of the indwellings of the spirit, of the operations of the spirit, of the teachings of the spirit, of the sealings of the spirit, of the witnessings of the spirit, and of the comforts and joys of the spirit," &c. p. 121, 122.

The compound phrases so much hacknied by the modern enthusiasts, are borrowed from the same source: "soul-softening means, soul-melting means, soul-hardening company, soul-hardening examples, conscience-wasting, and soul-undoing opportunities," p. 124. These terms, with those above men-

express reference to the great principles of christian morality, *viz.* "Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," and "the sanctification of the holy spirit." These principles might not be insisted on in *terms*, though they were virtually considered as the real ground of every argument which could enforce religious practice. It was natural for those who had witnessed the perverted use of the sacred text, and the jargon occasioned by the unmeaning and endless repetition of certain scriptural phrases, to avoid a mode of discourse which would have exposed them to the suspicion of hypocrisy or fanaticism: those deadly enemies of pure religion, which have so frequently assumed her voice, and worn her cloak; "but hid the dagger underneath the gown." Yet, whatever has been, or may hereafter be the style of preaching in the established church, we confidently appeal to that standard which is alone infallible, in vindication of the doctrines delivered by the English clergy. And to the question, whether we or our antagonists preach as our Saviour preached, his word if it be examined, will afford an answer decisively in our favour. For this is the purport of our instruction:

tioned, were used in the seventeenth century, for the same purpose that they are repeated now; "and this is that in which chiefly consist the power and edifyingness, (as they call it,) of their preaching, and by which they think themselves so far to excel the instructions of the conformable ministers; and I wonder where lies the mystery and great difficulty of this gifted sort of rhetoric!"—Echard, p. 119.

“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good: he that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God:”*
 Virtuous practice is the manifest emanation of religious wisdom: and *consistently* with this doctrine, we urge our blessed master’s gracious assurance, “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.” † Faith in Christ is the only means by which we can attain salvation; but this end must be effectuated by moral obedience, by the fulfilment of that condition on which it is promised: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” ‡ That such doctrine is evangelical, the source from which it is drawn will abundantly prove; that it is not Methodistical is no less certain: for Methodism annuls the conditions of salvation, and thus dishonours its meritorious cause. The displeasure, or, it might be said, the contumely we have incurred by teaching this sound doctrine, would scarcely be credited if it did not break out with undisguised malignity. Sir Richard Hill did not scruple to vent his spleen in this unfounded calumny: “They (the clergy,) do not admit the scripture account of the fall, and its consequences.” § And supposing the case of an “evangelical minister’s removal from his church,” he asks, “What must

* 3 Ep. John ii.

† Matt. xix. 17.

‡ John iii. 36.

§ Sir Richard Hill’s Apology, p. 125.

the congregation do ; having been nourished with marrow and fatness, with Christ the true bread of life, they cannot feed on husks, or swallow poison ; they must seek for wholesome meat, where they can find it ; but from principle they love the church, though alas ! the sweet sound of her essential doctrines is no longer heard from the pulpit, where they used to hear it,"* &c. Can language be more reviling, or an imputation more unjust ? By such slander separation is encouraged, and variance made a principle of conscience ; and by such criminations, it may be feared the rage of persecution will one day be fomented.

The Rev. Rowland Hill descends to the same base arts of scurrility and detraction. In his *Village Dialogues* the coarse abuse of our ministry is repeated, even to the disgust, one might suppose, of his professed admirers ; at least, that part of them which is raised above the lowest of the vulgar. A few extracts from this popular work will place the temper of the author, and the design with which he addressed his village readers, in a light too clear to be mistaken.

“ It will be a great mercy if some of the clergy in these parts should be influenced by divine grace to preach what all of them should preach, according to the bible and their own subscriptions ; the glad tidings of salvation, instead of a downright heathenish morality, or a sort of undefinable jumble between law and gospel, which nobody

can understand."* "Old *Mr. Deadman*, and his cousin-german, *Mr. Blindman*,† had preached no more the true doctrine of the bible, as it relates to salvation by Jesus Christ, than if they had been two of the priests of Jupiter."‡

Under these characters are designated clergymen of the establishment, for the obvious purpose of exposing them to scorn and ridicule. To the same end it is related of a *Mr. Steadyman*, that when he became inquisitive after the truth of the gospel, he discovered there was in the same town a worthy dissenting minister, whom in the days of his ignorance he had overlooked; whose life was exemplary, and who had preached

* Village Dialogues, vol. iv. p. 102.

† This evangelical writer is pleased to contemplate the facility with which the appellations he has invented will be understood, and says, in allusion to one of them, "Learned men should have learned names. No wonder that Dr. Nescience has his name from a Latin derivation, though in plain English, Dr. Know-nothing. All my other names, I believe, my readers can pretty well comprehend, without understanding Latin."* Certainly there is little difficulty in decyphering the characters of this facetious author; and those which occur in the page before us, are eminent instances of his talent for this species of satyr, viz. "Dr. Numscull, Dr. Papsull, and Dr. Loggerhead." The ingenious application of this witty device is equalled only by its novelty; but in good truth, the mind that can have recourse to such scurrility, betrays its insufficiency for better things, and deserves pity rather than resentment.

‡ Village Dialogues, vol. i. p. 114.

* Village Dialogues, vol. iii. p. 95.

more of the doctrines of the church of England in his meeting in one sermon, than was to be heard in the church for seven years together.* Might we not admonish these declaimers as St. Paul did the Colossians? "Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds." † If ye be regenerate, at least speak truth.

Did not "the spirit which lusteth to envy" blind the heart of man with prejudice and passion, the cause of such foul aspersions cast by a minister of Christ upon his brethren would be inexplicable; and if they be countenanced by other teachers, who profess to disseminate the genuine dictates of the gospel, it is plain they know not "what spirit they are of." It would seem that they are entirely ignorant of the scripture, which commands us "to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men;" ‡ otherwise those pestilent invectives which disgrace the "*Village Dialogues*," and "*Scriptural Characteristics*" would never have contaminated writings, avowedly published for the sole purpose of diffusing evangelical doctrines. Nor would the characters of the clergy have been assailed by a member of their own order with taunts and insults, alike inconsistent with the charity of a christian, and

* *Village Dialogues*, vol. i. p. 69.

† Titus iii. 2.

‡ Ch. iii. 9.

the dignity of a man. Had the gracious admonitions of St. Paul penetrated the heart, and corrected the spleen of this acrimonious author, he would not have given vent to language such as this: "If I was to quarrel with our parson, I should not have any peace in the parish, and he would raise my tithes directly, for he is always *grinning* after more *money*;"* he would not have termed the clergy "A race of pseudo-spiritual monkeys,"† nor have scoffed at them as objects of abhorrence and contempt.‡

It is no light charge against us, in the opinion of this gentleman, and in that of his coadjutors, that we consider reasoning and argument of some moment in the investigation of divine truth. These instruments of knowledge they set at nought, as having no concern with religious matters, and treat the principle of reason itself as if it were in direct opposition to revelation. The author of "*Willat's Apology*" confidently asks, "Would it not be the highest mark of enthusiasm, and a still stronger one of folly, for fallen creatures to trust to their own corrupt

* *Village Dialogues*, vol. i. p. 5. † Vol. iii. p. 107.

‡ "The *Village Dialogues*," says the Barrister, "abound in such descriptions as are calculated to compel the deluded peasantry of this kingdom to think and act towards their parish minister with no feelings but those of aversion and disdain. The sale of curates is but another quiver laden with arrows of stronger venom, and directed at the same target.—Hints, part II. p. 124.

reason as a sufficient guide to direct them in their search after truth?" * †

* P. 39.

† For my part I am certain," says an excellent writer, "that God hath given us our reason to discern between truth and falsehood, and he that makes not this use of it, but believes things he knows not why, I say it is by chance that he believes the truth, and not by choice; and I cannot but fear that God will not accept of this 'sacrifice of fools.'" Again, he asks, "Why do you make it such a monstrous absurdity, that men in the choice of their religion should make use of their reason? Which yet, without all question, none but unreasonable men can deny, to have been the chiefest end why reason was given them."* "Controversies," he observes, "wherein the scripture itself is the subject of the question, cannot be determined but by natural reason, the only principle, beside scripture, which is common to Christians."† To what purpose this champion of the Protestant cause employed his reason, will never be forgotten by his adversaries, whatever be the neglect or ingratitude of those whose triumph he ensured.

It would be amusing, if the subject were not too serious, to remark the resemblance in every material point between the Methodists and their puritanical predecessors; of whom the historian relates, "What they were chiefly anxious about, was the fixing the precise moment of their conversion, or new birth; and whoever could not ascertain so difficult a point of calculation, could not pretend to any title to saintship. The zealots," (after the parliament became masters of Oxford,) "insulted the scholars and professors, and intruding into the place of lectures, disclaimed against human learning, and

* Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, a safe Way to Salvation, p. 96. 99.

† Id. p. 53. edition of 1638.

Reason, mere *human reason*, and the wisdom of this world, powerfully oppose themselves to vital experimental religion; though the promise standeth sure, that they shall never prevail against it. Let the learned rationalists continue to wander in labyrinths of error.*

To what end is this scoff at the reasoning faculty in man? Why is it confounded with "the wisdom of this world?"—a term which in scripture language conveys an idea of arrogant impiety. It can proceed only from this sinister motive: a wish to seclude ignorance from the rays of light, which would dissipate its darkness; to wrest from our hands those weapons which have been so successfully employed against the direct assaults of infidelity; and which we trust, will not fail in repelling the insidious attacks of fanaticism.

Let the stigmatizers of reason and learning reflect, that these noble endowments have been the ornament and support of the ablest defenders of our holy faith; that the glorious Reformation owed its birth, under Providence, to the exercise

challenged the most knowing of them to prove, that their calling was from Christ."—See Wood's *Fasti. Oxon.* p. 740.*

Mr. Hill speaks of *experimental knowledge* as superseding *educational knowledge*, (to use his own terms,) with the same contemptuous sneer at men of learning.—*Village Dialogues*, vol. ii. p. 23, 24.

* P. 41.

* Hume, vol. vii. p. 33. edition of 1807.

of the human mind on the subject of religious truth, and was raised to maturity by the fostering care of “*learned rationalists* ;” that the same guardians have since secured the armoury of God from the most pointed shafts which wit and genius, aided by all the arts of sophistry, have aimed at its destruction ; that Boerhaave,* Locke, Clarke, Chandler, Lardner, Leland, Campbell, and Paley have successfully refuted Herbert, Hobbes, Collins, Toland, Tindal, Woolston, Bolingbroke and Hume, and have rendered all the attempts of modern sceptics, the sarcastic ridicule of Voltaire, and the malignant insinuations of Gibbon, impotent and harmless, by means of that reasoning and learning which are thus defamed. Let this consideration “ put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,” who would degrade that high prerogative by which God hath specially distinguished his intellectual creatures ; and having given them a capacity to know his will, has thence rendered them accountable for their transgression of it. To give some colour to his objections against reason, the author speaks of our “ *trusting* to it as a *sufficient* guide in our search after truth ;” an im-

* Of this learned foreigner, Johnson observes, that “ He discussed the important and arduous subject of the distinct nature of the soul and body with such accuracy, perspicuity and subtlety, that he entirely confuted all the sophistry of Epicurus, Hobbes, and Spinoza, and equally raised the characters of his piety and erudition.”—*Life of Boerhaave.*

putation which he repeats afterwards, in terms, however, that are materially different: "If you mean to charge those with enthusiasm who do not trust to the guidance of their own reason in matters of religion, I must be allowed to differ from you."*† We allege no such charge; nor do we "fix the term enthusiast or fanatic indifferently on all those who acknowledge and lament their utter ruin and lost estate by the

* For the full import of the term *enthusiasm*, as contrasted with *reason*, the reader is referred to a passage already cited, from Mr. Rowland Hill; where having instanced "the conversion of a profligate in the extreme," he asks exultingly, "Can the advocates of mere reason and morality produce such miracles of grace as these?" Allowing this eminent preacher all the superiority he claims, of which we pretend not to dispute the palm, may we be permitted humbly to observe, that we are not the advocates of *mere* reason and morality, but of *enlightened* reason, and *christian* morality, which derive all efficacy and virtue from the God of light and truth; "from him as we acknowledge in our daily prayers all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; but they proceed from him in such a manner as still to be *our* desires, *our* counsels, and *our* works. We know we cannot come to Christ except the father draw us, and therefore we are sure that as many as come are drawn; but then they are drawn by the cords of a man—invited and wrought upon by the dictates of reason, by the instructions and exhortations of God's word, by the admonitions and checks of their own consciences, in a manner suitable to their rational nature and faculties; in a way that requires their own co-operation and consent; and the more men work, the more God will work with them."—Sermons by Dean Stanhope, on several Occasions, Sermon 7.

† P. 39.

fall.”* We disclaim the accusation; neither do we trust in reason, nor in any other faculty of so imperfect a being as man. We use it indeed as our “guide in the search of truth,” but with submissive deference to him who hath promised to lead us into all truth, and hath directed our course by the light of his word, and the revelation of his will. In “matters of religion” generally we trust solely to that revelation, and place no confidence in the discovery of our own understanding. We know that “spiritual things are spiritually discerned;” nor do we strain the view of reason, to penetrate the depths of divine wisdom, and scan the secret decrees of the Almighty, to “seek out the things that are too hard for it, or to search the things that are above its strength.” †

We believe that “reason, till she has been taught by the lively oracles of God, knows nothing of the spiritual life, and the food brought down from Heaven for its sustenance.” ‡ We are assured that till Christ made known the way of life, we walked in the valley of the shadow of death. Reason was perverted, misled by false philosophy, and clouded by the grossest sensuality. But though the heathen became “vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened,” still they might have “understood

* Willat, p. 15.

† Eccus. iii. 21.

‡ Horsley's Primary Charge in the Diocese of St. David's.

the eternal power and godhead; because, that which may be known of God was manifested in them, for God had shewed it unto them, so that they were without excuse.”*

It was *their* condemnation, that they would not glorify God, who “left not himself without witness” even *then*, but “worshipped the creature more than the creator.” It is *our* condemnation that “light is come into the world, and we love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil.” But reason is the principle, which distinguishes between good and evil, light and darkness; aided, not suppressed by the influence of the Holy Ghost; † and even that which is spiritually discerned, is approved as the object of our search by the human intellect.

* Rom. i. 19, 20.

† “God, when he illuminates the mind with supernatural light, does not extinguish that which is natural. If he would have us assent to the truth of any proposition, he either evidences that truth by the usual methods of natural reason, or else makes it known to be a truth, which he would have us assent to by his authority, and convinces us that it is from him, by some marks which reason cannot be mistaken in. Reason must be our last judge and guide in every thing.” I do not mean that we must consult reason, and examine whether a proposition, revealed from God, can be made out by natural principles; and if it cannot, that then we may reject it: but, consult it we must, and by it examine whether it be a revelation from God or no.—Locke on Enthusiasm, vol. i. 349. fol. edit.

This passage may furnish a *hint* to the Barrister, as well as the Methodist.

The same scripture which teaches us that “the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God,”* requires us to “prove all things,” to “judge what is right,” “to choose the good part,” and “abounding yet more and more in knowledge, and all judgment, approve the things which are more excellent.”

Our Saviour frequently chides his hearers with this just reproof:—“How is it that ye do not understand?” “Strong meat,” says the apostle to the Hebrews, or, the more perfect knowledge of Christianity, “belongs to them that are of full age, and have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” †

Let not reason be disparaged ‡ then, much less opposed to the illumination of the spirit; each is the gift of God; a gift of transcendent worth; and each may be improved to our salvation, or neglected to our condemnation. But our great danger is, lest “professing ourselves wise, we become fools.” §

* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

† Chap. v. 14.

‡ See Law's Theory of Religion, p. 20, et seq. where this subject is well discussed.

The Methodists would persuade us, that the foolish things of the world, are still chosen to confound the wise, no less than they were in the apostolic age; which is contrary to experience and truth.

§ “Concerning a preacher who despised *head knowledge*, Charles Wesley said, ‘such a preacher never have I heard before, and hope I never shall again: it was beyond description. I cannot say he preached false doctrine or true, or any doctrine

Diligently to exercise our reasoning power, and modestly to confine its efforts within their proper scope, is the duty of an intellectual, but imperfect being. It is the province of this faculty to compare and judge; to try all things, and hold fast that which is good; and, in a word, to observe the necessary connection of cause and effect. This rule may be universally applied.

Reason, for instance, may affix the value on every divine gift, which its superior worth and the Almighty Being from whom it proceeds, absolutely claim. Reason may also apprehend that the spirit of God acts upon the human mind, infusing holy thoughts and good desires, by his preventing and assisting grace, although the manner and time of his doing this be a secret to man inscrutable. But feeling and experiences, however they may be boasted of, are a very fallible criterion of spiritual interposition; a very insufficient substitute for those fruits of a good life, by which alone its presence can be ascertained.

There may, indeed, be special favour and assistance yielded by the divine comforter, to those who need and ask his heavenly succour. The humble and contrite heart may be cheered in its most desponding moments, and supported in its several trials, by his consolations. But let this

at all; but pure unmingled nonsense."—Nightingale's Portraiture of Methodism, p. 359.

be between the sinner and his God. Let him not vaunt of transports and illuminations,* attested by no evidence. Let him not argue from feelings, which are so frequently the effect of constitutional temperament, or a disordered mind, that his soul is purified by the influx of the holy spirit, and his lot among the saints. Let him not mistake even passionate sorrow for repentance, nor pervert hope into assurance. The comforts flowing from communion with the paraclete, God forbid we should deny, God grant we may possess! But we must caution our fellow Christians to avoid delusions, whether of the head or of the heart. We must warn them, that there is one only ground of confidence towards God, “faith which worketh by *love*.” The “answer of a good conscience” is not to be confounded therefore with visionary raptures. It is worse than absurd to persuade an agitated and over-heated mind, “that religion without feeling is but a painted sun;” † and to intimate, that “they must conclude equally against the being and operations of the Holy Ghost, who are not

* It is affirmed of the Rev. Mr. Cadogan, “doubtless he could have said, that he delivered to his hearers that which he received of the Lord Jesus.”* The language of St. Paul, who was favoured with special revelations, is thus applied to a gentleman who certainly never appeared to possess any supernatural endowments.

† Willat’s Apology, p. 144.

* Willat’s Apology, p. 77.

“decided by any experience of light or teaching, by him communicated to them.” * †

Such ideas we think ought not to be encouraged, because they are apt to mislead unwary Christians from the plain rule of God’s revealed will. They tend to the neglect of that patient continuance in well-doing, which is the best proof of our sincerity, and of the divine blessing upon it.

In fine, our conclusion is, that if our lives be conformable to the precepts of our blessed master; “and whatsoever we do, in word or deed, we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the father by him;” ‡ we then may be assured that his spirit abideth in us: we then may have peace with him, and with ourselves: a peace which the world cannot give, but which God only can bestow. Inspired by these religious motives, confirmed in these pious sentiments, and blessed with a consciousness of

* The whole sentence from which this passage is taken, stands thus:—“Though it must be owned with grief, that in every church professing Christianity, too many are to be found, who have scarcely considered, ‘if there be any Holy Ghost;’ and if they are to be decided by any experience of light or teaching by him communicated to them, they must conclude equally against his being and operations.”

It is given at length, lest we should appear to have garbled or changed the author’s argument, which we have endeavoured to understand: but if we have failed in this difficult point, the reader will interpret it for himself.

† Willat’s Apology, p. 140.

‡ Col. iii. 17.

sincere faith, stedfast hope, and fervent charity, the most humble Christian may believe that he is influenced by that being from whom "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." And this is our answer to the inquiry: "How could you have been inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, without feeling something like a supernatural impulse;"* or, to use Dr. Tottie's words, by which this writer endeavours to support his own tenets: "we feel, and confess the enlivening presence of the holy spirit, in the peace of conscience; in having a delight in virtue; in the possession of all those Christian graces that purify and refine the soul; in the assurance of God's favour; and in hope full of immortality. These effects, the pious Christian, who is led by the spirit, does most undoubtedly feel." †

This testimony of the heart, is the only ground of confidence, the only perception of spiritual operation we can admit. And since that holy influence is necessary to produce such a heavenly frame of mind, those who possess it, may be therefore said "to feel in themselves the workings of the spirit of Christ." ‡ §

* Willat's Apology, p. 71.

† Quoted in Willat's Apology, p. 72.

‡ Article XVII.

§ His motions are not discernible by us, from the natural operations of our minds. We feel them no otherwise than we do our thoughts and meditations; we cannot distinguish them

The general accusation urged against us by our evangelical brethren, that we do not preach the gospel, but make void the grace of God, which is alone sufficient for us, and quickeneth whom he will. That we trust in ourselves, that is, in our own righteousness, instead of relying on the unmerited mercy of our redeemer :

This accusation is not supported by any shadow of proof; it is inconsistent with truth, and irreconcilable with charity.

We acknowledge, the *preventing grace* of God to be the only efficient means of a sincere conversion to the religion of Christ; “that no man can say, Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” “That the spirit quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.” But adds our blessed Lord: “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* Whosoever receiveth his words therefore is prevented by his spirit: whosoever “callest him Lord, doth it by the Holy Ghost;” and whosoever has been admitted into his church by baptism, has been baptized into

by the manner of their affecting us, from our natural reasonings, and the operations of truth upon our souls; so that if God had only designed to give the holy spirit to us, without making any mention of it in his word, we could never have known, unless it had been communicated to us by some private revelation, that our souls are moved by a divine power, when we love God and keep his commandments.—Dr. Stebbing’s *Treatise concerning the Operations of the Spirit*, c. vii. 124.—See King’s origin of Evil, p. 377.

* John vi. 63.

one body, and made to drink into one spirit, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." * †

We acknowledge also, that his assisting grace is the only sufficient support of a Christian life, "without which we can do nothing:" to him therefore we have recourse as our safe-guard in temptation, and our succour in distress, as furthering our endeavours, enlightening our understandings, suggesting good thoughts, maintaining stedfast resolutions, interceding for our pardon, and obtaining our reward. The question between the Methodists and us, is in what manner we receive this grace; whether as free agents, or as passive machines: whether as working *with* us, or *upon* us; whether as a violent impulse controuling our minds; or as still small voice admonishing, persuading, teaching us, what *we must do* to be saved: whether sensibly experienced in its immediate act, or known only by its blessed fruits. ‡

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† Titus iii. 5.

‡ Do not accustom yourself to trust to *impressions*. There is a middle state of mind between conviction and hypocrisy, of which many are conscious. By trusting to impressions, a man may gradually come to yield to them, and at length be subject to them, so as not to be a free agent, or, what is the same thing in effect, to suppose that he is not a free agent. A man who is in that state should not be suffered to live; if he declares he cannot help acting in a particular way, but is irresistibly impelled, there can be no confidence in him, no more than in a tyger. But, no man believes himself to be impelled

We acknowledge the *especial* dispensation of this grace, on occasions which require its extraordinary influence. We believe that during the first promulgation of Christianity, its operations were mighty in deed and word, evinced by miracles and signs, which could not be mistaken. We believe moreover that the spirit of God still actuates the soul in all the exercises of a religious life; that it excites remorse, and godly sorrow in the penitent; and fervent hope, and pious gratitude in the thankful. We confess with all humility, that the spirit helpeth our infirmities; and we pray that we may daily be renewed by his grace.

irresistibly. We know that he who says he believes it, lies. Favourable impressions, at particular moments, as to the state of our souls, may be deceitful and dangerous. In general, no man can be sure of his acceptance with God; some indeed may have had it revealed to them. St. Paul, who wrought miracles, may have had a miracle wrought on himself, and may have obtained supernatural assurance of pardon, and mercy, and beatitude. Yet St. Paul, though he expresses strong hope, also expresses fear, lest having preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away.*

These sentiments of the great moralist deserve the more attention, because they are the result of his deliberate judgment, notwithstanding he was by constitution extremely susceptible of *impressions*, and had felt the danger of yielding to their influence, in those moments of morbid melancholy, when his "fear betrayed the succours which reason offereth."—Wisdom xvii. 12.

* Boswell's Life of Johnson, p. 403, 4to. edit.

But, we do not arrogate to ourselves the peculiar favour of heaven; we do not consider the mercies thus vouchsafed to us, as the seals of our election; nor are we so elated by them as to over value ourselves, and despise others; to think our own state secure, and theirs desperate. We do not presumptuously boast, however we may hope, that God hath heard our petition, and will assuredly save our souls: much less do we pretend to superior sanctity and peculiar gifts; or assert that we are chosen and cannot be rejected; raised up and cannot fall: much less do we claim an entire release from sin, from sin future as well as past, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and thence pronounce ourselves incapable of committing it. We do not suppose, that we are finally justified during our probation in this world, or exclusively predestinated to happiness in the next.

These opinions we dare not entertain: we have not so learned Christ; but when we turn to him, it is with penitential sorrow, and when we rejoice in him, we rejoice with trembling. So far from believing ourselves to be secure, we hold it to be our most urgent duty “to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation; to strive to enter in at the strait gate, not as though we had already attained, either were already perfect; but we follow after, if that we may apprehend that, for which also we are apprehended of Christ Jesus. We count not ourselves to *have*

apprehended; but this one thing we do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* In this we observe the advice and pattern of the great apostle, who exhorts us to be thus minded: in this we act conformably to the doctrine of our divine master, and therefore we protest against the tenets of the pretended evangelists, as unscriptural and unchristian; as false in their principles, absurd in their conclusions, and pernicious in their consequences.

* Philipp. iii. 12, 13, 14.

CHAPTER IX.

FANATICISM OF THE FIRST METHODISTS.—EXTRACTS FROM THE WORK OF BISHOP LAVINGTON IN PROOF OF THIS.—THE CONVERSIONS, ASSURANCES, RAPTURES, AND EXPERIENCES ASSERTED BY WESLEY AND WHITFIELD.—THEIR NOTION OF REGENERATION AS ATTENDED WITH AGONIES AND TORMENTS, BUT PRODUCTIVE OF ABSOLUTE PERFECTION.—ANALOGY OF A CONVERSION IN THE ROMISH CHURCH TO THE NEW BIRTH OF THE METHODISTS.—THEIR CLAIMS TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS DISPROVED BY THEIR UNCHARITABLENESS.—THE MODERN METHODISTS MAINTAIN THE TENETS OF THEIR PREDECESSORS.—THE FORMER EFFECTS OF PURITANIC ZEAL TO BE REASONABLY APPREHENDED FROM A RECURRENCE OF THE SAME CAUSE.—THE REPREHENSION OF ITS PRINCIPLES NOT INCONSISTENT WITH TOLERANCE AND CHARITY.—CHRISTIAN PRACTICE THE TRUE CRITERION OF DIVINE GRACE.—CONCLUSION.

IF, from the view that has been taken of the doctrines now disseminated by the Methodists, we look back to the authors of these extravagant opinions, we shall find them possessed by a wild enthusiasm, embittered with a rancorous zeal. To prove so plain a fact in the most compendious manner, a reference to the work of Bishop Lavington, *viz.* “The Enthusiasm of Papists and Protestants compared,” may be sufficient: and

as that treatise is now in few hands, and the matter of it cannot be too generally known, the following extracts, it is presumed, will not appear irrelevant to our present purpose, nor unacceptable to the reader :

The learned author thus states his opinion of that divine grace, the misapprehension of which has been the source of so many fatal errors. “ Though I do by no means deny that the holy spirit may, or sometimes doth, by some extraordinary act of grace throw such a light and influence on the mind of man, as suddenly to arrest him, as it were, in the midst of a wicked and unbelieving course, yet surely this is not to be expected of course ; the extraordinary method of heaven being that of drawing us by gradual means, good education and instruction, improvements by learning, reading, and studying the holy scriptures, which direct us in an honest and good heart to ‘ grow in grace, and build up ourselves in our holy faith,’ and not presume that we shall start up perfect men at once.* But by the Methodist’s ‘ Faith, and being born of God, are said to be *an instantaneous work at once*, and in a moment as lightning.’ Wesley’s 2d Journal, 16, 17, 39. ‘ My being born of God was an instantaneous act, enabling me from that moment to be more than conqueror over those temptations which before I

* Bishop Lavington’s Enthusiasm of Papists and Methodists compared, v. i. p. 30, 32.

was always a slave to.' 3d Journal, 16. 'Very many persons changed in a moment, always suddenly, as far as I have known.' Id. 49.

"After these sudden conversions, usually they receive their assurances of salvation, and these (as also the proofs of their conversion) are certainly known, heard, seen, or felt; they can ascertain the particular time and place of their receiving them, as so many seals of the spirit. 'All this while, I was assured God had forgiven me. It is a dreadful mistake to deny the doctrine of assurances. I know numbers, whose salvation is written on their hearts, as it were, with a sun-beam.' Whitfield's 5th Journal, 17, &c. Then for Mr. Wesley—'I felt faith in Christ, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine.' 2d Journal, 30. 'My sister received atonement on St. Peter's day.' 3d Journal, 17. 'At that hour, one who had long continued in sin, received a full, clear sense of his pardoning love, and power to sin no more.'"

It is evident, from the many extraordinary passages which Bishop Lavington has collected from the writings of those noted founders of Methodism, that the fanatic flame burst forth at once with all its fury.

"God," says Mr. Whitfield, "was indeed there, riding in the congregation."—"Jesus has been with me much to-day, at another time he

* Bishop Lavington, v. i. p. 33, 34.

was with me on the road; but, oh! how was he met with me in Abergavenny!" — "I lean on Jesus's bosom from morning to night, yea, all the day long." — "I sweetly leaned on my Saviour's bosom, and sucked out of the breasts of his consolation."*

In his 2d Journal he says, "Could the trees of a certain wood near Stone-house speak, they would tell what sweet communion I and some more dear souls enjoyed with the ever-blessed God there." — "The love of God was shed abroad in my heart," says Mr. Wesley, "and a flame kindled with flames so violent, and yet so very ravishing, that my body was almost torn asunder. I loved. The spirit cried strong in my heart. I sweated, I trembled, I fainted, I sung. My soul was got up into the holy mount; it had no thought of coming down again into my body," with more of the same ranting flame.† Wesley's 3d Journal, 19.

The same enthusiast describes the Holy Ghost descending into his congregation as on the day of Pentecost; nay, with greater evidences of his power: "The spirit at length came down like a mighty rushing wind, and carried all before it. In my prayer the power of God came down, and gave a great shock; such an abiding, universal shock I never knew before. In the afternoon again the shock was very great; the place

* Lavington, v. i. p. 39.

† Id. p. 44.

was almost rent by the power and presence of God." Wesley's 7th Journal, 57.

With no less presumption, though in a milder tone, Mr. Whitfield says, "I felt more and more of the divine assistance to-day; the Lord endowed me with power on high. In the midst of my discourse the power of the Lord came upon me; God enabled me to speak with such irresistible power," &c. 2d Journal, 23. And afterwards he makes this insolent appeal to heaven—

" Past is thy word, I here demand,
And confident expect thy aid."*

He has the audacity to vouch for all his pretensions, by declaring, "The eternal Almighty, I am, hath sent me."† 3d Journal, 58. Which is equalled in fanaticism, if not in arrogance, by an old hardened sinner's daring to assert, "The Saviour of sinners has saved me; he told me so on Sunday morning." Wesley's 4th Journal, 52.‡

When the minds of men are infatuated with these strong delusions, can any thing be matter of wonder which they think or say? But to see the infinite Majesty of heaven, and the ineffable grace of God, treated with such shameless familiarity, is calculated to excite feelings in every sober mind, which no language can express; and the amatory strains in which the raptures of enthusiasm are recited, cannot be read without

* Lavington, v. i. p. 47. † Id. p. 52. ‡ Id. p. 52.

disgust and horror. Surely, then, it is our duty to guard the weak, the ignorant, and the credulous, from that fundamental error in which these indignities appear to have their origin, *viz.* the false notion entertained by the Methodists of the *new birth*.

“Mr. Whitfield,” says Bishop Lavington, “explodes the scriptural doctrine adopted by our church of *regeneration* by baptism, and calls it the *Diana of the present age*. Mr. Wesley declares, “Though I have used all the means for twenty years, I am not a Christian. Verily, verily, I say unto you, I must be born again.” 3d Journal, 23. And he calls those “Blind, leaders of the blind,” who speak of the new birth as if it were no more than baptism.” 3d Journal, 82. Therefore, another greater and better new birth must be added to supply the defect. And yet one would think the former sufficient for all the purposes of a Christian, supposing only that St. Paul speaks truth. “Christ *sanctified and cleansed* the church with the *washing of water by the word*; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle on any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

Mr. Wesley’s assurance of his new birth was given him May 24, 1738. “Till that time, I sought saving faith,” he says, “with great indifference; but then assurance was given me that

* Ephes. v. 26, 27.

he had taken away my sins, even mine.”* 2d Journal, 29, 30. Nevertheless, many relapses, it appears, take place after this assurance; whence it seems to be nothing more than ordinary Christian’s experience, if at any time they repent and turn to God. And yet it must be more; for in order to attain this new birth, they are to undergo “the torments of a woman in travail.”—“I thought the pains of hell were upon me,” says Mr. Wesley, 3d Journal, 18—“was in this violent agony for about four hours, then began to feel I was born of God.” Nothing less than feeling, as it were, the pains of hell will serve.—“Devils are dragging them to hell: they are seized with the spirit of fear, horror,

* In Nightingale’s “Portraiture of Methodism,” we find a similar account of this marvellous event, and of the strange uncertainty which preceded and followed it.

“After all the virtuous toil of the two Wesleys, during a period of nearly ten years, they were both well convinced that as yet they had not the faith of the gospel! p. 78.—The time, however, was happily drawing near, when they should emerge from Egyptian darkness: at length the time arrived, p. 81.—About a quarter before nine, (while hearing Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans, and one was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ) I felt,” says Mr. Wesley, “I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

Yet it was very often a matter of great doubt with him, whether he even yet possessed the right faith; whether even yet God had pardoned his sins, p. 88.

and despair; one in the pains of hell is justified; another sinking down, even as dead, hath her sins taken away." Id. 19. 46. In general, as Mr. Wesley speaks, "the being in *orco* is thought an indispensable preparative for being a Christian." 1st Journal, 66.

Hence cryings, yellings, convulsions, &c. &c. are symptoms of the new birth.

"A woman was seized with little less than the agonies of death; five days she travailed and groaned, then in a moment was full of love and joy: her friends have accounted her mad for these three years." Whitfield's 3d Journal, 43. "One having dropped down as if shot with a gun, upon his rising I had half an hour's conversation with him on the subject of the new birth." 7th Journal, 12.

This kind of regeneration, we must acknowledge with Mr. Wesley, "to be something more than that of baptism."* But the torments inflicted on the Methodists are the means of bringing them to a state of perfection: witness Mr. Wesley's "certain experiences of some of his followers being as free from inward corruption, as Christ himself was; thoroughly renewed after the image of Christ; an entire change from the image of the devil to the image of God." 4th Journal, 51.

According to Mr. Whitfield likewise, "All experience, pangs, and troubles ere Christ is

* Lavington, v. ii. p. 217, 218, 219, 220, 221.

formed in them, and brought forth in the measure of his fulness who filleth all in all." 3d Journal, 82. Such is their perfection equal to God's fulness, and so to be brought forth in us.*

After citing many passages to the same purpose, Bishop Lavington indignantly exclaims, "Would not this amaze any person who has any reverence or regard to certain inspired writings, called the Bible—with what face or by what authority do these bold miscreants† make these hellish horrors and tortures a fundamental part of the Christian religion? Where is it required that such infernal seizures are the appointed preparations for a Christian's regeneration?‡

This learned writer has so fully exposed their enthusiasm, by comparing it with the superstition of the Papists, and shewing that their gross delusions exceeded even the impostures of the Romish church, that it might seem superfluous to add another word upon the subject.

But there is an example of the resemblance that exists, in one particular at least, between these two Christian communities, however they may differ in many others, recorded by the Bishop of Meaux, which may form an apposite conclusion of this particular.

* Lavington, v. ii. p. 221.

† *Miscreant*—One that holds a false faith.—Johnson. This definition will save Bishop Lavington from the charge of using language, in this instance, unjustifiably severe.

‡ Lavington, v. ii. p. 237.

In his *Oraisons funebres*, the conversion of *Anne de Gonzague de Cleves et Princesse Palatine*, is described in terms to this effect:

“The Princess had become an infidel, inso-
much that she thought the mysteries of Chris-
tianity mere errors and chimeras; and when
they were mentioned, could scarcely refrain from
laughter, considering them as things ridiculous
and impossible. From this darkness she was
roused by a dream or vision, and by an impulse
of the spirit was suddenly reclaimed from her
infidelity and dissipated course of life.” During
that period her eulogist remarks, “the hour of
the Princess Palatine was not yet come.” At
length the hour of grace arrived; “God, who
has no need of time, nor of a long course of rea-
soning to make himself known, opened her eyes
at once: then by a sudden illumination she felt
herself so enlightened and so transported with
joy! These are her own expressions, &c.—Thus
God changed her by an instantaneous light and
an ecstatic dream; thus she passed at once from
a deep darkness into manifest light. The clouds
of her mind were dispersed; a miracle no less
astonishing than that wherein Jesus Christ caused
the sort of scales to fall off, which covered the
eyes of Saul. Who then would not exclaim upon
this sudden change, ‘The finger of God is here!
the consequence does not permit us to doubt of
it, and the work of grace is acknowledged in its

fruits." In sum, "the Princess Palatine is totally changed in an instant."*

Can the warmest advocates for immediate and miraculous conversion bring forward a stronger instance of such a transmutation? The subject of it had all the qualifications which they usually consider as the proper requisites for divine interposition; she was an abandoned profligate, an avowed infidel, who made a mockery of religion, and violated its laws: in her, therefore, the favourite rule of Methodism was exemplified, *The greater the sinner, the greater the saint.*

The manner of it is no less congenial with the principles of this Protestant sect; the use of reason, in examining the truth of Christianity, was entirely set aside. Without any reformation on her part, or even a wish, so far as it appears, to renounce her wicked habits; she was suddenly illuminated, changed, subdued, by a miracle equal to that which convinced the great apostle of his mistaken but *conscientious zeal.* So that neither her intellect, nor her will; no honest intention, no moral principle, no exercise of any human faculty, concurred in the least degree with this extraordinary operation of the spirit. It agrees in all respects with the motives of those blind and deluded men, who attribute the abuse of an arbitrary and capricious power, to that holy being, whom the prophet addressed in

* Bossuet's Oraison Funebre d'Anne de Gonzaque.

language of a very different import: "The way of the just is uprightness: thou most upright dost weigh the path of the just."*

Let it be remarked, however, by the advocates of irrelative grace, that the object of it in this case, was led by her illumination to embrace all the superstitions of the Romish church; and that she proved her devotion to them by leaving to the benedictines of St. Germain, "the wood of the true and holy cross, which I protest," she says, "that I have seen in the flames, without being burned. I also give them the miraculous blood, &c. I also give the abbey of St. Germain, the reliques," &c. &c. †

The same convert who attested so absurd a falsehood, and bequeathed these instruments of idolatrous worship, with a firm persuasion that she asserted the cause of truth; felt also an undoubting assurance that she was under the divine protection.

"I found myself," she says, "supported by a hope as stedfast and tranquil as if I had heard even from an angel, that God would not abandon me." † Now we would ask those religious persons, who depend with implicit faith on the testimony of their feelings, what stronger conviction of supernatural influence they can entertain, than that which deluded this unhappy woman? And whether, since the grossest errors of the Roman Catholics are cherished by the

* Isaiah xxvi. 7.

† *Oraison Funebre, &c.*

same sentiments as prevail among the Methodists,* it be not reasonable to conclude, that the presumption of the one is equally fallacious with the confidence of the other. If this be still a question; let it be examined by one test which may be deemed infallible. St. John hath pronounced this positive decision: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his mother, he is a liar." † Had the high claims of inspiration, asserted by the founders of the new church, been tried by this simple rule, the uncharitable rancour which tintured their intemperate zeal, would have proved them to be impudent and false.

The fortunate impotence of those enthusiasts seems alone to have exempted them from that merited ignominy which the defence of religious opinions, by the arms of persecution, has always ultimately incurred. Their anathemas are as contradictory to their own professions, as to the gospel of Jesus Christ. "Read Mr. Wesley's Character of a Methodist," says Bishop Lavington; "and the love of God has purified his heart from every unkind temper, and malign affection, from all revengeful passions, envy, malice, and wrath. He cannot utter an unkind word of any one: but read his controversial

* In the Fourth Pastoral Letter of Bishop Gibson, their chimerical pretensions are exposed in their true colours; but it is unnecessary to multiply instances of that extraordinary enthusiasm which is already sufficiently evinced.

† 1 John iv. 20.

writings with his opposers, and all these fine professions are vanished and contradicted, and that in some of his latest performances. For not to repeat their calumnies against their brethren, nor to regard Mr. Whitfield's rant, *That all morality set up in opposition to his, shall sink with its professors into hell, &c.* let any one but look into the latter part of Mr. Wesley's *Further Appeal*, and he will find enough of uncharitable and damnatory clauses, dispatching all mankind to hell, (as far as lies in human power,) who are not Methodists. *All their opposers are labouring heartily in the cause of hell; they are blasphemous, openly fighting against God, fight under the devil's banner, are taking part with the devil against God.*

Whitfield in his *Fourth Journal*, p. 32, says, "Preached this evening at Kennington Common: God gave me great power, and I never opened my mouth so freely against the *letter-learned* clergy of the church of England: I should not die in peace unless I bore my testimony against them.—Woe be unto such blind leaders of the blind, how can you escape the damnation of hell?"*

"The scarlet whore of Babylon," says Mr. Seward, *Journal*, p. 71, "is not more corrupt in principle or practice, than the church of England." But what a wickedness is it to throw out

* Enthusiasm of Papists and Methodists compared, part II. p. 86, 87.

so much gall and bitterness against persons whose chief power of doing good, and promoting the common salvation, depends upon their character? And how much more to impute this black art of calumny to the spirit and power given from God?" *

What extenuation or excuse can be offered for such anti-christian sentiments by those who profess to respect the *new commandment* of our divine teacher, and to believe that "God is love," we are at a loss to imagine. But the modern Methodists may say, what have we to do with the errors of Whitfield, or Wesley: are we accountable for their excesses? Certainly the disciples of Mr. Rowland Hill are not answerable for the outrageous folly of his great precursor; no more are the Jesuits for the chivalrous fanaticism of Ignatius Loyola; nor the Anabaptists for the anti-social, rebellious, and immoral tenets of Munzer and Matthias; nor the disciples of Emanuel Swedenborg, for his Extatic Reveries. But inasmuch as the *new evangelist* of the present day treads in the steps of his vehement predecessor, wears his mantle, propagates the peculiar dogmas of his creed, and lays claim to the same extraordinary gifts; since he asserts that the new birth is effected, not by the baptismal covenant, but by some emotion sensibly communicated to the soul; since he pronounces damnation or absolution with the same plenary

* Id. part I. p. 13.

authority, sets the seal of election on the saints with infallible assurance, defames the clergy and traduces their doctrines with the bitterest revilings, raises an indignant outcry against the most innocent amusements, whilst every atrocious offence is sheltered under the cover of human inability and divine predestination ; since he affirms that the imputed righteousness of Christ cleanses the heinous sinner from all his iniquities at once, and that the virtuous believer is irrecoverably lost, if he think otherwise ; since, in a word, he represents the Deity as an arbitrary tyrant, and man as the passive object of his love or hatred, who must await the elective call, which, without any regard to his own will, word, or work, summons him instantly and irresistibly, to the assembly of saints, numbers him among the children of God, and consigns him to eternal bliss : Surely the same spirit of infatuation which impelled the father of this sect, still rules in his misguided children.

They may have prudently tempered their language in some respects, have lowered their pretensions in others, and have improved their Catholic scheme, of converting the world to their opinions by a variety of new expedients : expedients better calculated to gain over the ignorant, the wicked, the melancholy, and the timid to join their meetings and adopt their creed. But in the same degree as their folly or madness is diminished, their art and cunning may be in-

creased, and what is subtracted from the former, added to the latter ; there may be less imputable to the ramblings of the brain, but more to the deflexions of the heart. But whether the errors of the head or of the heart preponderate, is a question of little importance in comparison with the momentous consequences to which they lead. " The great preservative of religion, and of order and regularity in the exercise of it, is the provision that is made for the performance of public offices, by persons lawfully appointed within particular bounds and districts ; and if these be taken down, nothing can follow but disorder and confusion. This nation in the time of our forefathers had sufficient experience of the mischief and contempt that may be brought upon religion by inspired tongues and itching ears. When the holy spirit was alleged to sanctify the greatest extravagances, and the most ridiculous fancies ; when the most ordinary actions and incidents of life were ascribed to the influences of the same spirit ; when the doctrine of justification by faith alone was carried into an utter exclusion of the necessity of good works, and under that notion grew to be the distinguishing mark of a whole sect ; and when the bounds of order and discipline were broken down, and the settled ministries and offices of the church depreciated and brought into contempt, as dispensations of a low and less spiritual nature." *

* Gibson's Fourth Pastoral Letter, p. 279.

Were we willing to take counsel from the example which our ancestors have bequeathed to us, there is terror enough in that example to alarm the apprehensions, and excite the vigilance of the bravest, the wisest, and the best. But this is an age in which the experience of those who have gone before us is esteemed of no account; and the wisdom derivable from the observation of former events, the most instructive and least fallible that mere reason can attain, no longer regulates our judgment or our conduct. We contemplate without dismay the dangers of the coming storm, and stupidly forget the fury of the past. The records of history are to us a dead uninteresting letter. To the melancholy relation of those miseries which sprung from a fanatic zeal we pay no regard, or peruse with philosophic apathy the awful lesson which it teaches. "But the judgments of God are for ever unchangeable," says a learned and sagacious writer, "neither is he wearied by the long process of time, and won to give his blessing in one age to that which he hath cursed in another."*

The same disastrous consequences which were occasioned by the excess of puritanic violence in a former period, will undoubtedly ensue again, if we are subjected to the ascendancy of a similar enthusiasm. And surely our apprehensions of it will not be allayed by the consideration of those religious tenets which it has been the purpose of

* Raleigh's Preface to his History of the World.

these pages to unfold: tenets which are alike repugnant to moral virtue, sound wisdom, and christian charity.

The danger which threatens the ecclesiastical, and together with it, the civil establishment of this happy country from the angry spirits of contending sects, will not appear less imminent,* because the predominant spirit of Methodism is

* That this spirit will submit to no controul, is evident from the temper and language of those who entertain it. Some restrictions on itinerant preachers having been proposed, a writer in the Evangelical Magazine, on the supposition of their being enacted as a law, thus declares his sentiments:

“The ministers of the gospel, who, in compassion to the souls of men, think it their duty to preach in the villages, will not be silenced by unjust and persecuting restrictions: they *will* unquestionably *persist* in preaching, whenever they *think themselves called* to do it; and should severe punishments be enacted, the prisons would be filled with persecuted Methodists and Dissenters, as in the days of the Stuarts they were with persecuted Puritans and Quakers.

Evang. Mag. Oct. 1809, p. 437.

Mr. Styles, in observing on the Barrister's suggestion, that self-appointed teachers should not be exempt from the militia ballot, says, “You indeed seem chiefly to depend on the efficacy of subjecting evangelical ministers to serve in the militia. This would perhaps be the most effectual way to shut our pulpits; but we should go into the army, and preach there: you will not be able by any means to quench this new spirit.”* What a presage of public calamity does this intimation, which is not obscure, convey! A fanatic army, impelled by designing agitators, immediately presents itself to the imagination: the troubles which preceded Cromwell's usurpation,

* Styles's Vindication, p. 141.

swallowing up all the rest. Our fears will rather be frightened, when we consider the gigantic strides and the malignant looks of that religious spectre; when we observe the desire of pre-eminence, spiritual and temporal, concealed by the shallow disguise of holy zeal for Christ, and Christ alone; when we see a system of proselytism regularly arranged throughout the British empire, and a multitude of converts seduced by doctrines, most agreeable indeed to our depraved nature, but utterly subversive of all social and private duty: When the influence of fanaticism is thus exciting the passions of the ignorant and vulgar against the best interests of mankind, and the venerable institutions by which those interests have been effectually secured, are we not justified in calling the attention of our countrymen to the progress of that evangelism, which profanes the gospel of Jesus Christ, under the sanction of its hallowed name?

Far be it from us to awaken an intolerant disposition towards any description of our fellow Christians, or to cherish an uncharitable sentiment towards any man: the principles, not the persons, of our opponents are the just object of our censure and aversion. With the most sacred

and the baleful influence of that gloomy superstition, which almost extinguished the light of science and of truth during its continuance, occur at once, on the bare mention of army preachers, and forewarn us to defend ourselves from the malignity of this *new spirit, if it cannot be quenched.*

regard for the freedom of conscience, we may reasonably be afraid of its activity, when ignorantly misguided, and violently impelled. Let opinions be free; but the application of those opinions to measures which are fraught with public mischief, is an offence cognizable by the community, whose safety they endanger, on this acknowledged principle: *Salus populi suprema lex*. The severest reprehension, in this case, is perfectly consistent with the most liberal tolerance.

Far be it from us also to confound the pious religionist with the raving enthusiast. "God forbid that in this profane and degenerate age every thing that has the appearance of piety and devotion should not be considered in the most favourable light that it is capable of."* To the sincere faith and virtuous practice of many excellent persons, whose name and patronage give countenance to the host of itinerant Methodists, we bear our humble testimony. However we may differ from them in some points, we respect the Christian motives which actuate their conduct. But it is impossible not to lament that doctrines are disseminated, and measures pursued, under the sanction of such characters, which tend to corrupt religion and degrade morality; to dissolve the ties which attach the people to their appointed ministers; and to fo-

* Bishop Gibson's Fourth Pastoral Letter.

ment that factious disunion; which is invariably produced by the baneful influence of religious discord.

We are all so liable to prejudice and error in our theological, as well as our political opinions, that we should regard those who differ from us in merely speculative tenets with unbounded charity. But in the practice of Christianity there is no room for misapprehension; if that *new spirit*, that *spirit of meekness*, of *wisdom* and of *truth*, which proceeded from the divine Author of our religion, dwell in us, it will manifest itself by its fruits: "Now the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."* Hence it follows most undeniably, that let moral duties be ever so much disparaged as mean, and low, and legal, yet wheresoever we see any man living righteously, where we find such a mixture of faith and charity, and all that bright constellation of virtues mentioned just now, we may and ought to pronounce that man born of the spirit. For though the tree be not visible to us, yet the fruits are; and since those practices are the genuine product of the influences of the spirit, and cannot be produced from any other principle; to attribute them to nature, or to any thing besides, is in effect to say, that "grapes may be gathered of thorns, and figs of thistles." And a necessary consequence of this

* Galat. v. 32.

particular is, that if such good practices, where they are conspicuous, declare that they are wrought by the spirit, and that God hath renewed that man, and did, and does still act and dwell in him; then it is no less certain, that where the contrary vices and dispositions are predominant, those men are not regenerate, nor does the spirit of God work in them. "Let no man deceive you," says the apostle; "whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."*

Men may delude themselves and their ignorant followers with boasting pretences; they may have the impiety to sanctify their blackest crimes, by fathering them upon divine impulse and inspiration: but while we see them turbulent and factious, proud and disobedient, censorious and bitter, unjust and uncharitable, can we think that God is the author of, or dwells with these froward dispositions? It were a contradiction to all religion to suppose so; and however they may be exalted by their own vain imaginations, yet, alas! they *know not themselves, nor what spirit they are of.*†

This truly scriptural exposition of the doctrine we have been considering, no sophistry can evade, no argument refute. It comprises the substance of all that need be said upon this subject—a subject that appears to have been purposely involved in mysterious obscurity; the

* John iii. 10.

† Stanhope's viith Sermon.

misconception of which has produced the greatest injury to the cause of Christianity, has occasioned the ignorant to err, the wise to mourn, and the enemies of Christ to blaspheme.

To contribute in some degree to the vindication of that divine revelation, which is thus slandered and abused, is the duty of every professor, and more particularly of every minister of the gospel. The corruption of Christianity is so prevalent and so contagious an evil—*Malum, quo non aliud velocius album*—that no endeavour should be wanting to stay the progress of this pestilent disease. For the sake of truth, of virtue, and even of common decency and common sense, we should protest against the opinions of a sect which would overwhelm them all in darkness and confusion—a sect that has imbued the fountain of knowledge with the bitter waters of a morose fanaticism; that has disowned the obligations of the moral law, and annulled the conditions of the gospel-covenant; that has substituted its own vain imaginations for the reasonable service enjoined by Jesus Christ; that has divested God of his attributes, and man of his faculties; has denied the responsibility of the sinner, and thence arraigned the justice of his Almighty Judge; that has straitened the way of salvation, admitting its own votaries indeed, however wicked and depraved, but excluding all other human beings; thus daring to defeat the purpose for which “God sent his Son into

the world—that the world through him might be saved.”*

Against such doctrines it is our duty to protest, from reverence to “the gospel, which we have received, and wherein we stand; by which also we are saved;” and from a regard to the well-being of the community in which we live; for surely there is too much ground of real fear, that this country is fast approaching to that crisis, when a mild and tolerant establishment may be subverted by its false friends and real enemies. When the blessings of religious freedom and internal peace, may be exchanged for spiritual tyranny and rancorous dissension. †

* John iii. 17.

† The following remarks of the acute, and ingenious author, who has been formerly cited, and cannot be suspected of having written them from any interested motive, well deserve, and at this time especially, the most serious attention.

“We see, that in all countries upon earth, that have any religion among them, there is some established discipline; and though the wisest and most rational, tolerate other forms beside their own, there are particular institutions and usages appointed for the generality, and for such as have no opinions, and but little thought of their own. I know there are some people disturbed at the dignities and revenues established in the church: if they have so contemptible an opinion of religion, as to wish it were utterly lost out of the world, I cannot blame them. But I will not suppose this of them; and as those who complain loudest, are such as would be thought very rational men, they will hardly expect the world should be well instructed by means of extraordinary illuminations, or supernatural impulses imparted to private persons, qualifying them instantaneously for the office: or, if the thing were doubtful

This surely is too probable a conjecture to be contemplated without serious apprehension by any one, who will observe impartially, and consider attentively, the peculiar signs of these eventful times.

in speculation, experience testifies what wild work has been made by persons undertaking it on those pretences. For it is well known, the doctrines of religion may be grossly misunderstood, and perverted to very mischievous purposes, as well through ignorance, indiscretion, or mis-applied zeal, as by design. If we do not think a common artificer well qualified for his business, without having served a regular apprenticeship; surely this, which is a more dangerous edge-tool than the saw or the chisel, requires an early preparation to handle it skilfully. As one of the most valuable liberties of mankind is that of forming into societies, and enjoying the benefit of regulations made for public order and convenience, whoever endeavours to propagate opinions tending to disunite or disturb the society, to weaken the authority of those regulations, or hinder the good effects of them, is an infringer of that liberty, and consequently a proper object for the restraint of the law.”*

* Tucker's *Light of Nature* pursued, p. 416, 420, of the Abridgment.

POSTSCRIPT.

IT was proposed in the commencement of this work, to examine the other doctrines, which the pretended evangelists have grafted on the word of God; as well as that which respects *grace* and *regeneration*. But this article is extended to so great and unexpected a length, that it may be advisable perhaps to proceed no further. Indeed, after the publication of the Bishop of Lincoln's Refutation of Calvinism, and Mr. Mant's Bampton Lectures, it might seem needless, if not presumptuous, to attempt any new defence of those doctrines, which we affirm to be delivered in the gospel and asserted by our church. But in extenuation of such apparent temerity, it may be proper to state, that the materials of this treatise were collected before the former excellent work appeared; and that the copy was ready for the press, when the "Appeal to the Gospel" was presented to the public. The first thought that occurred, and in this case possibly the best, was the propriety of relinquishing a design, the main object of which had been attained by such superior abilities and learning. But sub-

sequent reflection led to a different determination. For although we pretend not to proceed *pari passu* in vindicating the divine doctrines of our blessed Master, and only Saviour, Jesus Christ; yet it appeared probable that a more familiar exposition of so grave a matter, however inferior in dignity and value, might not be altogether unserviceable to the common cause. In venturing therefore to publish this cursory review of Methodism, after the comprehensive and accurate examinations of the subject which have preceded it, we have been chiefly influenced by these considerations, *viz.* That a light, and even a superficial tract will often find its way, where a more deep and weighty disquisition is less readily admitted; and that when the principles of truth itself are perverted, then it is allowable, if it ever be, to "write the same thing, to add line upon line, and precept upon precept." If the subject be trite, and the remarks anticipated; and, if in pursuing the same end with the *Bampton Lecturer*, we have occasionally trod in the same path; we presume to hope that a concurrence of sentiment, purely accidental, may add some force to the argument, and some credit to the opinion it supports.

The bold assumptions of Calvinistic Methodism have indeed been sufficiently repelled, and its high claims to a divine original, have been utterly disproved. But the adversary with whom we are contending never remits his vigilance

or activity; though defeated, he is not subdued; he returns to the charge with the same weapons which have been repeatedly blunted and foiled. It is necessary, therefore, to oppose the same means of defence which have been so frequently resorted to before.

To make an effectual stand, we must put on the whole armour of God: but still, in vain shall we resist him, with the "breast plate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God;" those arms of truth of which he bears the counterfeit; unless the imposture be exposed to those, who are most liable to be deceived by the specious semblance. His success is favoured by darkness and delusion.

Fallere et effugere est triumphus.

We must, therefore, unravel all his windings, unfold his intricacies, and discover his evasions.

The detailed, and numerous extracts from Methodistical authors may possibly be very tiresome to the reader; but if these particulars had not been specified, we might have been charged, as another opposer of their opinions has been, "of dealing in generalities, and of reproaching all its teachers with one sweeping censure, as illiterate, and self-appointed." * We might have been accused of imputing sentiments to them, which their advocates disclaimed.

* Styles's Letter to a Barrister, p. 91.

It may be some apology for the loose manner in which these strictures have been composed, to observe, that they were written under the disadvantage of continual interruptions, and at short intervals; and that the time bestowed upon them has been literally snatched from pressing, and necessary engagements, which would scarcely allow either abstraction of mind, or arrangement of thought.

THE END.



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