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The Wesleyans Vindicated

1837

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THE WESLEYANS VINDICATED

FROM

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THE CALUMNIES CONTAINED IN A PAMPHLET,

ENTITLED,

“THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND COMPARED WITH
WESLEYAN METHODISM,”

AND RECOMMENDED BY THE BRITISH MAGAZINE TO THE CLERGY
AND LAITY OF ENGLAND FOR GENERAL DISTRIBUTION :

IN

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A CHURCHMAN AND A METHODIST.

Jackson

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN MASON, 14, CITY-ROAD;
AND SOLD AT 66, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

MDCCCXXXVII.

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LONDON:—Printed by James Nichols, 46, Hoxton-Square.

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PREFACE.

THE following pamphlet has been written, not in anger, but in sorrow. It is not an attack upon the national Church, but an honest defence of an insulted and slandered people. For some months the author has been acquainted with the tract which he has here attempted to answer; and he has been repeatedly requested to supply an antidote to the poison which it contains; but he deemed this unnecessary. The tract appears so destitute of all candour, and its statements, so far as the Wesleyans are concerned, are so void of even the semblance of truth, that he could not think it was likely to gain much credit in the world, especially among sensible and upright people.

But the case is now altered. The British Magazine recommends the tract in question to the Clergy and laity of England; and indirectly calls upon them to unite in giving it circulation wherever Methodism exists. The Editor of that Magazine, therefore, has made himself responsible for the contents of the tract. He of course pledges his character for their correctness; and there is reason to believe that considerable efforts have already been made to carry his suggestion into effect. Under these circumstances the pamphlet now submitted to the public has been prepared. The writer is a Wesleyan Methodist. He feels that the religious and moral character of his brethren is grossly calumniated; their doctrines and institutions are shamefully misrepresented; and he fearlessly undertakes their defence. He might have greatly enlarged this publication; but he wished to compress it into the smallest possible compass. He might have made it a vehicle of invective against the Establishment; but this he could not do consistently with his own principles. The Church of England he has long been taught to venerate; and he cherishes a growing conviction that her preservation, in all her integrity, is essential to the well-being of these realms. It is with no pleasure, therefore, that he contemplates the combination which is formed to effect her overthrow. With that combination he has no sympathy whatever. That the Church of England will be saved, he has no doubt; and he is equally persuaded, that she will become more efficient than ever. But she will

not be saved by the writers and distributors of bitter and mendacious pamphlets, intended to bring other bodies of Christians into unmerited disgrace, and to destroy their usefulness. The true pillars and saviours of the Church, under God, are the men of peace and love, who faithfully preach the doctrines of the Reformation, and demonstrate the benefits of an Establishment by the salutary influence of their labours upon society. The Church will be more injured by the publication of tracts like that which is here answered, than by any other means. The man who violates truth and charity for the attainment of any object awakens suspicion in every candid mind.

Methodism, it is freely conceded, is a fair subject of criticism and animadversion; and every man who disapproves of it has an undoubted right to state the grounds of his dislike. But then he is bound to confine himself within the limits of truth. "Lie not one to another, brethren," is the solemn admonition of a Christian Apostle. The complaint against the tract which the British Magazine recommends to the Clergy and laity of England, is not that it assails Methodism, but that it is characterized throughout by a scandalous disregard of truth. The proof is before the reader.

Within the last two or three years many writers on the side of the Church have acknowledged in terms of strong approbation the generous support which the Church has in various ways received from the Wesleyan body. To meet acts of friendship with a scowl, and to return them with blows and hard names, is a conduct which is not usually expected among Christian men.

January 12th, 1837.

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A CHURCHMAN AND A METHODIST.

Churchman.—I have waited upon you this morning, to lay before you a pamphlet, which our Clergyman has just published, and which he is freely distributing among his parishioners. Its circulation is not likely to be confined to this neighbourhood. The British Magazine for the present month recommends it in the following words:—"A little twopenny paper, published at Bristol, and by Seeley, London, entitled, *The Church of England compared with Wesleyan Methodism*, is recommended to the attentive consideration of Clergy and laity where this form of Dissent prevails."* It is here recommended, you perceive, that the members of the established Church, both clerical and lay, throughout the country, should circulate this publication, wherever Wesleyan chapels and societies exist. For my part, I very much doubt the truth of the statements which the pamphlet contains. So far as the Methodists are concerned I fear it is a tissue of falsehoods; and if so, for the members of the Church of England generally to unite in its circulation would be a sad breach of Christian decorum, and a shameful requital of the part which our Methodist friends have acted towards the Establishment amidst the clamour which has of late been raised against it. I have known you as a peaceable and upright neighbour for many years; and I cannot believe that your Ministers and societies are the wretched characters here described. I will leave the pamphlet with you, and call upon you to-morrow evening for the purpose of hearing your opinion of its contents. Perhaps you will be able in the mean time to read it over.

Methodist.—I will endeavour to comply with your request, and thank you for your civility. We Methodists are so accustomed to reproach, that libels upon us cease to excite our surprise. Nor are we discouraged. We know who has said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matt. v. 11.) I shall be glad to see you at the time appointed; when I will give you my candid opinion of the tract. You and I have differed somewhat in our views

* British Magazine for Jan. 1837, p. 69.

of Church order ; but on the nature of Christianity, and the institutions of our country, we are generally agreed.

Churchman.—Have you read the pamphlet that I left with you yesterday ?

Methodist.—I have ; and find that your apprehensions respecting it, as a mendacious composition, are too well founded. A more unfair and disingenuous publication I never read. To say nothing of Christianity, I wonder how any person who has been accustomed to the decencies of civilized life, and is aware of the respect which is due from man to man, could bring his mind to write and publish such trash.

Churchman.—Your censures are very strong. I hope the case is not quite so bad as you represent it. Let us enter into particulars. I should be sorry to find a Clergyman guilty of deliberately publishing untruths ; and especially if that Clergyman should be my own Minister and Pastor, in whose piety and uprightness I ought to have entire confidence. If you have no objection, we will canvass the statements throughout. The writer, you will observe, has compared the Church of England and Methodism together in five particulars ; and that the subjects may be more distinctly appreciated by the reader, the descriptions are placed over against each other in distinct columns.

Methodist.—So I perceive ; and the Church is described as all light, and Methodism as all darkness. The Church is all excellence and perfection ; but every thing in Methodism, and connected with it, is evil. Verily you Church-people are a favoured race. You are like the Israelites in Egypt. “There was a thick darkness over all the land of Egypt three days : they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days ; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” (Exod. x. 22, 23.)

Churchman.—There is some truth in your remark. But what do you say concerning the very serious charges which are here in detail preferred against you and your system ? Which of the writer’s statements do you deny ?

Methodist.—The whole of them, without exception. But before we enter upon the discussion of the different questions, allow me to premise that I argue merely in defence of Methodism. I make no attack upon the Church, which I sincerely respect. You have never seen nor heard me in vestry meetings clamouring against Church-rates. You have never known me to refuse the payment of that impost, or even to withhold the Easter-dues, when they have been called for. Within the last few days even the pew-openers in the church have requested of me, Methodist as I am, the usual Christmas gratuity, which was cheerfully given. My opinion is that the principle on which the payment of Church-rates is at present refused by many people is unsound. They say that, because they do not attend the

religious services of the Church, they derive from it no benefit, and, therefore, should not be required to contribute towards its support. This position, I think, is untenable. If the Church is a means of even promoting morality in the community, I am greatly benefited by her influence, though I should never attend her services myself. Some of the people whom she has trained up in virtue and piety might otherwise have robbed my house, or knocked me on the head. For any thing that I can prove to the contrary, the Church has saved both my property and my life. Against the Church, as such, I have no hostility, and I offer no objection. To much of what your Clergyman has said in her favour I yield a cordial assent. If then I should sometimes retort his arguments, you will understand my meaning. I rebuke the slanderer of Methodism, and bid him look at home. He has supplied weapons which may be turned with terrible advantage against many things in the Church which he intended to support.

Churchman.—I perfectly understand your meaning. I know you too well, and have been too often connected with you in public affairs, ever to suspect you of hostility to the institutions of the country. This being conceded, I beg to ask how you meet the charge of novelty, which is the first that the pamphlet prefers against Methodism? “The church of Christ in England,” it is said, “took its *rise* in the *apostolical* times:” whereas “Methodism had its *origin* from John Wesley.”

Methodist.—I “meet the charge” by a flat denial; and fearlessly aver, that “Methodism had” not “its origin from John Wesley.” It is as old as Christianity; for it is Christianity itself. It was taught and practised in Jerusalem, Casarea, Antioch, and other places, before even the name of Christ was known in England. Methodism is the love of God, and of all mankind for his sake, expressing itself in all holiness, righteousness, truth, and benevolence. Its doctrines are those which the Apostles preached, and which are embodied in the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies of the Church of England; such as, the Godhead and atonement of Christ; the personality and influence of the Holy Spirit; the fall of man; justification by faith; the witness and fruit of the Spirit; the necessity of good works; the immortality of the soul; the resurrection of the dead; the endless duration of the happiness of the saints, and of the punishment of the wicked. The means which Methodism employs for the attainment of its holy objects are, the ministry of the Gospel, Christian fellowship, baptism, and the Lord’s supper, with the education of youth, the circulation of the Scriptures, &c. These things, I hope, are no novelties. He must be a bold man who will seriously maintain that they had their “*origin* from John Wesley, within the last century.”

Churchman.—But will not the remark hold good in regard to the peculiarities of your system? Your ministry, you know, is itinerant; and you hold private meetings.

Methodist.—You will not maintain, surely, that itinerant preaching had “its *origin* from John Wesley, within the last century.” Jesus Christ, the seventy disciples, and the twelve Apostles, were all travelling preachers. Timothy and Titus were the same. “From Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum,” St. Paul “fully preached the Gospel of Christ.” (Romans xv. 19.) Our private meetings, to which you referred, I shall show, in a subsequent part of our conversation, to be intimately connected with that spiritual and holy fellowship which formed an essential branch of primitive Christianity.

Churchman.—Of course, it is universally understood that Mr. Wesley appealed to the New Testament in support of his religious views. Nobody supposes that he came to his countrymen, professing to have received any new revelation from heaven. I know not, therefore, what our Clergyman can mean, when he talks of Methodism as having had its origin in the last century, and contrasts it with “the church of Christ in England,” which “took its rise in apostolical times.” Does he mean that Mr. Wesley, who was a regularly ordained Clergyman, taught a religion which has nothing to do with “the church of Christ?”

Methodist.—This part of his pamphlet appears to be a clumsy imitation of an old Popish trick. Ever since the Reformation, the Roman Catholics have been in the habit of saying to Protestants, “Where was your religion before Martin Luther?” Two good answers to this captious question are upon record. To a Romish Priest, who was urging this inquiry, a plain man is reported to have said, “Before Luther was born my religion was in the Bible, where yours never was.” Another is said to have proposed the counter question, “Where was your face this morning before it was washed?” If the writer of this pamphlet were to say to me, “Where was your religion before John Wesley?” I would say, “It was in the Bible. It was also in the Church of England; but had sadly declined, and exerted comparatively little influence upon the people generally.” His object was to revive the pure religion of the Reformation, and extend its benefits through all classes of the community. This was his crime. He disturbed the slumbers of those who were at ease; and this it appears they can never forgive.

Churchman.—This is your own view of Methodism. Have any other persons, who are not of your community, spoken of it as a revival of scriptural Christianity?

Methodist.—They have, in great numbers. The late Mr. Jones, of Nayland, who was one of the highest of High Churchmen, says, in his Life of Bishop Horne, that Methodism is Christian godliness without Christian order; that is, without the three orders of Ministers. Still, however, he confesses it to be Christian godliness. Dr. Chalmers says, that Methodism is “Christianity in earnest;” and the Bishop of London,

in one of his late Charges, says, that the Methodists have faithfully, though irregularly, preached the Gospel in many neglected districts of this country. Apply the assertion of your Clergyman to these concessions. "Methodism had its *origin* from John Wesley." Did Christian godliness then never exist till "John Wesley" began to preach? Was Christianity never in earnest till that period? Did "John Wesley" invent the Gospel which he and his coadjutors have faithfully preached?

Churchman.—It is in vain to defend this first charge. It involves the principle, that Methodism is not even a modification of Christianity; and that therefore its adherents are not Christians. A censure so harsh, when applied to millions of people, (for thus numerous the Methodists, I presume, have been in their successive generations,) who hold the essential verities of our holy religion, and give every possible proof of their sincerity, cannot be entertained; and I am grieved to find that my own Minister should, by implication at least, have given such just ground of offence. A Churchman, of course, must be allowed to think his own system the best; but he has no right thus to "judge another man's servant." To his own master he must stand or fall. If you please, we will pass on to the next charge. It is, that "Methodism is plainly a schism *in* a church and *from* a church, which is undeniably scriptural in its principles." How do you meet this allegation?

Methodist.—By an absolute negative. It is not true, as every reflecting man, who knows the facts of the case, must perceive. Methodism, in the sense now intended, is not "in the Church," and therefore cannot be "a schism" in it. Mr. Wesley and his first coadjutors were strict Churchmen, and it was his most anxious desire to promote the spiritual interests of the Establishment; but his services were indignantly rejected. The churches were closed against him, and he was compelled by a sense of duty to preach in the open air, and in chapels built by his own friends, in the most wicked and neglected districts of the country. The people who were reclaimed by his instrumentality he urged to attend the religious services of their parish churches, and especially the Lord's supper; but often when they went, they found themselves to be marked out for censure and vituperation from the pulpit; so that Mr. Wesley, with all his authority, could never induce his people in general to attend their several churches with regularity. Methodism brought them to the church, and the Clergy drove them away. So far was the Church from entertaining Methodism, as taught by Mr. Wesley, that two of the Bishops wrote against him, regardless even of the ordinary courtesies of scholarship; and many of the Clergy stimulated mobs to assail both him and his people. Methodism was thus rejected by the Church, and was compelled, contrary to the designs of its adherents, to assume an independent form. In that form it has now long existed. The Church has no connexion with the system, and no control over it; and therefore to talk of its being "a schism *in*

the Church" is palpably absurd. It is not in the Church, because the Church would not have it. Its doctrines are not generally entertained and taught there, as Mr. Wesley held them; and its discipline and order are altogether discarded. I mention not these things as matter of complaint. The Church had a right to determine whether it would have Methodism or not; and though its dignitaries and Clergy ought to have treated Mr. Wesley with greater justice and candour, yet I am inclined to think that Providence directed events to the right issue. The ever-active and enterprising spirit of Wesleyan Methodism would have ill accorded with the state and regularity of the Establishment. The two systems are best apart; and both are necessary to meet the spiritual and moral wants of the nation.

Churchman.—But you perceive that the sword of my Clergyman has two edges, and cuts both ways. He says that Methodism is a schism *from* a church, as well as *in* it.

Methodist.—Should you not rather say, that the writer of the pamphlet takes both sides of a contradiction? If his words mean any thing, they mean that Methodism is both *in* the Church and *out* of it; and is a schism both ways. The Methodists, you see, can do nothing right. They are very much in the situation of the miller, his son, and his ass. All they do subjects them to animadversion.

Churchman.—I confess your case appears somewhat hard; but then, if you have done wrong, you must endure the consequences. What do you say concerning the schism of separation?

Methodist.—I say, first, that no man has any scriptural authority for the use of such language. The word "schism" is never used in the New Testament in the sense of separation.

I say, secondly, that it is a mere begging of the question to say that, to separate from a church which is "*scriptural* in its principles is schism." A Church may be "*scriptural* in its principles," and very unscriptural and corrupt in its administration. The Presbyterian Churches of England were "*scriptural* in principle," with the exception of their Calvinism; but, like the same Churches in Switzerland, they are Socinian in fact. The Lutheran Churches of Germany are "*scriptural* in their principles;" yet many of the Clergy are as rank Infidels as ever were Tom Paine and David Hume. To separate from such Churches, I conceive, is the duty of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, notwithstanding their "*principles.*" It is undeniable, that, during the last century, when Methodism assumed its independent character, not a few of the English Clergy were immoral men; and Archbishop Secker himself charged many of them with not preaching in a manner sufficiently evangelical. Bishop Horsley, too, described some of them as "*the apes of Epictetus.*" This state of things, I conceive, caused and justified many instances of individual separation from the Church. In churches, as well as in persons, "*principles*" and practice are often sadly at variance.

I say, thirdly, that the great body of the Methodists of the present day never were "in the Church," in any just sense, and therefore have not separated from it. The fact is, that the population of the country has immensely outgrown the means of the Establishment; and there are hundreds of thousands of people for whose spiritual necessities she makes no adequate provision whatever. There are extensive districts where dense masses of people are ignorant of the very first principles of religion, and brutally wicked. They habitually break the Sabbath, and are seldom seen at any place of worship. It is from people of this description that the Methodist societies and congregations have been principally raised. Chapels have been erected in the midst of them; their children collected together in Sunday-schools; prayer-meetings have been opened; and the result is matter of notoriety. All the decencies and happiness of Christianity appear where discord, misery, and every evil work prevailed. The moral wilderness is become beautiful as the garden of the Lord. These people, it is said, are separated from the Church; and by attending the Methodist chapel are involved in the sin of schism. If they belonged to the Church, why did not the Church instruct and save them? They are separated from nothing but ignorance and sin. Modern orthodoxy mourns over these converted drunkards, swearers, and Sabbath-breakers, and condemns them to hell as schismatics; yet the New Testament declares that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Hard is the fate of a large proportion of the people of England. They are living in the practice of vices and crimes for which the Bible threatens them with damnation. The Church cannot, or will not, supply the means of their conversion. Methodism, by God's blessing, effects this in regard to many; and then warm Churchmen turn round upon them, charge them with the sin of schism in separating from the Church with which they were never, in fact, united, and endeavour to terrify these simple people with the prospect of future wrath.

The Methodist societies generally consist of this kind of people, with their descendants, and not of persons who were once regular and devout church-goers. There are, however, among them, doubtless, persons who were regular attendants at church; and these may with greater plausibility be charged with what is called "the schism of separation." Yet allow me to observe that such persons, if they have acted from conscientious motives, are clearly justifiable on the right of private judgment, which Christianity distinctly recognizes. You know that I am no friend to democracy; but I must and will contend for universal liberty of conscience. A man may tell me, that he is placed over me as my Pastor, and that it is a sin for me to attend any other ministry. I ask him if he can answer for me at the day of judgment. The Bible declares that every man must give an account of himself to God; and if this be the case, it is not only my right, but

my bounden duty, to attend that ministry, and use that form of divine worship, which I find to be most conducive to my edification in faith and love. There have been Clergymen whose ministry, I frankly confess, I could not conscientiously attend. Their sermons would have grieved and distressed me beyond endurance; and attendance at church would have been worse than a waste of the Sabbath. Such was that of a late Vicar of Broad-Hembury, who denied that man is a free agent; strenuously inculcated the doctrine of limited atonement, and absolute reprobation; and published the impious sentiment, that "God works all things in all men, even wickedness in the wicked." Such was that a late Clergyman in Manchester, who for half a century preached the foolish dreams of Baron Swedenborg, denying all personal distinction in the Godhead, and explaining Scripture in such a manner as to make it as bewildering as a magic lantern, in which ten thousand grotesque figures float before the eye. Had I absented myself from the ministry of these men, and gone to the Methodist chapel, to hear doctrines more accordant with my own views of divine truth, and they had charged me with the sin of schism, I would have pleaded the liberty wherewith Christ made me free, when he made me an accountable creature. The souls of men are not to be bartered like cattle in Smithfield. Whatever may be said of the sin of separation, it is no light sin to usurp authority over the consciences of men. The true use of an established Church, I apprehend, is to provide the means of religious instruction and worship for all who choose to avail themselves of it; and not to bind men to its services whether they find those services to be profitable or not.

Methodism, then, I contend, is not a schism *from* a church. It appeared as a revival of apostolical Christianity, attended by some peculiar circumstances, in the established Church. The Church cast it forth, and refused to entertain it; in consequence of which it was thrown upon its own resources, gradually assumed a distinct and definite form, and grew up by the side of the Establishment as an independent body. Men may call it "schism" and "separation;" but it stands before the world as a national blessing. It has turned hundreds of thousands of people from ignorance, wickedness, and impiety; and conducted them to Christ, and holiness, and heaven. Multitudes of the most respectable and exemplary church-goers in the present day received their first religious light and impressions, directly or indirectly, from Methodism. These persons far outnumber such pious and regular Church-people as have become stated attendants upon Methodist chapels.

Having, as I hope, satisfactorily, repelled the charge of schism, which your Clergyman has preferred against us, will you allow me, without offence, to retort upon himself what he has advanced upon this subject?

Churchman.—Most assuredly. He has shown no delicacy towards

you ; and I do not see why you should be put under any restraint in self-defence. I know that you will say nothing disrespectful of the Church itself, whatever you may think of some of its members.

Methodist.—I thank you for your candour. Allow me then to say, that, according to the New Testament, schism is not a separation from a church, but the prevalence of party-spirit in it. The Corinthians are charged with this sin, which St. Paul thus describes:—“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions (*σχισματα*) among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared to me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul ; and I of Apollos ; and I of Cephas ; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided ? was Paul crucified for you ? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul ?” (1 Cor. i. 10—13.) The schisms, or divisions, which the Apostle here censures were differences of opinion, connected with alienation of affection, among the members of the same church ; for the cure which St. Paul recommends is, that the people should “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment ;” and, as the result of this, that they should “all speak the same thing.” The schisms were in the church. Now I beg leave respectfully to ask, whether something of this kind does not at present prevail in the Church of England ? To say nothing of the laity, are all the Clergy “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment ?” Do they “all speak the same thing ?” Are there no “contentions” among them ? Is there not in the Church an “Orthodox party ?” an “Evangelical party ?” a “Millenarian party ?” Is there not also a “liberal party,” who make little account of orthodox Christianity, and of ecclesiastical order ? and a party so high in its notions of Church unity, as in effect to give up some of the essential principles of Protestantism ? If all the positions contained in the “Oxford Tracts” and the “British Magazine” be true, the Reformation was a sin, and the martyrs of Smithfield were insane. What mean the endless bickerings between the correspondents of “The Record,” and those of the “British Magazine ?” Why will Churchmen go out of their way to quarrel with their Methodist neighbours, who wish them no harm, and earnestly desire to live peaceably with all men ? According to your Clergyman, Methodism is both in the Church, and out of it, and a schism in both places. Will you have the goodness to ask him whether it is the only schism that has ever come under his notice ? When he has cured all the schisms at home, he will offer his services to the Methodists with a better grace.

Churchman.—I certainly shall question him respecting the statements which he has published. To me I confess they appear, not only

unkind, but unjust. Will you proceed to his third charge? which is this:—"The doctrines of Methodism are many of them undefined; so that the members of this system cannot know precisely what they believe, and stand manifestly exposed to the introduction of false heretical opinions from wicked and designing men." Do you deny this allegation too?

Methodist.—I do, most peremptorily; and I wonder how any Clergyman could have the indiscretion to moot such questions as are here suggested. It is asserted that "the doctrines of Methodism are *many of them* undefined;" and to prove this, *two* doctrines are adduced, which are pronounced unscriptural. Now, every body knows that *two* are not *many*. The two are justification and sanctification; and it must be conceded, that if the Methodists hold these doctrines as your Clergyman has described them, they are "undefined" indeed. Such a tissue of nonsense and absurdity was surely never before presented to the world. The statements which he has given, and which I defy any man upon earth fully to understand, are no more the doctrines of Methodism, than they are the doctrines of gravitation, or the dictates of Christian charity. The Methodist doctrine of justification is precisely that of the Church of England, and of Protestant Churches in general. To all that your Clergyman has said on this subject, as being the doctrine of the Church of England, I fully assent. It is Methodism exactly. Most cordially do we believe, that "we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings."

Churchman.—Will you specify the misrepresentations of the Methodist doctrine of which you complain?

Methodist.—It is misrepresentation throughout. The writer gives, for instance, a garbled extract from Mr. Wesley's Journal, copied from Dr. Southey; and then says, by way of answer to it, "Where are the texts of Scripture which make *believing* to consist entirely of *feeling*?" as if Mr. Wesley had asserted this absurdity. Whereas his words are, "I *felt* I did trust in Christ, and in Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sin, even mine, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." Now I presume that if Mr. Wesley had thought it possible for his Journal to fall into the hands of a reader who could not distinguish between believing, and a man's own consciousness of believing, he would have said, for the benefit of such a person, that believing is an act, and feeling is a sensation; and that, therefore, he did not intend, when giving this account of himself, to confound one with the other. Unhappily, Mr. Wesley never thought of such a reader; he has therefore omitted the explanation; and now, stands accused of heresy. I would fain set your Clergyman right upon this subject; and therefore take the liberty to suggest a few illustrations. I presume he sometimes *eats*, and *feels*

that he eats; yet eating implies something more than feeling. It implies an action of the jaw, of the tongue, and of the gullet, as well as a secretion of certain juices. He sometimes *walks*, and *feels* that he walks; yet walking is something more than feeling. It involves a motion of the legs, and perhaps sometimes a considerable swing of the arms, especially when he sees a Methodist, and thinks of his own superiority to that vile "schismatic."

Your Clergyman goes on to inquire, in reference to Mr. Wesley's words, "Where are the proofs of that which follows from this statement, that a man must *feel* himself to be pardoned, before he *is* pardoned?" Mr. Wesley's words imply just the contrary. He felt that he trusted in Christ; and then an assurance was given him that his sins were taken away. This is the plain and obvious meaning of his words. But if they had been ambiguous, a candid person would have endeavoured to ascertain the writer's meaning by a reference to other parts of his works, where he speaks upon the same subject. Had your Clergyman pursued this fair and honourable course, he would have saved himself from the disgrace of publishing a direct calumny, and me the pain of exposing it. Mr. Wesley has most explicitly disavowed the tenet here imputed to him. Hear his own words:—"The assertion, that justifying faith is a sense of pardon, is contrary to reason. IT IS FLATLY ABSURD. For how can a sense of our having received pardon be the condition of our receiving it?"*

Churchman.—You will observe that my Clergyman accuses you of holding "the doctrine of the assurance of forgiveness of sins, and of salvation, conveyed to the soul by the Holy Spirit, *sensibly, suddenly,* and *miraculously*, sometimes by a strong and sudden light shining from heaven; sometimes by a dream; sometimes by a strong impulse or feeling of the mind at some particular *moment*, or in some particular act; but always *suddenly*. Thus Wesley tells us, 'God doth now, as aforetime, give remissions of sin, and the gift of the Holy Ghost to us, and that *always suddenly*, as far as I have known, and often in dreams and visions of God.' Hampson's Life of Wesley, Vol. ii. p. 81." What do you say to all this?

Methodist.—I say that it is a specimen of as disgraceful misrepresentation as was ever palmed upon the world. "The assurance of salvation" is generally understood to be an assurance of final happiness; but the Methodists, so far from holding any such tenet, believe that even the best of men may fall into sin, and finally perish; and that they will thus fall, unless they live in constant watchfulness and prayer. On "the assurance of the forgiveness of sins," they simply believe what Bishop Pearson has expressed in the following words:—"It is the office of the Holy Ghost to assure us of the adoption of sons, to create in us a sense of the paternal love of God towards us, to give us an

* Wesley's Works, Vol. xii. p. 110. Third Edition.

earnest of our everlasting inheritance." "Dreams," "visions," "strong impulses," "sudden light from heaven," &c., are terms applied to this subject by their adversaries. The Methodists generally use no such language. Christians, you know, were formerly clad in the skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs. The truths of our common Christianity have often been presented in the most offensive garb, that both they and their professors might be alike shunned and despised. Whether men sustaining the sacred office should ever be employed in this vocation of infidelity is more than doubtful.

About the year 1738 the preaching of Mr. Wesley was attended by some remarkable physical effects, especially in the neighbourhood of Bristol. His own recorded opinion was, that some of the cases were purely natural; others were produced by diabolical agency; and others again, the result of strong religious convictions produced by the Spirit of God. He formed his judgment from the fruits which followed. He had indubitable proof, that persons who were affected in the singular manner which he has described were then effectually turned from the love and practice of sin to universal holiness. He knew that these cases would be urged against his ministry; but with a candour which cannot be too strongly admired, he published an exact description of what he had witnessed, leaving Christian men to judge of them as they pleased. But did he consider "dreams and visions" as necessarily connected with the conversion of men to God? or as even ordinary means of conversion? Never. Such things he declared, even then, to be in themselves of a doubtful nature. They rarely occurred in connexion with his preaching during the subsequent fifty years of his public life; and among the Methodists in general they are neither expected nor desired. We have in Mr. Wesley's own printed Journal his views of the importance to be attached to things of this kind. In preaching to a congregation near Bristol, in June 1739, "I told them," says he, "they were not to judge of the spirit whereby any one spoke, either by appearances, or by common report, or by their own inward feelings; no, nor by any dreams, visions, or revelations, supposed to have been made to their souls; any more than by their own tears, or any involuntary effects wrought upon their bodies. I warned them, all these were in themselves, of a doubtful, disputable nature: they might be from God, and they might not; and were therefore not simply to be relied on, any more than simply to be condemned; but to be tried by a farther rule; to be brought to the only test; the law and the testimony."* He has expressed himself to the same effect in various other parts of his writings. Now I would ask, Where is the candour of your Clergyman in passing over all Mr. Wesley's explanations, and in representing "dreams and visions" as forming an essential part of his doctrine of a sinner's justification before

* Wesley's Works, Vol. i. p. 206.

God? Is such a proceeding consistent with either justice, truth, or charity?

Churchman.—I cannot defend such conduct, and will not attempt it. Pray, who was Hampson, to whom the pamphlet refers?

Methodist.—He was the son of a Methodist Preacher, of the same name. He was educated by Mr. Wesley at Kingswood School; and for some time was himself a Preacher in the Wesleyan Connexion. In the year 1784 Mr. Wesley drew up the “Deed of Declaration,” constituting one hundred of his Preachers the legal Conference. The name of the elder Hampson was omitted in this document; in consequence of which both the father and the son left the Connexion. The young man obtained episcopal ordination, and became the Vicar of Sunderland. He drew up a libellous Life of Mr. Wesley, to whom he was under the deepest obligations, which he had ready for publication as soon as the remains of his benefactor and friend were placed in his coffin; and sent forth this work with all haste, to anticipate the public sentiment respecting this great man. His book is a sort of armoury, to which almost all the slanderers of Mr. Wesley have had recourse from that day to the present times. Hampson assumes the character of an indifferent spectator of Mr. Wesley and Methodism, and sometimes affects an ignorance of things which he well understood. The Methodists felt all this to be unkind. They were grieved that the memory of their venerated father was thus insulted; and they gave a most effectual rebuke to the man who had thus offended.

Churchman.—Pray, sir, what was the nature of that rebuke?

Methodist.—It was this. The father of the offender, who, as I have stated, had left the Methodists, was poor, and almost friendless; and they gave him the mastership of one of their schools; and the Methodist Preachers presented to him, out of a fund which they had raised for their own support in age and infirmity, an annual pecuniary donation as long as he lived.

Pray, sir, may I ask you one or two questions?

Churchman.—Certainly.

Methodist.—What would you think of a man who should write a book against the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, and instead of referring to the New Testament should take all his information from such authors as Hume, Voltaire, and Paine?

Churchman.—I should deem him a man of dishonest purpose.

Methodist.—And what would you think of another, who should write against the order and discipline of the Church of England, taking all his alleged facts and his reasonings from the works of avowed Dissenters, never looking into a book written by a Churchman, nor even referring to the Church’s own formularies?

Churchman.—I should deem him no better than the other. But what is your design in proposing these questions?

Methodist.—To make way for another; which is this:—What do

you think of the writer of the pamphlet now on the table, who, undertaking to lay before the world Mr. Wesley's views concerning the doctrine of justification, never refers to Mr. Wesley's own writings, but to the work of a personal enemy? and, instead of producing an extract which bears directly upon the subject, produces one which has no necessary connexion with it whatever? For if all the "dreams and visions" that were ever heard of in Methodism were mere delusions, the doctrine of justification, as taught by Mr. Wesley and his people, is as true as the Bible, from which it is deduced. On that point he differed not a hair's breadth from the Church to which he belonged; and the man who charges him with it is inexcusable.

Churchman.—If the writer of the pamphlet were a stranger, I should suspect him of dishonesty; but as he is my own Clergyman, I hope the best; yet exceedingly regret the manner in which he has laid himself open to suspicion. We will not discuss motives, but proceed, if you please, to the next doctrine, which you say he has misrepresented. It is thus stated:—"Perfect sanctification; or the doctrine, that through the agency of the Holy Ghost, absolute perfection is attainable in this world." Can you prove that this statement is incorrect?

Methodist.—I can; and I can prove, too, that the manner in which it is proposed is a violation of all controversial truth and fairness. It is here said to be Mr. Wesley's doctrine, "that through the agency of the Holy Ghost, ABSOLUTE PERFECTION IS ATTAINABLE AND IS ATTAINED IN THIS WORLD." Now Mr. Wesley, speaking of the people who have attained what he called Christian perfection, says, "They are not perfect in knowledge. They are not free from ignorance, no, nor from mistake. We are no more to expect any living man to be infallible, than to be omniscient. They are not free from infirmities, such as weakness, and slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such in another kind are impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. From such infirmities as these none are perfectly freed till their spirits return to God. Neither can we expect till then to be wholly freed from temptation; for 'the servant is not above his master.' But neither in this sense IS THERE ANY ABSOLUTE PERFECTION ON EARTH. There is no perfection of degrees, none which does not admit of a continual increase."*

Now, sir, does this pamphlet correctly report Mr. Wesley's doctrine, or does it not?

Churchman.—Certainly it does not. It attributes to him a tenet which he in so many words denies. You complained of the manner in which this mis-statement was introduced. To what did you refer?

* Wesley's Works, Vol. xi. p. 374.

Methodist.—I referred to this: That the writer of the pamphlet has placed in alleged opposition to Mr. Wesley's doctrine two extracts from the Articles of the Church of England, in which it is asserted that sin remains in regenerated persons, and that they may fall into actual transgression; as if Mr. Wesley opposed either of these positions. Whereas he published a sermon for the express purpose of proving the first point which it is here intimated he denied, entitled, "Sin in Believers;" and I believe no human being, till this pamphlet appeared, ever suspected him of supposing that Christians cannot fall into actual sin.

Churchman.—This, I confess, is not quite fair; but you have another difficulty yet to surmount. The pamphlet, you perceive, contains an extract from the second volume of Wesley's Hymns, which is intended to prove that the Methodists hold those strong views of perfection with which they are charged.

Methodist.—The "difficulty" you mention is not a very serious one; yet I approach the subject with pain. The insertion of that extract, in its present form, I consider one of the very worst things in this most offensive publication.

Churchman.—How so? Did not Mr. Wesley write what is there attributed to him?

Methodist.—He did write it, at an early period of his public life; but he soon perceived that it had been hastily composed, and he publicly retracted the strong expressions which it contains. He reprinted it in his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," and continued to publish it to the end of his life; but always with notes, explaining and softening what he acknowledged to be indefensible. Now the "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," and Mr. Wesley's Works, both of which contain the preface with the author's explanations, are constantly on sale, and may be every where obtained; whereas the volume in which the preface appears in its original and objectionable form is one of the scarcest of all Methodist books; yet even this can be brought forward when it is needed to fix a charge of heresy upon the Founder of Methodism. His views of Christian perfection are said to be erroneous. He has written hundreds of pages explaining and defending his real sentiments on the subject. All these are passed over in total silence; and part of a paraphrase which he had retracted is adduced to prove the charge! Is this the conduct which one Christian Minister ought to pursue towards a deceased brother? Is this heathen honesty? Yet the man who has done this concludes his pamphlet with the words, "Your affectionate Friend and Pastor." If "John Wesley" were as bad a man as Judas Iscariot, it would be wicked to use such means of vilifying him.

Churchman.—I regret the justness of your censure; and acknowledge that the charge of vagueness and indefiniteness against the Wesleyan theology has not been proved. May I ask you, what is the

fact, so far as your Ministers are concerned? Is there, in the body of Methodist Preachers, any thing approaching to a general unity of sentiment on the leading subjects of theology?

Methodist.—I will answer your question with all frankness. There is not merely something “approaching to a general unity of sentiment,” but that unity has long been attained; and it never was more complete than at the present day. Within the last few years there have been painful agitations in some of our societies, as you have heard; but they have had no relation to any doctrinal questions. A spirit of godless democracy attempted to subvert our pure discipline; but it was effectually resisted by the good sense and piety of the societies, co-operating with the Ministers. As ours is an itinerant ministry, any discrepancy in the doctrine of our Preachers would be instantly detected; but we have no such cases among us. On all the essential truths of Christianity, especially those which bear directly upon the salvation of men, the same doctrine is heard in all our chapels from Penzance to Inverness. The honest boast of Mr. Wesley is as applicable to our whole Connexion at this day, as it was at any former period:—“Where is there a body of people in the realm, who, number for number, so closely adhere to what our Church delivers as pure doctrine? Where are those who have approved and do approve themselves more orthodox, more sound in their opinions? Is there a Socinian or Arian among them all? Nay, were you to recite the whole catalogue of heresies enumerated by Bishop Pearson, it might be asked, Who can lay any one of these to their charge?”*

And now that I have answered your inquiry, may I ask you what is the state of things in the established Church, of which you are a member, in regard to theological opinion? Are the Clergy generally of one mind and one judgment on all the leading truths of Christianity? Are the same doctrines preached in all the churches throughout the land?

Churchman.—I confess I did not expect to have this question proposed to me. And yet it is perfectly fair; for I have proposed a similar question to you; and my own Clergyman has instituted a comparison between the Church and Methodism on this very point. He says that the advantage is altogether on our side; but this I am not prepared to prove. The Clergy certainly do not all preach the same doctrines. Some are highly Calvinistic; others are moderately so; and not a few are in the opposite extreme. The theology, learned and orthodox, which emanates from the book-establishment of the Messrs. Rivington, in St. Paul’s Church Yard, differs not a little from the Genevan and Millenarian literature which the Messrs. Seeley send forth from Fleet Street. The theology of the “British Critic,” and of the “Christian Remembrancer,” is not the theology of the “Christian

* Works, Vol. viii., p. 205.

Observer," nor of the "Christian Guardian." If the Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford has been perfectly orthodox in all his publications, I can only say that he has been very ill used ; for sad complaints have been raised against him ; yet he is the instructor of many of our rising Clergy.

Methodist.—I thank you for your candour. The tone of doctrine in the established Church has been vastly improved within the last few years ; and I have no doubt will improve. In this no one rejoices more sincerely than myself ; but not while you or I live will the Church present that unity in the faith of which Methodism sets the example. The absurdity of comparing them together, on this head, and claiming the palm for the Church, would provoke the smile of a stoic.

There is one passage in the pamphlet, relating to this subject, which seems to excel all the rest in folly. It is this. Speaking of the doctrines of the Church, which are "solemnly recorded in her articles and homilies," the writer says, "THEY HAVE NOT BEEN, AND CANNOT BE CONTROVERTED." Is it ignorancce, or is it recklessness of truth, that makes him write in this manner ? Why, all the doctrines of the Church, being the doctrines of orthodox Christianity, have been "controverted" by Deists and Socinians, as every body knows. And it cannot be denied, that nearly all the doctrines of the Church have, in fact, been "controverted" by her own Clergy. Bishop Taylor wrote against original sin ; Bishop Bull, against justification by faith ; Dr. Samuel Clarke, against the proper Divinity of the Son and Spirit of God ; Dr. Burnet, of the Charterhouse, against the eternity of future punishment ; Dr. Dodd, against the opinion that there is any sin in regenerate persons ; Bishop Watson, by his unqualified recommendation of the works of Dr. John Taylor to the younger Clergy, attacked the doctrine of atonement for sin, and that of the Holy Spirit's influence ; and there are living Clergymen of eminence whose writings declare, —in opposition to the "solemn" avowal of their own Church, that the souls of them that depart hence in the Lord are in joy and felicity,—that those souls are all fast asleep, and will never awake to either "joy" or "felicity" till the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.

Churchman.—If you please, we will proceed to the next charges, which relate to fact, and may be decided without discussion. Of the Methodists it is said, "No Scripture is enjoined to be read in their public services. The person officiating is not required to read a single chapter : this is sometimes done, sometimes omitted." "No form of prayer is enjoined or used." Is this true or not ?

Methodist.—"True !" It has not the semblance of truth. Here are the Minutes of Conference, containing the solemn engagement entered into between that body and the societies under their care, in the year 1795. Read the passage with your own eyes.

Churchman.—"THE LORD'S SUPPER SHALL BE ALWAYS ADMINIS-

TERED IN ENGLAND, ACCORDING TO THE FORM OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH: but the person who administers shall have full liberty to give out hymns, and to use exhortation and extemporary prayer.

“WHEREVER divine service is performed in England, on the Lord’s day, in Church-hours, the officiating Minister SHALL READ EITHER THE SERVICE OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH, OUR VENERABLE FATHER’S ABRIDGMENT, or, at least, THE LESSONS APPOINTED BY THE CALENDAR. But we recommend either the FULL SERVICE, or the ABRIDGMENT.”

Methodist.—These are among the most sacred rules of the Connexion; and they convict of gross untruth the writer of the pamphlet before us.

Churchman.—I regret to say that they do. The rules are clear enough, and absolute; but are they observed? What is the practice?

Methodist.—As far as my knowledge extends, and that knowledge is not very limited, the rules are strictly observed. But I will put the matter upon a short issue. You shall attend any of the chapels where our regular Ministers officiate on the forenoon of any Lord’s day you please; and if you do not find either the Liturgy or the Lessons read, I will forfeit five pounds. I will procure for you a note of admission to the Lord’s supper, in any of our chapels you please to attend; and if you do not find that ordinance administered according to the form of your own Church, I will forfeit five pounds more. The ten pounds thus obtained, I further propose shall be applied in aid of the circulation of this vile pamphlet.

Churchman.—I will certainly accept your offer of attending the religious services you mention. The information which I have this evening received concerning your body has created in my mind a feeling in its favour. Having, however, the fullest confidence in your veracity, I have no expectation of receiving the money you mention; and if I were to receive it, I should be sorry to apply it to any such purpose as that you specify. I have seen enough of the pamphlet to be satisfied that its general statements are unworthy of credit. My hands shall never be employed in its distribution.

Methodist.—The Methodists seldom or never read the holy Scriptures in their public religious services! never use a form of prayer, either in their general religious assemblies, or in the administration of the sacraments! and have no rule, enjoining either one or the other! Why half a million of people in England, from their own personal knowledge, would contradict the impudent falsehood!

Allow me here to remark, that the writer of this pamphlet either is acquainted with the rules and usages of the Methodist body, or he is not. If he is acquainted with them, what shall we think of his veracity, when he makes the statement now before us? If he is not acquainted with them, what shall be said of his modesty, and respect for the public, when he takes upon himself to write and dogmatize on subjects which he knows he has never examined?

Churchman.—The rule you have actually shown me. The fact of its observance or neglect I will soon ascertain by my own senses. The pamphlet, I observe, accuses Mr. Wesley of leaving out some of the Psalms in his abridgment of the Book of Common Prayer. If this statement is correct, what do you suppose was his design?

Methodist.—Mr. Wesley has stated his reason for this; and a candid opponent would have adverted to it, and not have intimated by his silence that Mr. Wesley was actuated by caprice, or some bad motive. He thought that the imprecations which occur in some of the Psalms are not suited to Christian worship. Those imprecations, he well knew, are capable of a satisfactory explanation; but the explanations usually given are not generally known to the common people; and to habituate them to invoke curses upon their enemies is not to the use of edifying. These were Mr. Wesley's views. He might be mistaken; for he never laid claim to infallibility; but at all events his reason ought to have been given. The omission of this, when a serious charge was brought against him, can never be reconciled with that justice which is due from man to man. Your Clergyman, I perceive, on this subject, quotes Archbishop Magee, who, in his eagerness to criminate Mr. Wesley, overstepped the bounds of truth. He was answered by the late Rev. Edward Hare, who convicted his Grace of various mis-statements. The Archbishop was very angry; but he had the candour to cancel one or more leaves of his book. I perceive your Clergyman says nothing on this subject.

Churchman.—I suppose it did not suit his purpose. Why Mr. Wesley should be severely condemned for omitting in the public service such Psalms as he thought unfit for that purpose, I cannot conceive; when there are passages in the canonical Scriptures which our own Church omits of set purpose. I perceive that the quotation from Magee is followed by one from the Rev. John Angell James, to prove that the ministrations of the Methodist Preachers are “a heap of dulness.”

Methodist.—Yes; and the proof is very curious. Mr. James is a Calvinistic Independent; and he is describing, not the public religious services of any class of Ministers whatever, but the prayer-meetings of his own community. Now, how the dulness of a Dissenting prayer-meeting proves the incompetency of a Methodist Preacher to conduct the worship of God in an edifying manner, it would require a wiser man than your Clergyman to show. This is a new edition of the old tale concerning Tenterden steeple, and the Goodwin sands. A hackney-coachman would laugh at such logic as this.

Churchman.—And very justly, I confess. But what have you to say concerning the next two charges which are preferred against the whole body of your Ministers? They are these:—“No bond of union exists among the Methodists, between Ministers and people. The flock have no shepherd; the shepherd has no stated flock. He itine-

rates from place to place, knowing nothing of the people amongst whom he goes, either as it regards their spiritual knowledge, or their personal attainments." "No sick among the Methodists are regularly visited by the Minister. Appalling as the fact is, it will be found, on inquiry, that the sick, even of their own community, are rarely visited by their own Ministers."

Methodist.—These are serious allegations. Let us see whether they can be proved. How many Wesleyan Ministers do you think there are in Great Britain?

Churchman.—I am unable to conjecture.

Methodist.—There are eight hundred and sixty-eight, besides one hundred and thirty Supernumerary and Superannuated Ministers. A large proportion of these men are married, and have children. Now, how do you think they and their families are supported?

Churchman.—By the voluntary contributions of the societies, I understand.

Methodist.—Exactly so. Our Ministers have no tithes; no glebelands; no Queen Anne's bounty; and they want none. They and their families are supported by the societies, whose free contributions are presented both weekly and quarterly for this object. The members of society in Great Britain are two hundred and ninety-three thousand one hundred and thirty-two. Now I would ask any man of ordinary capacity, whether it is probable that nearly three hundred thousand people would unite permanently to support a thousand Ministers, when "no bond of union," either civil or religious, "existed between" the parties? If "*twelve or thirteen sermons are a sufficient stock for a Methodist Preacher;*" if even these "*are very meagre, and have a great sameness;*" if the "*Methodists, as a body, must necessarily be ill-taught, ill-fed, and never built up on our most holy faith;*" and if their Ministers are so indifferent to the spiritual interests of the societies, as to treat them with almost total neglect, both in health and sickness;—all of which things your Clergyman positively declares;—I ask, in the name of common sense, why their people thus support them? The absurdity of all this is increased, when it is recollected that, according to the writer of this pamphlet, the established Church is all perfection. Its doctrines are so true, that they were never "controverted;" its ministry and order, "apostolical;" and all its services just what they ought to be. The Methodist societies and congregations support, at a vast expense, a ministry from which they derive no benefit, and for which they can have no respect! and they neglect a ministry which gratuitously offers them the highest religious advantages! The man who can believe all this, had he been in London about the middle of the last century, would certainly have paid his shilling to see a conjuror cork himself up in a quart bottle. Yet your Clergyman has written all this wise intelligence; and the "*British Magazine*" calls upon the Clergy and people of England to

unite to give it circulation. Mercy on us! whatever will become of Methodism? It must be shivered to atoms, like the French fleet under the operation of Nelson's cannon, by the force of such argument as this!

Churchman.—If you have no objection, Sir, we will conclude our conversation. The evening is considerably advanced; and, to confess the truth, I am weary of the subject. Direct falsehood, and palpable absurdity, meet us at every step. Of all vices, that of lying is, in my account, the most hateful and disgusting; particularly the Antinomianism of lying for God and religion. Never, I trust, shall I forget the impression made upon my mind in early life, by that fine summary of moral duty, contained in the Catechism of our own Church, in which I was taught, while I “keep my hands from picking and stealing,” to “keep my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering.”

Methodist.—I regret to say that I cannot accede to your proposal. I consented to engage in this conversation at your request; and therefore have a right to require that the whole subject shall be reviewed. Besides, it would be unjust to your Clergyman not to hear him out. The pamphlet is an ugly toad; but we may find a jewel in dissecting its head.

Churchman.—I will then read the last charge against you. It is this:—“Many of the practices of the Methodists are opposed to Scripture, foster pride and party-spirit, tend to enslave the people, and promote self-conceit and hypocrisy.” You perceive the writer's spirit does not at all soften. He endeavours to substantiate the several parts of this charge by referring to lay preaching; the preaching of women; and the institution of class and band-meetings. I shall be glad to hear your remarks upon these subjects.

Methodist.—I could say much concerning them; but at present my observations shall be brief. The word “layman” is one of the most ambiguous terms in theology; and is therefore exactly suited to such writers as this pamphleteer. It denotes “one of the people;” a man who is not in the Christian ministry. To decide who is a “layman,” it is necessary to ascertain who is a true Minister of the Lord Jesus. The Church of Rome contends that this is the exclusive character of her hierarchy; and there is not a Popish Priest who would not boldly pronounce every Protestant Clergyman in England, from the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the humblest Curate, a mere “layman,” unable to administer the true sacraments of the church; a usurper, whose ministrations are “unauthorized” and “irregular.” A high Episcopalian, like the writers of the “Oxford Tracts,” contends that all are “laymen” who have not received ordination from a Bishop, in what is called the true line of “succession from the Apostles.” In this sense I suppose it is, that the writer of the pamphlet before us uses the word, when he calls the Methodist Ministers “laymen.” But then, to be consistent with himself, he must for the same reason pronounce all those persons “laymen” who have only received Presbyterian ordination. And this is the case with all the Ministers of the Church of Scotland; with the

Ministers of the Reformed Churches of Holland, France, and Switzerland; and with a large proportion of the Lutheran Clergy. To be placed in such company, can be a dishonour to no man, and to no body of men. The Wesleyan Ministers are "separated to the Gospel of God" from all secular employments. After due trial they have received their appointment from men who were in the ministry before them; and that with the full concurrence of the societies over whom they sustain the pastoral office. With this appointment both they and their people are justly satisfied. Your Clergyman says that every Minister in our body is a "layman;" and the same compliment is paid to himself by every Popish Priest that he happens to meet.

Leaving these grave men to settle their dispute, I would observe that there are, I fear, more "irregular and unauthorized teachers" in the world than many people imagine. Jesus Christ knew that they would arise in every age; and he has warned his disciples against them. His words are these: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. (Matt. vii. 15—20.) By this test I am quite willing that the credentials of our Ministers should be tried. If their spirit and conduct are Christian, and their ministry is a means of turning men from the love and practice of sin to scriptural holiness, however they may be at present slandered, they evidently labour under a higher sanction than man can give; and to "speak all manner of evil against them falsely," may prove a more serious offence than some people seem to think. At all events, the words of our Lord clearly prove, that no human sanction can make a bad man a true Minister of Christ. Whatever hands may have planted "a corrupt tree;" whatever may be the root from which it sprang; and by whatever fine names it may be called; it is "a corrupt tree" still; and will, ere long, be "cast into the fire."

"Another unscriptural practice" of the Methodists, your Clergyman says, "is the suffering of females to hold forth publicly, sometimes by preaching, sometimes by prayer, to the display of vanity in weak and silly minds, and contrary to the express commands of Almighty God." We did not need any admonitions from this quarter against female preaching. It never was generally countenanced among the Methodists; and the wisest and best men in the body consider it to be expressly forbidden in Scripture. If your Clergyman wishes to have a dispute on this subject, let him assail our good friends the Quakers. The Methodist body will not defend the practice. To deny Christian women the right to instruct their own sex in private meetings, and to pray with

them, are very different questions. These acts are not prohibited in Scripture, and are clearly justifiable on various grounds. To such efforts as these, the cause of Christianity has often been greatly indebted. The pamphleteer, you will observe, quotes St. Paul just as he would quote Mr. Wesley; leaving out what would disprove his allegation. To prove that women should do nothing in the communication of divine truth, he gives the Apostle's words thus: "I suffer not a woman to teach." (1 Tim. ii. 12.) Hence we are left to infer that St. Paul would not even suffer a woman to teach her own children, or to take part in any conversation on religious subjects, for the purpose of conveying instruction to others. Whereas St. Paul's words, when fairly quoted, bear a very different meaning. They are, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." An excellent Christian lady, Priscilla, united with her husband in expounding to the eloquent Apollos "the way of God more perfectly" than he had before known it; (Acts xviii. 26;) and who dares to say that in this she committed a sin, or violated any command of Almighty God? May not pious and sensible women teach children of their own sex in Sunday-schools, and similar institutions? Whatever the author of this pamphlet may think to the contrary, I have no hesitation in saying, that there are thousands of women in the Methodist societies from whose "teaching" he might derive immense advantage. They could "teach" him many things which he has evidently yet to learn, especially on subjects of moral duty, and the courtesy and truth which Christians owe to one another.

Class-meetings and band-meetings form the last subjects of charge and invective in the pamphlet. These, it is presumed, are productive of the worst possible consequences. They are said to "furnish to a deceitful and desperately wicked heart an opportunity, which it will not fail in many cases to embrace, of assuming a mock humility in the confession of sins which are not forsaken, or of making highly excited professions, either of *self-loathing*, or of *perfect love*, which are not borne out by a correspondent practice in the life. Thus the weak are offended; the serious disgusted; and a holy heart-searching God is mocked in his own temple."

I am glad we did not break off the conversation when you proposed. You see we have found the jewel at last! It is difficult for men that write against truth to preserve any thing like consistency in their statements. The pamphleteer represents the Methodists as corrupt both in principle and practice, as far from scriptural Christianity as hell is from heaven. Yet it turns out that not only the Methodist chapel, but even the Methodist class-room, is God's "own temple." Ay, and so it is; consecrated by His presence, manifested to his sincere and spiritual worshippers, and making it to them the very "gate of heaven." "This witness is true." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

As to the character and moral tendency of these meetings, allow me just to say: They are no novelties, nor speculations. They have been practised by hundreds of thousands of religious people, and for nearly a century. The universal result is, that the more devout and spiritual, the more holy and circumspect, the members of the Methodist societies are, the more they prize and recommend these meetings; and in proportion as they become worldly in their temper, lukewarm in their affections, and irregular in their moral conduct, they dislike them, and absent themselves from them.

Churchman.—You deny, then, that these meetings are productive of evil consequences?

Methodist.—Most distinctly. On this subject I appeal to the whole English nation. Who are the men that crowd our prisons; that are sent in shoals to our penal settlements; that die by the hand of the public executioner? Are they Methodists, or are they not? Has Methodism exerted no influence upon the morals of general society? Has it done nothing for the established Church itself? Hear Bishop Jebb on this subject. The following is his own testimony, quoted from his *Life* just published:—

“With all its alloy, I conceive there is much pure gold in Methodism. I soberly believe that it has been the providential means of reviving and diffusing, far beyond its own sphere, that inward, spiritual religion which is diffused through our liturgy, but which had been, before John Wesley’s rise, almost entirely banished from our pulpits by the cold, rationalizing, spiritless system of morals which came in fashion about the Restoration, and reached its acmé about the middle of the last century. The higher tone of morals, and the more exalted feeling of Christianity as a spiritual system, which is now, I think, rapidly gaining ground amongst the philosophic Divines of our Establishment, I cannot but attribute to the indirect operation of Methodism.”

“It has to my certain knowledge been productive of much advantage among the lower orders; not only increasing their piety; but, in very many instances, opening their understanding, and civilizing their manners.”

“Certain it is that this system has been permitted to spread widely, and operate powerfully, and, in most instances, advantageously.”

“Valuable as his (Mr. Wesley’s) life and labours have been in their influence upon his own immediate followers, and especially among the lower classes of society, I am far from thinking those results either the most important or the most perfect consequences of Wesleyan Methodism. At the very commencement, he and his brother thought that the chief providential purpose of the association which they formed within the Church, was to excite, in the Church itself, a spirit of emulation. That purpose has already been substantially obtained; and I am convinced that multitudes both in and out of holy orders, who

know little more than the name of Wesley and of Methodism, have indirectly imbibed the best principles of his writings. Methodism, in a word, has been a powerful resuscitation."

Churchman.—I observe that your class and band-meetings are spoken of as tyrannical. The pamphlet says, in regard to them, "Surely this is worse tyranny than that of the Pope at Rome!"

Methodist.—This is only an additional specimen of that headlong, neck-or-nought mode of writing of which the entire pamphlet is a perfect specimen. Why do people join the Methodist societies, but for the spiritual advantages which those societies present; among which are those of class-meetings? If a man does not like these, he can leave them whenever he pleases. He cannot be made to submit to the Methodist discipline a day longer than he chooses. The same remark will apply to band-meetings. Attendance upon these is not even a term of membership. Methodism offers certain religious advantages to all who choose to accept them; but it is armed with no power of compulsion, and therefore leaves every man to decide for himself. This is the sum total of the "tyranny" in question, which is deemed to be so extremely hideous and frightful, as even to be compared with that of the Pope. The most amusing thing connected with this "tyranny" is, that the people who endure it would consider the removal of it the greatest calamity. The amount of this alleged "tyranny" is, that people may do just as they please. Poor Methodists! how many people wish to free you from the yoke of that discipline which you feel to be your glory and happiness!

Churchman.—The pamphlet represents class and band-meetings as unscriptural. You Methodists think much of their utility; but do you think that they are sanctioned by the word of God?

Methodist.—We do; and we think further, that, without these meetings, or others of a similar kind, neither the "communion of saints" can be realized, nor some branches of Christian duty fully discharged. A few texts of holy writ will explain my meaning. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." (Mal. iii. 16.) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. iii. 16.) "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." (1 Thess. v. 11.) "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. iii. 12, 13.) "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one

another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." (Heb. x. 25.) "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." (James v. 16.) These passages, with many others, we think, prove that Christians ought to cherish an affectionate desire for each other's spiritual improvement, and promote that improvement by mutual prayer and exhortation. If these duties can be more effectually discharged than by means of regular meetings for the purpose, we should be glad to be informed on the subject.

Churchman.—I find a note at the foot of page 9, in which it is said, "In these meetings the members receive a ticket, on which is written, 'Steadfastness,' *i. e.*, steadfastness in attending class-meetings," &c. Is this true?

Methodist.—No, sir, it is not. There is not a word of truth in it. The members of the society receive a ticket, which is renewed every three months. On this ticket is printed some text of holy Scripture; but nothing is "written" upon it except the name of the person to whom it is given, and in some cases the initials of the name of the man that gives it. No such ticket as the note describes is given, either "in these meetings," or in any other place. While the writer was using his powers of invention, I marvel that he did not hit upon something more bold and ingenious. It was said of the primitive Christians, that they murdered little children, and assembled in private meetings to eat them. Why did not "your affectionate Friend and Pastor" publish something of this kind? It would have made an impression. If he thought such a statement too shocking to be credited, he might have said, that Mr. Wesley taught his people to practise what Joseph saw in his dream; and that they meet together to "worship the moon and eleven stars;" or that, like witches, they say their prayers backwards. Why did he not invent something that would serve people to talk about?

Churchman.—You ought rather to say, "Why did he not altogether hold his peace?" As Job says, "It would have been his wisdom." Supposing Mr. Wesley and his people to be Turks and Heathens, no man has a right to publish falsehoods respecting their creed and usages.

Methodist.—Certainly not. The writer of the pamphlet is not at all nice in charging "hypocrisy" upon the Methodists; but what is to be thought of a man who, standing up as the mouth of a Christian congregation, reads, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour;" joins in the prayer, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law;" and then goes from the sacred desk into his study, where he writes a pamphlet full of "false witness," not against one or two neighbours, but against thousands of Christian people, who give every proof of their uprightness, and neither wish him nor his Church any harm? Talk of "hypocrisy!" what is this?

Churchman.—We live in strange times. The world seems to be turned upside down since you and I were boys.

Methodist.—So it does. Extremes meet. The most violent men, in the most opposite parties, unite in the same object. The “*Eclectic Review*,” and the “*Congregational Magazine*,” vie with each other in vilifying the Methodists, because we will not unite with Infidels, Papists, revolutionists, and others, in a general movement against the Church. Mr. R. M. Beverley is indignant at us, and has just poured the contents of his soot-bag upon us, and slapped his black brush in our faces. He is joined in his dirty work with hearty good-will, and for a directly opposite purpose, by your own Clergyman in the pamphlet before us. It is difficult to say which of these two persons excels the other in all the things of which Christian men ought to be ashamed.

Churchman.—I am concerned for the Editor of the *British Magazine*, who has made himself responsible for the contents of this publication, by calling upon the Clergy and laity of England to combine for its circulation wherever Methodism prevails. This was a sad oversight; for to call upon such men to distribute a pamphlet which is full of absurdities and untruths must be mortifying to an honourable mind.

Methodist.—I agree with you. The Editor of the *British Magazine* is a gentleman and a scholar, and a man that fears God. He has insulted the Clergy of his own Church, by attempting to connect them with a pamphlet which an honest Heathen would blush to own. Ἰκανὸν τῷ ποιῶντι ἡ ἐπιτιμία αὐτῆ ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πλειόνων. The depth of his sorrow will be ascertained by his future conduct.

Churchman.—Is it your opinion, that any evil consequence will result from the publication of this pamphlet, and the unqualified recommendation of it by the “*British Magazine*?”

Methodist.—This is unavoidable. It will wound in the tenderest part many sincere friends of the Church. But the worst is, it will strengthen the cause of revolution. If the Editor of the “*British Magazine*” should find the Clergy tardy in the distribution of this pamphlet, there is an agency that will doubtless circulate it to his heart’s content, but for a purpose very different from that which he contemplates. The members of Anti-Church Rates Societies will be glad to carry it to the houses of the Methodists; and comment upon it at public Meetings; and then appeal to their Wesleyan neighbours, whether it is not high time to set the parochial authorities at defiance, and refuse all payments in behalf of a Church, some of whose Clergy, at least, thus treat them with contumely and abuse, and hold them up to public reprobation. I will not answer for the consequences of such appeals. If “oppression maketh a wise man mad,” false charges will sometimes provoke even a religious man’s resentment. Moses himself was made angry oftener than once. Certain I am, that the bitterest enemy of the Church of England could not at this day do her a greater injury, than to carry out the suggestion of the “*British Magazine*,” by spreading this wicked

pamphlet through those districts of the country where the Methodist societies and congregations are the most numerous. I shall not be at all surprised, if the worst parts of it be reprinted in some of the principal towns of the kingdom, with inflammatory calls upon the Methodists to join the democratic movement which threatens to overthrow the best institutions of the country. The men who are the direct cause of all this mischief, should it ensue, must be answerable for the consequences of their own intemperate zeal. That the Church contains rash and indiscreet men, who ought not to be considered as her representatives, is freely acknowledged; but why do not sensible and moderate men come forward, and disclaim such publications as this infamous pamphlet? It has been advertised again and again, and thus forced upon public attention. It has been placed in the window of one of the most respectable book-shops in London, and in one of the principal thoroughfares, to catch the eye of passengers. But where is the Churchman that has censured the insufferable nuisance?

In the mean while Methodism will pursue its allotted course, abused by violent men on both sides; yet breathing good-will to all; and aiming simply to turn men from sin to Christ. It will leave others to dispute about what is called "the apostolical succession," "the true church," and kindred subjects; and assuming that all who die in their sins will perish eternally, wherever they may worship, and to whatever Church they may belong, it will still maintain that "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Impressed with a conviction that Christianity is a divine and an inward principle, the life of God in the soul of man, the religion not of forms, and opinions, and ceremonies, but of holy love, and universal benevolence, it will be satisfied with nothing less than the bringing of all men to live, and love, and pray, as the Christians did in the apostolical times. It is essentially conservative of all that is good and venerable, and opposed to Popery and the popular atheistical democracy, as containing in themselves the elements of all evil. It would fain live in peace and harmony with good men of all denominations; but if this cannot be, the will of the Lord be done. Its motto is, "Through good report, and through evil report, as deceivers and yet true;" and it must at all events, and at all hazards it must, spread that "kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

THE END.

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