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AIDS TO TRUTH AND CHARITY:

A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

“WILLIAM FITZGERALD, D.D., BISHOP OF CORK,
CLOYNE, AND ROSS.”

BY THOMAS JACKSON.

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AIDS TO TRUTH AND CHARITY:

A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

“WILLIAM FITZGERALD, D.D., BISHOP OF CORK,
CLOYNE, AND ROSS;”

BEING

A VINDICATION

OF

JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY, GEORGE WHITEFIELD,
AND THEIR PEOPLE,

AGAINST HIS CENSURES, CONTAINED IN A VOLUME ENTITLED,
“AIDS TO FAITH;” “EDITED BY WILLIAM THOMSON, D.D.,
LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.”

BY THOMAS JACKSON.

Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?—2 Samuel ii. 26.

LONDON:

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

1862.

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A LETTER,

&c.

MY LORD,

IT will no doubt excite your surprise, and perhaps your indignation, to be thus publicly addressed ; but you have freely pronounced what I conceive to be unjust censures upon a body of Christian people to whom I have the happiness and honour to belong, and have treated with marked disrespect the memory of men whom I have been taught to venerate, and to whose faithful and self-denying labours, I, in common with millions, am under the greatest obligations ; I therefore, as a man, as a British subject, and a professor of Christ's religion, claim the right of self-defence and of remonstrance. I trust that I shall always be prepared "to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters ;" but when "my betters" forget what is due to their own character and position, so as to violate the laws of charity and truth, they look so much like other men, that one's reverence for them is unavoidably abated ; and it sometimes becomes even a duty to withstand them to the face, and endeavour to neutralize the evil which their misdoings are calculated to produce. Such a case, I conceive, has now occurred with respect to your Lordship.

I confess, my Lord, that, in common with religious people in general, I have viewed with dismay the publication of a volume of essentially infidel charac-

ter, written for the most part by Clergymen of the Church of England;—a volume which contains passages far worse than anything that Gibbon ever wrote;—a volume which not only denies some of the most important elements of catholic truth, but openly and avowedly contradicts the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, and is obviously intended to bring the holy Scriptures into disrepute. Many answers to this mischievous volume have appeared; but one answer, which was understood to possess a sort of official character, has for some time been eagerly expected and desired. It has at length been sent forth under the title of “Aids to Faith;” and is the joint production of eight Clergymen, two of whom are Prelates, and among whom are some of the ablest and most honoured men of the present times. The second Essay in this volume of “Aids” is supplied by your Lordship; but a part of what you have written, I regret to say, is, in my apprehension, a serious drawback to the value of the work. It reminds one irresistibly of Eccles. x. 1; it has given just offence to many persons who are as sincere friends to revealed truth as your Lordship; and, whatever “aid” it may afford to a certain kind of “faith,” it affords none to “the faith of the Gospel.”

And here allow me to say, in all sincerity, that a Bishop of the United Church of England and Ireland is one of the very last persons with whom I should choose to come into collision. Though not myself in immediate connexion with that Church, I have long regarded it with deep respect, and believed its maintenance and healthy Protestant action to be essential to the national welfare. I have no sympathy with those who desire its separation from the State, or the diminution of its true and legitimate power. My

sentiments on these subjects are not the result of early education, but of extensive reading, and of observation, prosecuted through a long life. I have done what I could, for many years, to promote a good understanding between the Wesleyan body and the Church of England; but have been sadly thwarted by such outbreaks of intolerance as that of which I now complain. I make these statements, while at the same time I am far from pledging myself to a belief of every expression contained in her formularies, and still farther from accepting all that is delivered from her pulpits. Her true strength, I conceive, lies in her working Clergy; the men who preach the truth with earnestness and fidelity; who promote scriptural education in their parishes; who visit the sick, are the friends of the poor, and the kind advisers of all who are in trouble. Many of these men are ill-paid; but the nation appreciates their services, and a reward awaits them in another world. Yet the Established Church has never met all the religious and moral wants of the community; and therefore other Christian agencies, I conceive, are not only desirable, but necessary, and worthy of all encouragement.

I am free also to confess my deep sympathy with the men who have come forward, in the present emergency of the Church's affairs, to defend the Bible and its leading doctrines against the assaults which have been made upon both by persons who have violated their own solemn pledges, given when they entered into the sacred office. The men who have contributed to the volume with which your name is connected have my cordial thanks, as well as the writers of other volumes which have appeared on the same side; and by no class of people would the

“Aids to Faith” have been more cordially received, than by the Methodists, had they been treated with even ordinary civility and candour.

Without any further preface, I will frankly tell you that I complain of three things with respect to that part of your Essay which relates to Methodism.

I complain, first, that the substance of what you have advanced on this subject has been advanced a thousand times during the last hundred years, and has been as often answered and refuted. You may find it in tracts, pamphlets, and volumes of every shape and size; in visitation sermons, episcopal charges, pastoral addresses; in reviews, both Whig and Tory; the productions of men bearing the names of orthodox, evangelical, high church, low church, broad church, and of men belonging to no church at all;—and Methodist libraries are glutted with replies. I would respectfully ask, Is this repetition of refuted accusations never to end? Are intellectual viands, as unsavoury as cold cabbage, to be served up in perpetuity? If you had taken the trouble to look into Mr. Wesley’s “Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” or into a small volume entitled, “The Centenary of Methodism,” you would have found all the most serious of your allegations anticipated, and everything that you have advanced in the shape of argument proved to be worthless.

I complain, further, of the manner in which you have contrived to send your censures upon the Methodists and their leaders into the world, so as to gain for them the widest possible attention. You have mixed those censures up with observations on infidelity, with which they have really no connexion; for John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield were not infidels, nor are the Methodists infidels, but

as sincere believers in the Christian revelation as any of their contemporaries and accusers. A volume on subjects of public interest, and bearing the names of several accomplished scholars, will most probably be translated into some of the Continental languages, and command the attention of all classes of Christian people; and in that volume, written professedly for a very different purpose, you have, my Lord, assailed the character of the living and the dead in a manner which admits of no excuse. It is possible that the other writers of this important volume, with the exception of the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, never saw your censures upon the Methodists till they saw them in print: but I presume the public generally will regard them as being parties to what you have written, and as hostile as yourself to the people whose character you assail. I would ask, Is such a conduct fair and honourable? Is it just to the accused, to prefer serious charges, which will go into quarters where no defence can ever be heard? Is it just to the other writers of the volume, to make them parties to statements and imputations which are utterly groundless? They have written to supply "aids to faith;" and you make them answerable for allegations which never did and never will promote either faith, hope, or charity; but will inflict a grievous injury upon a body of Christian people, who desire to live peaceably with all men, and to give no unnecessary offence to either Jew or Gentile, or to the church of God.

But that of which I chiefly complain is that your animadversions upon Methodism and Methodists are partial, one-sided, untruthful; and are directly calculated to mislead the general reader, who is unacquainted with the facts of the case. Far be it

from me to intimate, or to believe, that you intended to misrepresent and to mislead; but it is impossible to avoid the impression that you intended to depreciate the services of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, and to lower their character and services in the public estimation. You evidently write under an apprehension that many people think too highly of these men and of their usefulness. On these subjects you have an undoubted right freely to express your thoughts: yet one cannot but feel that you have taken no adequate pains to obtain correct information on the several subjects concerning which you are so free to declare your opinions. In this respect, I regret to say, you are not singular, but follow the example of other public men who have distinguished themselves as the opponents of Methodism. Several years ago Bishop Van Mildert—one of the ablest scholars of his time—passed some severe censures upon Mr. Wesley, whom he described as being in exact agreement with Mr. Whitefield on the litigated doctrine of “election.” Whereas Mr. Whitefield embraced the Calvinistic theory, while Mr. Wesley adhered to the tenets of Arminius; and on this question, and others connected with it, “the contention between them was so sharp, that they parted asunder,” and each of them pursued a separate course of action to the end of life!—a decisive proof that the learned Prelate had formed little or no acquaintance with the writings of these eminent men. A similar example we have in Dr. Pusey; who a few years ago entered the lists against the Methodists, charging them, if not with heresy, with that which borders upon it. He alleged in proof certain tenets which the Methodists not only never held, but utterly repudiate!—There are three modes of dealing with delinquents, and with

persons who are under accusation. The first is the English mode: To hear the evidence, and then to acquit or condemn accordingly. The second is that of Rhadamanthus, who is said to have chastised the wretches brought before him, and then to have inquired what they had done. The third is the mode adopted by many of the assailants of Methodism; who inflict upon its adherents the penalty of public censure, and never inquire, either before or after the infliction, what the Methodists really believe and teach; but prefer against them random charges which no thoughtful man can by possibility believe, and repeat them one after another as if they admitted of no dispute.

We will, my Lord, subject what you have published concerning Methodism to a careful analysis, and endeavour, with all fairness, to ascertain the amount of truth and error it contains. I think it will not be difficult to show, that on no question of Methodism that you have mooted are your statements trustworthy. I take exception

TO YOUR ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN OF METHODISM,
AND OF THE STATE OF RELIGION AND MORALS
IN ENGLAND AT THE TIME.

You confess that, from a variety of unhappy causes, the state of religion and of morals in England, at the close of the seventeenth century, was lamentably low. "Prelates," you say, "forsook their dioceses for the nobler work of writing controversy, or asserting the political interests of their order. Discipline became relaxed; parishes were neglected; and at the end of the century the Church found itself surrounded with a swarming population, and no

adequate machinery provided for dealing with the mass of ignorance.

“It is not true, I think, that the bulk of the lower orders had been leavened with infidelity. Their heathenism was negative, not positive; they had been suffered to grow up in gross ignorance of religion: and it was during the prevalence of such evils that the evangelical reaction—commencing with the Methodist movement—began.

“But it would be an error, I apprehend, to suppose that it was Whitfield [Whitefield] and the Wesleys who *originated* a Reformation. Long before them it appears manifest that a healthy reaction had set in. As the old panic dread of fanaticism abated on the one hand, and the necessities of continual controversy became less on the other, Preachers insisted more and more on the peculiarities of the Christian faith as the springs and motives of Gospel obedience. Energetic efforts were made to build new churches and establish schools throughout the country: and (what is always a hopeful sign) some zeal began to be felt for Foreign Missions, and some sense of responsibility for the religious state of our colonies. A change for the better was going on. The case of Whitfield [Whitefield] and the Wesleys was that of other energetic men whose names figure in history as the originators of mighty changes. They fling themselves into a great movement before it has become conspicuous to the vulgar eye: they put themselves at its head, they carry it on to extravagance, and thus accelerate and extend an impulse which they partially misdirect, and may ultimately spoil for ever.”*

These statements, my Lord, appear to me to present

* Aids to Faith, p. 49.

a singular combination of truth and error, and to be even self-contradictory. The effects produced by the preaching of the Methodist leaders are denominated a "Reformation;" a term, I presume, which denotes a great and a beneficial change. This "Reformation" is described as an "*evangelical* reaction," "*commencing* with the Methodist movement;" and it "*began*" "during the prevalence" of practical "heathenism." Yet you tell us that "*long before*" these men entered upon their career "a healthy reaction had set in;" and this "healthy reaction" was of an evangelical character; for "Preachers insisted more and more on the peculiarities of the Christian faith as the springs and motives of Gospel obedience." This "healthy reaction" you further describe as "a great movement," which was "going on" when the Wesleys and Whitefield appeared, and "flung themselves into" it. The Methodist leaders, then, it appears "*began*" the "movement" which was "*going on*" when they "flung themselves into" it; and "*commenced*" a reaction which had set in "*long before*" they were connected with it! So difficult it is to invest fiction in the garb of truth. In other words, the Methodist leaders began a reformation which they did not begin!

In proof of "a healthy reaction" and "a great movement" in favour of evangelical religion "long before" the rise of Methodism, you refer to the erection of new churches and schools, to Missionary operations, and to an alleged improvement in the sermons of the Clergy. Allow me to say, that if the people themselves, in any large numbers, combined to build churches, and if, when they were built, those churches were numerous attended, and the pulpits occupied by efficient Ministers, your argument would

appear conclusive; but if the churches were built by Act of Parliament, and were generally neglected by the people, they prove the existence of no such "movement" as you declare to have been "going on." The same observations will apply to the "schools" you mention. Were they erected and supported by the people generally, or by private individuals? How were they attended? and what was the character of the education that was given in them? Churches and schools are means to an end; but it is only when they are rightly used that they answer their true purpose. In the reign of Queen Anne, fifty new churches were built in London and its neighbourhood by Act of Parliament; and yet Secker, an unexceptionable witness, complained of the general neglect of public worship; and uttered his complaint in the year 1738,—the very year in which the Methodist "movement" began.

That before the rise of Methodism "Preachers insisted more and more on the peculiarities of the Christian faith as the springs and motives of Gospel obedience," you have asserted, but not attempted to prove; and your silence is ominous. During many years I have sought for proof of such an improvement in the ministry of that period as you declare, but have found none. The higher orders of society were extensively tainted with infidelity; the working-classes were ignorant and profligate; but in the middle ranks there were unquestionably many persons, and we may hope families, who were anxious to know and do the will of God; but their piety was of an ascetic and unevangelical character. The truth is, their teachers caused them to err. They were kept in the bondage of servile fear, when they ought to have been rejoicing in the liberty of faith and of holy

love. They had no just apprehension of the nature and method of a sinner's justification before God, and of the happiness connected with that great blessing of the Christian covenant. Such works as Kempis's "Christian's Pattern," Andrewes's "Private Devotions," Sherlock's treatise on "Death," and on "Judgment," and Stanhope's translation of Epictetus's *Morals*, were in demand: a decisive proof that there was in the nation a considerable number of serious, thoughtful, and praying people. In those times William Law, a nonjuring Clergyman, was a popular writer. His "Serious Call to a devout and holy Life," and his "Treatise on Christian Perfection," passed rapidly through several editions: yet this erring man and beautiful writer rarely refers to Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin; and never adverts to the momentous truth, that the human conscience can be purified only by an application of His blood. He finds scarcely anything in the Gospel but rules of self-denial, and of religious and moral action; and these he enforces with an earnestness, an eloquence, and a power, which his readers cannot but feel and confess. But he never attempts to answer the question, "How can man," guilty and self-condemned, "be justified with God?" Among the most accomplished Preachers of that age were Bishop Atterbury and Jeremiah Seed. Their diction is incomparable, but their doctrine is lamentably defective. Had the three thousand Jews, who, on the day of Pentecost, were charged with the murder of the Son of God, and were terrified under the guilt of that great crime, applied to such Preachers as Atterbury and Seed, or even to Waterland and Berriman, urging the inquiry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" we should not have found these

broken-hearted penitents, immediately after, happy and holy, eating "their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." (Acts ii. 37—39, 46, 47.) They would not have been shown how they might at once obtain the forgiveness of their sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Dr. Trapp would have given them an earnest warning against the evil of being "righteous overmuch." The truth is, not that the Clergy in general, in the early part of the eighteenth century, denied the vital truths of the Gospel; but that they assigned to them only a subordinate place in their public ministrations, and dwelt mostly upon moral duties. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity was ably defended against the Arianism of Clarke; but the mediatorial work of Christ, and the office of the Holy Spirit, were sadly overlooked.

It is indeed an honour to the Church of England, that at this period, in the midst of angry controversy and the strife of parties, Dr. Bray and other devout men belonging to her Clergy formed the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts;" an institution which has continued its beneficial operations to this day. According to the documents which these excellent persons put forth at the time, they used great caution in the selection of the men whom they sent abroad as their agents; anxious to secure the services of such as were duly qualified to convert the heathen, as well as to minister to the settlers in the various colonies of the empire. In this respect they did what they could, but were not always successful in finding men who combined in themselves sound evangelical knowledge with religious zeal and self-denial. Mr. John Wesley was recognised as one of the Society's Missionaries in the

infant colony of Georgia; and he was prepared to undertake any amount of labour, and to endure any hardship, for the benefit of the people under his care, but very imperfectly acquainted with the Gospel of Christ. He appears to have been engaged as a Missionary by the Trustees of the colony; but, on his arrival there, it was found that the resident Missionary wished to resign his charge. The Trustees therefore recommended Mr. Wesley to the Society, who accepted him as their Missionary, and sent him £50 a year for his support.*

At that time he was one of the highest of High Churchmen; in respect of theology a disciple of William Law. Many of the English settlers were insolvent debtors, taken from the prisons of London, with other persons of desperate character and fortunes. He engaged in the hopeless task of making all these people strict Churchmen, and of inducing them, in the absence of evangelical motives, to exemplify in their daily practice Law's rules of holy living. It is needless to say that his mission was a failure; and, after two years of hard toil and intense mortification, he returned to England, pensive and sad; making this entry in his Journal: "It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why, (what I the least of all suspected,) that I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God. 'I am not mad,' though I thus speak; 'but I speak the words of truth and soberness;' if haply some of those who still dream may awake, and see that as I

* Hawkins's Historical Notices of the Missions of the Church of England in the North American Colonies, p. 92. Edit. 1845.

am so are they." * The Society that patronized Mr. Wesley as a Missionary was founded by a company of godly and earnest men, on whom it reflects the highest credit, as well as on the Church that adopted and has hitherto supported it; but it supplies no proof of "a great movement" in England in favour of evangelical religion. Mr. Wesley discovered no such "movement" either before he went to Georgia, or after his return; and the views of Gospel truth which exerted so mighty an influence upon his own character, and formed the subject of his effective ministry to the end of his life, were derived not from members of his own Church, but from a devout Moravian Missionary.

Let me further say, that the reality of any such "movement" as your Lordship affirms, is disproved by the hostile treatment which the Methodist leaders met with from the beginning of their eventful career. If they "flung themselves into a great movement," so as to enter into an existing current of thought and feeling, and to swim with the stream, how is it that they had to encounter such a fearful amount of opposition? When they began to preach the doctrine of salvation by faith, the London churches were at once closed against them; and they were compelled, if they preached at all, to preach in the open air, which they often did at the hazard of their lives, being assailed by formidable mobs, not unfrequently encouraged by the Clergy, and by other men in power. This kind of opposition met them in all parts of the kingdom, and it was continued for many years. The Wesleys and their friend Whitefield did indeed "fling themselves into a great move-

* Wesley's Works, vol. i., pp. 75, 76. Edit. 1829.

ment;" but it was a "movement" in a wrong direction,—a "movement" in the way to perdition. They saw immense multitudes of people, immortal as themselves, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, thronging the broad way that leads to eternal death; they rushed in among them, and, with tears of pity, entreated them to turn and live. Some took the warning given, and fled from the wrath to come; but others mocked, and treated them with scorn and murderous hostility. Of Whitefield, a contemporary thus wrote :—

"Leuconomus (beneath well-sounding Greek
I slur a name a poet must not speak)
Stood pilloried on infamy's high stage,
And bore the pelting scorn of half an age;
The very butt of slander, and the blot
Of every dart that malice ever shot.
The man that mention'd *him* at once dismiss'd
All mercy from his lips, and sneer'd, and hiss'd;
His crimes were such as Sodom never knew,
And perjury stood up to swear all true;
His aim was mischief, and his zeal pretence,
His speech rebellion against common sense;
A knave, when tried on honesty's plain rule;
And when by that of reason, a mere fool:
The world's best comfort was, his doom was pass'd,
Die when he might, he must be damn'd at last."*

These lines are as applicable to John and Charles Wesley as to their friend and fellow-labourer in the Gospel.

Does your Lordship still contend that, "long before" these men appeared, "a healthy reaction" had set in, and "a great movement" was going on in favour of evangelical religion; so that the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield "originated" nothing,

* Cowper.

but merely entered into the labours of other men? Then I will call your attention to opposing testimonies with which you will find it hard to grapple; the testimonies of men living at the time in question, of men belonging to your own order.

BISHOP BURNET, 1713.

I AM now in the seventieth year of my age; and as I cannot speak long in the world in any sort, so I cannot hope for a more solemn occasion than this, of speaking with all due freedom, both to the present and to the succeeding ages. Therefore, I lay hold on it, to give a free vent to those sad thoughts that lie on my mind both day and night, and are the subject of many secret mournings. I dare appeal to that God to whom the secrets of my heart are known, and to whom I am shortly to give an account of my ministry, that I have the true interests of this Church ever before my eyes, and that I pursue them with a sincere and fervent zeal. If I am mistaken in the methods I follow, God, to whom the integrity of my heart is known, will not lay that to my charge. I cannot look on without the deepest concern, when *I see the imminent ruin hanging over this Church, and, by consequence, over the whole Reformation. The outward state of things is black enough, God knows; but that which heightens my fears rises chiefly from the inward state into which we are unhappily fallen.* I will, in examining this, confine myself to the Clergy.

Our Ember-weeks are the burden and grief of my life. The much greater part of those who come to be ordained are ignorant to a degree not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it. The easiest part of knowledge is that to which they are the greatest strangers; I mean, the plainest part of the Scriptures, which they say, in excuse for their ignorance, that their Tutors in the Universities never mention the reading of to them; so that they can give no account, or, at least, a very imperfect one, of the contents even of the Gospels. Those who have read some few books, yet never seem to have read the Scriptures. Many cannot give a tolerable account even of the Catechism itself, how short and plain soever. They cry, and think it a sad disgrace to be denied orders; though the

ignorance of some is such, that, in a well-regulated state of things, they would appear not knowing enough to be admitted to the holy sacrament.

This does often tear my heart. The case is not much better in many who, having got into orders, come for institution, and cannot make it appear that they have read the Scriptures, or any one good book, since they were ordained; so that the small measure of knowledge upon which they got into holy orders, not being improved, is in a way to be quite lost: and then they think it a great hardship, if they are told they must know the Scriptures and the body of divinity better before they can be trusted with the care of souls. These things pierce one's soul, and make him often cry out, "O that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away, and be at rest." What are we like to grow to? In what a case are we, to deal with any adversary, atheist, Papist, or Dissenters; or in any sort to promote the honour of God, and carry on the great concerns of the Gospel; when so gross an ignorance in the fundamentals of religion has spread itself so much among those who ought to teach others, and yet need that one teach them the first principles of the oracles of God?

Politics and party eat out among us, not only study and learning, but that which is the only thing that is more valuable,—a true sense of religion, with a sincere zeal in advancing that for which the Son of God both lived and died, and to which those who are received into holy orders have vowed to dedicate their lives and labours. Clamours of scandal in any of the Clergy are not frequent, it is true, and God be thanked for it; but a remiss, unthinking course of life, with little or no application to study, and the bare performing of that which, if not done, would draw censures, when complained of, without ever pursuing the pastoral care in any suitable degree, is but too common, as well as too evident.—(*Pastoral Care, Preface to the Third Edition, 1713.*)

BISHOP GIBSON, 1728.

THEY who live in these great cities, (London and Westminster,) or have had frequent recourse to them, and have any concern for religion, must have observed, to their great grief, *that profaneness and impiety are grown bold and open; that a*

new sort of vice, of a very horrible nature, and almost unknown before in these parts of the world, was springing up and gaining ground among us, if it had not been checked by the seasonable care of the civil administration; that, in some late writings, public stews have been openly vindicated, and public vices recommended to the protection of the Government, as public benefits; and that great pains have been taken to make men easy in their vices, and deliver them from the restraints of conscience, by undermining all religion, and promoting atheism and infidelity; and, what adds to the danger, by doing it under specious colours and pretences of several kinds. One, under pretence of opposing the encroachments of Popery, thereby to recommend himself to the unwary Protestant reader, has laboured at once to set aside all Christian ordinances, and the very being of a Christian ministry, and a Christian church. Another, under colour of great zeal for the Jewish dispensation, and the literal meaning of Scripture, has been endeavouring to overthrow the foundations of the Christian religion. A third, pretending to raise the actions and miracles of our Saviour to a more exalted and spiritual meaning, has laboured to take away the reality of them, and by that to destroy one of the principal evidences of Christianity. Others have shown a great zeal for *natural* religion, in opposition to revealed, with no other view, as it seems, than to get rid of the restraints of revealed religion, and to make way for unbounded enjoyment of their corrupt appetites and vicious inclinations, no less contrary, in reality, to the obligations of natural religion than of revealed. And all or most of these writers, under colour of pleading for the liberties of mankind, have run into an unprecedented licentiousness, in treating the serious and important concerns of religion in a ludicrous and reproachful manner.—(*Pastoral Letters*, p. 2. Second Edition.)

BISHOP BUTLER, 1736.

It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, *that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. And, accordingly, they treat it, as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained, but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and*

ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.—(*Advertisement prefixed to the Analogy*, first published in 1736.)

BISHOP SECKER, 1738.

MEN have always complained of their own times, and always with too much reason. But though it is natural to think those evils the greatest which we feel ourselves; and therefore mistakes are easily made in comparing one age with another; yet in this we cannot be mistaken, *that an open and professed disregard to religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age; that this evil is grown to a great height in the metropolis of the nation; is daily spreading through every part of it; and, bad in itself as any can be, must of necessity bring in all others after it.* Indeed, it hath already brought in *such dissoluteness and contempt of principle, in the higher part of the world, and such profligate intemperance, and fearlessness of committing crimes, in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal.* And God knows, *far from stopping*, it receives, through the ill designs of some persons, and the inconsiderateness of others, *a continual increase.* Christianity is now ridiculed and railed at, with very little reserve; and the teachers of it, without any at all. Indeed, with respect to us, (the Clergy,) the rule which most of our adversaries appear to have set themselves, is, to be, at all adventures, as bitter as they can: and they follow it, not only beyond truth, but beyond probability; asserting the very worst things of us without foundation, and exaggerating everything without mercy; imputing the faults (and sometimes imaginary faults) of particular persons to the whole order; and then declaiming against us all promiscuously, with such vehemence as, in any case but ours, they themselves would think in the highest degree unjust and cruel. Or if sometimes a few exceptions are made, they are usually made only to divide us amongst ourselves: to deceive one part of us, and throw a greater odium upon the other. Still, were these invectives only to affect us personally, dear as our reputations are and ought to be to us, the mischief would be small in comparison of what it is. But the consequence hath been, as it naturally must, that disregard to us hath greatly increased *the disregard to public*.

worship and instruction; that many are grown prejudiced against religion; nay, more, indifferent about it, and unacquainted with it. And the emissaries of the Romish Church, taking the members of ours at this unhappy disadvantage, have begun to reap great harvests in the field, which hath been thus prepared for them by the labours of those who would be thought their most irreconcilable enemies.—(Eight Charges, p. 4. Edit. 1790.)

The necessity of a moral life most men will own in general terms; only what they are pleased to call so is often a very immoral one, both with respect to their fellow-creatures, and the government of themselves. *But regard to piety is strangely lost, even amongst persons that are otherwise tolerably serious. Many have laid aside all appearances of it; and others, who would seem to keep them up, do it with evident marks of indifference and contempt.—(Ibid., p. 21.)*

To these sad testimonies, given by sorrowing Prelates, it would be easy to add an equal number from the pens of godly men among the Dissenters; for many of their Ministers had departed from the faith of their fathers, and their churches were in a state of religious declension. From this quarter one testimony may suffice. It shall be that of

DR. ISAAC WATTS, 1731.

AMONG the papers published last year, there hath been some inquiry made, whether there be any decay of the "Dissenting interest:" and what may be supposed to have been the occasion of it. So far as I have searched into that matter, I have been informed, that whatsoever decrease may have appeared in some places, there have been sensible advances in others. And without entering into any debate about the particular reasons of its declension in any town whatsoever, I am well satisfied that the great and general reason is, *the decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men; and the little success which the ministrations of the Gospel have had of late for the conversion of sinners to holiness, and the recovery of them from the state of corrupt nature, and the course of this world, to the life of God by Jesus Christ. . . .*

Nor is the complaint of *the declension of virtue and piety* made only by the Protestant Dissenters. It is a *general matter of mournful observation amongst all that lay the cause of God to heart*; and therefore it cannot be thought amiss for everyone to use all just and proper efforts for *the recovery of dying religion in the world*.—(Preface to *An Humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion*. Edit. 1735.)

From these testimonies, my Lord, it is clear, that the “great movement” and “healthy reaction” of which you speak, and which you say “appears manifest,” was not only not “conspicuous to the vulgar eye,” but not even to “the eye” of the greatest and best men of the age. Burnet, Gibson, Butler, Secker, and Watts, men living at the time, saw it not; and Secker, who was deservedly raised to the see of Canterbury, declares that “the torrent of impiety,” “far from stopping, received, through the ill designs of some, and the inconsiderateness of others, a continual increase,”—and this to the very year in which the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield, being denied access to the pulpits of the Establishment, began to preach in the open air.

The decay of religion in England, and the consequent prevalence of every kind of vice and wickedness, have been attributed to various causes, but chiefly to the style of preaching which was then prevalent, both in the Established Church and among the Dissenters. Moral duties were enforced, but rather upon philosophic grounds than as enjoined by the authority of God; and the great doctrines of the Gospel were only adverted to in an incidental manner. Sermons commanded little attention; for they neither alarmed the consciences of the careless, nor ministered comfort to such as mourned under a sense of sin; so that Atterbury, whose testimony

is indisputable, says, “indecenty of carriage..... universally prevails in our churches.”* It is a remarkable fact, that Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, —one of the most determined opponents of Methodism then alive,—addressing the Clergy of his diocese, just ten years after the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield had entered upon their extraordinary course of evangelical labour, said, “My brethren, I beg you will rise up with me against only moral preaching. We have been long attempting the reformation of the nation by discourses of this kind. With what success? *Why, with none at all.* On the contrary, *we have very dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity.* We must change our voice. We must preach Christ, and Him crucified. Nothing but the Gospel is, nothing will be found to be, the power of God unto salvation. Let me, therefore, again and again request, may I not add, *let me charge you,* to preach Jesus, and salvation through His name; preach the Lord who bought us; preach redemption through His blood; preach the saying of the great High Priest, *He that believeth shall be saved.* Preach repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” †

The evil, however, still remained; and Horsley, after the lapse of forty years more, lifted up his powerful voice against it. In the year 1790,—referring to the assumption, that the doctrine of justification by faith leads to antinomianism, and that practical religion and morality are the same thing,—that very able Prelate thus admonished his Clergy: “The two [maxims] taken together have much contributed to divest our sermons of the

* Sermons, vol. i., p. 213. Edit. 1730.

† Life of Charles Wesley, vol. i., p. 504.

genuine spirit and savour of Christianity, and reduce them to mere moral essays, in which moral duties are enforced, not, as indeed they might be to good purpose, by scriptural motives, but by such arguments as nowhere appear to so much advantage as in the writings of the heathen moralists, and are quite out of their place in the pulpit. The rules delivered may be observed to vary according to the temperament of the teacher; but the system chiefly in request with those who seem the most in earnest in this strain of preaching, is the strict but impracticable, unsocial, sullen moral of the Stoics. Thus, under the influence of these two pernicious maxims, it too often happens that we lose sight of that which is our proper office to publish,—the word of reconciliation,—to propound the terms of peace and pardon to the penitent; and we make no other use of the high commission that we bear, than to come abroad one day in the seven, dressed in solemn looks, and in the external garb of holiness, to be the apes of Epictetus. I flatter myself that we are at present in a state of recovery from this delusion. The compositions which are at this day delivered from our pulpits are, I think, in general, of a more Christian cast than were often heard some thirty years since, when I first entered on the ministry. Still, the dry strain of moral preaching is too much in use, and the erroneous maxims on which the practice stands are not sufficiently exploded.”*

Bishop Horne followed in the same strain the next year, and, in the Charge which he prepared for his primary visitation in the diocese of Norwich, said, “Of late times there has been a prejudice in favour

* Charges of Samuel Horsley, Lord Bishop of St. Asaph, pp. 5—8. Edit. 1813.

of good moral preaching, as if the people might do very well, or even better, without the knowledge of the Christian mysteries; a good moral life being the end of all teaching. The enemies of Christianity, taking advantage of this prejudice, have made a total separation between the works of religion and its doctrines; pleading the example and authority of some of our Divines. And it must not be concealed, that by delivering cold inanimate lectures on moral virtue, independent of Christianity, many of our Clergy of late years have lost themselves very much in the estimation of the religious part of the laity.” “Natural religion, as a system, is a phenomenon risen up in these latter times; infidelity seems to have been increasing upon it ever since: and, as the unedifying morality of our pulpits is a growth from the same root, we need not wonder at the zeal and earnestness with which it hath very lately been treated by a learned and able Prelate of this Church.” *

Now, my Lord, I submit to you and to the general reader, whether we may not consider the question as to the state of religion and morals in England in the early part of the last century fairly settled by documentary evidence of the most unexceptionable kind. The “healthy reaction,” of which you speak, proves to have been no “reaction” at all; the alleged “great movement,” of the same kind, was a “great” —nothing; and sound evangelical preaching, which you say prevailed “more and more,” “long before” the rise of Methodism, was, after all, so tardy in its progress, that, at the close of the century the complaints of the Prelates on this score were nearly as loud as ever.

* Horne’s Works, vol. i., p. 452. Edit. 1831.

Had this state of things continued a century longer, it is impossible to say what the issue would have been. While Protestant watchmen slept, the emissaries of the Papacy were on the alert; and Secker says they had "begun to reap great harvests in the fields" which they found thus "prepared for them." The Protestant Church in Ireland was then as apathetic as her sister in England; and had it not been for the revival of a Protestant feeling there, by the ministry of the Wesleys and their Preachers, Romish Priests have expressed their belief that at this day they should have had the people in many parts of the country entirely under their own power. What truth there may be in this opinion, I know not; but it may be more correct than some of the men who enjoy the benefit of this new state of things are willing to own. Had it not been for the Wesleys and their co-adjutors, it is very possible that persons who now enjoy high ecclesiastical preferment might have gone to the grave without that honourable distinction.

In the English nation, circumstanced as it was in the early part of the last century, a vast increase of population was about to take place. Wealth, with all its incentives to luxury and indulgence, was on the point of being everywhere diffused. The factory-system, congregating together large masses of people of both sexes, was soon to be extensively introduced. The American war of independence, producing temporary scarcity and want, and inviting attention to the republican form of government, was at no great distance. Then followed the French revolution, with its infidel democracy, and godless theories of social order, inflaming the popular mind, and endangering every national institution. Had these stirring

events taken place while the elements of evil to which we have just adverted were in full and unrestrained operation, who can calculate the consequences? By the great mercy of God, there was religious principle in the country to resist the evils which wealth, revolution, and war, were pouring forth in one mighty tide; but it was religious principle which, to a considerable extent, was consequent upon the rise of Methodism. What other agencies might have been called out in the various emergencies, to counteract the threatening evils, and secure the public welfare, had that form of Christianity which is denominated Methodism never appeared, we know not; nor does it become us to speculate upon such a subject. What God in His providence has done, we know; of what He might have done, we have no knowledge. In times of unexampled peril and excitement,—times which it is fearful even to think upon,—it pleased God to preserve this country in unimpaired strength by means of religious principle; and that principle, in a thousand instances, was created by the labours of the Wesleys and Whitefield, and in many others it was greatly raised and invigorated by the same means.

But, whatever benefits may have resulted from Methodism, your Lordship has given an unfavourable view

OF THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF THE TWO
WESLEYS AND MR. WHITEFIELD;

and what you have advanced on this subject we will next examine. You charge them with having “mis-directed,” if not for ever “spoiled,” “a great movement” in favour of sound evangelical religion; and describe them as “weak persons,” and “wild

fanatics," who held and taught a "preposterous" doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit's influence.

The first of these allegations we need not stay to examine; for if this "great movement" was a non-entity, it could neither be "misdirected" nor "spoiled," nor could any men "fling themselves" into it: so we may let this matter pass. But, however, you intimate,

1. That they were "weak persons." The manner in which you have expressed this opinion is curious, and seems to display some misgiving; but I cannot extract from your words any other meaning. You compare them with certain classes of Popish devotees, who are endeavouring to gain proselytes to the Papal tenets and modes of worship; such as transubstantiation, purgatory, the supremacy of the Pope, indulgences, priestly absolution, prayer to the Virgin Mary, and to saints and angels in general. Your words are, "Nor can it be reasonably doubted that many of those amiable but weak persons who have latterly been roving over England in the garb of Passionists and Oratorians would have been, in the days of Whitfield's [Whitefield's] popularity, preaching rank Methodism on Kennington-Common, amidst a shower of mud and turnip-tops."* You may compare these three Methodist "leaders" with whom you please, and apply to them all the degrading epithets that the language can supply; but you will never lower their character in the public estimation, nor induce anyone who knows their history to regard them as "weak" either in intellect, in piety, or in action. Look at them separately.

Whitefield was unquestionably one of the most

* Aids to Faith, p. 50.

powerful, impressive, and successful Preachers that England ever bred. Learned sceptics listened to him with respect; "the common people heard him gladly," and congregated around him by thousands; and in these vast assemblies many a fool who "came to scoff" was so overpowered, that he "remained to pray." Few Preachers have been instrumental in bringing more sinners to their Saviour, in turning them to righteousness, and in urging them onward in the narrow way; and these will be his joy and the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord. While he lived, comedians, for a morsel of bread, mimicked his tones, action, and language, to the amusement of the thoughtless and the gay, who raised shouts of laughter at the Preacher's expense; but where are these triflers now? Men deemed him, and still deem him, a fool; but a higher authority has said, "He that winneth souls is wise."

"Now truth perform thine office, waft aside
 The curtain drawn by prejudice and pride.
 Reveal (the man is dead) to wondering eyes
 This more than monster, in his proper guise.
 He loved the world that hated him: the tear
 That dropp'd upon his Bible was sincere.
 Assail'd by scandal and the tongue of strife,
 His only answer was a blameless life;
 And he that forged, and he that threw the dart,
 Had each a brother's interest in his heart.
 Paul's love of Christ, and steadiness unbribed,
 Were copied close in him, and well transcribed:
 He follow'd Paul; his zeal a kindred flame,
 His apostolic charity the same.
 Like him cross'd cheerfully tempestuous seas,
 Forsaking country, kindred, friends, and ease;
 Like him he labour'd, and like him, content
 To bear it, suffer'd shame where'er he went.
 Blush, calumny! and write upon his tomb,
 If honest eulogy can spare thee room,

Thy deep repentance of thy thousand lies,
 Which, aim'd at him, have pierced the' offended skies!
 And say, Blot out my sin, confess'd, deplored,
 Against Thine image in Thy saint, O Lord!"*

Was Charles Wesley a "weak" man? He was weak in respect of his bodily constitution, and was compelled, after a few years of hard and successful labour, to withdraw from the itinerant ministry in which he rivalled the zeal and energy of his two associates. He had not Whitefield's voice; but he had Whitefield's ardour, unction, and success. He excelled all his contemporaries in the composition of sacred lyrics; for he embodied in verse of unrivalled terseness and power the great truths which his brother and Mr. Whitefield taught, and adapted them to the purposes of devotion. His strains are sung every Sabbath-day by thousands and tens of thousands of devout worshippers, not Wesleyans only, but Churchmen and Dissenters. Such is the honour put upon this gifted man, of whom you speak in terms bordering upon contempt.

Was John Wesley a "weak" man? He preached more sermons, and travelled more miles, to promote the spiritual good of mankind,—by means of the press he placed within the reach of the common people a greater amount of religious and useful knowledge,—than perhaps any other man that ever lived; and he has left an impress of his character upon immense multitudes of mankind in every quarter of the globe. If such are the signs of weakness, pray, what are the signs of power? The following sketch of this great and good man, I humbly presume, is more just and truthful than your offensive comparison of him with Romish Passionists and Oratorians:—

* Cowper.

"O, I have seen (nor hope perhaps in vain,
 Ere life go down, to see such sights again)
 A veteran warrior in the Christian field,
 Who never saw the sword he could not wield.
 Grave without dulness, learned without pride;
 Exact, but not precise; though meek, keen-eyed:
 A man that could have foil'd, at their own play,
 A dozen would-be's of the modern day:
 Who, when occasion justified its use,
 Had wit as bright as ready to produce;
 Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
 Or from Philosophy's enlighten'd page,
 His rich materials, and regale your ear
 With strains it was a privilege to hear.
 Yet, above all, his luxury supreme,
 And his chief glory, was the Gospel theme:
 There he was copious as old Greece or Rome;
 His happy eloquence seem'd there at home;
 Ambitious not to shine, or to excel,
 But to treat justly what he loved so well."*

You connect your intimation that the three Methodist leaders were "weak" men with the fact of their preaching on Kennington-Common. Allow me, my Lord, to ask, Is it a sign of weakness when men preach in the open air? What, then, shall we think of the Apostles, who carried the Gospel to the ends of the earth before Christian churches were generally erected? Where did St. Paul preach all the way "from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum?" What shall we think of our Saviour, who preached upon a mountain, on a plain, in public roads, in a ship, as well as in Jewish synagogues and the temple? Was it a weakness in the Wesleys and their intrepid friend, that they so far believed the Bible, as to be persuaded that people who were living in ignorance and sin, addicted to Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, profane swearing, and the neglect of public worship,

* Cowper.

were in danger of endless perdition; that salvation was provided for them by Jesus Christ; that the Gospel is the appointed instrument of salvation; that they owed it to Christ, as well as to these poor outcasts for whom no man seemed to care, to endeavour to reclaim and save them? It is not the field-preacher, my Lord, that needs an apology, but the faithless pastor who has no heart to follow the lost sheep into the wilderness, and attempts to hide his shame by treating with ridicule the men that bring them back upon their shoulders rejoicing. The command of Christ is, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." But there are many thousands of human "creatures," to whom the Gospel is to be preached, who are never seen in any place of worship. How, then, can the ministerial commission be fulfilled, and an acceptable account be given to the Lord of all, if field-preaching be neglected? All honour to the Prelates and Clergymen of the present times, who have so far risen above the restraints of ecclesiastical etiquette, as to preach Christ's Gospel in omnibus-yards and in market-places; remembering that omnibus drivers and conductors, cabmen, and the crowds who are found wandering about in the streets of our large towns on the Lord's day, are all redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, and must repent and believe the Gospel, or perish for ever. These are just the sort of men whom the Lord Jesus came to seek and to save. Shall they die in ignorance and sin, saying, "No man cared for my soul?"

On this subject Mr. Wesley makes the following appeal to his clerical brethren:—

Suppose field-preaching to be ever so expedient, or even necessary; yet who will contest with us for this province? May we not enjoy this quiet and unmolested? unmolested, I

mean, by any competitors. For who is there among you, brethren, that is willing (examine your own hearts) even to save souls from death at this price? Would not you let a thousand souls perish, rather than you would be the instrument of rescuing them thus? I do not speak now with regard to conscience, but to the inconveniences that must accompany it. Can you sustain them, if you would? Can you bear the summer sun to beat upon your naked head? Can you suffer the wintry rain or wind, from whatever quarter it blows? Are you able to stand in the open air, without any covering or defence, when God casteth abroad His snow like wool, or scattereth His hoar-frost like ashes? And yet these are some of the smallest inconveniences which accompany field-preaching. Far beyond all these are the contradiction of sinners, the scoffs both of the great vulgar and the small; contempt and reproach of every kind; often more than verbal affronts, stupid, brutal violence; sometimes to the hazard of health, or limbs, or life. Brethren, do you envy us this honour? What, I pray, would buy you to be a field-preacher? Or what, think you, could induce any man of common sense to continue therein one year, unless he had a full conviction in himself that it was the will of God concerning him?

Upon this conviction it is that we now do, for the good of poor souls, what you cannot, will not, dare not do. And we desire not that you should; but this one thing we may reasonably desire of you: Do not increase the difficulties which are already so great, that, without the mighty power of God, we must sink under them. Do not assist in trampling down a little handful of men who for the present stand in the gap between ten thousand poor wretches and destruction, till you find some others to take their places.—(*Works*, vol. viii., pp. 230, 231.)

2. But you have charges more serious than that of "weakness" to prefer against the three Methodist leaders, whom you have selected as the objects of your special vituperation. You describe them as being guilty of religious "extravagance," and as "wild fanatics." This charge, however, you have somewhat qualified, and have said that they were "not mere

wild fanatics." Whether their fanaticism was partially interrupted by intervals of religious sanity, or whether their fanaticism was of a milder type than that of some other men, you do not say. But their "fanaticism" was bad enough; for it was "extravagant" and "wild."

I am not at all anxious, my Lord, to justify these devoted servants of Christ against the charge of wild fanaticism, foul and offensive as it is; for I find that it has, in substance, been always preferred against men who have been at all remarkable for earnestness in religion. Mankind may be in earnest in anything else, and yet be respected; but earnestness in religion is deemed intolerable. When David danced before the ark of God, a courtly lady, who had no sympathy with him in his joyous excitement, "despised him in her heart," and addressed him in language of sarcasm and contempt: David, however, felt that he was right, and remained unmoved. (2 Sam. vi. 16, 20—23.) When St. Paul defended himself and the Gospel before King Agrippa, "Festus said with a loud voice," confident that the Apostle was wrong, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." (Acts xxvi. 24.) Yet it was not Paul that was mad, but Festus that was in error. The unthinking Corinthians, also, misled by false teachers, and not having been brought into full subjection to Christ, deemed the Apostles rather "extravagant" in their zeal and labours. St. Paul's answer was, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,

but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.” (2 Cor. v. 13—15.)

The truth is, our blessed Lord Himself did not escape the charge which you have preferred against the men that led the way in the Methodist movement. “And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself.” (Mark iii. 20, 21.) They thought so much crowding and excitement a breach of decorum, even when Christ Himself was the object of attraction. At another time many of the Jews said, “He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?” (John x. 20.) You see, then, my Lord, that the “wild fanatics” of Methodism are in good company, of which they have no reason to be ashamed. “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?”

3. But you deal not merely in terms of reproach, calling the Methodist leaders ill names. You charge them with erroneous doctrine, and that on a subject of the highest importance,—the influence of the Holy Spirit. You say, “They taught (and taught rightly) that we must not only believe, but feel, before we can act, as Christians. In recalling attention to the truth, that the Gospel is a revelation of God’s love to sinners, designed to produce corresponding affections in our hearts—that the faith of Christ is a faith that works through love, they did valuable service, which should never be dissembled or forgotten. But unhappily they went on to teach that the belief and the action were to be grounded upon the feelings

considered as the immediate and sensible operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human mind.—Now such a preposterous mistake could hardly have been possible but in the general acquiescence of the national mind in the truth of the Christian religion. I am persuaded that none except the very wildest fanatics (and the leaders of whom we speak were certainly not mere wild fanatics) do really thus wholly ground their faith upon an imaginary inspiration.” You further explain your meaning by saying, “The evangelical leaders were tempted to overstep the bounds of sobriety, and to forget that the Holy Spirit is given not to supersede or supply the place of our natural faculties, but to help their infirmity, and restore them to that just balance and due subordination—that proper and healthful exercise—which have been disturbed by sin.”*

These, my Lord, are serious charges; and it would have been no breach of charity, if, before you sent them forth into the world, you had inquired whether or not they were true. Had such an inquiry been made in good faith, the charges would never have appeared, and I should have been spared the unwelcome task of questioning your Lordship’s competency as an opponent of Methodism. That the eminent men whose character you assail, should, at the commencement of their public career, when they were placed in new and peculiar circumstances, have said and done things which are capable of a sinister construction, and which they would not repeat in the subsequent years of their lives, when time had been given for reflection and for more extended observation, might have been expected; and such inadvertencies

* Aids to Faith, pp. 52, 53, 54.

and infirmities of judgment, if they occurred, will be readily excused by persons of generosity and candour. Where is the man that ever succeeded in the accomplishment of a great and difficult undertaking, who did not, on a review of the whole, discover errors and mistakes which he would have done well to avoid? The wonder is, that the Methodist leaders fell into so few errors either of doctrine or of practice, considering the mass of brutal ignorance with which they had to contend, and the formidable opposition with which they were beset in every quarter. But that at any time they taught the "preposterous" doctrine concerning faith, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, which you have imputed to them, I absolutely and solemnly deny. They neither "grounded" "the faith of Christ," nor "the action" by which it is accompanied, "upon the feelings, considered as the immediate and sensible operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human mind," instead of grounding both upon the word of God; nor did they ever teach that the Holy Spirit is given to supersede our natural faculties, either in the act of faith, or in the performance of Christian duty. The errors on these subjects, with which you charge them, never formed any part of their teaching; nor can they be justly inferred from any of their recognised tenets. They connect the influence of the Holy Spirit with the entire process of human salvation, and with all the duties of the Christian life, in common with all orthodox Christians; but they represent the word of God as the instrument by which the Spirit operates. Why did they preach Christ, and Him crucified, but because "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God?" Had they grounded faith upon mere feeling, as you say they did, instead of grounding it upon the word of God,

they must have stultified themselves every time they addressed a congregation; for why were they so anxious to give their hearers scriptural views of Christ in His character of a Mediator and Saviour, if faith be grounded upon mere feeling, and not upon Scripture truth? You describe them as "wild fanatics;" but had they held the tenet concerning faith, which you impute to them, they must have been absolutely insane.

But did they not teach that the Holy Spirit is given to "supersede or supply the place of our natural faculties," rather than to "help their infirmity?" Certainly not, although you have ascribed to them this folly. The most prominent subjects of their ministry, like those of St. Paul, especially when they addressed mixed assemblies in the open air, were "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance they described as a conviction of sin, producing godly sorrow, the confession of sin to God, the renunciation of it, an earnest desire for pardon, expressing itself in importunate prayer for that blessing. Of this conviction, and of the feeling connected with it, the Holy Spirit, they said, is the Author. "Sin is a transgression of the law;" but how is it possible for any man to be convinced of such "transgression," unless he have an apprehension of the nature and requirements of "the law," of the authority of God, and of the penalty to which every transgressor is liable? and how can he weep and pray while his understanding, his will, his conscience, his memory, and his affections are all "superseded," and quiescent? The Methodist leaders represented Christ as the object of saving faith; and faith in Him they described as the trust of a penitent transgressor.

But how is it possible for any man thus to trust, unless he have some competent apprehension of Christ, of His tender mercy, of His saving power, of the atoning efficacy of His blood, and of the warrant and authority given to guilty men to expect forgiveness through the sacrifice of His death? To produce this apprehension was one of the principal objects which the Methodist leaders had in view in their public ministry; and they relied upon the Holy Spirit to apply their word to their hearers, so as to render it effectual. It would not be difficult to produce extracts from the writings of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield, that would fill a volume, in proof that their doctrine concerning faith and the operations of the Holy Spirit was the reverse of that which you have placed to their account; but this is unnecessary. The absurdities that you have charged upon them are too palpable to be believed by any thoughtful reader.

One single extract will be sufficient. It shall be taken from the sermon which Mr. Wesley placed first in the order of his printed discourses; and the date which he prefixed to it is June 18th, 1738.

Speaking of the faith by which men are saved, he says,—

It differs from the faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of His death, and the power of His resurrection. It acknowledges His death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and His resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as He was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification. Christian faith is then, not only an *assent* to the *whole Gospel of Christ*, but also a *full reliance on the blood of Christ*; a *trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection*; a *recumbency upon Him* as our *atonement* and our *life, as given for us*, and

living in us ; and, in consequence hereof, a *closing with Him*, and *cleaving to Him*, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, or, in one word, our salvation.—(*Works*, vol. v., p. 9. Edit. 1829.)

Such is Mr. Wesley's doctrine of faith, preached before the University of Oxford, and published at the outset of his career as a field-preacher. The question is, Is such a faith "grounded upon the feelings," or upon the word of God? The answer is, Upon the word of God undeniably; for a man's "feelings," come from what quarter they may, can give him no such information concerning Christ as a Saviour as Mr. Wesley's words imply; nor can his "feelings," considered in themselves, authorize any man to believe in Christ for salvation. Such a faith can be grounded upon nothing but the word of God, which is God's testimony concerning His Son.

Further, when a man exercises such a faith as Mr. Wesley has described, are his "natural faculties" "superseded," or does the Holy Spirit simply "help their infirmity?" The answer is, the man "assents to the whole Gospel,"—he places "a full reliance upon the blood of Christ,"—he puts "a trust in the merits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection,"—he places "a recumbency upon" Christ "as our atonement and life,"—he regards Christ "as given for us, and living in us,"—he "closes with" Christ, and "cleaves to Him," as the Author of salvation. Can any man do this while his "natural faculties" are all "superseded?" If he can apprehend truth without his understanding, if he can voluntarily acquiesce in the Gospel method of salvation without his will, and if he can exert his "natural faculties" when they are "superseded,"—all this is possible; but not otherwise. Why you have imputed to the Methodists

such absurdity and folly, it is not for me to say. If your allegations were believed, they would inflict a grievous injury both upon the living and the dead; but as they are in themselves utterly incredible, and are contrary to the clearest evidence, they are harmless; and so we will let them pass.

And now, having given, as I conceive, a sufficient answer to the personal reflections which you have cast upon the Wesleys and their popular co-adjutor, we will next examine what you say as to the

CAUSES OF THEIR SUCCESS;

for this is also a subject on which you have expressed an opinion.

You say, "Within the Church and without, there was a demand beginning to be felt for some free and stirring ecclesiastical activity; the thought of which men had ceased to associate with any of the old organizations." And you add, "In such a state of predisposition Whitfield [Whitefield] and the Wesleys began their work by preaching the NEW BIRTH."*

In this statement, my Lord, you have again forgotten what you formerly advanced; namely, that "long before" the leaders of Methodism began their work "a healthy reaction had set in;" "a change for the better was going on;" "energetic efforts" were put forth; and, in fact, "a great movement" in favour of evangelical religion was "manifest;"—and now you state that, when Whitefield and the Wesleys "*began* their work," "a demand was *beginning* to be felt for some free and stirring ecclesiastical activity." Which of these statements are we to believe? They cannot both be true. If your first

* Aids to Faith, pp. 51, 52.

account be correct, "a stirring ecclesiastical activity" had been "long" going on; and now you tell us that even "the *demand*" for such an "activity" was "*beginning* to be felt," when the Methodist leaders actually entered upon their work. The "healthy reaction," the "energetic efforts," and the "great movement," have now all dwindled down into "a predisposition" in the public mind, and the "*beginning*" of a *desire* for a religious and moral change! Giving up, then, your former flattering accounts, you now state that which is much nearer the truth. Dr. Southey, who had studied the history of this period, justly says, "It was a time of great degeneracy in very many important points. The manners of high life were not indeed so absolutely profligate as in the infamous days of Charles II., but there was a greater degree of general coarseness. Drunkenness had become as much a national vice among the gentry, as it was among the Germans. The learning which the Universities imparted was still sound and orthodox,—but there was little of it; and, considering them as schools of morals, the course of life there was better adapted to graduate young men in the brutalizing habits of the society wherewith they were soon to mingle, than to qualify them for reforming it. The Church, therefore, was ill supplied with Ministers; its higher preferments were bestowed with more reference to political connexions than to individual desert; and there never was less religious feeling, either within the Establishment or without, than when Wesley blew his trumpet, and awakened those who slept."*

In addition to the desire for religious and moral

* Southey's Colloquies, vol. i., pp. 255, 256.

improvement, which now began to be felt, you ascribe the success of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield to the love of novelty, which always characterizes a part of the human race, and therefore existed when these zealous men entered upon their public career. Besides the real wants of the nation, you say, "There were other cravings of the popular mind demanding satisfaction. There was (what is to be found in every generation) the great herd of superficial minds who always require the stimulus of something new; who throw the blame of their own shallowness upon their teachers, and are always asking for something more 'deep and earnest and thoroughgoing,' or 'more rational and suited to the age,' than the current theology, whatever it may be. This is the common sequacious mob of 'novarum rerum avidi,' who are drawn, like insects, by the loudest noise and the greatest glare."*

The facts may be as you have stated; but your inference is not legitimate. There doubtless were, at the time we are now speaking of, such men as you describe; and they would be very likely to attend the preaching of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield. It would, indeed, be then something "new," to see Clergymen preaching in the open air, not stooping over a manuscript, but with an open Bible in their hands; not delivering their sermons in a dry unfeeling manner, but with tears in their eyes warning their hearers of the misery consequent upon a life of sin, and calling upon all, even the vilest and worst, to break off their sins by repentance, and come to Christ for a full and free pardon, that so iniquity might not be their ruin. All this was "new;" but

* Aids to Faith, p. 50.

then the novelty would soon pass away, and these people, if they retained their "shallowness," would in a short time inquire for something else. If you say that these men constituted the bulk of the people that were permanently connected with Methodism, you pay the highest compliment to the system: for it gave seriousness, solidity, and strength of character to the frivolous, who were before "unstable as water." But these were not the only men that were brought into connexion with the system. The facts are patent and undeniable. Formalists became spiritual worshippers of God; the lukewarm became fervent in spirit; drunkards became sober and temperate; profane swearers feared an oath; Sabbath-breakers kept holy the day of the Lord; dishonest persons made restitution to the parties whom they had defrauded; abandoned profligates, given up to every form of vice, became examples of all that is spiritual in religion and correct in morals. Your theory, therefore, my Lord, does not meet all the facts of the case. It was only to a very limited extent that Methodism gained a permanent hold upon the lovers of change. Her children were mostly persons of a different type.

Another reason which you assign for the ministerial success of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield you thus express:—"Furthermore there was a want that has been less often remarked as one of the causes of Methodism—the want of what may be called a freer *Church-activity*. The busy, bustling, democratic spirit of ultra-Protestantism had made itself so hateful in the previous generation, that, within the Church, laymen shrank from meddling. The synodical assemblies of the Clergy had only spasmodic fits of action, in which they tore themselves, or made violent assaults on others. Their time and energies were

wasted in disputes between the two Houses, disputes with the Crown, disputes with obnoxious brethren;—till, at last, their action became so manifestly scandalous, that the Minister was able to silence them entirely, to the general satisfaction of a public who had ceased to be entertained with their quarrels.”*

You state then, my Lord, that while the Clergy in Convocation were indulging themselves in unseemly and bitter strife, so that the suppression of both the Houses was felt to be a public benefit, “there was a want of a freer Church-activity.” This is very true. The want was a necessity; and to some extent it was also a desire, cherished by a few devout and thoughtful people. Who then came forward to supply the “want,” but the Methodist leaders, to whose memory you are so hostile? Generally speaking, no other parties, in the first instance, offered their aid. As time advanced, other agencies appeared. Godly men and women lent their help as teachers in Sunday-schools, tract-distributers, visiters of the sick, Missionary collectors, &c.; but the pious activity of these parties was not the “cause” of the success of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield, but an effect of their ministry; so that here again your argument breaks down. The people who connected themselves with these Methodist leaders did not begin by offering their services in “ecclesiastical” affairs, but by inquiring, “What must we do to be saved?” and it was when they were made partakers of the benefits of true religion themselves, that they became concerned for the salvation of others, and put forth a generous activity in the cause of Christian godliness.

It is clear, then, that neither a love of novelty

* Aids to Faith, p. 51.

cherished by men of shallow intellect, nor the desire for ecclesiastical activity, nor both combined, will account for the success of the Methodist ministry. A true philosophy, as well as a sound theology, will assign that success to causes more efficient than these. What they were, we will ere long inquire.

In the meanwhile, I take the liberty to say that the account you give of the preaching of these men is open to just exception. They did, indeed, preach "the new birth;" and "the term," as used by them, as well as by our blessed Lord, "had a sound and valuable meaning;" a meaning far deeper and more important than you have given to it. They understood it to denote an entire change of character; a change from sin to holiness; a change symbolized by baptism, but effected by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of "the word of truth." The principle of this great change they believed to be love; the love of God, and of all mankind for His sake, producing cheerful obedience to His commandments, zeal for His glory, a careful abstinence from whatever would injure any man, and a willingness to please and serve every one for his good. You say they meant by the new birth, "not the production of a new *belief*, but of a new *sense* of the reality and importance of momentous truths involved in what had been already assented to." Why, every lost spirit that had a Christian training has a "new *sense* of the reality and importance" of the momentous truths which were formerly assented to, but never cordially believed and obeyed; but the new birth prepares mankind for "the kingdom of God." How many a nominal Christian, upon the bed of mortal sickness, has even a distressing "sense of the reality and importance of truths," to which through life he

yielded a cold assent, but which he never reduced to practice; and yet, notwithstanding this "new sense," he dies in despair!

But, my Lord, the new birth was not the only doctrine that the leaders of Methodism preached with special earnestness and fidelity, and that contributed directly to their usefulness and success. They gave equal if not even greater prominence in their sermons to the kindred tenet of justification by faith; which Bishop Horsley has justly said "is no private tenet," "but the common doctrine of all the first Reformers; not to say that it is the very corner-stone of the whole system of redemption." The Methodist leaders laboured with all their might to convince their hearers who were living in the love and practice of sin, that they were under the wrath of God, in a state of condemnation, and in danger of endless misery; and that, until their guilt was cancelled, and their persons were justified through faith in the sacrifice of Christ, they could neither be happy nor holy in this world, nor escape "the damnation of hell" in the next. Their first concern, therefore, was to bring their hearers to a just apprehension of their danger, as transgressors of the law of God, and then to lead them in penitence and faith unfeigned to the blood of the Cross; that they might be justified freely by the grace of God, and thus pass from death unto life. They believed that peace of conscience and purity of heart are consequent upon justification, but can never go before it. Never would their success have been what it was, if they had confined their ministry to the new birth, especially in the superficial sense you have assigned to that term.

With respect to the matter of his preaching, Mr. Wesley says, in the Preface to his Sermons,—

To candid, reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life, as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit, come from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the great gulf, till a few moments hence I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity. I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone. Only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights, "Lord, is it not Thy word, 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?' Thou 'givest liberally, and upbraidest not.' Thou hast said, 'If any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know.' I am willing to do, let me know Thy will." I then search after, and consider, parallel passages of Scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby being dead they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.

We shall soon see whether or not this method of ascertaining the sense of Holy Scripture is the same as that which you ascribe to the Methodists generally.

The manner in which you mention the

PERSECUTIONS THAT WERE ENDURED BY THE
EARLY METHODIST PREACHERS,

while endeavouring to revive a sense of religion in the people, I cannot but regard as a proof that you have paid little attention to the subject. Had you been aware of the facts of the case, you could hardly

have spoken of them with such levity. "A shower of mud and of turnip-tops on Kennington-Common," is your only reference to the brutal violence which was generally encountered, in the early years of Methodism, by the men who, pitying the people in the state of ignorance and wickedness into which they had fallen, endeavoured to awaken them to a sense of their guilt and danger, and raise them to a state of purity and happiness. "A shower of mud" might be annoying, but it would break no bones; and "turnip-tops" would be about as harmless as bits of paper. But, my Lord, these were not the missiles which the sons of violence were accustomed to use in their opposition to Methodist Preachers. Stones and brickbats, bludgeons, and fire-engines, were in more general requisition with the men who loved darkness rather than light, and who deprecated all interference with their moral habits. Mr. Wesley's Journal, that of his brother, and the biographies of the early Methodist Preachers, abound with details of this kind. I will mention one case as a specimen. The account is given in artless language, by the sufferer himself, who was associated with Mr. Wesley in his great evangelical enterprise. His name was Thomas Mitchell. He says:—

In the year 1751 I was stationed in Lincolnshire. I found a serious people, and an open door; but there were many adversaries.

On Sunday, August 7th, I came to Wrangle, very early in the morning. I preached, as usual, at five. About six two constables came at the head of a large mob. They violently broke in upon the people, seized upon me, pulled me down, and took me to a public house, where they kept me till four in the afternoon. Then one of the constables seemed to relent, and said, "I will go to the Minister, and inquire of him whether we may not now let the poor man go." When he came back, he

said they were not to let him go yet. So he took me out to the mob, who presently hurried me away, and threw me into a pool of standing water. It took me up to the neck. Several times I strove to get out, but they pitched me in again. They told me I must go through it seven times. I did so; and then they let me come out. When I had got upon dry ground, a man stood ready with a pot full of white paint. He painted me all over from head to foot; and then they carried me into a public-house again. Here I was kept till they had put five more of our friends into the water. Then they came, and took me out again, and carried me to a great pond, which was railed in on every side, being ten or twelve feet deep. Here four men took me by my legs and arms, and swung me backward and forward. For a moment I felt the flesh shrink; but it was quickly gone. I gave myself up to the Lord, and was content His will should be done. They swung me two or three times, and then threw me as far as they could into the water. The fall and the water soon took away my senses, so that I felt nothing more. But some of them were not willing to have me drowned. So they watched till I came above water, and then, catching hold of my clothes with a long pole, made shift to drag me out.

I lay senseless for some time. When I came to myself, I saw only two men standing by me. One of them helped me up, and desired me to go with him. He brought me to a little house, where they quickly put me to bed. But I had not lain long before the mob came again, pulled me out of bed, carried me into the street, and swore they would take away one of my limbs, if I would not promise to come there no more. I told them, "I can promise no such thing." But the man that had hold of me promised for me, and took me back into the house, and put me to bed again.

Some of the mob then went to the Minister again, to know what they must do with me. He told them, "You must take him out of the parish." So they came, and took me out of bed a second time. But I had no clothes to put on; my own being wet, and also covered with paint. But they put an old coat about me, took me about a mile, and set me upon a little hill. They then shouted three times, "God save the King, and the devil take the Preacher!"

Here they left me penniless and friendless: for no one durst come near me. And my strength was nearly gone; so that I had much ado to walk, or even to stand. But from the beginning to the end my mind was in perfect peace. I found no anger or resentment, but could heartily pray for my persecutors. But I knew not what to do, or where to go. Indeed, one of our friends lived three or four miles off. But I was so weak and ill, that it did not seem possible for me to get so far. However, I trusted in God, and set out; and at length I got to the house. The family did everything for me that was in their power: they got me clothes, and whatever else was needful. I rested four days with them, in which time my strength was tolerably restored. Then I went into the Circuit, where I met with more persecution. As I was preaching in a certain village in the Fen, the mob came into the house, and broke through the congregation, in order to pull me down; but the good woman of the house took me into the parlour, and stood in the door with a great kitchen-poker in her hand, and told the mob, the first man that came near the door, she would knock him down. As she was very big with child, and near the time of her travail, this, with the sight of the great poker, kept them off, so that they could not get at me. However, they stayed some time, and then left the house without doing much harm. After they were gone, I gave an exhortation, went to prayer, and then we went to bed in peace. In the midst of this persecution, many were brought to the saving knowledge of God. And as the sufferings of Christ abounded, so our consolations by Christ abounded also. As to the lions at Wrangle, an appeal to the Court of King's Bench made both them and the Minister quiet as lambs.—(*Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, vol. i., pp. 74—77. Edit. 1837.)

This is a specimen, my Lord, of the “great movement” into which the Wesleys and their fellow-labourers “flung themselves,” and which they endeavoured not to advance, but to arrest. The disgraceful scene, you will observe, took place on a *Sunday*. According to Pliny, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, the Christians of Bithynia, in the second century,

met for Divine worship before the light of day, aware that they would otherwise be interrupted by the heathen. Thomas Mitchell, as was his wont, preached at five o'clock in the morning; but even at this early hour the heathen of Wrangle were on the alert, prepared to resist all Methodistical innovations, and maintain their sinful habits undisturbed.

Yet, notwithstanding this formidable and general opposition, that a great religious and moral change was effected in England in the time of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield is an undeniable fact, however it may be accounted for. It has been generally believed that the change was brought about by means in the application of which they led the way; and great respect for their memory has often been expressed on this account. That they did some good, you confess; but, if we may judge from the general tenor of what you have said concerning them, they did much more harm; and things would have been far better at this day, had the Wesleys and Whitefield never appeared. They "misdirected" a good work, which others had begun, and perhaps "spoiled" it "for ever." You therefore not only reflect upon their character, and call them by an ill name, but speak disparagingly of their labours, and reduce their usefulness to the smallest possible amount. You say that they neither "originated a reformation," nor had they "to convert the English population to a belief in Christianity."* It may be, therefore, proper to inquire,

WHAT CREDIT IS REALLY DUE TO THE WESLEYS
AND MR. WHITEFIELD.

Far be it from me to claim for them any honours to which they are not fairly entitled.

* Aids to Faith, pp. 49, 50.

It certainly was not necessary to inform the general reader, that in the early part of the last century the "English population" were neither pagans nor professed unbelievers, though many persons were tainted with infidelity, and a general profligacy of manners prevailed; for everybody knows that for many ages before the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield were born England was professedly a Christian country. It had its authorized version of the Holy Scriptures, a Protestant Church established by law, a Liturgy and doctrinal articles which had received legislative sanction, and churches and chapels, with a body of Clergy appointed to officiate in them; and it had a literature surpassing in sacred scholarship and in sound theology that of any other nation either ancient or modern. These were mighty advantages, which these faithful men duly appreciated, and of which they did not fail to avail themselves. In confirmation of their teaching, they not only appealed to the Bible as an inspired book, but to the ecclesiastical formularies which were drawn up by the martyrs of the Reformation.

But does it follow that, because their way was thus prepared for them, and they entered into the labours of other men, they did little or nothing for the public good; and that posterity owes them a very small amount of gratitude, if it owes them any at all? Do we owe nothing, then, to the Protestant Reformers, because their way was prepared by Wickliffe and the Lollards? nothing to Wickliffe and the Lollards, because their way was prepared by the Churches in the valleys of Piedmont? Do we owe nothing to the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, because their way was prepared by Moses and the Prophets? Important as were the advantages which the leaders of Methodism enjoyed, and the help which they

received from various quarters, they made great sacrifices, encountered and overcame appalling difficulties, and accomplished, by the blessing of God, a great and good work; and their memory, I conceive, is entitled to a treatment very different from that which you have awarded to it.

We claim for them the credit of introducing a kind of preaching vastly superior to that which they found in general practice: superior as to its substance, its spirit, and its manner. In their pulpit ministrations they substituted Gospel truth for heathen ethics; announcing, in a manner the most explicit, the ruin of mankind by sin, and their redemption by the death of Christ. They preached Christ as a Sacrifice for sin, and a Saviour from it; and the salvation of which He is the Author, they declared to be attainable now, and attainable by faith, as a free and unmerited gift. They also gave great prominence in their sermons to the office and work of the Holy Spirit, representing Him as the direct Author of all spiritual and moral good in fallen men: so that without Him they can do nothing that is acceptable to God, but with Him they can do all that God requires. However deeply, therefore, individuals may have fallen, and however powerful and inveterate may be their evil habits, none need despair in their attempts to attain the Christian character.

At the same time, their spirit was deeply serious, and their zeal the pure flame of holy love; love to Christ, whom they felt to be *their* Saviour; and love to the souls of dying men, whom they regarded as their Saviour's purchase. To Him their language was,—

“Too much to Thee I cannot give,
Too much I cannot do for Thee;”

and with respect to mankind,—

“The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men ;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the gaping grave.”

They preached, not to display their scholarship, or their powers of oratory, or merely to fulfil a duty, but to save souls. If they succeeded, their joy rose to rapture; if in any particular place they succeeded not, they mourned in secret, and felt that their mission was a failure. For help and success their trust was in God, and in Him only. They preached daily, at every opportunity, “in season,” and “out of season:” for, like the Apostles, they “gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

Their self-denial corresponded with their doctrine and their zeal, and was second only to that of the Apostles. Considering their abilities, (for they were not “weak persons,” though you have spoken of them as such,) they might doubtless have obtained ecclesiastical appointments, in the possession of which they could have lived in ease and plenty, enjoying the luxury of learned leisure,—had they chosen in this manner to spend the brief period of human life. But they had other views of ministerial responsibility, and gave themselves to Christ with an entire devotion, carrying His Gospel to neglected masses of people, for whom no man seemed to care, regardless alike of the summer’s heat, and of the winter’s cold; (for they preached abroad at all seasons of the year;) exposing themselves to personal violence from infuriated mobs, and making no account of public ridicule and scorn. It was not for worldly gain that these men did and suffered these things. Then, as well as now, men spoke all manner of evil against them; but they looked

to a higher tribunal than that of popular opinion. Their "judgment was with the Lord," and their "work with their God;" and if He approved of them, and sanctioned their word, they desired no more.

But, my Lord, the labours of these men are to be viewed in connexion with the effects produced, and especially with the raising up of a large body of people, who exhibited in life and death all the characteristics of New-Testament Christianity. Thousands of these people, from the time of their conversion, lived in habits of devotion; they discharged with conscientious fidelity the various duties of domestic and social life; they suffered injuries with meekness, were patient in pain and sickness, contented in poverty, and died in the joyous hope of endless happiness with their glorified Saviour. These effects, my Lord, we confess, the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield did not "originate," except instrumentally. They far surpass human power and skill; and, wherever they appear, they are unquestionably the effect of the Holy Spirit's operation. These peculiarities of the Christian character may be called enthusiasm, fanaticism, or anything else; but foul names, though repeated with the utmost pertinacity, cannot alter the nature of things. Holy and upright believers in Christ, wherever they are found, are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

Six years after the Methodist leaders had entered upon their work as field-preachers, Mr. Wesley published the following appeal, as to the effects of their ministry, and the agency by which these effects were produced:—

I cannot but entreat you who know God to review the whole matter from the foundation. Call to mind what the state of religion was in our nation a few years since. In whom did you

find the holy tempers that were in Christ? bowels of mercies, lowliness, meekness, gentleness, contempt of the world, patience, temperance, longsuffering? a burning love to God, rejoicing evermore, and in everything giving thanks; and a tender love to all mankind, covering, believing, hoping, enduring all things? Perhaps you did not know one such man in the world. But how many that had all unholy tempers! What vanity and pride, what stubbornness and self-will, what anger, fretfulness, discontent, what suspicion and resentment, what inordinate affections, what irregular passions, what foolish and hurtful desires, might you find in those who were called the *best* of men, in those who made the strictest profession of religion! And how few did you know who went so far as the profession of religion, who had even "the form of godliness!" Did you not frequently bewail, wherever your lot was cast, the general want of even outward religion? How few were seen at the public worship of God! how much fewer at the Lord's table! And was even this little flock zealous of good works, careful, as they had time, to do good to all men? On the other hand, did you not with grief observe outward irreligion in every place? Where could you be for one week without being an eye or an ear witness of cursing, swearing, or profaneness, of Sabbath-breaking or drunkenness, of quarrelling or brawling, of revenge or obscenity? Were these things done in a corner? Did not gross iniquity of all kinds overspread our land as a flood? yea, and daily increase, in spite of all the opposition which the children of God did or could make against it?

If you had been then told that the jealous God would soon arise and maintain His own cause; that He would pour down His Spirit from on high, and renew the face of the earth; that He would shed abroad His love in the hearts of the outcasts of men, producing all holy and heavenly tempers, expelling anger, and pride, and evil desire, and all unholy and earthly tempers; causing outward religion, the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love, to flourish and abound; and, wherever it spread, abolishing outward irreligion, destroying all the works of the devil: if you had been told that this living knowledge of the Lord would in a short space of time overspread our land; yea, and daily increase, in spite of all the opposition which the devil and his children did or could make against it; would you

not have vehemently desired to see that day, that you might bless God, and rejoice therein?

Behold, the day of the Lord is come! He is again visiting and redeeming His people. Having eyes, see ye not? Having ears, do ye not hear, neither understand with your hearts? At this hour the Lord is rolling away our reproach. Already His standard is set up. His Spirit is poured forth on the outcasts of men, and His love shed abroad in their hearts. Love of all mankind, meekness, gentleness, humbleness of mind, holy and heavenly affections, do take place of hate, anger, pride, revenge, and vile or vain affections. Hence, wherever the power of the Lord spreads, springs outward religion in all its forms. The houses of God are filled; the table of the Lord is thronged on every side. And those who thus show their love of God, show they love their neighbour also, by being careful to maintain good works, by doing all manner of good, as they have time, to all men. They are likewise careful to abstain from all evil. Cursing, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, with all other (however fashionable) works of the devil, are not once named among them. All this is plain, demonstrable fact. For this also is not done in a corner.—(*Works*, vol. viii., pp. 40, 41. Edit. 1830.)

As he advanced in life, he contemplated the success of this great work, both at home and abroad, with increasing delight and gratitude. In the year 1777 he laid the foundation of a new chapel in the City-road, London, more than thirty years after he had published this appeal; and in the sermon which he delivered on the occasion he makes the following remarks:—

Methodism, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive church, the religion of the Church of England. This old religion is no other than love, the love of God, and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved us,—as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul. This love is the great

medicine of life ; the never-failing remedy for 'all the evils of a disordered world ; for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand ; there is humbleness of mind, gentleness, longsuffering, the whole image of God ; and, at the same time, a " peace that passeth all understanding," with " joy unspeakable and full of glory." This religion of love, and joy, and peace, has its seat in the inmost soul ; but is ever showing itself by its fruits, continually springing up, not only in all innocence, (for love worketh no ill to his neighbour,) but likewise in every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness to all around it.

Just at the time when we wanted little of filling up the measure of our iniquities, two or three Clergymen of the Church of England began vehemently to call sinners to repentance. Many thousands gathered together to hear them ; and in every place where they came, many began to show such a concern for religion as they never had done before. Many were in a short time deeply convinced of the number and heinousness of their sins, of their evil tempers, of their inability to help themselves, and of the insignificance of their outside religion. And from this repentance sprung fruits meet for repentance. The whole form of their life was changed. They " ceased to do evil, and learned to do well." Neither was this all ; but, over and above this outward change, they began to experience inward religion. The love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, which they enjoy to this day. They " love Him, because He first loved us ;" and this love constrains them to love all mankind, and inspires them with every holy and heavenly temper, with the mind which was in Christ. Hence it is that they are now uniform in their behaviour, unblamable in all manner of conversation ; and in whatsoever state they are, they have learned therewith to be content. Thus they calmly travel on through life, never repining, or murmuring, or dissatisfied, till the hour comes that they shall drop this covering of earth, and return to the Father of spirits.

This revival of religion has spread to such a degree as neither we nor our fathers had known. How *extensive* has it been ! There is scarce a considerable town in the kingdom, where some have not been made witnesses of it. It has spread to every age and sex, to most orders and degrees of men ; and even to abun-

dance of those who, in time past, were accounted monsters of wickedness.

Consider the *swiftness* as well as the extent of it. In what age has such a number of sinners been recovered, in so short a time, from the error of their ways? When has true religion, I will not say since the Reformation, but since the time of Constantine the Great, made so large a progress in any nation, within so small a space? I believe, hardly can either ancient or modern history afford a parallel instance.

We may likewise observe the *depth* of the work so extensively and swiftly wrought. Multitudes have been thoroughly convinced of sin; and, shortly after, so filled with joy and love, that, whether they were in the body, or out of the body, they could hardly tell; and in the power of this love they have trampled under foot whatever the world accounts either terrible or desirable, having evidenced, in the severest trials, an invariable and tender good-will to mankind, and all the fruits of holiness. Now, so deep a repentance, so strong a faith, so fervent a love, and so unblemished holiness, wrought in so many persons in so short a time, the world has not seen for many ages.

No less remarkable is the *purity* of the religion which has extended itself so deeply and swiftly. I speak particularly as to the doctrines held by those who are the subjects of it. Those of the Church of England, at least, must acknowledge this; for where is there a body of people who, number for number, so closely adhere to the doctrines of the Church?

Nor is their religion more pure from heresy than it is from *superstition*. In former times, wherever any unusual religious concern has appeared, there has sprung up with it a zeal for things that were no part of religion. But it has not been so in the present case. No stress has been laid on anything, as though it was necessary to salvation, but what is plainly contained in the word of God. And of the things contained therein, the stress laid on each has been in proportion to the nearness of its relation to what is there laid down as the sum of all,—the love of God and our neighbour. So pure, both from superstition and error, is the religion which has lately spread in this nation.

It is likewise *rational*. It is as pure from enthusiasm as from superstition. It is true, the contrary has been continually

affirmed ; but to affirm is one thing, to prove is another. Who will prove that it is enthusiasm to love God ? yea, to love Him with all our heart ? Who is able to make good this charge against the love of all mankind ? (I do but just touch on the general heads.) But if you cannot make it good, own this religion to be sober, manly, rational, Divine.

It is also pure from *bigotry*. Those who hold it are not bigoted to opinions. They would hold right opinions ; but they are peculiarly cautious not to rest the weight of Christianity there. They have no such overgrown fondness for any opinions, as to think those alone will make them Christians ; or to confine their affection, or esteem, to those that agree with them therein. Nor are they bigoted to any particular branch even of practical religion. They are not attached to one point more than another. They aim at uniform, universal obedience. They contend for nothing circumstantial, as if it were essential to religion ; but for everything in its own order.

They dread that *bitter zeal*, that spirit of *persecution*, which has so often accompanied the spirit of reformation. They do not approve of using any kind of violence, on any pretence, in matters of religion. They allow no method of bringing any to the knowledge of the truth, except the methods of reason and persuasion : and their practice is consistent with their profession. They do not, in fact, hinder their dependents from worshipping God, in every respect, according to their own conscience.

But if these things are so, may we not well say, "What hath God wrought !" For such a work, if we consider the *extensiveness* of it, the *swiftness* with which it has spread, the *depth* of the religion so swiftly diffused, and its *purity* from all corrupt mixtures, we must acknowledge, cannot easily be paralleled, in all these concurrent circumstances, by anything that is found in the English annals since Christianity was first planted in this island.—(*Works*, vol. vii., pp. 423—427.)

Such was the spirit, the devotedness, the self-denial of the Wesleys, and their friend and associate Whitefield ; and such the success with which it pleased God in perpetuity to crown their labours and to gladden their hearts. This, my Lord, is the "rank Method-

ism," of which you speak so contemptuously. Whether it is a benefit or a bane, let others judge. The evidence is before them. If "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," it is with an ill grace that men murmur and cavil, fret and fume, when a multitude of sinners not only repent, but also believe to the saving of their souls.

You conclude your attack upon the Methodists with several

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which call for further replies; and these will require a further exercise of your patience. You say, "In the flush and fervour of their triumph, and the general silence of the advocates of infidelity, the evangelical leaders went on securely,—comparing proudly their own achievements with the performances of their predecessors."* This, my Lord, is a serious charge, and affects their character as Christians. If it be true, they were vain-glorious men, and not men who, like the Apostles, "served the Lord with all humility of mind." When they saw some thousands of ignorant and wicked people, in a comparatively short space of time, "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," they did indeed rejoice, and well they might; but that they ever spoke of the cheering facts which they daily witnessed as "their own achievements," is not true. They uniformly spoke of them as "the work of God;" just as did the Apostles when they contemplated the success of the Gospel. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh

* Aids to Faith, p. 54.

manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." (2 Cor. ii. 14.) Nor is it true, that they "compared their achievements with the performances of their" clerical "predecessors." They lamented the notorious ignorance and profligacy of the people, and were grateful to see many of them turned from the error of their way; but they were not in the habit of speaking evil of the Clergy, nor of depreciating their "performances," though many of the Clergy spoke evil both of them and of their doings. For nothing was Mr. Wesley more remarkable than for the respect and tenderness with which he used to speak of the Clergy, even of those who reviled him. Nor did "the evangelical leaders" speak "proudly" of their own ministry and success. According to the teaching of the Bible, pride is a vice, and is especially offensive to Almighty God. "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xvi. 5.) "God resisteth the proud." (James iv. 6.) It is easy for you, my Lord, to accuse "the evangelical leaders" of pride, or of any other vice, now that they are sleeping in their graves; but where is the proof? and, in the absence of proof, where is the authority to prefer the charge?

You further state, that "the evangelical leaders" "went on," "declaring that they needed no other evidence than the manifest adaptation of their doctrine to the wants of mankind, and its living power, when received, to regenerate a sinful race." You have here, my Lord, stated a great truth; but what you impute to "the evangelical leaders" as matter of blame, I cannot but regard as proof of sound wisdom on their part. For, what are "the wants of mankind?" and what was the "doctrine" of these men? "The wants of mankind" are—the pardon of

sin; for every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is guilty before God; (Rom. iii. 19;)—purity of heart; “for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness;” (Mark vii. 21, 22;)—tranquillity of conscience, for “there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked;” (Isaiah xlviii. 22;)—spiritual and moral power; for in and of themselves mankind are “without strength,” “dead in trespasses and sins;” (Rom. v. 6; Eph. ii. 1;)—admission into heaven; for “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” (Heb. ix. 27.) To all these “wants” we find an exact and “manifest adaptation” in the “doctrine” which was taught by “the evangelical leaders.” But then it was not “their doctrine” only, but the doctrine of the Apostles, and of all evangelical churches throughout the world. The sacrifice of the cross contains a provision for the justification of the ungodly; the gift of the Holy Ghost secures the sanctification of the unholy, and the consolation of the miserable; the grace of Christ imparts strength to them that have no might; and to those who, being thus sanctified and strengthened, “give diligence to make their calling and election sure, an entrance shall be ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Now, my Lord, “the evangelical leaders,” having preached this “doctrine,” and witnessed its effects in the conversion of drunkards, blasphemers, harlots, and thieves, and in the holy lives and happy deaths of the people thus reclaimed,—and having observed that precisely the same effects were by the same means produced in the most abandoned Jews and

heathens in the apostolic times,—they naturally concluded that the same “doctrine,” preached in the same manner, applied by the same power, and practically “received” by those who hear it, will “regenerate a sinful race.” Did they judge erroneously in this case? So you intimate. They “went on,” however, to preach the same “doctrine” to the end of life, and with precisely the same results; and so delighted were they with their work, and with the effects everywhere produced, that they sang with holy transport,—

“’Tis worth living for this,
To administer bliss,
And salvation in Jesus’s name.”

Since “the evangelical leaders,” the Wesleys and Whitefield, died, the men who entered into their labours have preached the same doctrine, and have witnessed the same results, in the mining, manufacturing, and agricultural districts of England and Ireland; on the American continent; in the West Indies; in Africa; in the Friendly Islands; and among the cannibals of New-Zealand and Fiji. It is an undeniable fact, established upon indubitable evidence, that by the plain and faithful preaching of this “doctrine” thousands of men and women, who a few years ago were so degraded as to feed upon human flesh, are now united together in religious fellowship, are devout worshippers of God, kneel at the table of the Lord, read the Holy Scriptures and pray in their families, and otherwise present in their conduct all the characteristic marks of primitive Christianity. Whatever discredit may be thrown upon this “doctrine,” you may rest assured that Methodist Preachers, the spiritual children of “the evangelical leaders” of the last century, having these facts before

them, and the apostolic writings in their hands, will submit to any amount of reproach, and will even die, rather than abandon the "doctrine" which they know to be "the truth as it is in Jesus," and which they everywhere see to be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

You go on to say, that "the natural consequence of all this was an extensive decay among them of theological learning." You say, "among them;" and the connexion of the sentence would lead us to conclude that "the evangelical leaders," the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield, are the parties intended. Do you then say, that these devoted men, at the outset of their public career, were learned theologians; but that, as they advanced in life, their "theological learning" declined, so that they became drivellers and dotards? This can hardly be your meaning, though your words imply it. Do you then mean that "an extensive decay of theological learning" took place among their spiritual children, the people who were converted through their instrumentality? Neither, I imagine, can this be your design; for many of these people had been so neglected, before their conversion, that they could not even read. They therefore knew no more of "theological learning" than they knew of astronomy; and that which did not exist, I presume, could not "decay." Your statement, I hence conclude, refers to the men who agreed with "the evangelical leaders," and were any way connected with them as "ministers of the word;" for you speak of their "preaching." Your charge, therefore, of "an extensive decay of theological learning," applies to the entire body of Preachers who have borne, and who now bear, the name of Methodist, whether in the Established

Church, or out of it; whether Arminian, or Calvinistic; whether Wesleyan, Primitive, New-Connexion, or any other class of people who claim affinity either with the Wesleys, or with Mr. Whitefield. I will answer for my own denomination, leaving others to defend themselves, if they deem it necessary. Without hesitation, I give a flat denial to your statement, so far as the Wesleyan section of the Methodist family is concerned. "An extensive decay of theological learning" is no "natural consequence" of the "doctrine" they have received; nor has any such "decay" ever taken place among them. Some of the Preachers who were associated with the Wesleys as fellow-labourers in the Gospel were scholars; but a majority of them were not so; yet they were men of strong understanding, of unquestionable piety, diligent students of the Bible, and of earnest zeal. After hearing one of them in Leeds, Dr. Priestley said, "He must do good; for he aims at nothing else;" and after hearing another of them, the late Dr. Chalmers said, "He goes about converting the people in a business-like manner." Concerning one of his Preachers Mr. Wesley has left the following record: "He was so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible, that if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old, or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but also what it meant in every place. His name was Thomas Walsh. Such a master of Biblical knowledge I never saw before, and never expect to see again."* Of his Preachers in general he says, "In the one thing which they profess to know, they

* Wesley's Works, vol. vii., p. 54. Edit. 1829.

are not ignorant men. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination, in substantial, practical, experimental divinity, as few of our candidates for holy orders, even in the University, (I speak it with sorrow and shame, and in tender love,) are able to do.”*

On what authority you make your sweeping assertion of “an extensive decay of theological learning,” I know not. I have been personally connected with the body of Wesleyan Ministers for nearly sixty years; I know the men and their communications; I have carefully studied the history of their predecessors, from the time at which Mr. Wesley accepted the services of men who had not been episcopally ordained; and I aver that from that time sound “theological learning” among them, so far from being in a state of “extensive decay,” has steadily advanced, and was never so widely diffused among them as it is at present. There may not be any one of them, now living, who is possessed of the varied scholarship of the late Dr. Adam Clarke; but that great and excellent man never had among his brethren so many successful rivals as there are at this day. So much for the “extensive decay” which you affirm.

Perhaps you are not aware of the amount of sacred and useful literature that Mr. Wesley provided for the Preachers and people who were in religious connexion with him. Allow me therefore to state, that, in addition to his own voluminous writings, and those of his friend the devout and learned Vicar of Madeley, he published a “Christian Library” in fifty volumes, comprehending, in an abridged form, some

* Wesley's Works, vol. viii., p. 221. Edit. 1830.

of the most valuable theological compositions that had then appeared in the English language; a History of England, in four volumes; an Ecclesiastical History, in four volumes; a Compendium of Natural Philosophy, in five volumes; and that he published twelve volumes of a monthly Magazine, in which he inserted some of the most profound treatises on the predestinarian controversy that had then appeared; and also copious extracts, with notes, from Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding. This publication has been continued to the present time; and is at this day one of the most widely circulated of all the religious periodicals of the age. To some persons it may perhaps appear incredible, but it is, nevertheless, a fact, that, independently of his own original works, which occupy fourteen large octavo volumes, Mr. Wesley abridged, revised, and printed no fewer than one hundred and seventeen distinct publications, reckoning his Christian Library, his Histories, and his Philosophy, as only one each; and that the brothers, separately and unitedly, published forty-seven poetical tracts and volumes, most of which were the compositions of Mr. Charles Wesley, and adapted to the use of public, domestic, and private devotion. Since the death of the Wesleys large and important additions have been made to the literature of the Connexion by able and studious men, particularly by the late Richard Watson, whose "Theological Institutes" have been and still are extensively read and highly appreciated, and by others, who have successfully undertaken the exposition of Holy Scripture. The monthly and yearly issues of the Methodist press prove anything but an "extensive decay of theological learning," either among the Methodist Preachers or the people.

Other censures upon the Methodist Preachers you have in reserve. "A few leading doctrines," you say, "were, for them, the essence of the Gospel; and their preaching, in too many cases, became little more than a monotonous repetition of those doctrines. For such a ministry neither deep research nor accurate thinking was at all necessary. On the contrary, it was manifest that, in order to make a great part of the Bible available for the direct teaching of a few subjects to which they confined themselves, it was needful to violate all rules of sober criticism, and confound the Old Testament with the New by an arbitrary spiritualizing interpretation to which reason could set no limits." Here are three charges indiscriminately preferred against the ministry of the Gospel as it has been and still is exercised among the Methodists. I will again answer for my own community; and, so far as the Wesleyan body is concerned, I affirm you have said the thing that is not. The practice of "spiritualizing," I fearlessly declare, never did prevail in the Wesleyan Connexion, either during Mr. Wesley's lifetime or since his death. We have volumes of sermons written by Mr. Wesley, by Walsh, Benson, Bradburn, Pawson, Clarke, Edmondson, Sutcliffe, Watson, Bunting, and many others; for upwards of eighty years sermons written by Methodist Preachers have been, as a matter of course, inserted in their monthly Magazine; and, if it would not appear rude and personally offensive, I would challenge you to produce from all these volumes a single sermon of the kind you describe.

Why the Ministers who hold the doctrine of present salvation from sin through faith in Christ, as preparatory to a holy and obedient life, should confine themselves to so limited a range of instruction as

you describe, you have not shown; nor why such a doctrine requires "neither deep research nor accurate thinking." All that we know concerning salvation from sin, by faith in Christ, is derived from Holy Scripture; and is "no deep research," no "accurate thinking," requisite in proving that Scripture, as we now possess it, is an authentic revelation of the mind of God? as well as in ascertaining the correct interpretation of the inspired record? Besides, the doctrine in question stands in essential connexion with the fact of our redemption by the death of God's incarnate Son: and that fact involves mysteries which "the angels desire to look into," and which the human intellect tries in vain to fathom. Nor must we forget that the doctrine in question is intimately related to a thousand other truths of the profoundest interest, which are sufficient to tax the strongest intellect, and exercise the patience of the hardest student.

That the Apostles preached the doctrine of present salvation from sin by faith in Christ, and purity of conduct as consequent upon that salvation, is undeniable; and this doctrine they saw exemplified in their spiritual children. Thus St. Paul addressed the believers in Rome; men and women who had in their heathen state "yielded their members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity:"—"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Rom. vi. 19, 22.) Yet the Apostles did not confine their ministrations to this one doctrine; and why must Methodist Preachers confine themselves to it? That they did, and still do, you affirm, and I deny.

We confess, however, that the doctrine of salvation by faith, considered in itself, is so simple, that a child

can understand it. In this respect it is graciously adapted to all mankind; to the young, as well as the aged; to the illiterate, as well as the learned. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." (Rom. x. 8.)

You say, that the preaching of the Methodists "became little more than a monotonous repetition of" "a few leading doctrines." In the settlement of questions of this kind, my Lord, facts are better than mere assertions, either on one side or the other. Let me, then, state a few facts bearing upon the question you have here mooted. For more than a hundred years, the ministry which you thus describe has gradually drawn to itself an increasing number of friends and supporters; so that, at this day, about a million of people attend it in Great Britain, and a still greater number on the American continent. These people support this ministry by their voluntary contributions; for they have few or no endowments. They also build chapels for the exercise of this ministry, and schools connected with them, at a very large expense. On the erection of chapels and schools they expended more than £114,000 during the last year in England alone; and this is but a specimen of what they are doing from year to year. They also raise some £140,000 annually for the purpose of extending this ministry to heathen people. Now, if the Methodist ministry be that dull, uninteresting, and "monotonous" affair that you describe; if it comprehend nothing more than the repetition of "a few doctrines," which require "neither deep research nor accurate thinking," so that everybody, even little children, must know beforehand all that the Preacher is going to say; how is it possible that

it should produce these effects? People do not ordinarily part with their money upon light grounds, at least in perpetuity. Your statement, viewed in connexion with the facts of the case, bears a character of palpable absurdity; it surpasses all belief; and no affirmation, come from what quarter it may, can ever render it credible. There must be in this ministry a charm that you are not aware of. Shall I disclose the secret? The charm is not in oratory, nor in erudition, nor in anything that human ingenuity can supply; but in its subject,—Christ crucified,

“The Name to sinners dear,
The Name to sinners given.”

In the apostolic times the Jews required a sign, and the Greeks sought after wisdom; and there are Greeks now, and Greek professors, too, who are prosecuting the same search, and losing themselves in endless labyrinths of perplexity and doubt. Meantime, “we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” You may deem such preaching trite and “monotonous;” but we find it never loses its interest, and we believe it never will. When we have preached Christ, and sung His praise, to the end of life, we hope to join “with a loud voice,” indicative of the deepest feeling, in the new song, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Another charge you prefer against the “evangelical leaders” and their followers, which would be serious, if it were true: but, like the rest of your charges, it will not bear the test of a strict examina-

tion. It relates to the treatment of the Holy Scriptures. You say, "The practical result of such a course was an extensive, though vague, popular impression that the test of a correct exposition of Scripture was the amount of comfort or edification that the hearer or reader sensibly derived from it. The pious feelings which a text, as he understood it, produced in his mind were unhesitatingly regarded as the consequence of the Spirit's teaching through the word. Human agency, if it was indeed acknowledged, was necessary to teach a man to read; and human agency was needful to supply the unlearned with translations of the Bible; but beyond this, very little was allowed to any other help than prayer, for the profitable study of the Scripture." I will simply answer this most injurious allegation by two facts.—For nothing, generally speaking, have the Wesleyan Methodists been more remarkable than for their love of Holy Scripture, and their desire to understand its meaning. To assist and gratify them, Mr. Wesley published short notes on the entire Bible; and since his death his personal friend Dr. Coke published a very voluminous Commentary upon it, consisting in the main of a reprint of Dr. Dodd's Commentary, but with large additions; which was widely sold in the Wesleyan Connexion. Since that publication was completed, two large and elaborate Commentaries have been written and published by two Ministers, both of whom were in connexion with Mr. Wesley; one by Dr. Adam Clarke, the other by the Rev. Joseph Benson. Another Commentary of great value, but of less dimensions, has appeared, from the pen of the Rev. Joseph Sutcliffe, who also belonged to the Wesleyan body. In addition to these works, dictionaries and other elementary books, intended to facilitate the

study of the sacred volume, have been prepared for the use of the Methodists; particularly a large and valuable Biblical and Theological Dictionary, by the late Rev. Richard Watson. These works have been sold, not by thousands only, but by tens of thousands; and the last three Commentaries are now in constant demand, by those very people whose character you profess to draw. To meet the strong mental cravings of these people, the Methodist press has, in less than one hundred years, sent forth five Commentaries on the entire Bible. Whether any other Christian community has, during the same period, published an equal amount of Scripture interpretation, may be fairly doubted; and yet the Methodists, you tell the world, profess to require no human "agency" in the exposition of Scripture. They judge of its meaning solely by their personal "feelings!" Will you then inform us how it is, that a body of people, having these views, and making this profession, expend large sums of money, which many of them can ill spare, in the purchase of critical Commentaries, to aid them in their Biblical studies? If they are satisfied with what their own personal "feelings" dictate, why do they buy and read the expositions of other men? The truth is, your statement is an unjust censure upon a body of Christian people, with whose character and habits you are evidently unacquainted; and you have again placed yourself in the situation of "the Jews which came down from Jerusalem" to Cæsarea, and while they "stood round about, laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove."

I cannot forbear, my Lord, to observe the marked difference there is between your treatment of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield, and the manner in

which you speak of the Arian Dissenters, who were contemporary with them. The Wesleys and Whitefield were as orthodox as Athanasius himself: yet you denominate them "wild fanatics," and have otherwise censured them in no measured terms. The Arian Dissenters you characterize as "men of enlarged and liberal principles:" yet Dr. Harwood, who was one of them, in his volume of "Dissertations" which you quote, has used the strongest terms the English language can supply in condemnation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and of our blessed Saviour's Divinity and Atonement; and has uttered the foulest abuse against the fathers of the Nicene Council, and Athanasius in particular. It appears, then, that if "the evangelical leaders" of the last century, the Wesleys and Whitefield, would have forborne their ecclesiastical irregularities, field-preaching especially, and have left the profligate masses of England and Ireland to go quietly to perdition, they might have renounced the catholic faith, denied the three creeds, and yet have obtained a eulogy in a volume written for the express purpose of supplying "Aids to Faith." Happily for the world, these maligned men had nobler aims than the acquisition of such equivocal honour. A dispensation of the Gospel was committed to them; they felt their responsibility, and then acted with a direct reference to the day of judgment, and a state of endless retribution.

I observe further, my Lord, that the Methodists are the only people who are treated with marked disrespect in the volume to which you have contributed. Arians are there eulogized; emissaries of Rome, who are going about to persuade the people of England that the Reformation was a sin, and that Popery is the only true religion, are characterized as "amiable"

men, though they are thought to be "weak;" and the writers of "Essays and Reviews," who deny some of the leading doctrines of the Bible, and throw discredit upon the Bible itself, are treated with courtesy and candour. So far as these are concerned, the volume is free from all unseemly vituperation: while the Wesleys, Mr. Whitefield, and Methodists of every class, are treated with marked hostility. Sentiments and practices are imputed to them, of which they are as innocent as their accuser. How is this, my Lord? What is the "faith" which you intend to "aid?" Is it the catholic faith, "the faith of God's elect," "the faith of the Gospel?" If so, why are large bodies of Christian people, who are as sincerely attached to that "faith" as any men that ever lived, held up to public scorn? Do not mistake me, my Lord. I do not ask for your approval, or even for your forbearance. I only ask for truth and justice between man and man. If you will prove to the Methodists that they are in error, or that their practice is religiously and morally wrong, you will confer upon them a benefit, and be entitled to their gratitude. But they protest, in the name of truth and charity,—in the name of all that is sacred in morality and religion,—against the things you have said of them, and of the devoted men whose memory they revere, in your "Aids to Faith." If you deem their tenets worse than Arianism, worse than Popery, worse than Deistical infidelity, yet remember, they are not beyond the pale of humanity; and the ninth commandment of the Decalogue has never been repealed.

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