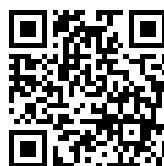
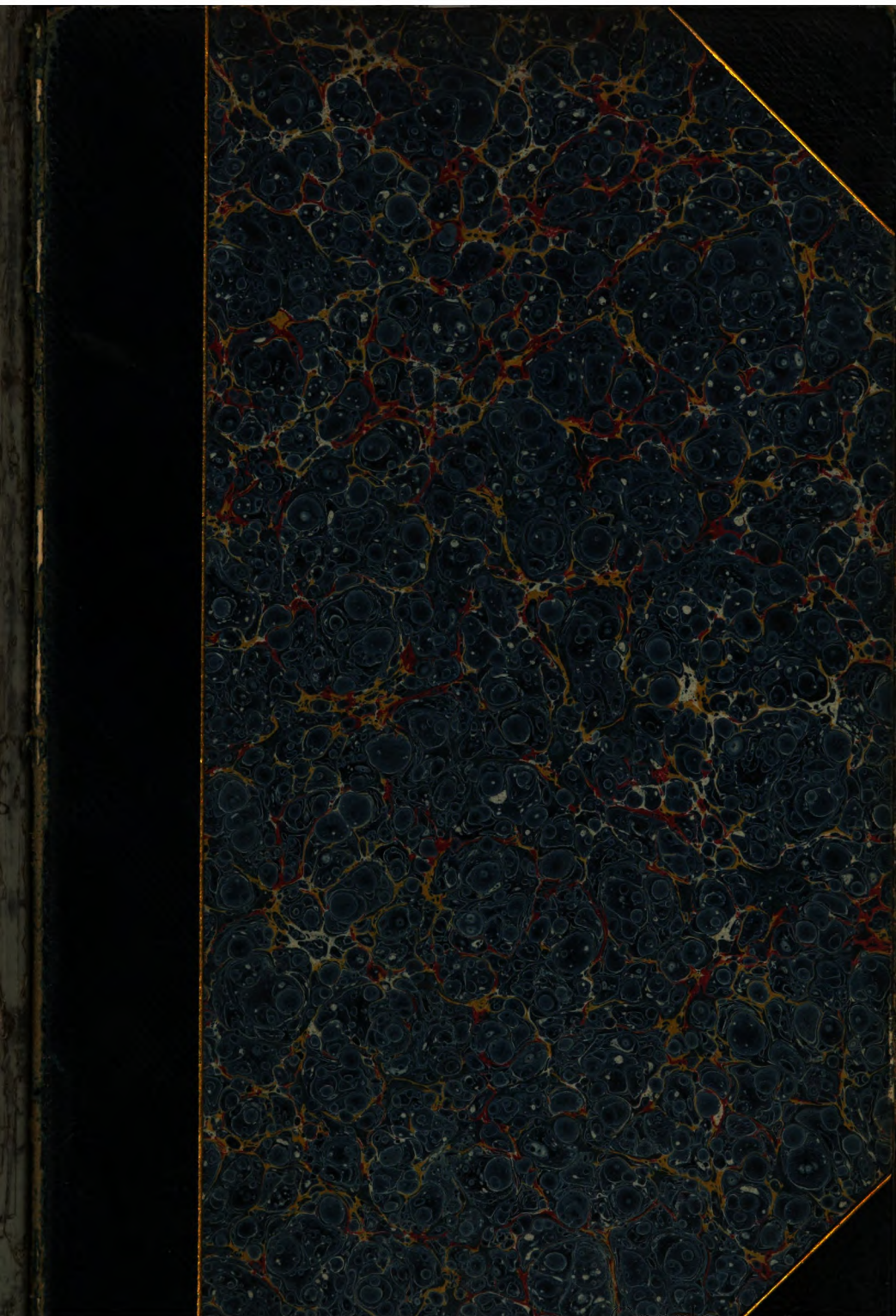

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THE
PRINCIPLES,
PRACTICE, AND DESIGNS,
OF THE
First Christians,
EXEMPLIFIED
IN THOSE OF THE METHODISTS.

A



A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE OPENING

OF THE

Methodist Chapel,

IN

TWICKENHAM, NEAR LONDON,

DECEMBER 14, 1800.

BY

JOSEPH BENSON:

THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF THE METHODISTS, OF
LATE IN CONNECTION WITH THE REV. JOHN WESLEY,
ARE STATED, AND SHOWN TO BE CONFORMABLE TO
THOSE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED

COPIOUS NOTES,

CONTAINING EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SEVERAL OF THE MOST
EMINENT PRELATES AND DIVINES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
ALL OF WHOM MAINTAINED, IN CONFORMITY WITH THEIR CHURCH,
THE DOCTRINES BELIEVED AND TAUGHT BY THE METHODISTS.

Let not your good be evil spoken of.—Rom. xiv. 16.

Be ready, always, to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of
the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience;
that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed
that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.—1 Peter iii. 15, 16.

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1812.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon was published in the January and February Numbers of the 27th Volume of the *Arminian or Methodist Magazine*, viz. for the year 1804, and also in a separate Pamphlet the same year. That Pamphlet having been long out of print, and the Sermon having been often inquired for by persons who missed the opportunity of procuring it while on sale, it is now republished, partly, to oblige these persons, but more especially with a view to answer, in some measure, the numberless inquiries which are made in different parts of the United Kingdom, and by many individuals of the higher, as well as the middling and lower ranks of society, concerning the Principles and Practice of a Sect now become very numerous, being spread over Great Britain, Ireland, and America, and continually increasing, although by many still spoken against. To render the information more full and complete than could possibly be given in a single Sermon, I had intended writing a Pamphlet expressly on the subject; but find myself compelled by my engagements with the Public in other Works, undertaken some years ago, and yet unfinished, to defer, for the present, the execution of my design; which, yet, I hope, hereafter, to be able to execute, unless in the interval I shall find it performed by some abler hand. In the mean time I hope the following Sermon, which I am certain, as far as it goes, gives a just and accurate, although, perhaps, not so full and complete a view as some might desire to see, of our Principles, Practice, and Designs, will partly at least satisfy all unprejudiced inquirers on these points, especially as illustrated and confirmed by the copious Notes annexed, which, the Reader will observe, are referred to in the Sermon by the figures 1, 2, 3, &c.

City-Road, March 25, 1812.



JOSEPH BENSON.

SERMON,

&c. &c.

ACTS XXVII. 22.

We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: For as concerning this Sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

1. SUCH was the just and reasonable language of some of the inhabitants of the greatest city in the world, to a poor, despised, and persecuted disciple of Jesus Christ, who appeared among them with every disadvantage, having been sent to Rome a prisoner, and being at this very time bound with a chain. (1) It is true, they were not native Romans, as it appears, but Jews, who spake thus. But this very circumstance, one would have supposed, might have increased their prejudices against him, as he was known to be an abettor of the cause which their Countrymen and the Chiefs of their nation in Judea, had condemned; and a disciple of the Man whom the Rulers of their people had lately executed as a malefactor upon a cross. Nevertheless, altho' appearances were so much against him, and although there were so many reasons why they should give him no countenance, but despise and persecute him as their friends in Jerusalem had done; they had so far imbibed the fair and equitable principles of the imperial city where they resided, that they determined to check every rising prejudice, and give him a patient hearing, judging it unjust to condemn a man, or a party, or a cause, unheard. "We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for, as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against."

2. Methinks, my Brethren, their conduct in this matter re-

flects censure and disgrace upon many in our day, who readily believe and propagate every idle tale that they happen to hear, to the disadvantage of others, and make no scruple to condemn and revile whole Communities of people, whose principles and conduct they neither understand, nor will be at the pains to examine. This, however, I trust, is not your practice. You, who call yourselves, and who, many of you, I hope, are Christians, will surely have as much justice as the Jews or Heathens at Rome. You will patiently hear a cause before you judge it, and will not condemn what you have not considered.

And, persuaded that spiritual things differ in this from natural, that they cannot be rightly understood but by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, according to the clear and forcible reasoning of this Apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 11, "What man knoweth the things of a man," or the things that belong to human nature, "save the spirit of a man that is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man but by the Spirit of God;"—persuaded of this, I say, you will see the propriety of applying to God in prayer for the illumination of his Holy Spirit, that, as our Church observes, in her Collect for Whitsunday, being taught hereby you may "have a right judgment in all things," especially in things of such vast moment. Now this is all we desire. Grant us this, and we ask no more. If, at any time, after you have heard our message, and endeavouring to divest your minds of prejudice, have sincerely and earnestly asked of God to enable you to form a right judgment concerning it, you think proper to reject it, we can do no more. We leave you to God and your own consciences, only observing, for your greater caution, and to prevent your coming to too hasty a conclusion, that these Jews at Rome rejected even the message of St. Paul; not, however, because they had divested their minds of prejudice, and sincerely addressed themselves to God in prayer for supernatural light; but because they had not previously taken these necessary steps.

3. I am glad, my Brethren, for the *Truth's* sake, that you may believe and be saved, that I do not appear before you, in this place, to-day, under such disadvantageous circumstances as those, under which St. Paul appeared at Rome. I was not

brought to this town a prisoner; nor do I appear before you in chains. (2) I am free, and have the same right to the privileges of an Englishman which any of you have, and to the protection of the good Government under which we live; nor does the law allow any man to molest me, were any minded to do it, in the exercise of my office in this licensed house. (3) Add to this, that the circumstance of my professing to be a disciple of HIM that was crucified in Judea, can excite no prejudice in your minds against me, for you profess to do the same. In these respects, therefore, I address you with advantages very superior to those which this Apostle had in addressing the Jews at Rome. But then, I must acknowledge, on the other hand, that he was a much more able advocate for the truth than I can pretend to be. However, as he did not go to any people confiding in "excellency of speech, or of wisdom," but "in the demonstration of the Spirit and of Power," which from time to time accompanied his Word: and as even he allowed that he was not sufficient of himself, for the important office of preaching the Gospel, but acknowledged that his sufficiency was of God; so the same Spirit and Power are free for us: God can still aid the weakness of his servants, and cause us to know, by our own experience, that his grace is sufficient for us. Relying, then, on the help of this, let us,

1st. Inquire what the *Sect* was which is spoken of in my text, and what were the *Principles* and *Conduct* of its Members.

2dly. What we may suppose were the reasons why it was every where *spoken* against, and whether they who thus reviled it, acted wisely, and were justified in so doing.

I shall, then, 3dly, make some Application of what has been advanced.

And, 1st. We are to inquire what the *Sect* was which is spoken of in my text, and what were the *Principles* and *Conduct* of its Members.

I. This *Sect*, you will recollect, was no other than that, termed by Tertullus,* "the sect of the Nazarenes," that is,

* Acts xxiii. 5.

of the Christians, founded by Jesus of Nazareth, "a ring-leader" of which, as Tertullius expresses it, was this same Paul of Tarsus. (4) And, first,

2. As to the Principles of this Sect, it must be confessed that they differed widely from those, both of the Heathen and the Jews. In opposition to the Heathen, who were Polytheists and Idolaters; who believed in a plurality of gods, and those gods either the *work of men's hands*, wood and stone, or *mere imaginary beings*, that had no existence, or *corrupt and evil beings*, that were, in reality, *devils*; the Christians held that there is only *one God*, and that he is *Self-existent*, and possessed of all possible Perfections. They believed him to be infinite and eternal in all his Attributes; in *Wisdom* unsearchable, in *Power* Almighty, in *Love* unbounded, in *Truth* inviolable, in *Justice* impartial, in *Mercy* unfathomable, and in *Holiness* unspotted: That he is present every where, acquainted with every thing, even with the secrets of men's hearts, and can do whatever he will, whether in heaven or among the inhabitants of the earth, no creature being able to stay his hand, or say unto him, "What dost thou?" They viewed him as the original *Creator* and continual *Preserver* of the universe of creatures, as the bountiful *Benefactor*, and righteous *Governor* of the human race, and the final *Judge* of men and angels, whom, as being formed intelligent, free, and immortal, or, as the Scriptures speak, "after his image," they believed to be accountable to him, and dependent on him for their final doom. They acknowledged, of course, that a future state of rewards and punishments awaits mankind, and that a future and general judgment will take place, the consequences of which will be everlasting.

3. Herein they differed from many among the Jews also, even from the whole sect of the *Sadducees*, whose doctrine it was, "that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit" of man, that survives the death of the body; nor indeed any future state whatever; but that this life is the whole of our existence, and carnal pleasure our chief good. In opposition to another part of the Jews, the *Pharisees*, the professors of

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the day, the Christians believed that man is a fallen creature, "very far gone from original righteousness," from the image of God in which he was made, and that he is by nature a child of wrath, and therefore incapable of justifying himself by his own works before God: That "there is none righteous" (by nature, or according to the holy and spiritual Law of God,) "no, not one, that all are gone out of the way, are together become unprofitable, that there is none that doeth good," viz. from a right principle, and in the manner and degree required, "no, not one:" That man's "throat is an open sepulchre;" noisome and dangerous, gaping to swallow men up, or poison them with its infected air; that "with his tongue he uses deceit; that the poison of asps is under," even when honey is upon "his lips;" that his "mouth is," too often "full of cursing and bitterness, his feet swift to shed blood, that destruction" to others, "and misery" to himself, "are in his ways, and the way of peace he has not known."

4. But did they therefore leave mankind without hope, and abandon them to destruction and despair? By no means. As they taught that God has a Son, an only Son, his eternal *Word* or *Wisdom*, who "was in the beginning with him, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made;" so they taught also, that God had "so loved the world as to give this his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:" That, although he was his *own* and *only* Son, the Father had "not withheld him, but freely delivered him up to become incarnate, to live and die for us all;" "had wounded him for our transgressions, bruised him for our iniquities, and laid on him the chastisement of our peace;" had "made him to be sin," or a sin-offering, "for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," or might be justified and accounted, nay, and even constituted righteous, in and through faith in him.

5. Hence, they preached *Justification* and *Salvation*, present and eternal, in his Name, and through his Mediation: "God," declared they, "is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing men's trespasses unto them, and

both committed unto" his servants, "the word of reconciliation. Now, then," added they, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." For, * "through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe," (that believe in, and rely on him, with a faith that "worketh by love," † that "overcometh the world," ‡ and "purifieth the heart," §) "are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." (5).

In the same way, through the same Atonement and Grace of Christ; they preached *Regeneration*; and entire *Sanctification*, declaring, that "not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us; by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which God sheds on believers abundantly, that, being justified by grace, they may be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." For,

6. They taught that God, who has a Son, has also a Spirit, often termed the *Holy Ghost*, as being infinitely holy in himself, and the one Source of holiness to us: termed also the Spirit of *Truth*, of *Life*, and of *Grace*, because it is his office to guide us into all necessary truth, to quicken our souls; which, by nature, are dead in trespasses and sins, to open the life of God within us, to create us anew in Christ Jesus, and, (from day to day,) to help our infirmities. He convinces, they assure us, of *sin*, of *righteousness*, and of *judgment*; and as a Spirit of Adoption, "sent into the hearts of believers, crying, Abba, Father," "bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God." He is, therefore, also a *Comforter*, being a never-failing source of consolation, as well as of purity, to God's people, and producing *love*, *joy*, and *peace* in their souls, as well as all other fruits of righteousness. This Spirit, they bore testimony, must not only be believed in and acknowledged, but *received*, and when received, makes mankind the *Temples of God*, or "an habitation of God through the Spirit" here, and prepares them to

* Acts xiii. 38. † Gal. v. 6. ‡ 1 John v. 4, 5. § Acts xv. 9.

dwell with him hereafter. On the other hand, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," they uniformly declared, that such an one "is none of his," but is still *in the flesh*, that is, in a carnal and unregenerate state, and incapable of being admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven. (6.)

7. One thing more let me observe here. As they represented these blessings of justification, regeneration, and sanctification, with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in his gifts and graces, as *free for all*, without exception, Christ having, as they testified, "given himself a ransom" absolutely "*for all*," and "tasted death for *every man*," without the exception of any; so they required nothing of mankind in order to their partaking of this salvation in all these branches of it, but "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," both which blessings, however, they represented as the *gifts of God*, which would certainly be conferred on all that sincerely, earnestly, and perseveringly sought them. "The Kingdom of God is at hand," was their language, even that Kingdom which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,"* "repent ye, and believe the gospel," as the way leading infallibly to it: "Repent and be baptized, in the Name of the Lord Jesus," which certainly implied believing in his Name, "for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (7): for the promise is unto you and to your children, and to those that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call:" † "Testifying," says St. Paul, "both to Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." ‡ They assured their hearers, however, that all genuine repentance would certainly be productive of fruits worthy of repentance, such as "ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well," in all known instances; and that true faith in Christ and his Gospel would infallibly produce love to God and man, and all those good works which they had ability and opportunity to perform, it being their avowed and constant doctrine, that "faith without works is dead."

* Rom. xiv. 17. † Acts ii. 38, 39. ‡ Acts xx. 21.

Such then; were the leading principles of the Sect which was every where spoken against: these were its chief doctrines. But,

Secondly. What was the Practice of its Members? This, perhaps, is of more consequence even than the former.

1st, then, they were, in general, an *innocent and harmless* people. They injured no man in his character, property, or person. And no wonder, for it was their constant care, as they were taught and commanded both by Christ, and by his Apostles and Evangelists, to imitate their Master, whom none could ever convince of sin, "who did," nay, "who *knew* no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" "who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" and whom his enemies, even Pilate, who condemned him, owned to be an innocent and just man. Indeed, if they had not been innocent and harmless, at least in outward things, as they were continually and earnestly exhorted by the Apostles, and their other teachers, to be, they could not have been continued in the Society of Christians, but must have been expelled from it. This appears from sundry passages of the New Testament, in which the Christians are exhorted and required to "look diligently lest any of them should fall off;" or fall from "the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness should spring up and trouble them; and thereby others should be defiled; lest there should be among them any fornicator or profane person, such as Esau." They are required to "purge out the old leaven, that they might be a new lump," and to deliver the offending brother, that would not be reprov'd and reformed, by a solemn act of excommunication, to Satan, "for the destruction of the flesh, that," being brought to repentance by the grace of God sanctifying the afflictions wherewith he was visited, "his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Nay, they were required to have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works," or workers, "of darkness, but rather to reprove them." "I wrote to you," says St. Paul, "not to keep company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world:" as if he had

said, They surround you in such a manner on all hands, and are to be found in such numbers in all places, that, unless you were absolutely to go out of the world, or to decline transacting any business, or having any intercourse with society in it, you cannot entirely avoid sometimes intermixing with, and being in the company of evil doers: "But now," adds he, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no, not to eat." These are sufficient evidences that evil doers were not suffered to enter in, or, if through stealth, they gained admittance, at least, not to remain in the Society of the Christians; and, therefore, that the Members of that Society were an innocent and harmless people. Indeed, it appears they were such even by the testimony of the heathen who persecuted them, and sought most diligently for accusations against them, to justify the persecution. Pliny's Letter to the Emperor Trajan, to say nothing of other documents, is a full proof of this. This Letter, at the same time that it testifies that the Christians were put to death, acknowledges also, "that they bound themselves by an oath, (or mutual covenant,) to allow themselves in no crime or immoral conduct whatever." But,

2dly, they were a *useful Sect*. Their Master had been continually employed in "going about doing good," and had exhorted and enjoined all his disciples to follow his example in this particular, as far as they had ability and opportunity. "Let your light so shine before men," were his words, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." "Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful." "Bless even those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those that despitefully use and persecute you." "Love even your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and the evil." These and such like precepts of their divine Master, rightly understood, they were careful to observe; for it was only in the way of observing them that they could expect to be acknowledged and received

as his disciples in the day of final accounts. Hence it was that the Apostles and Evangelists, and all the other Pastors and Teachers of the Christian Church, which then was, ceased not to exhort all the Members thereof, even all "that had believed in God" aright, and thereby had laid a proper foundation for such a practice; "to be careful to maintain" every kind of "good works;" to "be ready for every good work," and "as they had opportunity to do good unto all men, especially to those that were of the household of faith," and "never to be weary of well-doing," but to persevere and "by patient continuance" therein to "seek for glory, honour, and immortality." And as the generality of those that then professed Christianity were in low circumstances, as to this world, and therefore could not distribute "out of their abundance," to the relief of the necessities of their fellow-christians, or fellow-creatures; in order that, nevertheless, even *they* might be able, in this way, to comply with the commands of their Lord and his Apostles, and do good to the bodies, as well as souls of men, they were directed and exhorted to "labour diligently, working with their hands the thing that was good, that they might have to give to those that needed;" of which conduct, St. Paul set them a bright example, his hands "ministering to his own necessities," and to the necessities of those that were with him. In which may be "shewed them how, so labouring, they ought to support the weak;" and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Nor was this advice given; or this example set them in vain. The members of this sect, although every where spoken against, yea, "the multitude of them that believed," were, in that early age of the Church, "of one heart and of one soul," and went to such lengths in their disinterestedness and liberality to others, that "they said not that any of the things which they possessed were their own; but they had all things in common, and as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things sold, that distribution might be made unto every man, according as he had need." But, Sadly. As they were an *harmless* and *eminently useful*; so they were a remarkably *pious* sect, living, not only *soberly*

and *righteously*, but *godly* in the present world; influenced continually by the fear and love of Jehovah, and "walking in his ordinances and commandments blameless." They spent much of their time in prayer and praise, in hearing and reading the Word of God, in meditating thereon, in attending the Supper of the Lord, and in other acts of private, social, and public worship. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer;" and not only assembled frequently in each other's houses, but "were daily in the temple, with one accord, praising God;" and "whatever they did in word or deed," it was at least their endeavour to "do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, even the Father, through him."

Nor, 4thly, was their piety separate from *holiness*, but they were consecrated and conformed to the God they worshipped. They no longer "walked as the" unconverted "Gentiles" or Jews "walked, in the vanity of their mind," attached to, and seeking happiness in, the earth, and in earthly things, "having the understanding darkened, and being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them;"—but they had learned Christ, so as to "put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, were renewed in the spirit of their minds, and had put on the New Man, which, after" a resemblance of "God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." (8). Thus, being in Christ, they "were new creatures: Old things," with them, "were passed away, and all things were become new." They were, therefore, become "followers," *μιμηται*, imitators of God, as his dear children, and walked in love, as Christ had loved them." Knowing that, when they were "all dead, Christ had died for them all, and thereby had bought them with a price, and that they were not their own, it was their continual care and endeavour to "live to him that had died for them," and to "glorify God in their bodies and spirits," which they knew were his, and which they dedicated to and employed for him from day to day.

But, 5thly, were they not a gloomy, morose, ill-natured, and melancholy sect? No: but quite the reverse. They

were a kind, loving, friendly, affectionate, and happy people; disinterestedly and unweariedly pursuing, as we have seen, the good of others, and that in many respects, even to the neglect of themselves, and benevolently and kindly sacrificing their own interest, and honour, and ease, and health, nay, and also their liberty and lives for the temporal and spiritual profit of their fellow-creatures. All the accounts which have reached us concerning them, conspire to prove that this was the fact. Like their great Master and Leader, they "pleased not themselves," but rather denied themselves for the sake of others, and like St. Paul, one of their principal teachers, "sought not their own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved." As they were continually advised and directed, they had "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with and forgiving others, if any man had a complaint against any;—and above all, they had put on love, the bond of perfectness, and the peace of God ruled in their hearts," while their life was a life of continual thankfulness. Yea, while they "rejoiced evermore, and prayed without ceasing," they "in, and even for every thing, gave thanks," knowing perfectly, that "every thing would work for their good." Hence, they feared not death itself, with any slavish or tormenting fear. And why should they? To them "to live was Christ, and to die was gain." They were, therefore, "confident and willing rather to be absent," by death, "from the body, and present with the Lord;" or, as the Apostle elsewhere expresses it, "to depart and be with Christ," than to continue here. Such were the Principles, and such the Disposition and Conduct of the Members of the Sect, which was "every where spoken against."

II. We come now to consider the Reasons why they were "every where spoken against;" and whether they, who spoke against them, acted wisely, and were justified in so doing?

On this head I observe, 1st: **CHRIST**, whose Providence was infallible, had repeatedly and clearly foretold that his followers would be reproached, reviled, and persecuted; and therefore it was with certainty to be expected. "Remem-

ber," says he,* "the word that I said unto you: The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: If they have kept my saying, they will also keep yours. But these things will they do unto you, for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If they call the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household! They will put you out of their synagogues: Yea, the time cometh, that *whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service.* And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me." Again,† "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my Name's sake." At the same time, however, that the Lord Jesus forewarned them that they should meet with such usage, he failed not to fortify their minds against it, by such declarations and promises as were well adapted to support and comfort them under it.

But why were they to be persecuted? For what cause? For I hardly need to observe, that the predictions uttered by our Lord, however infallible, were not the cause why they were persecuted: Nor would they have been less persecuted, if no such predictions had been uttered. In other words, they were not persecuted because these predictions were delivered, but these predictions were delivered because the Lord Jesus foreknew that they would be persecuted, and that it was proper and necessary that they should be forewarned of these trials of their faith and patience, and thereby prepared to meet them. I observe, therefore,

2dly. The Heathen persecuted them, because they testified, and that wherever they came, by word and writing, in private and public, boldly and resolutely, that the gods which they worshipped were *no gods*, but either devils, or "the work of men's hands, wood and stone," or *mere imaginary beings*, that had no existence, save in the fancies of their worshippers. Another reason why they persecuted them was, they knew that the Christian doctrine, in all its branches, had a direct

* John xv. 20.

† Matt. xxiv. 9.

tendency to overthrow, and, as far as it prevailed, must overthrow their superstition, polytheism, and idolatry: for it revealed and proclaimed *one only living and true God, and one Mediator between God and man*; it called mankind to the worship of this one God, in and through this one Mediator, by one Holy Spirit, and in the most clear and express terms prohibited the worship of any other being, real or imaginary, good or evil. Add to this, that inasmuch as their false and corrupt Theology was interwoven with their *constitution of Government*, in their several countries, and with their *maxims of Policy*, on the one hand, and with all their *vices and pleasures* on the other, while it was a *source of gain* to many; it is natural to suppose that the religion of Jesus, to be erected on the ruins of this Superstition and Idolatry, would meet with the most determined opposition from all ranks and conditions of men. All that, like Demetrius and his silver-smiths, by that Idolatry and image-worship, or by those festivals and pleasures, which it supported, had their wealth or maintenance, with all the votaries of *Bacchus*, of *Venus*, or of *Mars*, or of their other drunken, lewd, or cruel deities, would certainly oppose and persecute the abettors of a religion, which, if it should prevail, would infallibly dry up all the sources of their wealth and pleasure, and leave them, perhaps, in declining years, destitute of a maintenance.

3. The Jews opposed and persecuted them, because they preached a Messiah very different from him whom their nation looked for. The expectations of their countrymen were full of a temporal Messiah, who, they hoped, would appear in a state of splendor, power, and glory, and exalt their nation to honour and dignity among the kingdoms of the earth, and raise it to a widely extended, if not to universal empire. But this weak and despicable sect of Christians proclaimed a Messiah that was spiritual, who professed to confer only spiritual blessings, and who acknowledged that "his kingdom was not of this world," a poor, mean, despised, and persecuted man, and one who had been executed as a malefactor on a cross. This so contradicted all their preconceived ideas and carnal prejudices, and was in such direct opposition to all their worldly views and prospects, that it cannot appear strange that they

should reproach and persecute the persons who thus robbed them of their hopes.

4. The Jews, in general, were either Sadducees or Pharisees. The Sadducees, whose avowed sentiment it was, as we have seen, that there is no life after this, and who were strenuous to propagate that doctrine, hated and persecuted the Christians, because they testified that there is an invisible, spiritual, and eternal world; that the souls of men survive the death of their bodies, that even their bodies shall be raised again, and made incorruptible and immortal, and that all mankind must appear and take their trial before the judgment seat of Christ. Concerning this point, the sacred historian gives us clear as well as authentic information. Acts iv. 1, we read, "As they (viz. the Apostles) spake unto the People, the Priests, and Captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, *being grieved* that they taught the people, and *preached*, through Jesus, the *resurrection of the dead*, and they laid hands on them, and put them in hold until next day." Again, Acts v. 12—17, "By the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, and believers were added to the Lord:—Then the High Priest rose up, and all that were with him, which is the sect of the Sadducees, and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the Apostles, and put them in the common prison."

5. In the mean time the Pharisees opposed, and reproached them on very different grounds. According to St. Luke, (Acts xxiii.) their principles differed widely from those of the Sadducees: They confessed both that there will be a resurrection of the body, and that there are in existence angels, and human spirits departed. They, therefore, did not persecute the Christians for entertaining and propagating these sentiments: But the *Doctrines of Grace*, were those which they chiefly hated and opposed. Being ignorant of the spirituality, extent, and obligation of the law of God, they were also unacquainted with their own sinfulness and guilt, their depravity and weakness, in consequence of which they "went about," and took unspeakable pains "to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves to the right-

'eousness of God ;" nor could bear to hear that men must be saved, if saved at all, " by grace through faith." Hence arose their murmurings against Christ, in the days of his flesh, that " he received sinners, and ate with them ;" and their continual efforts to prevent the Apostles from speaking to the sinners of the Heathen, in order to their salvation,* and their violent and outrageous exclamation against St. Paul, when he mentioned the commission given him to preach to the Gentiles, recorded Acts xxii. 21. " They gave him audience unto that word," says the Historian, " and then lift up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." The doctrine of the Apostles, therefore, " That every mouth must be stopped, and all the world be acknowledged guilty before God ;—that by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight ;—that as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, we can only be justified freely (*δωρεαν*, by a free gift) through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ :"—This doctrine, I say, was an abomination to the ears of these self-righteous Pharisees. The consequence was, that while the abandoned sinners of the Gentiles, who formerly " had not followed after righteousness," having had neither thought nor care about it, " attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith :" these Pharisees, " who had followed after the Law of righteousness, did not attain to the Law of righteousness," and that for the evident reasons the Apostle assigns ; " they sought it not by faith, but by the works of the Law, stumbling at that stumbling-stone, as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone, and a rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

6. It must be acknowledged, however, that it was not any matter of doctrine which was the *sole*, if even the *principal* cause of the enmity of the Pharisees and Sadducees among the Jews, or of the Gentiles against this sect. (9) There was another, and (perhaps I may say) yet more powerful cause of this opposition, and that was, the lives of these Christians differed much from, and were a continual reproach

* 1 Thess. ii, 14—16.

to their lives. The Christians were temperate and chaste; but their Persecutors were generally drunken and debauched: The Christians were true and just in all their dealings; the Jews and Heathen were in general, false, perfidious, and fraudulent. The Christians, as they had opportunity, did good unto all men; but their enemies did evil to many. The Christians lived in the fear and love of the only living and true God, regarded his all-seeing Eye, revered his Majesty, confided in his Mercy, praised him for his Benefits, submitted to his Dispensations, obeyed his Commands, and lived to his Glory; but those that reviled them, on the other hand, either denied his very being, and were, in every sense, without God, (*ἀθεοί, Atheists*) in the world, which was the case with the Heathen: Or, if *Jews*, their faith in him was dead, and did not produce any good fruit. They profaned his sabbaths, slighted his ordinances, disobeyed his laws, and trampled under foot his authority. Nay, as the Apostle testifies, "The name of God was blasphemed" through their ungodly, unrighteous, and wicked conduct, "among the Gentiles." On this account, neither Jews nor Gentiles could bear these Christians, because their lives were a continual reproof of their ungodliness, unrighteousness, and intemperance. Add to this, that the Christians went still further: They not only, like Noah of old, "condemned the world" by their conduct: but like him, they were, also, all, more or less, "Preachers of righteousness," in their generation. They bore testimony against the evil deeds of all among whom they lived, or with whom they conversed, and therefore ceased not to disturb the peace and quiet of every family, village, town, city, or country, in which they resided or sojourned. And in doing this, they feared the face of no man, "neither counted they their lives dear unto themselves." They braved all reproach, persecution, and affliction, which they might meet with in the execution of this office: They proclaimed war against all the world, and were only anxious about the word of their testimony, that they might be faithful to him that had called them, and to the souls of their fellow-creatures.

7. This brings me to the chief cause of this enmity and

opposition, and that is the *Carnal Mind*, which is in every man by nature, and is "enmity against God" and his Work; against his Nature, his Attributes, his Word, his Ways. In consequence of this, "they that are born only after the flesh; will, most assuredly, "persecute those that are born after the Spirit." And they that "lie in wickedness," or, as the Greek, *ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ*, means, "the wicked one," and are under his influence, will, in this, as in every thing else, do his will and perform his work. "If the world hate you," said Jesus,* "ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: But, because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." All this is still but too applicable to the carnal part of mankind, and to the opposition they still make to the genuine followers of Jesus, even to all that, like him, are *not of the world*. Observe this well, my Brethren, and see that none of you be influenced by their spirit, or imitate their example in this particular. For if, as was also proposed,

8. We inquire, Whether those persons, who spoke against and persecuted this Sect of the Nazarenes, at the head of which was Jesus of Nazareth, and a "ring-leader" in which was St. Paul, acted wisely, and were justified in so doing, we shall be compelled to acknowledge, that they did not act wisely, and cannot be justified in such a conduct. For they either spoke against these Christians *ignorantly*, as probably many of the Heathen did, not being acquainted with their principles and conduct; or, which was certainly the case with many of the Jews, whether Pharisees or Sadducees, they reproached them, notwithstanding, and in spite of their *better knowledge*. Now, in either case, they were highly to blame, and, indeed, without excuse. If they persecuted the Christians *ignorantly*, they were inexcusable, because they might easily have obtained true and full information concerning them, if they would have endeavoured to obtain it, which it was certainly their duty to do. The Christians were become a numerous body of people. Many of them were persons of

* John xv. 18.

learning and influence, and were in offices of civil trust in the countries where they resided. They openly professed to believe in, and ground their faith upon very extraordinary facts, on wonderful miracles wrought by a very extraordinary person; who they affirmed had risen from the dead, and had ascended into heaven in the sight of many of them. They boldly and continually bore testimony to these things, and taught publickly in places of concourse. They published books in different languages, and these books were open to the inspection of mankind. They themselves confirmed or professed to confirm their testimony by divers extraordinary operations, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, health to the sick, and even life to the dead. They suddenly spoke, or professed to speak languages which they had never learned, and predicted events which, they testified, came exactly to pass. None of these things were done in a corner. They were open to the examination of mankind; and surely they were of such importance as to merit, and even demand examination. They, therefore, that spoke against them *ignorantly*, were without excuse. Every circumstance shews that it was the indispensable duty of mankind, in every country which the Christians visited, or in which they were found, to inquire diligently into the principles and conduct of this extraordinary and rapidly increasing Sect.

9. But there is reason to believe, that many, if not the greater part of those, among the Jews, at least, who spake against this people, did it in contradiction to their better knowledge. The Doctrine, Life, and Miracles of Jesus had been so public; such prodigies had attended his death; there had been such accumulated evidence of his resurrection; and his disciples were persons of such unblemished lives, and were endowed with such extraordinary powers, that many of the Jews, especially those who had been spectators of these things, could not be ignorant of the doctrine or practice of the Christians, nor that they had the countenance of Heaven. They, therefore, in speaking against and persecuting them, must have been influenced by a high degree of malice against God and his people, and therefore must have been more guilty

than, if, like St. Paul in his unconverted state, they had done these things "ignorantly in unbelief." Their sin, it seems, must have, at least, bordered upon that charged by Christ himself upon the Pharisees, I mean, the *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*. For that sin, according to the Evangelists, consisted in their ascribing, contrary, it seems, to their better knowledge, the miracles wrought by the Holy Ghost, to the devil, and, on that ground, rejecting Jesus, as one possessed of and assisted by the devil. Now, as Miracles were commonly wrought in the Apostolic age, and that in the face of multitudes, and as the operations and fruits of the Holy Spirit were very apparent in the doctrine and lives of the first Christians in general, they who, contrary to the conviction of their own minds, maligned and reproached them, certainly did, more or less, malign and reproach that Spirit, which, at that time, "wrought so mightily in those that believed."

III. 1. But (which will bring me, 3dly, to an Application of what I have advanced) it will be inquired here, "What is it all this to us? What concern have we in these things? We do not speak against, nor are we opposed to Christians, nor do we disapprove of their principles or practice." In answer to this, I observe, I sincerely hope, my Brethren, that you do not, but, on the contrary, that you cordially approve of Christianity itself, and desire it may be exemplified in yourselves, and in every inhabitant of your village. If so, you and we, who, this day, open this Chapel, and who together worship the *one living and true God*, therein, *through the Mediation of his Son*, and *by the aid of his Spirit*, shall be quite agreed, and shall act in perfect harmony. For we open it for the *one, sole end* of promoting the progress of this Christianity; of spreading the knowledge of and faith in such doctrines, as, it has this day been shewn, the first Christians held and propagated; and of inculcating such a practice as that for which they were so conspicuous.

2. It is allowed, my Brethren, that, in places like this, where the people called Methodists are but little known, and where few that are connected with us reside, a very different idea may be entertained of us, in consequence of the idle reports, which, however void of foundation, and destitute of

truth, are but too generally and industriously propagated concerning us. You may perhaps have heard, and some of you may have believed, that we are *Heretics*, or *Schismatics*; that we hold very erroneous opinions, (10) which we industriously propagate, and that we have nothing in view but to draw people away from the Established Church, or from other Communities of Christians, and to raise a Sect or Party for ourselves: (11) That we have sinister and unworthy ends in view, such as gaining money, and enriching ourselves at the expense of those whom we can draw over to our party. Perhaps you have even heard it insinuated, that we are enemies to our King and Country, and are employed secretly in undermining that excellent Constitution of Government under which we live. (12) In answer to all this, I shall now content myself with observing, that none can possibly form any such judgment of us, who have, although but occasionally, heard us preach, or have read, with any attention, although but a part of the various Writings which are continually circulated among us, and which certainly manifest what kind of principles we wish to propagate. These Writings, it is well known, are chiefly those of the late Rev. John and Charles Wesley, and John Fletcher, than whom his Majesty never had, nor, perhaps, will have more loyal subjects, nor the real Church of England truer friends. Nor do I think we can be viewed in that light by any that have seen and considered the sundry Minutes of our yearly Conferences, which Conferences have been held, and the Minutes of them published annually since the year 1744, that is, during a period of almost seventy years; or who have attended, were it only to the Rules of our Societies, the observance of which, especially in all their great and leading points, is the term of Communion with us.

3. You will easily see, my Brethren, that it would not be possible, at this time, to enter upon the formal proof of what I advance respecting our *Doctrine* and *Practice*. After having already detained you, perhaps, much too long, it would be, indeed, quite unseasonable to enter upon so large a field. Suffice it to say, that, in delineating the doctrine and practice of the first Christians, in the former part of this discourse, I

did no more than describe the doctrine which we firmly believe, and the practice which we wish daily to copy in our conversation and behaviour, with the exception of *one single point*, in which we are not convinced that we are called to imitate them, and that is, respecting the having *all things in common*. As to all other points, such as their *harmlessness*, their *usefulness*, their *piety*, their *holiness*, it is our continual study and endeavour to follow them as far as we conceive they followed Christ. (13) But if you will be at the pains of reading our writings, particularly the Sermons and Journals of the late Rev. John Wesley, or his "Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion," or some of his smaller Tracts, such as, "The Principles of a Methodist," "The Character of a Methodist," "The Nature and Design of Christianity," or, a Book I have lately compiled and published, termed, "An Apology for the People called Methodists," in which you will see clearly stated, "the Origin and Progress, Doctrine, Discipline, and Designs," of this People, (for I will not call them a *Sect*.) so generally spoken against, you will gain sufficient information to enable you to form a true judgment concerning us.

4. Or, if this should be too much trouble, if you will be pleased to attend here, or at any of our other Chapels in Town or Country, a few times, you will easily learn the *nature and tendency* of the Doctrine which we preach. And if you will observe, with an unprejudiced mind, the *evident change* wrought in the *spirit and conduct* of those that receive our doctrine, and become Members of our Society, you will receive still further satisfaction: For I hope that the same effects will be produced here, as have been produced elsewhere, by the divine blessing, upon our preaching and labours. I trust that, in many instances, the drunkards will become sober, the lewd chaste, the false and perfidious true and just in all their dealings, the covetous and hard-hearted liberal, compassionate and kind; the idle and slothful, the lukewarm and negligent, diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; that the profaners of the Day and Name of the Lord, and the neglecters of divine worship, will be rendered devout and pious, "fearing an oath," and "remembering the sabbath-day to keep it holy," and "not forsaking the assem-

bling of themselves together, as the manner of too many is." If you will then be pleased to pursue such a method as this, and methinks I am not unreasonable in requesting you to pursue it, I doubt not but you will see sufficient reason, if not to unite with us in Christian fellowship, and assist us, in our endeavours to reform the nation, and spread genuine, scriptural Christianity through the land; yet, at least, to entertain a favourable opinion both of our Principles and Designs, and to wish us good luck in the name of the Lord. This, we certainly think, we are entitled to, conceiving our doctrine to be, in every point, the very doctrine of the New Testament, and of our Church, and that whoever objects to it, must also object to that of the Scriptures and of the Church of England.

If we are mistaken in these views, we shall be exceedingly obliged to any individual or number of individuals that will be at the trouble of shewing us our mistake. For if we were convinced that our doctrine is unscriptural in any point, we certainly should alter it. And as to our *Practice*, suffice it to say, that it is a first principle in our Discipline, to admit into and retain in our Societies, only such as attend to, at least, the three leading points contained in our Rules, 1st. To shun all known sin, especially the sins most commonly practised in the neighbourhood where they live: 2dly. To endeavour to do good unto men's souls (14) and bodies (15) according to their abilities: And, 3dly. To attend upon all the ordinances of God, or means of grace, both public and private. If you say, "But this is your own account of yourselves: Would you have us to take all you are pleased to affirm, for granted?" I answer, No: I would not have you take any thing for granted. Only take the necessary steps I have recommended, and you will see with your own eyes, and have all the evidence you can reasonably expect or desire, as to these points.

5. But, perhaps, you will say, Why did you come hither? Why do you intrude into our villages? I answer, With the same views and on the same design, wherewith our blessed Lord, his Apostles, Evangelists, and first Disciples, went to different Towns and Villages, and that is, *simply* and *only* to spread true and genuine Christianity, — to promote, as far as

we are able, the Kingdom of God on earth, that Kingdom, that vital and genuine religion, which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" or, "Love, the end of the commandment, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." This, and only this, is our object. Lesser matters, such as those which respect points of unessential doctrine, modes of worship, forms of church government, and other circumstantialia of religion, are, with us, of little importance. But the Christianity described above, appears to us to be of infinite moment, and therefore we labour to diffuse it far and wide; and we doubt not but we shall be justified in so doing, and even commended by all that understand its nature, and are apprised of what infinite consequence it is to mankind. As to those, in whose eyes it appears as a *trivial* and unimportant matter, and who therefore must consider our zeal in its service as *enthusiasm*, and our labours and sufferings to promote it, as *folly* and *madness*, we would recommend them to weigh well the following inquiry of the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "If the word spoken by angels," the Law delivered from Sinai, by their ministry, "was steadfast, and every transgression" of that law, and act of "disobedience" to it, "received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord; and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him; God also bearing them witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

As for us, when we consider how much superior the Son of God, the immediate author of the Gospel, was to Moses, the Giver of the Law, and with how much greater apparatus of grace and mercy, and more illustrious displays of love and power, the Christian Covenant was introduced, than those wherewith the Jewish was attended:—When we reflect on the *Incarnation, Life, and Death, the Doctrine and Miracles, the Resurrection and Ascension* of the Lord Jesus, and the astonishing effusion of his Spirit, in gifts and graces, on the first Christians, with the amazing displays of divine power for the propagation and defence of this religion, in early ages, and the signal vengeance that came on the Jews and other

nations that rejected or slighted it;—we cannot but see that Christianity is infinitely dear to God, and that, speaking after the manner of men, he has its progress infinitely at heart. Whatever others do, therefore, we dare not think lightly of or neglect it. We dare not prefer other things to it. We consider it as our indispensable and principal duty, and chief interest in life, to attend to it, and that above every thing else in the world, and to take care both that we be Christians ourselves, and that not in name only, but in deed and in truth, and also that we be “workers together with God,” in endeavouring to make as many others Christians, as possible. May the Lord grant that in this, as well as in every thing else, which is excellent and praise-worthy, you may be like-minded with us, that, when Christ “shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,” and shall recompence tribulation to such as trouble his people, he may impart to you, with us, and as many as are spoken against, and troubled, rest in his eternal presence and kingdom!

The first part of the book is devoted to a general introduction to the subject of the history of the world, and to a description of the various methods which have been employed by historians in the study of the past. The second part of the book is devoted to a detailed account of the history of the world, from the beginning of time to the present day. The third part of the book is devoted to a description of the various methods which have been employed by historians in the study of the past.

Notes

ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTE (1.)

ONE reason which some advance in favour of persecution, in one form or another, is the supposed want of piety or talents in these Ministers of Christ, who are objects of their suspicion and displeasure. But that this neither was, nor is, the true cause of persecution, will appear to all who have the least knowledge of Church history. Why did the Jews persecute the Saviour of the world? Why did they clamorously demand his crucifixion? "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He was as "a lamb without blemish or spot." His obedience to the moral law, which is an inalienable rule of right, was absolutely perfect; and with respect to his qualifications for teaching, his enemies being judges, he spake as no mere man was ever capable of speaking. His word was with power; he taught with authority; and perfection was stamped on his every word and action. But all these Divine excellencies united, and which rendered him infinitely worthy of being the "Desire of all nations," were so far from procuring him the approbation of the Jews, as a nation, that they exposed him to general reproach, and the most painful and ignominious of deaths.

In point of labours and sufferings, perhaps St. Paul, of all the Apostles, came nearest to his Divine Master. Could want of piety, or of natural or acquired abilities, be justly objected to the Apostle of the Gentiles? Surely not; and yet how bitter, cruel, and numerous were the persecutions which he endured. As the preaching of Christ crucified, in the Apostolic age, was, on different accounts, equally offensive to such Jews and Gentiles as persisted in sin; so, in every age of Christianity, similar preaching has been offensive to mere nominal Christians. Why were several of the brightest ornaments of the Reformation consigned to the flames? Surely not on account of being destitute of piety or talents, but because they had grace and resolution to preach the pure, unadulterated truths of the Gospel. This, and this alone, was their unpardonable crime, in the estimation of their persecutors: for had they not opposed the corrupt doctrines of Popery, they might have been proverbially ignorant, and as profligate in their lives as Leo the XII was, without the least molestation.

NOTE (2.)

Bishop Burnet, in the Preface to the third edition of his "Pastoral Care," makes the following judicious and sober observations:—"God be thanked we are delivered from a remnant of Popery, that stuck long to us, I mean *persecution for conscience sake*: for the breaches in a man's liberty or goods are as really a persecution, as that which strikes at his person. They may be in some instances more uneasy; as a single death is not so formidable, as to be forced to live under great necessities, perhaps with a numerous family. And if we were to judge of this matter by our Saviour's rule, of doing to others as we would have others do to us, our consciences would soon decide the question; I mean if we will but honestly ask ourselves, how we would have those of another religion deal with us, if we were living in any country where we must depart from the legal establishment, if we do truly follow the dictates of our own consciences."

The sober, well-read, pious Prelate, proceeds to notice some of the grosser errors of Popery, and then observes, speaking of himself in the third person, in conjunction with such of the Clergy as were then denominated Low-Churchmen:—"They dare not unchurch all the bodies of Protestants beyond sea; nor deny to our Dissenters at home, the federal rights common to all Christians, or leave them to unobeyed mercy. They do not annul their baptisms, or think that they ought to be baptised again in a more regular manner, before they can be accounted Christians. They are far from condemning private judgment in matters of religion: this strikes at the root of the whole Reformation, which could never have been compassed, if private men had not a right to judge for themselves; on the contrary, they think every man is bound to judge for himself, which indeed, he ought to do, in the fear of God, and with all humility and caution."

NOTE (3.)

The reformed Religion was often disgraced in this Country by the coercive measures which were resorted to, for the purpose of enforcing uniformity in matters ecclesiastical, until, by the Act of Toleration, the Government, as far as in it lay, completed the glory of the Reformation. Under the protection of that Act, an Act which has sound policy, reason, and religion for its support; the Methodists have become a very numerous and useful body of people. By their instrumentality, under God, thousands and tens of thousands, who neither feared God nor regarded man, have become good members of both civil and religious Society. Nor has their usefulness been confined to those who are more immediately designated Methodists. "Methodism," says a modern author of Church History, and a Clergyman of the Established Church, "hath spread in a prodigious manner among those of the Church as well as Dissenters from it; and has been the mean of rekindling the zeal of very many, so as to produce a vast alteration for the better in the conduct of thousands and tens of thousands. Predilection for the Establishment; strongly attaches many to it; who have

received their religious impressions from one or other of the Methodist societies, or from some of their own clergy who lie under the imputation of being methodically inclined, that is, such as literally, and with apparent zeal, inculcate the doctrinal Articles they have subscribed, and live in a state of greater piety and separation from the world, than the generality of their brethren. The number of these is, of late, amazingly increased. Where before scarcely a man of this stamp could be found, some hundreds, as Rectors or Curates in the Established Church, inculcate the doctrines which are branded with the name of *Methodism*; and every where, throughout the kingdom, one, or more, and sometimes several, are to be found within the compass of a few miles, who approve themselves faithful labourers in the Lord's vineyard." These are the just, candid, and enlightened acknowledgments of a clergyman of the Established Church. And as his account of the beneficial effects of Methodism, cannot be suspected of exaggeration, it clearly follows, that the Established Church itself has gained much by the tolerant principles which have been acted upon in this country, for more than a century.

NOTE (4.)

It has been justly observed, that whoever attempts to benefit mankind, out of the usual or ordinary way, will meet with much opposition. The institution of Sunday Schools, and that of the Bible Society, are, next to preaching the Gospel, the best calculated to promote the temporal and eternal interests of mankind; but even these have been strongly, though ineffectually, opposed by some who call themselves reformed Christians! St. Paul was commissioned by the great Head of the Church, to preach the good tidings of salvation to a ruined world; but in doing this, he suffered various persecutions, from both Jews and Gentiles. Tertullus, the Jewish orator, represented him as a "pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes." With what odious epithets did the Papists brand our holy and venerable Reformers! And what rivers of the blood of the saints did they shed, in support of their cruel and unchristian hierarchy! Their intolerant and persecuting principles, by which they endeavoured to support their tyranny, produced that infidelity, which, as an instrument of vengeance in the hands of Him who rules in the kingdoms of men, has long been, and still is, scourging the Popish nations. Through a succession of ages, they slew myriads, as they said, for the "*good of the Church*;" and when the day of retribution arrived, the Infidels, to whom their absurd doctrines and bloody persecutions gave birth, slew them in thousands, as they said, "*for the good of society*."

It would have been much to the honour of Protestantism, if the dangerous weapon of persecution had never been used in its defence. But this, alas! has not been the case. Witness the Act of Uniformity, passed in the reign of Charles the II, by which about two thousand pious Ministers were obliged, as conscientious men, to leave the Esta-

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blished Church. And what were the consequences? General levity, profaneness, intemperance, formality, and an alarming increase of Infidelity and Atheism. Bishop Burnet's thoughts upon the lamentable state of religion in this country, in 1712, will give the reader a tolerably clear and correct idea of the effects produced by forced conformity. "I am now," saith the venerable Prelate, "in the 70th year of my age, and as I cannot speak long to the world in any sort, so I cannot hope for a more solemn occasion of speaking with all due freedom, both to the present and succeeding ages: therefore I lay hold on it to give free vent to those sad thoughts that lie on my mind both day and night, and are the subject of many secret mournings. 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.

"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 parts of the Scriptures, which they say, in excuse of 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 of even 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 of them 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 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 a care of souls.

"These things pierce one's soul, and make me often cry out, 'Oh, 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 to 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!*"

But lest any should imagine that the Prelate, just now quoted, gave

* Institution here signifies the investing a Clergyman with the spiritualities of a rectory, &c. which is done by the Bishop.

an exaggerated or distorted account of the state of religion when he wrote, let us hear the learned, pious, and judicious Archbishop Tillotson, on the same subject. In the 5th volume of the edition of his Sermons, printed in 1700, and at the 117th page, he says, "If one of the Apostles or primitive Christians, should rise from the dead, and converse with us, how would he wonder to see the face and complexion of Christianity altered from what it was in his days; and were it not for the name and title which we bear, would sooner take us to be any thing than christians." Again: "I cannot see how Christianity can ever gain much ground in the world, till it be better recommended by the professors of it. Nay, we have just reason to fear that if God do not raise up some *great and eminent instruments* to awaken the world out of this *stupid lethargy*, that Christianity will every day decline, and the world will be overrun with Atheism and Infidelity." Such were the sentiment of two pious, learned, and eminent Prelates, about the beginning of the last century. Corruption being rapid in its progress, the state of religion in this country grew worse and worse, until God did raise up "some *great and eminent instruments* to awaken the world out of its *stupid lethargy*." These were Messrs. John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. Inspired with a zeal truly Apostolic, they preached the pure doctrines of the Gospel to listening thousands, many of whom, in a short time, experienced "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." But with what difficulties had those eminent reformers to contend! Their lives were frequently in imminent danger, from the outrages of lawless mobs; and many a "Tertullus" stepped forth to accuse them.

NOTE (5.)

How carefully did the Compilers of the Homilies of the Established Church guard against Antinomianism! They had clear and distinct views of both Law and Gospel; and hence, while they maintained, on the one hand, that "we are saved by grace through faith," they did not fail on the other, to insist, in the most unequivocal terms on the necessity of good works, in order to final salvation. "This true Christian faith," they say, "neither any devil hath, nor yet any man, who in outward profession, in his receiving the sacraments, in going to church, and in all outward appearances, seemeth to be a christian, and yet in his life sheweth the contrary. For how can a man have this true faith, sure trust and confidence in God, that by the merits of Christ his sins *are* forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God, when he denieth Christ by his works? Surely no ungodly man can have this faith and trust in God." To these sentiments the Methodists have always given their free and hearty assent.

NOTE (6.)

Bishop Sanderson, a prelate highly and justly famed for piety, strength of intellect, and erudition, says, "It is clear that all Christian virtues and graces, though wrought immediately by us, and with the

free consent of our wills, are yet the fruits of God's Spirit working in us. That is to say, they proceed not originally from any strength of nature, or any inherent power in man's free-will: nor are they acquired by the culture of *philosophy*, the *advantages of education*, or any *improvement whatsoever of natural abilities by the helps of art or industry*: but are in truth the proper effects of that *supernatural grace* which is given unto us by the good pleasure of God the Father, merited for us by the precious blood of God the Son, and conveyed into our hearts by the sweet and secret inspirations of God the Holy Ghost. Love, joy, and peace are fruits, not at all of the flesh, but merely of the Spirit." These were the sentiments of an eminent Prelate of Lincoln, about eighty years before the origin of the Methodists; sentiments which are universally maintained by that people.

Dr. Isaac Barrow, a philosopher as well as a divine, whose name at Cambridge has ever stood next to that of Sir Isaac Newton, did not scruple to declare his sentiments on the agency of the Holy Spirit on the minds of believers. "It is," saith he, "a notable part of the Holy Spirit's office to comfort and sustain us in all our religious practice, so particularly in our doubts, distresses, and afflictions: to beget joy and peace in us, in all our performances, and in all our sufferings, whence the title of Comforter belongeth to him. It is also another part thereof to assure us of God's gracious love and favour, and that we are his children; confirming us in the hopes of our everlasting inheritance."

NOTE (7.)

Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, &c. Those who do not clearly and strongly insist on the necessity of the influence of the Spirit of God, in order to produce holiness, however respectable they may be in the learned world, preach to no valuable purpose. Bishop Taylor, a man of prodigious knowledge and learning, as well as a model of Christian holiness, thus expresses himself upon this subject. "Too many scholars have lived upon the air and empty notions for many ages past, and troubled themselves with tying and untying knots, like hypochondriacks in a fit of melancholy, thinking of nothings, and troubling themselves with nothings, and falling out about nothings, and being very wise and learned in things that are not, and work not, and were never planted in Paradise by the finger of God. If the Spirit of God be our teacher, we shall learn to avoid evil and to do good, to be wise and to be holy; and they that walk in this way shall find more peace in their consciences, MORE SKILL IN THE SCRIPTURES, more satisfaction in their doubts, than can be obtained by all the polemical and impertinent disputations of the world.—The learning of the fathers was more owing to their piety than to their skill. These were the men that prevailed against *error*, because they lived according to the *truth*. If ye walk in the light, and live in the spirit, your doctrines will be true, and that truth will prevail." Will any, acquainted with the writings of this eminently-learned Prelate, stigmatize him as an enthusiast? And yet the very doctrines which

he inculcated from the pulpit and the press, are those which thousands in our day brand with the odious epithets of enthusiastic and fanatical.

Bishop Bull, a man of extraordinary natural and acquired abilities, and justly famed throughout the Christian world, for his "Defence of the Nicene Faith," maintained the absolute necessity of divine influences. "Man," saith he, "may be considered in a double relation: first in relation to the *natural, animal, and earthly life*; and so he is a perfect man, that hath only a *reasonable* soul and body adapted to it; for the powers and faculties of these are sufficient to the exercise of the functions and operations belonging to this life. But, secondly, man may be considered in order to a *supernatural* end, and as designed for a spiritual and celestial life; and of this life the SPIRIT OF GOD is the principle. For man's natural powers and faculties, even as they were before the fall, *entire*, were not sufficient or able of themselves to reach such a *supernatural* end, but needed the power of the DIVINE SPIRIT, to strengthen, elevate, and raise them. He that denies this, opposes himself against the stream and current of the holy Scriptures, and the consent of the Catholic church. Therefore to the perfect constitution of man, considered in this relation, a reasonable soul and a body adapted thereunto are not sufficient; but there is *necessarily* required an union of the DIVINE SPIRIT with both, as it were a THIRD ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE."

To the same purpose are the sentiments of Bishop Pearson, a prelate well known by his very able and orthodox exposition of the Creed. "As," saith he, "the increase and perfection, so the original or initiation of faith is from the Spirit of God, not only by an *external proposal in the word*, but by an *internal illumination in the soul*, by which we are inclined to the obedience of faith, in *assenting* to those truths which unto a natural and carnal man are foolishness. And thus we affirm not only the revelation of the will of God, but also the *illumination of the soul of man*, to be part of the office of the Spirit of God."

How directly opposite to the sober, scriptural sentiments of those eminent Prelates, were the heathenish opinions of a late fashionable Bishop, who scrupled not to assert, "that Socrates, by preaching *moral virtue*, and *dying* to bear witness to the unity of the Godhead, was made to the Grecian people *wisdom and righteousness*, NOT LESS *than Jesus*."

NOTE (8.)

Renewed in the spirit of their mind. Bishop Smalridge, who died upwards of twenty years before the rise of the Methodists, says, "The humble and devout Christian being satisfied of the necessity of God's grace, both from his own experience and from the Scriptures, and being *assured of the vital influences* of the Spirit of God from the promises made to him in the Gospel, will not be over-curious to inquire into the *secret and inconceivable manner* of its operation. He will choose rather to *FEEL* these influences, than to *understand and explain* them, and will not doubt of that power, which, though he

cannot give an account of it as to the manner of its working, he plainly perceives to be great and marvellous from its mighty and wonderful effects."

Dr. Gloucester Ridley, who was presented to a Prebend in the cathedral of Salisbury, by Archbishop Secker, was a clear, strong, and consistent advocate for the doctrine of divine influences on the heart, in order to the existence of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. "Illuminating grace," saith he, "consists not in the assent we give to the history of the gospel, as a narration of matters of fact, sufficiently supported by human evidence; for this may be purely the effect of our study and learning. The collating of copies, the consulting of history, the comparing the assertions of friends, and the concessions of enemies, may necessitate such a belief, a faith which the devils may have, and doubtless have it. This sort of faith is an acquisition of our own, and not a Gift.—*But faith is the Gift of God.*"

"There may be a faith," continues Dr. Ridley, "which is not the work of the Spirit in our hearts, but entirely the effect of human means, our natural faculties assisted by languages, antiquities, manuscripts, criticism, and the like, without any *divine aid*, except the *bare letter of revelation*; and as this faith may rise out of human abilities, so may it be attended with pride in our supposed accomplishments, envy of others of superior skill, and bitter strife against those who mistake or oppose such truths; and is, therefore, no manifestation of the Spirit which resisteth the *proud*, and dispenses its graces only to the *humble*. *This wisdom descendeth not from above.* But the *true saving faith*, at the same time that it *informs the understanding*, influences **THE WILL AND AFFECTIONS**. It is in the *heart* that the Christian man believeth."

NOTE (9.)

Had the primitive Christians been men of the world, breathing its spirit, and conforming to its practices, small indeed would have been the "glorious army of martyrs." The world in their time, as in the days of our Lord, *loved its own*, notwithstanding any opinions which might be held by them conformable to divine truth, when such opinions were not accompanied by the spirit and practice of true godliness. A bare profession of Christianity has generally been accompanied with principles and practices of a persecuting nature. Witness the inquisitorial cruelties exercised for many ages, upon those who dared to think for themselves, by a Church which arrogated to itself the titles of *Holy*, *Catholic*, and *Apostolic*. Even in this country, where religious as well as civil liberty has been for more than a century a part of the laws of the land, lawless mobs, who made a profession of Christianity, have frequently, in the course of the last seventy years, and some of them very lately, assaulted, with the utmost violence, several assemblies of religious people, who, under the sanction of divine and human laws, were engaged in worshipping God. But of whom were those mobs composed, who were so zealous

against their pious, well-behaved neighbours? In general of men grossly immoral, who, though they called themselves Christians, seldom or never attended any place of religious worship, and who were equally ignorant of the nature of civil and religious liberty. I refer the reader to Mr. Wesley's early Journals, for an account of the conduct and character of those enemies of all righteousness, who, in various parts of England and Ireland, persecuted, for several years, the peaceable and loyal members of the Societies which he had formed. "In the long-living annals of infamy their triumphs," and those of their abettors, "shall be recorded."

Religion has been always the pretext used by persecutors, to justify their absurd and abominable conduct. The Jews, while they possessed any civil power, pursued the Christians with unrelenting cruelty; and from what motive? Zeal for their temple-worship, and that at a time when, on account of their multiplied, glaring, and aggravated crimes, wrath was about to come upon them to the uttermost. Such was the pitch of wickedness to which they had arrived, notwithstanding their zeal for the temple, that Josephus, their own historian, and who was himself a witness of their final ruin as a body politic; declares, that, had not the Romans effected their destruction, he believed God would have destroyed them by fire from heaven. The Pagans, zealous for the worship of their devil-gods, devoted to destruction the Christians, as enemies to their religion. And whenever professed Christians have persecuted each other, zeal for their respective parties, which they confounded with religion, was the principal cause of their acting a part so repugnant to the whole spirit, doctrines, and precepts of the Gospel.

But that Christian zeal for true religion never was the real cause of persecution, is evident from the lenity used by persecutors to those, however grossly wicked, who professed to belong to their party. Schism, not easily defined in the present outwardly divided state of the Church, and of which the Greek and Romish Churches mutually accuse each other, is surely not the only sin which endangers men's salvation. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, says, "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of which I tell you, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Here is a catalogue of sins, the practice of any one of which excludes from heaven; and yet how many thousands, nay millions, have been habitually guilty of one or more of them, without ever being in the least molested by those, who, under a pretence of religion, persecuted their quiet, inoffensive, fellow-subjects, with unrelenting barbarity! How wretched was the state of religion and morals, in Spain, Italy, and France, when conformity to their corrupt church was enforced by the heaviest penalties! When persecutors shall evince as much zeal against *immorality of every kind*, as they do against, what they term, *heresy* and *schism*, they may be considered sincere in their professions of punishing those who cannot think as they do, for the sake of reli-

gion! O sacred name of Religion! how often hast thou been blasphemed by men who have used thee as a sanction for such wanton cruelties, and cool, deliberate murders, as are a reproach to human nature!

NOTE (10.)

The Doctrines of the Methodists are those maintained by the Church of England, in her Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy. From these they have never deviated; and for this grand reason, because they have always been persuaded that they are doctrines according to godliness. To the following sentiments of the late Bishop Horsley they yield an unqualified assent.

“The assumption, that faith and practice are separable things, is a gross mistake, or rather a manifest contradiction. Practical holiness is the end; faith is the means; and to suppose faith and practice separable, is to suppose the end attainable without the use of the means. The direct contrary is the truth. The practice of religion will always thrive, in proportion as its doctrines are generally understood and firmly received; and the practice will degenerate and decay, in proportion as the doctrine is misunderstood or neglected. It is true, therefore, that it is the great duty of a preacher of the gospel to press the practice of its precepts upon the consciences of men; but then it is equally true, that it is his duty to enforce this practice in a particular way; namely, by inculcating its doctrines. The motives which the revealed doctrines furnish, are the only motives he has to do with, and the only motives by which religious duty can be effectually enforced.” “I am aware,” continues the Bishop, “that it has been much the fashion, to suppose a want of capacity in the common people, to be carried any great length in religious knowledge, more than in the abstruse sciences. That the world and all things in it had a Maker; that the Maker of the world made man, and gave him the life he now enjoys; that he who first gave life, can at any time restore it; that he can punish, in a future life, crimes which he suffers to be committed with impunity in this; some of these first principles of religion, the vulgar, it is supposed, may be brought to comprehend. But the *peculiar doctrines* of revelation, the Trinity of persons in the undivided Godhead; the incarnation of the Second Person; the expiation of sin by the Redeemer’s sufferings and death; the efficacy of his intercession; the mysterious commerce of the believer’s soul with the Divine Spirit; these things are supposed to be far above their reach. If this were really the case, the condition of man would indeed be miserable, and the proffer of mercy, in the gospel, little better than a mockery of their woe; for the consequence would be, that the common people could never be carried beyond the first principles of what is called natural religion. Of the efficacy of natural religion, as a rule of action, the world has had the long experience of 1600 years. For so much was the interval between the institution of the Mosaic church, and the publication of the gospel. During that interval, certainly, natural religion was left to try its powers in the heathen world. The result of the experiment is, that its powers are of no avail. Among the vulgar, natural religion never produced any effect at all; among the learned, much of it is to be found in their writings, little

in their lives. But if this natural religion, a thing of no practical efficacy, as experiment has demonstrated, be the utmost of religion which the common people can receive, then is our preaching vain, Christ died in vain, and man must still perish. Blessed be God! the case is far otherwise. As we have, on the one side, experimental proof of the insignificance of what is called natural religion; so, on the other, in the success of the first preachers of Christianity we have an experimental proof of the sufficiency of revealed religion to those very ends in which natural religion failed. In their success we have experimental proof, that there is nothing in the great mystery of godliness, which the vulgar, more than the learned, want capacity to apprehend, since, upon the first preaching of the gospel, the illiterate, the scorn of pharisaical pride, *who knew not the law*, and were therefore deemed *accursed*, were the first to understand and to embrace the Christian doctrine."

The truth of these sentiments has been exemplified in the sound conversion of many thousands in the middle and lower walks of life, by the instrumentality of such preaching, by the Methodists, as the great prelate just now quoted, so earnestly recommends.

NOTE (11.)

Never was there a denomination of Christians more free from a sectarian spirit or practice, than that of the Methodists. Hence many thousands of them stately attend the service of the Established Church, and as many of them as choose, that of different denominations of Dissenters. To the church, as by law established, they are, as a body, decidedly friendly; but they, at the same time, take every fit opportunity of expressing their Christian love to the many thousands of Dissenters, whose holy and peaceable lives evince, that they are true members of the Church universal in the right way.

NOTE (12.)

From their learned, pious, and venerable Founder, the Methodists imbibed the purest principles of loyalty. Upon those principles they have acted, since their rise as a people, with such steadiness and consistency, that, even their enemies in general being judges, they may be justly considered some of the most loving and peaceable subjects of the British Government. Dr. Buchanan, a man well acquainted with both the civil and religious world, has, in a note to one of his sermons, given the following description of Methodism and Methodists. "The usual name of religious reproach at this day is *METHODIST*; a term first used at Oxford, and derived from the *METHOD* which some religious students observed in the employment of their time. So far it is an honourable appellation. It is now applied to any man of pure and unaffected piety, and is, in short, another term for a *CHRISTIAN*. Of the Methodists, Paley says, in his *Evidences of Christianity*, that in regard to piety to God, and purity of life, they may be compared to 'the primitive Christians.' The name *Methodist*

in England was, for a time, as disreputable as *Royalist* in France. And indeed there is an analogy in the character; for Methodism implies loyalty to the King of kings. And I am happy to add (in regard to the numerous body of our fellow-subjects who are called by that name) that it also implies, after an experience of half a century, **PURE LOYALTY TO AN EARTHLY SOVEREIGN.**"

NOTE (13.)

The sole reason why places of worship are erected among us, preachers sent forth, and Societies formed, is, that people may be led to *practise* religious duties,—to *love God with all their hearts inwardly*, and to *serve him outwardly* with all their strength. Nor do we, to our knowledge, admit any person into these Societies, or keep any person in them, who lives in the neglect of these duties; and in proof of the truth of this observation I appeal to the very *Rules of our Societies*, which in express terms, require all who join, or continue in these Societies, to evidence their desire of fleeing from the wrath to come, 1st. By *shunning* all known sin, such as profaning the name and day of God, drunkenness, lewdness, dishonest practices, and speaking evil of Ministers or Magistrates: 2nd. By doing good works to the utmost of their power, as feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked: 3dly, By attending all the ordinances of God, and using all the means of grace in private and public.

This is a matter that is capable of evident demonstrative proof, in all parts of the nation. The *Rules* of our Society may be had, for one penny, or for nothing, wherever we have a Chapel or Society; and full satisfaction obtained, whether they are adhered to;—whether any persons are admitted into, or continued in our Societies, who habitually break them.

With what face, then, can any urge, that the increase of the Methodists is the cause of the neglect of religious duties, seeing they are constantly inculcating those duties; and do not receive into or keep in their Societies any person who lives in the neglect of them!! I know that it has been urged by some, that we draw people from the Church, and from the sacrament in the Church. But supposing this were true, (which, in general, it is not,) it would not follow that we made people neglect religious duties, unless it can be shewn, that religious duties must of necessity be confined to the Church of England, and that God cannot be worshipped acceptably any where else. But *it is not true*: for thousands in different parts of the kingdom who seldom, or never came within the Church walls, till they heard us, but loitered away the precious hours of the Lord's day in their own houses, or wickedly spent them in ale-houses, or in idle recreations, or visits, or in journeys of pleasure, or in worldly business,—now see the evil of such practices, and have abandoned them; attend divine service in the Church of England, once or twice every Lord's day, and the Lord's supper whenever it is administered in the Church, which in country places, it is to be deplored, is not often.

But while the Methodists, from *principle*, not *policy*, are, as a body, well-affected to the Established Church, they are far from cen-

sureing those, who, from conscientious motives, are, in the unqualified sense of the word, Dissenters. From Church and sectarian bigotry they are equally averse: and, hence, acknowledge as brethren, all, whether in or out of the Established Church, who, by a holy life and conversation, evidence that they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. They are aware that some, from whose education better might be expected, would rather find the "common people" attending on the brutal sport of bull-baiting, than hearing the Gospel preached in a Methodist or Dissenting Chapel. An Established Church derives no credit from such advocates. Others of a very different description, from groundless apprehensions of future evils, are inimical to the spread of "pure religion and undefiled," by the instrumentality of either Methodists or Dissenters. But how narrow must the souls of those men be, and how contracted their views of religious truth, who would rather thousands should die without the saving knowledge of it, than receive that knowledge by the instrumentality of any other ministers than those of the Established Church. The Church of England was as true a church, when persecuted in the time of Cromwell, as when accompanied with the appendages of wealth and honour which it obtained at the Restoration. Nor did Dr. Hammond live or die less a true minister of Christ, because he did not live to be promoted at that eventful era. And surely the Christian church was not less pure, when "every where spoken against," than after it was taken under the protection of Constantine, and made the established religion of the Roman empire.

NOTE (14.)

The possession of true religion, which is nothing short of love to God and all mankind, never fails to be accompanied by a sincere and earnest desire, that all may become holy in time, in order to their being happy in eternity. This accounts for the zeal manifested in primitive and modern times, for the universal diffusion of religious truth. Had the Methodists nothing in view but to inculcate certain peculiar notions of their own, as some, unacquainted with their principles, imagine, or matters of mere speculation, which do not enter into the essence of Christianity; or meant merely to form or increase a sect, or party, they could not be justified, on any principle of religion or reason, in preaching and building Chapels, as they do, in so many parts of the United Kingdom, in our Colonies abroad, and in the United States of America. Could any thing less than pure love to the souls of men have ever caused these preachers to expose their lives to imminent danger, as they have often done, in carrying the good tidings of salvation to thousands, nay, myriads, who never attended the Church, or any other place of worship? The Clergy of the Church of Rome, as every intelligent Protestant knows, are sufficiently zealous, in their way, to make proselytes; but how do they manifest their zeal? Is it by preaching the pure Gospel to the grossly immoral, most of whom are as ignorant of the nature and design of Christianity as the Hindoos? No; but, when in power, by enforcing conformity to their

dogmas and mode of religious worship, by such inquisitorial tortures as are an eternal reproach to their Church; and when *merely* tolerated, (and notwithstanding their intolerant principles, we should be sorry to find them persecuted,) by insinuating themselves into the favour of the more respectable part of the community. But if our mode of proceeding be the direct opposite of this, as most assuredly it is; and if we only inculcate the *truths* and duties necessary to be known and practised in order to salvation, and that chiefly upon those, that in time past, neither knew nor practised them; and if the end and tendency of all our preaching and meetings, be only to turn sinners from the evil of their ways, and make them godly, righteous, and sober; *good Christians* and *good subjects*; then it will be easy to justify our proceedings to any man who believes the Bible, and is persuaded that there is a life after this, a life of *infinite*, because of everlasting importance. Now, on this point we rest the cause in which we are engaged, and on this ground we are ready to meet any description of men in the nation.

But it may be objected by some, that the doctrines of *Justification by Faith*, and of the *New Birth*, which we are in the frequent habit of preaching, lead to the neglect of good works, and render people useless members of Society. First, we do indeed preach Justification by Faith, because we find that doctrine declared clearly in the holy Scriptures, and in the *Articles* and *Homilies* of our Church. But by what kind of faith do we teach that men are justified? only by a *faith that worketh*,* or is productive of *good works*, yea, of all inward and outward holiness, being persuaded with St. James, that faith can only be evidenced by our works, and that *faith without works is dead*. And we do indeed teach, with our Lord, that men must be *converted and born again*, or they cannot see the kingdom of God: and with St. Paul, that *in Christ Jesus nothing availeth but a new creature*; and that *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*, and that *old things are passed away, and all things are become new*. But what sort of a *new birth*, or *new creation*, is this which we preach? It is no other than that which the Apostle describes, Eph. ii. 10, where he says, *We are his workmanship, created (anew) in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*.

And what have been, under God, the effects produced by our preaching these and the other doctrines of Christianity, as well as the divine precepts, with which they are connected? This question I shall answer chiefly in the language of the late Mr. Wesley, the learned and venerable founder of Methodism. At a comparatively early stage of his religious course, he wrote his *Appeals*, in which, after drawing a perfectly true, though horrid picture, of the state of morals and religion in the British Empire, he says "Now, if there be a God, and one that is not a mere idle spectator of the things that are done on earth, but a rewarder of men and nations according to their works, what can the event of these things be? It was reasonable

* Gal. v 6.

to believe, that he would have risen long ago and maintained his own cause, either by sending the famine or pestilence among us, or by pouring out his fury in blood. And many wise and holy men have frequently declared, that they daily expected this; that they daily looked for the patience of God to give place, and judgment to rejoice over mercy.

“ Just at this 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 shew such a concern for religion, as they had never done before. A stronger impression was made on their minds, of the importance of things eternal, and they had more earnest desires of serving God, than they had ever had from their earliest childhood. Thus did God begin to draw them toward himself, with the cords of love, with the bands of a man.

“ Many of these were in a short time deeply convinced of the number and heinousness of their sins. They were also made thoroughly sensible of the evil of those tempers, which are justly hateful to God and man, and of their utter ignorance of God, and entire inability, of themselves, either to know, love, or serve him. At the same time they saw, in the strongest light, the insignificance of their outside religion: nay, and often confessed it before God, as the most abominable hypocrisy. Thus did they sink deeper and deeper into that repentance, which must ever precede faith in Christ. And from hence sprung fruits meet for repentance. The drunkard became sober and temperate; the whoremonger abstained from adultery and fornication; the unjust from oppression and wrong. He that had been accustomed to curse and swear, for many years, now swore no more. The sluggard began to work with his hands, that he might eat his own bread. The miser learned to deal his bread to the hungry, and to cover the naked with a garment. Indeed the whole form of their life was changed. They had left off doing evil, and learned to do well.

“ But this was not all. Over and above this outward change, they began to experience inward religion. The love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, which they continue to enjoy to this day. And this love constrains them to love all mankind, all the children of the Father of heaven and earth, and inspires them with every holy and heavenly temper, the whole mind that was in Christ. Hence it is that they are now uniform in their behaviour, unblamable in all their conversation. And in whatsoever state they are, they have learned therewith to be content: insomuch that now they can in every thing give thanks: they more than patiently acquiesce, they rejoice and are exceeding glad, in all God's dispensations toward them. For as long as they love God (and that love no man taketh from them) they are happy in God. Thus they calmly travel on through life, being never weary nor faint in their minds, never repining, murmuring, or dissatisfied; casting all their care upon God, till the hour comes that they should drop this covering of earth, and return unto the great Father of Spirits. Then especially it is, that they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

You who credit it not, come and see. See these living and dying Christians.

“ Now, if these things are so, what reasonable man can deny that God is now visiting this nation, in a far other manner than we had cause to expect. Instead of pouring out his fierce displeasure upon us, he hath made yet another tender of mercy: so that even when *sin did most abound, grace hath much more abounded.*

“ Yes, *the grace of God which bringeth salvation*, present salvation from inward and outward sin, hath abounded of late years in such a *degree* as neither we nor our fathers have known. How *extensive* is the change which has been wrought on the minds and lives of the people! Know ye not that the sound is gone forth into all the land? That there is scarce a city or considerable town to be found, where some have not been roused out of the sleep of death, and constrained to cry out, in the bitterness of their soul, *What must I do to be saved?* That this *religious concern* has spread to every age and sex; to most orders and degrees of men? To abundance of those in particular, who in time past, were accounted maisters of wickedness, *drinking in iniquity like water,* and committing all *uncleaness with greediness.*

“ In what age has such a work been wrought, considering the *swiftness* as well as the *extent* of it? When have such *numbers* of sinners, in so *short* a time, been recovered from the error of their ways? When hath 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, supply us with a parallel instance.

“ Let understanding men observe also the *depth* of the work, so *extensively* and *swiftly* wrought. It is not a slight or superficial thing: but multitudes of men have been so thoroughly *convinced of sin*, that their *bones were smitten asunder, as it were, with a sword, dividing the joints and the marrow.* Many of these have been shortly after filled with *joy and peace in believing.* And in the power of this faith they have trampled under foot, whatever the world accounts either terrible or desirable: having evidenced in the severest trials, so fervent a love to God, so invariable and tender a good-will to mankind, particularly to their enemies, and such a measure of all the fruits of holiness, as were not unworthy the apostolic age. Now so deep a repentance, so firm a faith, such fervent love and unblemished holiness, wrought in so many persons, within 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 with regard to the doctrines held by those among whom it is extended. Those of the Church of England, at least, must acknowledge this. For where is there a body of people in the realm, who, number for number, so closely adhere to what our Church delivers as pure doctrine? Where are those who have approved and do approve themselves more *orthodox*, more sound in their opinions? Is there a *Socinian* or *Arian* among them all? Nay, were you to recite the whole catalogue of

heresies, enumerated by Bishop Pearson, it might be asked, Who can lay any one of these to their charge?

“Nor is their religion more pure from *heresy*, than it is from *superstition*. In former times, wherever an unusual concern for the things of God hath appeared, on the one hand, *strange and erroneous opinions* continually sprang up with it; on the other, a *zeal* for things which were no part of religion, as though they had been essential branches of it. And many have laid as great (if not greater) stress on trifles, as on the weightier matters of the law. But it has not been so in the present case. No stress has been laid on any thing, as though it were necessary to salvation, but what is undeniably contained, and represented as such, 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 from *superstition*, so thoroughly *scriptural* is that religion which has lately spread in this nation. It is likewise *rational* as well as *scriptural*; 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 another. Who will prove that it is *enthusiasm* to love God, even tho’ we love him with all our heart? To rejoice in a sense of his love to us? To praise him, even with all our strength? Who is able to make good this charge against the love of all mankind? Or, laying rhetorical flourishes aside, to come close to the question, and demonstrate, that it is *enthusiasm*, in every state we are in, therewith to be content? Ye men of reason, give me a man, who, setting raillery and ill names apart, will maintain this by dint of argument. If not, own *this religion* is the thing you seek; sober, manly, rational, divine; however exposed to the censure of those who are accustomed to revile what they understand not.

“It may farther be observed, the religion of those we now speak of, is entirely clear of *bigotry*. (Perhaps this might have been ranked with *superstition*, of which it seems to be only a particular species.) They are in no wise *bigotted* to *opinions*. They do indeed hold right opinions. But they are particularly cautious not to rest the weight of Christianity there. They have no such overgrown fondness for any mere opinions, as to think those alone will make them Christians, or to confine their affection or esteem to those who agree with them therein. Nor are they *bigotted* to any branch of practical religion. They desire indeed to be exact in every jot and tittle, in the very smallest points of *Christian practice*. But they are not attached to one point more than another: they aim at uniform, universal obedience. They contend for nothing *trifling*, as if it were important; for nothing *indifferent*, as if it were necessary; for nothing circumstantial, as if it were essential to Christianity, but for every thing in its order.

“Above all, let it be observed, that this religion has no mixture of *vice* or *unholiness* in it. It gives no man of any rank or profession, the least licence to sin. It makes no allowance to any person, for ungodliness of any kind. Not that all who follow after, have attained

this, either are already perfects. But however that be, they plead for no sin, either inward or outward. Yet, there is not found among them that *bitter zeal*, in points either of small or of great importance, that spirit of *persecution*, which has so often accompanied the spirit of reformation. It is an idle conceit, that the spirit of persecution is among the *Papists* only: it is wheresoever the devil, that old murderer, works, and he still *worketh in all the children of disobedience*. Of consequence, all the children of disobedience, will, on a thousand different pretences, and in a thousand different ways, so far as God permits, persecute the children of God."

Such is the account which Mr. Wesley, a man of uncommon sense, learning, and piety, and, of course, of unimpeachable veracity, gave of the *principles* and *practice* of the Methodists, a short time, comparatively speaking, after their origin. At that early period of their history, they had been instruments of great good to the souls of thousands, by reclaiming them from vicious practices, and bringing them to prove, by happy experience, that the *Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth with the heart unto righteousness*. Since he wrote the piece from which I have quoted, so largely, they have increased almost a hundred fold; but neither their *principles* nor *practice* have suffered any change. They are still, as a body, the people which he describes. Should any object, he believed in the doctrine of Inspiration, and consequently was an enthusiast; I answer, if the consequence holds good, our reformers, as well as the primitive Church, were enthusiasts; and that the Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy of the Church of *England* abound with enthusiastical sentiments. Were the learned and great authorities which I have already quoted, in the course of these notes, all enthusiasts? What! Bishops Taylor, Bull, Burnett, Doctor Isaac Barrow, &c. all enthusiasts! If not, Mr. Wesley and his Society stand justly acquitted of the charge of enthusiasm. In proof of the doctrine of *divine influence*, or inspiration, I might quote the writings of many respectable clergymen belonging to the Church at this day; but shall content myself with inserting a few sentences from a work of the late excellent Mr. Milner, of Hull, whose strong attachment to the Church has never been called in question.

"The sole adequate cause," saith he, "of the successful propagation of the Gospel is, according to the Scriptures, the HOLY GHOST. It will be well if his agency, in these polite and rational days, be thought to deserve a moment's attention. Even miracles cannot change the heart, whatever effect they may have on the judgment; and the ruling providence of God, implying only an *external government*, does not influence the will, as facts abundantly testify. All that is *rational* and *human* is totally unequal to the task; nay, perhaps the most sensible of mankind can scarcely bear the idea of a *real Christian* with patience. There is an *energy* more than human which produces this character: and it remains that this must be the INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

"The reader who will allow himself seriously to weigh this subject, may see that *nothing short of this* could constitute one real CHRISTIAN,

in this or any other age of the church. The generality will say, 'At this rate, the majority of those who call themselves Christians, do not even know their own religion.' It is devoutly to be wished that this were not the case; that even many who have written ably in defence of Christianity, had themselves known its nature. Much of the advantage that Deism has gained, had then been prevented: we should have had more of the *experimental proof*: and that scripture had been better known, 'He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself,' (1 John v. 10.) Sceptical doubts will vanish before stubborn facts. Were the gospel itself understood, little time need be spent on its evidences. One sight of the sun is sufficient to point out its glorious Author. In all things else, *experience* is allowed to be the best schoolmaster; in religion only, it is termed *enthusiasm*."

By properly insisting on this doctrine of the *divine influence*, in connection with the other essential doctrines of Christianity, and by inculcating practical religion, in all its branches, the Methodists have been made, by the great Head of the Church, instruments of a great revival of pure religion. And in doing good to the souls of their fellow-subjects, they have contributed much even to their temporal interests, and to the peace and prosperity of the nation. Even on the broad ground of their morals being improved, which few of their enemies will call in question, they may be justly considered as a great advantage, in a civil point of view, to any country in which they reside. The more characters of their description increase, the less has that nation to dread from popular rage or foreign invasion. Pious, upright Christians, whether in or out of the Church, make the best subjects at all times; and are most to be depended upon in the hour of alarm and danger. Immoral men may be subject to the civil power, through fear of punishment; when they conceive disobedience would affect their temporal interests; but true Christians are *subject for conscience's sake*.

NOTE (15.)

All pretensions to piety without benevolence, are founded in delusion; for he that loves God loves all mankind, his greatest enemies not excepted. Now, love to God, being an active principle, manifests itself by acts of beneficence, according to the ability of its possessors. To do good to the bodies as well as to the souls of men, has always been a standing *Rule* of the Methodists. Many of them have long been respectable in civil life; and consequently have had ability as well as inclination, to contribute to the support of public and private Charities. Have they ever discovered any reluctance to support the charitable institutions of their country, according to their power? None who know them will say they have. With whom did the *Benevolent, or Strangers' Friend Society* originate? A Society, the visitors of which distribute many thousands of pounds annually, among the most friendless and destitute of the human race. That society, which does honour to the present age, was formed by the Methodists. To obtain relief from that society, distress, by whomso-

ever sit, whether Christian, Turk, Jew, or Infidel, is a sufficient recommendation. It is true, many benevolent individuals, not among the Methodists, assist in supporting the funds of that institution; but as it originated with, so it is chiefly supported by, the Methodists. The Sunday School institution, now becoming general, owed, for many years, a principal support of its funds, to the Collections made in the Methodist Chapels. Nor though the Methodists have been chiefly the teachers in those schools, have I ever heard, except in one instance, that any of them received the least reward or gratuity for their exertions. "The luxury of doing good" has been to them, and still is, more than a sufficient recompence. Many thousands whom they have instructed are settled in life, and shew, by their regard for religion, and respect for their superiors, that the gratuitous labours of their teachers have not been in vain.

Upon the whole, the people called Methodists merit protection and encouragement, or they do not. If they be in general *honest, industrious* in their *callings*, and *good subjects*, they merit the protection of the Government, under which they live; and if they be also useful Members of Society, *ready*, as the Apostle expresses it, *to every good work*, and zealous in the exercise of universal benevolence, they even merit encouragement. Now it appears, I think, from the observations I have made, that they fairly deserve these characters. But there is another matter of the greatest importance, which should not be forgotten. God has crowned their efforts to reform mankind with astonishing success. Not fewer, I am persuaded, than a million and a half of people, in the British Empire and America, including those who have departed this life in the faith of Christ, during the last sixty years, have been reformed in principle and practice by their instrumentality; and have given all the evidence of it, that can reasonably be desired. Holiness towards God, and righteousness towards man, have taken place of irreligion and immorality, in thousands and tens of thousands of instances. Persons who were immersed in selfishness, and were only remarkable for covetousness, ambition, or the love of pleasure, have found their hearts enlarged, humbled, and purified, by the love of God, and all mankind; so that they have become eminent for liberality, condescension, and kindness; and patterns of temperance and purity to all around them. All that have been attentive to the state of religion and morality in the Empire, and have made accurate observations on the manners of the people, will confirm this testimony.

Let any intelligent and unprejudiced person visit the West of Yorkshire, the East and South of Lancashire and Cheshire; the more populous parts of Staffordshire, the Collieries in the Counties of Durham, Northumberland, and the neighbourhood of Bristol, and the Tin-mines of Cornwall, and he will soon see whether the Methodists have been of any use to the nation. Certain I am that there is no calculating the good which, under God, they have been instrumental in doing, because there is no calculating the importance of spreading those truths, which the Son of God came from heaven to

announce to men, which he sealed with his blood, and confirmed by his resurrection ; nor the value of those *souls*, for whose redemption he expired on the cross. He himself has assured us, that there is *joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth* ; how much more then over thousands and myriads !

FINIS.

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