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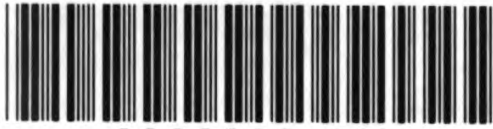
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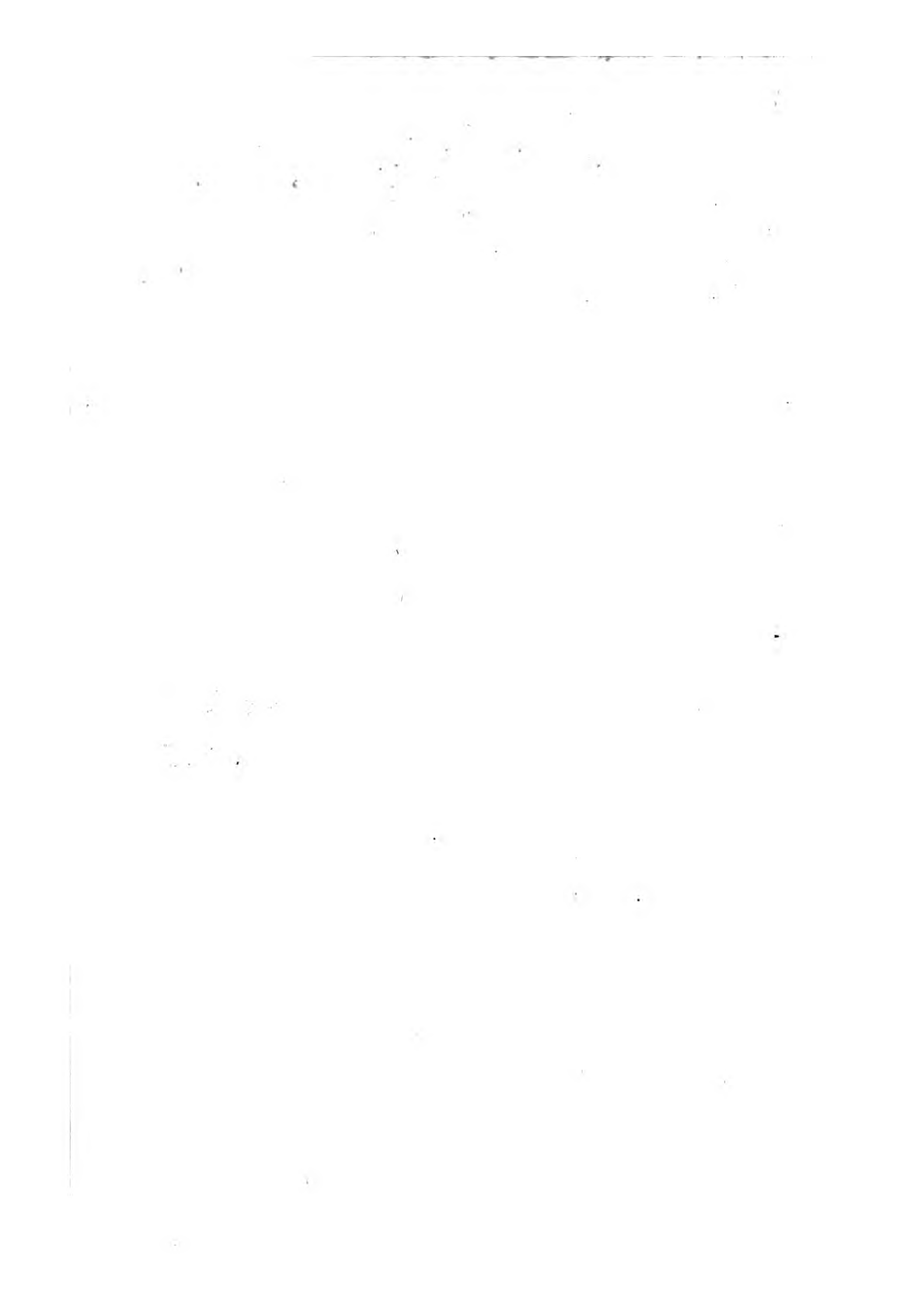


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Ms. 1831.

VINDICATION
OF THE
RELIGIOUS OPINIONS
OF THE
HIGHER CLASSES IN THIS COUNTRY:

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

UPON

*HIS PRACTICAL VIEW OF THE PREVAILING RELIGIOUS SYSTEM
OF THE SAME.*

BY ONE OF THE ARRAIGNED.



“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.”—
Rom. xiv. 4.

Say not unto thy brother “Raca,” lest he answer, “Thou fool,” and thus thou be cause of a double offence!

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR C. J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL’S CHURCH-YARD,
AND WATERLOO-PLACE, PALL-MALL.

MDCCCXXXI.

666.

LONDON:
GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

PREFATORY LETTER

TO

THE ADMIRERS OF MR. WILBERFORCE'S PRACTICAL
VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY.

READER, if such I have the luck to find, willing, steadily, and without prejudice to accompany me through a critical examination of Mr. Wilberforce's book, I would warn you not to expect to find in me an adverse partisan, seeking indiscriminately to overturn each and every opinion of the author, much less, that I am about to offer a vindication of crimes which may be tolerated by, or laxities which may have crept into, general society. I wish, on the contrary, with all my heart, that we could all become as pious, and as good practical Christians as Mr. Wilberforce himself; but my design is to show, that in order to become so, it is by no means necessary to condemn your ordi-

nary clergy, to declare indiscriminate war against the usages of society, or to adopt any of what may really be called the peculiar opinions of Mr. Wilberforce's school. To the unsuspecting or incautious reader, his is certainly an imposing book; to a young reader, with any constitutional tendency to enthusiasm, a dangerous one; but be it my task to shew that "all is not gold that glitters."

I profess to seek but the truth, and my success in this controversy ought mainly to depend upon the real and intrinsic fairness of any argument I may attempt. If I endeavour to fix any unfair interpretation upon any thing Mr. Wilberforce has advanced, or to defend my cause against any of his attacks by special pleading, or meddle with sophistry in the slightest degree, let me be condemned. But if any thing in these Letters should, in your opinion, savour of these offences, respite your judgment of me, until you have compared it carefully with the book I am reviewing. It is all I ask, to stand or fall by that! I have endeavoured to explain

honestly and fairly what I imagine to be the opinions of the mass of society, upon the topics alluded to by Mr. Wilberforce, and whenever I have had reason to suspect my own opinions of being peculiar, I have carefully abstained from obtruding them. By these Letters I propose to afford you a fair view of what are the real differences between Mr. Wilberforce's opinions and ours, and I think they will prove but trifling, when divested of that mass of assumption and extraneous matter with which he has encumbered the subject.

It has been a great object with me to get this Vindication into the smallest possible compass; I am sorry I have not succeeded better; but the peculiar style adopted by Mr. Wilberforce has obliged me to repetition and prolixity. His usual method being, to commence by an assertion either untrue in itself, or founded upon false grounds, to build a false hypothesis upon this, then to preach upon it for several pages; next to make, with apparent liberality, a total concession of the only point really in question: and after this, to

resume the original argument, assuming the conceded point as proved, and ending with a triumphant lecture to the vanquished objector. This process, occasionally several times repeated, has obliged me to follow him through every chapter. Not that I mean to assert, that I have noticed by any means all his charges or insinuations, for had I done so, my book must have been larger than his own. Many things remain unanswered and unnoticed; yet if you can have patience to read and compare those I have noticed, or half of them, you will not be much the worse for the remainder. Remember all I write has reference to the Vindication I have undertaken. Beyond the false charges and insinuations contained in the book against the opinions of the upper classes of society, I do not quarrel with it. Much of it is excellent, but that which is so is not peculiar; yet the manner in which preachment of the most undisputed truisms is therein given, not only assumes peculiarity of doctrine, but a denial on our part of the commonest doctrines of Christianity, whether of faith or morals. This, with the use Mr.

Wilberforce endeavours to make of the ambiguous terms—*real* and *nominal* Christians, and his own definition of those terms, must not be lost sight of, or I shall be in danger of being misunderstood. May you profit both by Mr. Wilberforce's book, and by my critique upon it, discerning with steady and undazzled eye, that which is Christianity, from that which is but the dress, often the disguise of it, and by steady perseverance in well doing, prove that the opinions of the majority of our Church are as really evangelical as those of the assuming minority!

Your servant,

THE AUTHOR.

C O N T E N T S.



	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY LETTER	1

LETTER I.

CHAP. I. *8vo. edit. p. 5.*

Inadequate conceptions of the importance of Christianity— Popular notions—Scripture account—Ignorance in this case criminal—Two false Maxims exposed	19
--	----

LETTER II.

CHAP. II. *8vo. edit. p. 19.*

Inadequate conceptions of the Corruption of Human Nature— Evil Spirit—Natural state of Man—Objections answered	30
---	----

LETTER III.

CHAP. III.. § 1, 2. *8vo. edit. p. 50.*

Inadequate conceptions concerning our Saviour and the Holy Spirit—Chief defects of the religious system of the bulk of professed Christians, in what regards our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—With a Dissertation concerning the use of the Passions in Religion	46
--	----

LETTER IV.

CHAP. III. § 3. *8vo. edit. p. 91.*

	PAGE
Inadequate conceptions concerning the Holy Spirit's operations..	56

LETTER V.

CHAP. III. § 4. *8vo. edit. p. 99.*

Some practical Consequences of the prevailing fundamental Mis- conception of the Scheme and essential Principle of the Gospel.....	72
--	----

LETTER VI.

CHAP. IV. § 1. *8vo. edit. p. 112.*

On the prevailing <i>inadequate conceptions</i> concerning the nature and strictness of practical Christianity	85
---	----

LETTER VII.

CHAP. IV. § 2. *8vo. edit. p. 144.*

Prevailing inadequate Conceptions of practical Christianity— Further effects of Religion degraded into a set of statutes	100
Discussion upon Sunday	104

LETTER VIII.

CHAP. IV. § 3. *8vo. edit. p. 160.*

On the desire of Human Estimation and Applause—The gene- rally prevailing Opinions contrasted with those of the true Christian	127
--	-----

LETTER IX.

CHAP. IV. § 4. *8vo. edit. p. 193.*

	PAGE
The generally prevailing error of substituting amiable tempers and useful lives in the place of Religion, stated and confuted ; with hints to real Christians	138

LETTER X.

CHAP. IV. § 5. *8vo. edit. p. 223.*

Practical Christianity—Prevailing inadequate Conceptions—Some other grand Defects in the practical system of the bulk of Nominal Christians	144
Discussion upon Theatrical Amusements	160

LETTER XI.

CHAP. IV. § 6. *8vo. edit. p. 249.*

Grand radical defect in the system of Nominal Christians—Neglect of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity	170
--	-----

LETTER XII.

CHAP. V. *8vo. edit. p. 272.*

Prevailing inadequate Conceptions of Practical Christianity—On the Excellence of Christianity in certain important particulars—Argument which results thence in proof of its Divine Origin	185
--	-----

LETTER XIII.

CHAP. VII. § 1. *8vo. edit. p. 328.*

Practical hints to various descriptions of Persons	195
Definition of the terms Cant and Saint	199

LETTER XIV.

CHAP. VII. § 2. *8vo. edit. p. 357.*

	PAGE
Practical hints to various descriptions of Persons—Advice to some who profess their full assent to the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel.....	210

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE ESQ.

&c. &c.

SIR,

HAVING accidentally seen advertised, in a newspaper of 1829, a work entitled “A Practical View of the prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the higher and middle Classes of this Country, contrasted with real Christianity, by William Wilberforce, Esq.,” curiosity prompted me to send for the book, which I then found was in its seventeenth edition. This certainly makes it rather late for me to remark upon its contents, especially as I have let slip the moment¹ following this last edition. But as I am unable to hear of any body having undertaken the task, I must venture to come forward, even thus late, in vindication of

¹ Although I bought the book in 1829, the idea of noticing it never occurred to me until the summer of 1830.

that portion of the Church of England, to which I profess myself as sincerely attached as you can be to that minority, whose cause you so sedulously advocate throughout your work. My vindication, Sir, cannot, alas ! be of that of which in most instances you actually do accuse us—imperfection of practice : this were vain ! But my vindication is of that of which you profess to accuse us—opinion ; for this is what you profess to treat of.

Whenever any sect of any religion is large enough to comprise a national Church, the actual general practice of that body of people, must, in the nature of things, be very defective, when contrasted with the strict literal precepts of the religion they profess ; and the imperfection of their practice can never form a fair argument against that religion, but when contrasted with other bodies of people of different tenets, under the same circumstances. Upon such wide scale we may judge with some degree of fairness of two systems that vary in their foundation, or essentially in the superstructure built upon the same foundation. We may contrast the spurious and evanescent civilization produced by Mahomedanism, with the more solid and permanent civilization of Christianity. We may contrast the intolerance and exclusiveness of the Church of Rome, with the professed and actual greater tolerance of Protestantism in general,

as the effects of the doctrines peculiar to these Churches. But if we see a drunken Mahomedan or a robber Christian, we must not charge these things as errors upon their respective creeds. If the Persian attributed the drunkenness of the Turk to his different opinion of who was first Caliph, or the Protestant the rapine of a Papist to his deification of the Virgin, we should laugh at him. Whether in the Koran or the Gospel, these things are forbidden alike to all sects of their followers. But you, Sir, have not scrupled to collect and enumerate every possible crime and imperfection that can be rife among any body of Christians, in disobedience alike to the tenets of every sect but one that ever called themselves Christians, and to charge them upon our tenets. Your complaint against which, all the while, is, that they are not sufficiently assimilated to the one exception I have alluded to,—those you, in the course of your work, describe as abusing the doctrines of grace. Do not let me be misunderstood; I do not mean to deny that all the evils you describe exist, nay, are more or less tolerated amongst us. But what I do deny is, that they are the effect of ignorance or misconception of our religion. This may seem like pleading guilty to more than we are accused of. Be it so! Let us be guilty of that of which we are guilty, but not of that of which we are not guilty.

Turn your book into a volume of general sermons, and I will not quarrel with it. But when you endeavour to convert a general charge of imperfection of practice, as contrasted with the theory of Christianity—a charge, which must of necessity be true—into a charge against the *opinions* of four-fifths of the clergy and laity of the Church of England, by entitling it “inadequate conceptions,” it is fitting that you should, if possible, be contradicted. The object, therefore, of these Letters, is not to vindicate ourselves from any general charge of imperfection of practice, but to vindicate our opinions where they may happen to differ from your own, and to explain them where, as I believe will generally be found to be the case, they are erroneously supposed to differ.

You attack us, Sir, with the full advantage of an assailant—an advantage of which you most unsparingly avail yourself. The arms of chivalry, the sling of David, the dirty water of the Chinese riot-engine, and the French stink-pot, seem equally lawful to you, and are most unscrupulously and indiscriminately used to overwhelm us, by a “candid friend,” ere even we can close our vizors or raise our shields. The arms of chivalry we can deal with; the sling may smite hard, though I trust not mortally, among our ranks; but against your other unchristian weapons we have no defence. We

must be content to bear the infliction, despising the annoyance, only protesting against the unfairness of their use. From such a conflict we cannot come unscathed, but I trust we may yet keep our ground and our array. You profess to use your Bible as your shield; but, Sir, you sling it upon your shoulders, and maintain but a Parthian combat, rarely trusting yourself to stand firm, even behind so impenetrable a buckler. And if, like Huntingdon, I should be compelled in my defence uncourteously to throw my mace, and its unregulated force should bruise you, remember I carried not the weapon as a missile. If dirt fall from it and splash you, it is but the dirt you yourself have thrown upon it.

On my honour, Sir, sincerely as I regret your discourteous mode of warfare, I as sincerely respect your person and your principles. There is a respect due to an eminent leader in the abolition of the slave-trade, that grand triumph of Christianity and civilization over selfishness and barbarism,—and to the steady, constant, and uncompromising advocate of religion and virtue, which no want of judgment, or slight intemperance of zeal on his part, must ever cause to be forgotten by those who would arrogate to themselves the name of Christians. Rest assured, Sir, that I have not forgotten it, though in the heat of combat I may appear to

parry roughly, or attempt a quick return. " Pardon, ce n'est que pour te remettre à toi-même!" You may, however, fairly retort upon me a charge of want of courtesy in presuming thus anonymously to offer myself as the opponent of the chosen champion of Israel; and could the question be personal between us, I should admit myself to be guilty of want of respect towards you in doing so, even though my bearings, if revealed, would be all unworthy of your notice. As it is, my cause would gain nothing from my name; while, by exposing it, I should but expose myself as a mark for the weapons of every Pandarus of your party, and at the same time, perhaps, to the ridicule of every Thersites of my own; destroying, probably, by so impolitic a disclosure, that slight degree of confidence the better of my own friends might feel in an unknown champion, and which is so essentially necessary to a just and unprejudiced appreciation of his exertions. I undertake the task, Sir, not from any vain confidence in the equality of my fitness with yours, to write upon such subjects, nor in my abilities as a writer or a reasoner, nor even from any idea of being more learned in divinity than many of my fellows; but that I conceive myself peculiarly fitted for this task, as being a thoroughly fair specimen of those you design to attack. Having no pretension to more religion

than the ordinary run of English gentry, but yet having thought sufficiently upon the subject to have formed fixed and definite opinions, which being, I believe, if any thing, rather more than ordinarily tinctured with what are termed rationalizing ideas, I have no fear that in giving them, as far as I suppose them accordant with those of the generality, I shall be representing the opinions of the higher classes of society, according to your notions, at all more favourably than they deserve.

It certainly appears to me that you have very greatly mistaken those opinions, and imagined them far more different from your own than they really are. Taking your whole work together, all that you would really find fault with, barring, of course, imperfection of practice, the common preaching of every clergyman and every moralist, and which nobody disputes, is, that we do not make our religion sufficiently ostensible. I am not prepared to say, that upon the whole, there may not be some reason in the complaint. It is difficult to strike a correct medium in any thing, and in this case, perhaps, our fear of hypocrisy may have carried us a little beyond what is strictly reasonable, and may have grown into the semblance of fear of being thought religious¹. Could we step

¹ Bishop Heber has made some excellent remarks upon this subject, very true and very judicious.

back just enough, and not too much, no doubt it would be an improvement. I am confident, however, that for the well-being of religion itself, its ostensible—I may say corporeal presence in general society, cannot be too jealously watched; for its body, like all other bodies here on earth, is a sadly corruptible one, and not always sacred from an avatar of Satan.

In penitence, prayer, and other expressions of religious feeling, the same degree of admission may be made. We may have gone a trifle too far for perfection in curbing them; a hand rather lighter might have been better. But here again the relaxation requires steadiness and judgment, or plain practical realities will soon be forgotten in more imposing forms. But when you would condemn us for these things by wholesale, and contend, that not only should every restraint be removed, but every possible encouragement and stimulus given to ostensible religion and fervour of expression, I tell you you are like the advocates of popular liberty, who by the heedless removal of every wholesome restraint, would soon destroy their much-loved freedom herself, by letting loose upon her her own offspring principles. It is like a question of pruning. We, perhaps, may prune too closely, but if you force and prune not, your vine, though more showy, will ultimately bear less good fruit than even ours.

These things, Sir, appear to me to form the only real differences in what you term our respective systems : for, as to the body of your charges against us, which, to a careless reader, would make your case appear so strong, they are beside the purpose altogether ; they are charges of irreligion and immorality ; of imperfection in our duty to God and man. These, you must well know, are not our system, although it suits you to represent them as such ; they cannot be our system, or the system of any sect of Christians whatsoever, nor ever were. They are those things wherein we fail in acting up to our system. They are the things in which every body of Christians that exist, or ever have existed, have more or less failed in acting up to their system, for the system of all has been, in these things, alike ;—a theory of perfect piety and perfect morality. Ours is unencumbered by superstitious ceremonies, and the Gospel is sufficiently known, to render it impossible that we should be deceived by an interested priesthood. Or, if such things are, why have you not pointed them out ? But what means all this ? why are these things called our system ? Ours contrasted with whose ? What is all this confusion of nominal Christians and real ones ? Why, Sir, if “ he who does righteousness only is righteous,” and those only are real Christians who do perfect righteousness, why, then, every

body of Christians that ever existed, have, as a body, been only nominal Christians! But the real fact is, (though doubtless with a perfectly good intention) you are acting a double part all through the book, and endeavouring at the same time to preach to us perfection, and to advocate the supremacy of a particular sect, for whom you assume a far nearer approach to this desirable perfection, than what has been attained by any other body of Christians.

Could you prove that all who agree with yourself in peculiar opinions were of necessity like you in every other respect, this might have some weight; but you can neither prove this, nor can you prove that there have not been and are not Christians of my opinions, Greeks, Papists, Quakers, sectarians of a thousand shades, nay, even Unitarians, all equally good as yourself, or the one you would point out as the very paragon of your sect? I hesitate not to affirm that such have been, and are, and might equally be held up as examples of the truth of their peculiar opinions. The truth is, Sir, you have confounded peculiar opinions with zealous sincerity. A good Christian is a good Christian, let him bear the name of what sect he will. You, in your zeal for that party whose cause you have espoused, and among whom you doubtless know many good Christians, have forgotten that Christ-

ianity is not peculiar to them alone ; and like a Spaniard, who, when he says “ Buen Christiano,” has no other idea than of a Papist ; and even though he might give a perfectly correct description of what that Buen Christiano ought to be, would still hold the term as by no possibility applying to any other than a Papist. So it is with you, although no doubt you would not openly and directly defend such opinion ; yet you never can thoroughly disconnect the ideas of “ real or true Christian” and “ one of us.” Nay, you indulge in this fancied identity so long, and so constantly, that at last you fairly assume it as an axiom, although you certainly have never actually ventured, in so many words, to claim perfection, even for those you designate as “ real and true.”

This unfortunate overstraining of partiality has led you, I must suppose unwarily, into a permanent strain of unjust insinuation against that part of the Church of England which you look upon as your immediate antagonist. It pervades even your best and otherwise unobjectionable preachment ; all has a tone of contrast, unfair, because as you put it, the contrast is not ostensibly with the theory of Christianity, or even with certain individuals ; but with another equal body of men, under similar circumstances, but which body is not proved to exist, and I fear, does exist but in your imagination. Indi-

viduals of your sect may certainly be found, who, as far as man can, may support your contrast, but these can be no fair contrast even for parallel numbers from the body of a national Church, which must naturally comprise within its pale a host of the most giddy and thoughtless of society; and their superiority, even were it ever so well established, as it by no means is, could never be any admissible argument against the opinions of the general body of adherents to such national Church. You, however, scruple not to assume all this, and upon your own mere assumption, to indulge in a strain of most unlimited abuse; and for no other reason than that, as a body, we are imperfect, and that you suppose us, generally, not to understand certain intricate propositions exactly as you do, you pronounce us not Christians. In asserting our ignorance, you first, by insinuation, condemn our clergy, who are our instructors, and then openly deny even to them the title of Christians, for no other reason, that I can see, than that they preach the Gospel in the language of the day instead of that of two hundred years back, and devote about two-thirds of their discourses to the practical realities of obedience, and to the exposition of the less intelligible parts of Scripture, instead of always harping upon articles of faith, or confusing the imaginations of their hearers with strings of ob-

scure but high sounding texts. Surely, the Liturgy having so amply provided for this part of the devotions of the congregation, in assigning so large a portion of the Psalms¹ to every service, might serve rather as the excuse than as the condemnation of the minister in this latter particular. You carry this abuse direct and indirect against us, under the title of nominal, as contrasted with real, Christians, in the double meaning of the term, to such lengths occasionally, as oblige me to call you to order in terms I regret the necessity of using; and herein I would by anticipation apologize if I appear to go further than is consistent with the respect I profess to feel for you; but the tone you have unfortunately adopted has rendered my retort indispensable.

You require your readers, if you should appear needlessly austere and rigid, not to condemn you without a fair enquiry whether your statements do or do not accord with the *language* of the Sacred Writings. This is cautious enough, certainly, and well may you have confidence in such test! From the word of God, when definitely understood, cer-

¹ Do not let me here be supposed to speak slightly of these, many of them most beautiful compositions, when used as what they really are: but when put as prayers, as addresses to the Deity, into the mouths of a Christian congregation, they certainly are not always either suitable or intelligible.

tainly there is no appeal ; but surely, Sir, it is not necessary for me to inform you, that almost every error, heresy, and absurdity, since the foundation of Christianity, has been referred with confidence to precisely the same test, and has, generally speaking, been provable thereby. An appeal, therefore, from the *language* of Scripture must lie somewhere, and put it how you will, this appeal must, first or last, directly or indirectly, be to *reason*. Argument and judgment must decide ! If you would impose your interpretation, you must prove its correctness, and prove it to the satisfaction of him upon whom you would impose it, or you are hardly justified in condemning him for differing with you.

You have free liberty to propose whatever may seem good and reasonable to yourself, and to support it with such proofs as may suggest themselves, in the best way you can, and, if your practice be consistent with your profession, you have a right to expect that men should give you credit for sincerity, tolerate your eccentricity, and respect your principles.

Thus much, in this age of toleration, I think I can promise you, and that the “charge of singularity” will not stand much in your way. If you do not like to go out on a Sunday, why you may stay at home ; if you do not like to go to a race-ground or to a theatre, stay away from them ; no-

body will trouble their heads about the matter : it were gross ill-breeding to observe upon it in your presence, and if observed upon behind your back, I can promise you, generally, a defender for every assailant, especially where you abstain, for principle's sake, from any thing usually thought agreeable. But if you will not be contented with this toleration, but must have dominion, and assail others, then you have no right to complain that you yourselves are assailed in turn.

If you will obtrude your opinions as infallible, prepare to support their infallibility with reason and good-humour, for whenever you descend to abuse, far from being thereby convinced, men will rather take it as an evidence of your feeling yourself worsted in argument. Quakers, with all their marked, and sometimes troublesome peculiarities, walk about in their brown coats and slouch hats unmolested and unridiculed ; they are respected for their sterling worth, and not only tolerated, but indulged even in their most inconvenient whims, beyond any other class of subjects, but then they have ceased to act upon the offensive. When they thought proper to come into the " steeple-house," and insult the worship of the place, they brought upon themselves retaliation, and their cry of " persecution" was justly ridiculed. Thus, Sir, it is with yourself ; the rules of our so-

ciety will answer your purpose well enough if you will be content not to outrage them. If you wish to preach, why preach, either *vivá voce*, if you can collect a willing audience, or in print for those who like to read. But if you will insist upon preaching unseasonably, or, under pretence of sermons, write libels upon society, you must expect that your audience will yawn, and your readers will criticize, and you must lay your account to being exposed, whenever you are caught tripping, “with such measure as you mete shall it be meted to you again;” and of this you have no reason to complain, for you, “*a real Christian*,” have begun the fray. Do not imagine, Sir, that even if I am the first who have observed upon the injustice of your remarks, that I therefore am the first who have felt it, or that your accusations have been thus seemingly acquiesced in from their undeniable justice. No, Sir; if they have remained unanswered, it has been because it was the business of no particular person to answer them; and they have been acquiesced in generally from want of observation. We are so accustomed to crimination from writers upon such subjects, and so well aware of our deserving all that can be said upon the score of imperfection, that your abuse has passed as general arraignment with the majority of readers, who have not attended to the particular design of your argument sufficiently

to discover its extent, and feeling each individual charge as advanced to contain some truth, as most of those which are at all definite must do, being charges of general imperfection, they have concluded the whole to be true, and the case made out. Others, again, having been perhaps a little staggered at first by some of your positions, after being tolerably well tired and confused, like a novice reading an Act of Parliament, by the lengthened wording, intermixed with Scripture quotations, have at last arrived at your explanatory concessions, and seizing eagerly upon something so good and reasonable, have forgotten to observe that these contradict entirely the previous arguments ; and, satisfied that they have now arrived at your meaning, their suspicions are lulled to sleep, and by the time the conceded point is re-assumed they have totally forgotten their previous jealousy, and conclude all is right, though they cannot remember exactly how. They, in fact, remember but your general charges, which they feel to be true ; your concessions, which they look upon as the explanation and summary of your arguments, forgetting the arguments themselves and their consequences ; and your good preachment, supported, as it appears to them, by numerous texts from Scripture. Thus the mass of your readers, powerless from mingled confusion, indolence, and habitual humility, in ac-

quiescing at once in every charge of imperfection, or excited by the high-flown piety of your style and language, and, above all, borne down by the reiterated assertions of an author of such name and just celebrity, are led to conclude that all you have said must be just and true; and many of them, it is to be feared, to the ulterior conclusions you would apparently enforce, that the Calvinistic minority of the Church of England is alone worthy of its assumed title of *Evangelical*.

I now pass on, Sir, to a regular review of your book, chapter by chapter, and let those who will read, think, and judge how far I sustain the charges I have ventured to make against it; and how far I have been able to answer the charges it makes against us.

Your humble servant,

OBJECTOR.

LETTER I.

CHAP. I. 8vo. Edit. p. 5.

Inadequate conceptions of the importance of Christianity—Popular notions—Scripture account—Ignorance in this case criminal—Two false maxims exposed.

SIR,

IN chapter first, under the above title of “inadequate conceptions,” with which you charge us, you bring forward four proofs in support of your accusation. First, our own utter ignorance of the “peculiar characteristics” (p. 5, 6) of the religion we profess. Secondly, our negligence in instructing our children therein: (p. 6). Thirdly, our not making it a topic of general conversation: (p. 8). Fourthly,—and which you seem to think the gravest charge of all—that when our conversation does take a grave turn, we talk of right and wrong, and philosophise upon their nature and principles, instead of being contented to refer *verbatim* to the commands and prohibitions of our Bibles: (p. 9).

Your two first assertions, in the name of the higher classes, I deny. We are not ignorant of any essential, either of faith or doctrine, of the religion of Christ; and as to our sons, to whom is their education confided? to whom was our own confided? I believe there is hardly an instance of the preceptor, whether public or private, to whom the youth of the higher classes is entrusted, being other than a clergyman of the Established Church. Your assertion then goes to accuse generally the whole body of preceptors, not only of criminal negligence, but negligence of a most extraordinary kind, that what they neglect to teach, is just the very thing that it is their peculiar profession to teach. Were this true, it would indeed be a strange anomaly, even in individual cases; as general, it is absolutely incredible. But in turning over a page or two, where you begin to support your assertion, we find it quietly resolving itself into a very different charge, namely, that the laity are not educated to be controversial theologians: (p. 12). This is certainly most true, and, in my opinion, most proper; were it otherwise, your third assertion, which I admit, might, perhaps, be no longer so true; but would Christianity be a gainer thereby? I think not! By making religion a common topic of general conversation, we should be apt, too soon, to lose our little reverence in familiarity. Every

one would fancy himself learned, be quick to speak and slow to hear, and our pious conversations would proceed with the usual charity of disputants. We should split into sects in these days of toleration, and the Church would speedily become the victim of our dissensions. Without a Church to guide and keep us united, it is to be feared Christianity itself would be refined away, even more quickly and completely than, according to your assertion, is now the case.

You appear to me, Sir, to confound proficiency in divinity with essential Christianity. Proficients in divinity we certainly cannot become without study, but proficients in useful and essential Christianity we may be. What specimens of ignorance you may have met with, it is not for me to say ; but I never, to my knowledge, met with one yet who did not at least know thus much. That he was created by God, redeemed from death, the consequence of original sin, by the incarnation of the Son of God, who had commanded him to be grateful and pious towards God, just, merciful, and benevolent towards men ; and moreover, this peculiarity, that he was to keep a check upon evil in the very bud, by not suffering himself to conceive it in his mind, and if conceived unawares, that he was instantly to crush it by an effort of determined resolution, accompanied by prayer to God in the

name of Christ, to give him fortitude to withstand it; and, that as he neglected or obeyed these commands, he was to expect punishment or reward in a future life. This, I may venture to say, is the least degree of Christian knowledge attained by any professed believer of the higher orders; and how with this, he can have any inadequate conception of its importance, I do not understand. It is with him as with you—salvation or condemnation: all the learning of the schools can make the matter of no greater importance than simple belief, though I will not say it might not make it less. I cannot see, even were our knowledge indeed limited to this sketch, how ignorance should make us “mistake greatly in what regards the religion we profess:” (p. 14).

Of your fourth charge, your explanation is not over clear; but if I understand aright, it alludes to our habit of saying—such a thing is right or wrong, because so and so; whereas you would have us say—because it is according to, or against, the word of God! But this is really the consequence neither of our contempt for the word of God, nor of our ignorance, but more properly of our presuming upon the knowledge of those we may be addressing; we suppose them to know already every thing that directly concerns the action with regard to Scripture. We conceive our opinion of its

assent or dissent to be implied in our word Right or Wrong; and we merely proceed to explain why or how: Why, if the command is direct; How, if it might be matter of dispute. We might not, it is true, be able to quote chapter and verse, but speak from general impressions, what you term "faint traces;" but we speak truly, and if truly, both our purpose and the purpose of religion are as effectually answered as if we could recite the very words of Scripture. And the reason why we are, as you say, "recalled to the subject by the mention of some acknowledged heretic," (p. 9) is, that we instantly remember that his doctrine denies our position, and our denouncing of that doctrine goes far, in my opinion, to prove what I have asserted, that, despite our silence upon the subject, the sentiments we had been expressing had secret reference to religion; consequently, that our judgment of right and wrong is not "uninfluenced by the religion of Jesus:" (p. 9).

Another accusation against us as a proof of our indifference to religion, is the little encouragement given to missions, (p. 8); but this, though I regret to say the imputation has some truth as to fact, yet I most positively deny your assumption of its cause being indifference. Had we hope of real success, missions would not want encouragement. It is not our indifference to the result, but our

fear, over great fear if you will, of producing an evil result, that checks our zeal in this particular ; it is in fact our want of confidence in the instruments employed, and too much has occurred to justify this want of confidence. But all this must remain matter of opinion ; it is neither my object nor my wish to prove that missions should not be encouraged, but merely to point out that there are other reasons for our apparent want of zeal, than mere indifference.

You next bring against us two maxims, which you pronounce false, and which you put into our mouths as a source of error : (p. 14). First, you make us say, " It signifies little what a man believes ; look to his practice." Secondly, " Sincerity is all in all." You then proceed to descant upon their various false applications, assuming that we so apply them ; but surely it would have been better for you to shew that we do so, by furnishing a context, instead of thus putting forth naked maxims, and throwing them in the worst, the most absurd sense you can devise, upon a whole class of educated people ; and that class not a sect of defined opinions. Now I unhesitatingly deny that we ever do use these maxims in a way which would justify any man of common sense, in supposing for an instant, that we meant them to be understood as you interpret them. We know, as well as you do,

that "faith influences practice," and that for this reason it is enjoined; and if we say it signifies little what a man believes, we must, in all fairness, be supposed to allude to the innumerable non-essential distinctions in the opinions of the Christian world. It is the maxim of toleration. We judge not man's belief; we have no right to do so; but we know well, that if his practice is good, his faith is not likely to be essentially wrong. To make us apply such maxim to religious systems not professing Christianity, is at once to make us cease to be Christians ourselves; and this we must suppose to be your meaning, as we cannot suppose you to imagine that salvation is to be limited to certain forms and descriptions of Christian faith.

Another mistake in your argument is, that while we in our words "look to his practice," are proceeding upon the supposition of good, you are proceeding upon the contrary supposition of evil, (p. 16); whereas, if the practice we point to be evil, our maxim is no longer opposed to you; as in this case you would not oppose our condemnation, whatever might be the sinner's creed.

It is the same with the second maxim. We say "sincerity," and by way of controverting us, you argue upon insincerity, and assert, that in popular notions, sincerity means insincerity (p. 17): but really, Sir, you must excuse our "lamentable igno-

rance," if we were totally unaware of this. When we say sincerity, we mean sincerity, and in talking of Christianity, we mean Christian sincerity, an unfeigned mindfulness of the omnipresence of the Omniscient; and do not presume an ignorance of even the essentials of what may be termed natural religion. I suppose you will allow that men may differ, and yet be equally sincere—may differ, even in certain matters, shades, and degrees, of right and wrong—yet herein we should not conceive that you mean to imply a denial of the sufficiency of the means afforded for the distinction: (p. 16). The means are certainly sufficient for all general purposes, yet cases will arise, in which the good and evil are so intimately blended as to defy an analysis that shall satisfy all alike. Why else have the best and most learned so constantly disagreed?

The instances you quote want the grand *primâ facie* evidence of sincerity; they are deficient in our test of practice. We mean neither to defend madmen, nor to apply the term sincerity to such "as, from long habits of wickedness, are lost to the perception of virtue," (p. 17); nor, unless so specified, should our expressions be taken to apply at all to actions in their own nature evil, especially when you had just made us give practice (*i. e.* good practice) as the test. Nevertheless, I will meet you even here, and not deny that, in a peculiar position

of argument, we might even go so far as not only to palliate, but even to claim merit, under plea of sincerity, for actions in themselves criminal; to palliate, even where they would not fairly come under that part of your definition of true sincerity, which we would admit—"Honesty of mind, and a faithful use of the means of knowledge:" (p. 18). For instance—Our blessed Saviour, while on the cross, prays thus: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Also, he adds no denunciation when he tells his disciples, "the time cometh, when he who shall kill you, shall think he doeth God a service." Now it can hardly be said that these persecutors generally were either strictly honest in mind, or had made a thoroughly faithful use of their means of knowledge. At least, others who had done so, saw enough in those means to enable them to recognise their Messiah. But these are only not condemned. On the other hand, St. Paul, in whom He who judges the heart saw real sincerity, and true, though misdirected zeal, was approved for that sincerity, his delusion was dispelled, and his zeal directed to the real service of the Master he had been endeavouring, though erroneously, to serve. I may instance also the patriarch Abraham, in his famous sacrifice. His action would have been highly criminal, even in his own day, but by his sincerity in his desire to please

God, by obeying what a faithful use of his means of knowledge told him was the command of God, even though that command was in direct opposition to the former commands of God, he earned both commendation and reward. It was his faith, you will exclaim. Mysterious word! Yes, it was his faith; for his faith was one of his means of knowledge; but his obedience to that faith, in a disagreeable command, was his merit, and this was the result or proof, which you will, of the sincerity of his desire to please the God he served: and if Clement and Ravillac were indeed equally sincere, their service, criminal as their acts may really be, will, we are bound to believe, be equally accepted by Him who alone can judge, even though their oracle may have been a delusion. The reason why we justify and praise the patriarch and the apostle is, that we believe in their sincerity; and if we condemn Clement and Ravillac, it is because we do not believe in their sincerity. The latter part of your definition of true sincerity we cannot admit. "Humble enquiry," and more especially "impartial and unprejudiced judgment," (p. 18) form no constituent parts of sincerity, although nothing, certainly, is more likely to effect them, as says your own excellent maxim, "An honest heart is the best casuist." But this, good as it is, I might equally pull to pieces, did I proceed upon

your example, and argue as if you had said "a dishonest heart," or interpret the term to mean, as it is often used, conviviality and frankness of disposition. True sincerity, however, you not only admit, but prove, throughout the whole tenor of your book, to be just what you have made us call it—all in all; and you contend, and we deny not, that to true sincerity true knowledge is promised, and will be given.

Your humble servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER II.

CHAP. II. 8vo. Edit. p. 19.

*Inadequate conceptions of the Corruption of Human Nature—
Evil Spirit—Natural state of Man—Objections answered.*

SIR,

IN chapter the second you attack us for having “inadequate conceptions of human nature;” and you assert, that we “either overlook, or deny, or at least, greatly extenuate, our corruption and weakness:” (p. 20). This is, truly, rather a vague charge, containing three counts in one, with the heaviest and falsest in the middle, as if for the purpose of being covered by the lesser two. You instantly proceed, however, to put into our mouths a full acknowledgment of our corruption: (p. 20). I must, therefore, suppose the first part of the charge withdrawn. But then you say, we “do not trace this corruption to its true origin” (p. 20); and immediately proceed with your charge of extenuation, making us give this extenuation as the

origin of the evil, in the terms “frailty—infirmity—petty transgressions—occasional surprisals,” &c. Do you mean then to say, that we call “ever being prone to sensuality and selfishness in disobedience to the more refined and liberal principles of our nature” (p. 20), an occasional failing, a sudden surprisal? or call oppression, rapacity, cruelty, fraud, envy, and malice, “petty transgressions!” And if, in answer to the question, “What is the cause of such general depravity?” we should say, “The frailty and infirmity of human nature,” will you deny it? are we not frail and infirm? or will you contend, that because we say “frailty and infirmity,” we must, therefore, be understood to deny any particular origin of this frailty and infirmity? As well might I contend that you denied the history of gunpowder, because you said a man’s death was caused by a bullet! Let us say all you here make us say; it neither proves that we think “that vice is rather accidental and temporary than constitutional and habitual” (p. 21), nor does it make us deny any part of your “Scripture account.” You really must excuse my saying, that your insinuation, throughout this section, that we do so, is neither true nor fair. Your objections against us here, as in many other parts of your book, are almost entirely referable to our different mode of expressing ourselves, and our habit, before

noticed, of not willingly talking of religion, especially in the set terms you seem to require. What your own opinion actually is, it is most difficult to determine, as you never come to the point; but it appears to me, judging from the style of your quotations, that if there is any difference in our opinions upon this subject, it is, that you imagine, that at the instant of the first disobedience, human nature arrived at once at its maturity of corruption—*repente turpissima*—while we contend for the original maxim, *nemo repente*,—that human nature was not immediately at its worst. I could talk for an hour about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, &c. &c. but it were useless; I really do not think the matter of sufficient consequence, as it in no wise alters our after state, be it which way it may. Allow me one remark, however. God said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake:” but the ground still brought forth good fruit, as well as weeds and poison, only to render the good crop a reasonable expectation, it required—what? cultivation! The evil principle once introduced, certainly made vigorous strides, but not throughout the history even of natural man, totally unopposed. While we admit your account of his depravity, we must not forget that there is a contrary side of the question, or hastily decide that God was altogether driven from his creation, be-

cause it is easier to collect vices than virtues from the history of mankind. It is the very nature of evil to be prominent, and of good to lie concealed ! Evil, however, had so far succeeded in the struggle, as to render necessary a general revelation, which has, as you allow, “ set the tone of morals much higher than it was ever found in the Pagan world,” and “ amended the standard of public opinion.” That we are still imperfect, beyond what might be conceived possible, we freely admit ; nor do I at all quarrel with your preachment and self-examination. Evil is not conquered for us ; we have still a severe struggle to maintain : but the grasp it had upon our throats is relaxed, and we are set afresh upon our legs, with a powerful friend to back us ; but we ourselves must still face our enemy, and endeavour to prove ourselves not unworthy of the promised aid, upon which, past experience and express revelation tell us, depends our victory. Such is the description you here give of our state ; do not, therefore, forget it hereafter !

You finish this section by two pages of a sort of triumphant lecture, as if you really had been engaged in a contest, and won a clear and decided victory ; whereas, you have been fighting but a shadow of your own creation, we never having denied, nor you even made us deny, the corruption of human nature. As for inadequate conception,

there is no hint of it throughout, unless indeed my surmise was right about the sudden or progressive maturity of this corruption; and you have not brought forward one argument to prove it sudden.

2d Section.—The next accusation brought against us is, that of having “exploded the notion of the existence of the evil spirit,” (p. 34); and than this, you say, “there cannot be a stronger proof of the difference between the religious system of Scripture and our religious system.” I really wish you would be so good as to explain what these two systems are, that we might compare them; for, so ignorant are we, that we are not aware of having any system, other than that of Scripture, which we imagine ourselves to have adopted. It is useless to keep rating us thus, for a difference which you will not or cannot show us! Now as to the existence of the evil spirit, you have not given us an objection even of your own manufacture: you merely assert that we deny it, and not only deny, but ridicule the idea. But are you sure that you have understood aright what it is we have exploded? What leads you to suppose the existence of such a being exploded? I can think of nothing likely to have offended you in this way, unless indeed it be the omission, in criminal indictments, of the words, “at the instigation of the devil,” which, I believe, were more commonly made use of formerly than

at present: or is it, in reality, our repeal of the laws against witchcraft, which so scandalised some religionists of your, or some similar, school? But, as far as I know any thing of the opinion of my fellows upon this matter, the belief in the existence of the evil spirit is by no means exploded. Few would be found to deny the existence of such being; but we certainly also conceive, that the words, Satan, Devil, &c. are often used in Scripture to signify no more than evil; the depravity of our nature, sometimes even no more than principle liable to error; the extension of those passions, which, though given us for good purposes, will, if unchecked, in time conduce to evil;—all these things are, at different times, signified by such like terms. What we may be fairly said to doubt is, the personal ubiquity of such evil spirit, by whose actual agency, and at whose (if I may use the terms) personal and particular instigation, every single sin is committed, that is committed; and what we have exploded and ridiculed is, not the existence of the evil spirit as asserted in Scripture, but the fantasies and grossly-absurd representations of the ignorantly or knavishly superstitious,—regarding the literal existence, in *propria personâ*, of a monster similar to the satyr of mythology, roaming about the world, visible or invisible at pleasure, gifted with a knowledge of men's thoughts,

and the power of a Proteus, in assuming such form as shall best suit his purpose of inducing them to evil. Is this what we ought to believe? If your reason revolts equally at this, you perhaps will feel inclined to accuse me of profanely trifling in a serious controversy. But I affirm that this has been, and is even to this day, the belief of thousands. Many, especially when terrified by an evil conscience, have imagined, and positively asserted, that they have seen him, been tempted by him in person, and would have sunk under such temptation, but for having discovered their spiritual enemy by a cloven foot, a tail, a horn, or some other corporeal attribute they imagine to belong to him unchangeably. The story of St. Dunstan is no fiction of sarcastic wit, but an actual representation of the vulgar creed.

These, Sir, are the things we laugh at—such grossly literal interpretations of Scripture texts; and if you think us wrong, why we must even be content to remain under your censure.

Having excited the imaginations of your timid readers by a lecture upon the reality of an evil spirit, you next proceed, from the Old Testament, to paint God under his attribute of avenger; and then, when it may be supposed that awe would have overcome discernment in a reader of warm imagination and sensitive nerves, you talk at once

of the “*fallacious* confidence, which, presuming upon the Creator’s knowledge of our weakness, and his disposition to allow for it, should allege, that instead of *giving way* to gloomy apprehensions, we might throw ourselves, in full assurance of hope, upon the infinite benevolence of the Supreme Being:” (p. 37). Alas for us, if this confidence be indeed *fallacious*! You have mixed this sentence up, as is your custom, with excellent preachment; and I would have it understood, that my objection is meant to apply to the sentence quoted only. You would mean, perhaps, this “fallacious confidence” to imply an absence of Christianity and its promises altogether, or an impenitent and unchecked course of sin. If so, we agree with you: but you should have explained this, as, in the form in which you have put it, it must be held to signify our fallacious confidence, in presuming that God, as he has revealed himself under his attributes of love and mercy in the Gospel, (good tidings of great joy), would deign, according to his own gracious promise, not to demand perfection from his imperfect creatures, but accept our imperfect service, unprofitable servants as we are, through the mediation of the Messiah. God himself, as we understand it, has bidden us have this confidence; one object of the incarnation was to give it; and Jesus, in his parable of the Prodigal Son, has

shewn us how, from reference to our own feelings, we may judge of the loving-kindness of God towards us. It is true that, in the next paragraph, you make Christianity "break in" to our aid, but in terms, though by no means otherwise objectionable, little calculated to do away with the impression, which the sentence objected to, and the former part of the section, might naturally be supposed to have produced. You then revert to your doctrine of human corruption, saying, (p. 40), "Slight and superficial conceptions of our degradation, &c. fall in too well with our natural inconsiderateness, and produce that insensibility to Divine threats, so generally prevailing." Please to remember, you have never defined correctly what you mean by these slight conceptions, nor proved any actually to exist in our opinions. However, I will deny this part of your assertion. Inconsiderateness certainly may and does produce insensibility; but peculiar notions upon original sin, be they what they may, our state of habitual disobedience being admitted, need not, nor have, that I can see, any tendency to produce it. I rejoice to hear you say, "Deliverance is not forced" upon us, but offered to us; we are furnished, indeed, with every help, but are plainly admonished," &c.: (p. 40). As this, I think, establishes your opinion that we have free will, that grace is not

irresistible, and that we have conditions to perform. The knowledge of this opinion of yours may be useful hereafter. As to what you insert in the above sentence, that “we are unable of ourselves to will or to do rightly,” we may, perhaps, misunderstand each other. Our explanation would be thus: of ourselves, that is without the help of Christianity, (I speak *generally*, not of *particular* instances), we are, we should be as we were, wholly unable; our notions and perceptions of right and wrong having been, in great measure, perverted; but the Christian revelation shews us wherein our reason had erred, and if we accept, and endeavour to observe it with sincerity, we are promised, indeed already have, Divine assistance in correcting our deviations.

In your conclusion of this section, if we are still to understand you as speaking of peculiar opinions, your assumptions and expressions are scarcely warrantable. You even have not made us deny our depravity and weakness; it is left in doubt how far our opinions differ from your own—in doubt even if they differ at all—yet you have not hesitated to assume a triumph. You talk of “accustoming ourselves to refer all our vices to our natural depravity, as the primary cause:” (p. 41). Why, really, in my estimation, this would be much more likely to augment than cure the evil you complain

of. Not that I deny our natural depravity, but a habit of referring our actions to it as a cause, would be as bad, indeed answer exactly the same purpose with the inconsiderate and licentious, as allowing them to refer their misdeeds to the immediate agency and instigation of the evil spirit; it would appear to them a convenient excuse to mitigate their own responsibility as reasonable beings. Indeed, I have not unfrequently heard this very sort of language held. I do not say this is what you mean, but this is the way many of your readers would interpret your words. You wish to impress upon your readers a deep sense of humility as regards themselves, by considering how different their natural propensities to sin are from what Christianity requires them to become. But, for this purpose, a conviction of "having ever been prone to habitual disobedience," is just as good as any other mode of expressing the same thing; for, though you have made us say disobedience to the "more refined and liberal principles of nature," instead of "to God." Yet—at last it must come to this—as we acknowledge equally with yourself, that the refined and liberal principles of our nature are no other than those instilled into us by God himself, and which, when weakened, and nearly strangled in a long contest with evil, were restored in their primitive purity, in the example and precepts

of Jesus. And the difference, if any, again resolves itself into the question before-mentioned, viz.—the moment at which our corruption attained maturity. You do not, indeed, charge us with denying habitual disobedience to the commands of God, and appear to understand, that, if we use the term “refined and liberal principles of our nature,” we do so merely to be more intelligible in speaking of those who, being heathens, knew not God. Nor, indeed, do you directly deny the existence of such principles since the fall of Adam. But as many might suppose this to be your opinion, and as I find no other real difference, I have ventured to notice it as the possible difference alluded to.

3d Section.—Your third section (p. 42) opens with an example (in the bold objector) of the very plea, I observed above, was not unlikely to be urged from your mode of expressing yourself. A plea not believed at the moment, by him who urges it; for he would not of himself deny his consciousness of free-will. But in his confusion, he seeks an excuse for what he knows to be wrong, and finds one, a hollow one certainly, in the wording of his indictment, and then finishes off with a Christian truism, “that he will be judged by what he hath, and not by what he hath not.” But, Sir, I cannot suffer your little preface to this objection to pass unnoticed. You begin by calling this “a formidable objection.” To

what is it a formidable objection, and which do you mean is so, the first half or the last? the "How can I withstand?" or the "Infinite justice and goodness will never try me by a rule disproportionate to my powers?" You then talk of the "plea of innocence." What plea? who has made it? Remember your objector represents the upper classes of English society professing Christianity! Have you ever heard them make such plea? have you ever heard any decent person among them attempt the manœuvre of your bold objector, and charge their sins upon God? I will venture to say you have never heard the one or the other; but, as usual, the objection is mixed up with what doubtless you have often heard, and for which we defy your censure; for it is our belief, and we are justified in that belief, that we shall be judged, not only in justice, but in mercy! You tell us, that "it would not be difficult to shew, that the notion of the demands—demands, remember—of divine *justice* being lowered in consideration of our weakness and corruption, is at war with the whole system of redemption by the atonement." Why, then, do you not shew it, instead of perplexing your readers, either by making distinctions without a difference, or entangling them by cunningly devised words? for either you intend a bye-play upon the words "demands and justice," or you make a distinction

between lowering a demand, and forgiving a portion of it. This may be all fair in logic ; but when you talk of our being at war with Christianity for not observing the distinction, you really are bound to show us more cause for it ! We have always been accustomed to consider the mission of Christ as made specially in pity to, and in consideration of, this very weakness and corruption ; and the atonement as for the consequence of them, within certain limits, undefined, because real sincerity was to become the test. The requisitions, therefore, of Divine justice are heightened rather than lowered, inasmuch as they go to spiritual as well as actual perfection ; but the demands, that without which we could not have been accepted, (the whole law), are lowered, and acceptance promised through Christ, to an imperfection of action, which was previously promised only to perfection, for Jesus was to perform, and did perform, the whole law ; and, by performing it, broke the chain of sin.

All the concluding part of this chapter, which you profess to give as the best practical answer to objectors, such as you choose to imagine us to be, far from being an answer, appears to me to be an entire concession, or, to speak more properly, a complete reconciliation of our opinions : (p. 46—8).

Whatever difficulties there may be, when we would enquire beyond our province, most gladly

and thankfully do we accord with you in acknowledging, that "that which we are most concerned to know is plain and obvious;" and also, "in the folly of busying ourselves with what is above our comprehension, to the neglect of what is plain and practical:" (p. 47). Oh that you would but bear this in mind, that you had never lost sight of it, what trouble had been spared to both of us! And would that our trouble were the worst consequence of your forgetting it! Had you never forgotten it, your well-meant and really pious book, sent abroad with the high sanction of a name and character deservedly respected, had then been a wholesome balm, like the fresh juice of the toddy-tree, cooling and nutritious, but which, fermented, is the brain-disturbing arrack! And such, I fear, has your work proved to too many of those readers, for whose welfare you would naturally feel the greatest concern, I mean the young and religiously enthusiastic, especially of the better, though weaker sex. But, "I must not trifle too." All this foolish prying is insinuated as a charge against us. Is it we—we, the mere ignorant antichristian moralists, who can rarely or never be persuaded to listen to, or converse upon, the subject, that wish to plunge into these unhallowed depths? Surely not! We have resisted with all our might; but you, Sir, have dragged us forward to the very margin of the sea

of doubts, have told us of the paradise beyond, and now warning us of rock, storm, and quicksand, would abandon us with a lecture upon *our* folly, if we venture to disturb one ripple of the fathomless abyss !

Your humble servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER III.

CHAP. III. § 1, 2. 8vo. Edit. p. 50.

Inadequate conceptions concerning our Saviour and the Holy Spirit—Chief defects of the religious system of the bulk of professed Christians, in what regards our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—With a Dissertation concerning the use of the passions in religion.

SIR,

WE now come to your third chapter, wherein you profess to treat of our “inadequate conceptions concerning our Saviour and the Holy Spirit;” but in the first eight pages, professedly devoted to this subject, not one single inadequate conception or popular notion is even attempted to be pointed out. Your charge seems to resolve itself entirely into a general accusation of negligence and imperfection of conduct, in which, however, you abundantly acquit us of the concluding imputation of your last chapter, I mean, prying beyond our depth. You then lecture us rather severely upon “the in-

gratitude *hereby* evinced¹!" Now does this mean by the inadequate conceptions of which you profess to be discoursing, or by the negligence and lukewarmness of which you are actually discoursing? If of the former, it is a pity you have forgotten to tell us how it is we are guilty of ingratitude: if of the latter, we are indeed compelled to bow to your charge. It is too true! We are negligent and ungrateful, we never pretend to deny it. But what means this charge against our clergy?—"too many," (p. 55). One traitor were too many in any society! But I will fearlessly contend, that, as a body, the clergy of the Established Church of England, although their modernized language may not please you, do preach in accordance with the Liturgy; they cannot, they dare not, do otherwise! We may be favoured, perhaps, with a more defined charge hereafter; and if so, I promise you I will answer it, argument for argument, assertion for assertion; here, at least, I have no fears.

You then revert again to your charge of igno-

¹ Vide index, p. 55.—Some apology may be thought necessary for descending to notice Mr. W.'s index. My excuse is the pervading tone of imputation he has adopted. If he cannot even keep this out of holes and corners, I, in pursuance of my plan, must visit them there, once at least, if but to direct attention to them.

rance, and can find in our ideas "nothing distinct, nothing specific," &c. &c. (p. 57); in short, "they are so confused, that we can scarcely be said to believe any doctrine at all." Pardon me, Sir, but having very carefully perused your book, it is very strange! But barring the "no doctrine at all," this is the very accusation I should bring against yourself. You assert, recant, soften down, and re-assert so often, and mingle your arguments, where you attempt any, so much with preachment, insinuation, and unexplained quotations, that it is impossible, in many instances, to say what it is you do believe; and sometimes it is only by your re-assumption of an hypothesis which you had previously conceded, that one can guess how you would be understood. After all, you may in this matter "be wise in your generation;" for it is really hardly reasonable in me to expect that any body will follow me in the tedious operation of unravelling your tangled skein. In opening this chapter, you profess to give the leading doctrines concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit. You give them, as usual, in actual quotation from Scripture; of course I can have nothing to say against them: but in admitting them to be certainly leading doctrines, we must not forget that they are merely unconnected texts, open to my interpretation as well as yours. As

you do not charge us with denying any of them in the pages immediately following, probably we may not differ.

We now come to what you call our "inadequate conceptions of the operations of the Holy Spirit." You begin (p. 58. 60) by putting into our mouths a long objection, not to religious affections towards our Saviour, not to the operations of the Holy Spirit, as professed, but against a display of them being either desirable in, or a test of a man's religion, alleging, as a reason, the insanity of fanatics, and the guile of hypocrites. In professing to answer this, you admit the facts stated by Objector to be true ; therefore, his objection to be valid, for you make him object only to the display, which you acknowledge is no test, and then you ask him with the utmost apparent simplicity ; "Why is it here only to be made an argument that there is danger of abuse ?" (p. 61). Indeed, Sir, if Objector only does so here, pardon him this one offence, in consideration of the examples you have so abundantly set him ! But he is not guilty even of the one offence, that I am aware of. You framed his objection ; you have omitted to state to us the hypothesis to which it is given as an objection. As it stands, it is not an objection at all to any thing you have been contending for, or would, if we may believe your own words, contend for ; for you say

yourself, " that there is no way by which the validity of pretensions to religious affections may be ascertained, must be partly admitted : " (p. 62). Why " partly ? " say *wholly*, unless you admit conduct as a test of sincerity ! Had you thought proper to give us a correct definition of what you mean by " religious affections, " much misunderstanding might have been avoided, as I have little doubt, that in reality we perfectly agree. But you, if I may be excused for saying so, like too many religionists, have an inconvenient fondness for mystery, and seem to think it derogatory to the dignity of religion, that terms used concerning her should be defined. Thus you leave it to every one's imagination to suppose what these religious affections and operations of the Holy Spirit may be ; and therefore it is, that he objects against the first abuse of the term that happens to present itself in his mind or memory. After admitting the abuses contended for, afresh, you again ask, " But will you discard religion altogether ? " Now, I ask you, Sir, whether, even any thing that you have put into Objector's mouth, does propose to do so ? Does he not, on the contrary, object to the injury done to religion by hypocritical assumption and perverted zeal ? You then gravely inform us that " pretences to religion do not prove all similar claims unfounded : " (p. 63). Nobody ever said they

did ; yet such you would insinuate is our argument, when you say, “ we do not argue thus, but where our reason is under a corrupt bias :” (p. 63). We have but objected to the display of enthusiasm as a test, and this you have both admitted, and go on to admit, if possible, still further.

Your next step is in defence of the manners of puritans, &c., that we should not be “ unreasonably shocked” by their vulgarity. *Unreasonably*, certainly we should not ; but grossness and vulgarity are adverse to the character of Christianity, and give reasonable cause of suspicion, as you yourself indeed allow. And as for your Moravians, the excellence you claim for them, does not prove that they would not have been better without that offensive manner, which, probably, was but a stumbling-block to many, and reasonably so, as it was fair evidence of spiritual pride and want of Christian temperance in themselves. Your argument seems merely to say, that we should not judge hastily, but charitably. A most excellent maxim, of which I regret you have given us so little of the benefit !

Section 2d, p. 65.—You now, Sir, enter into a long discourse about “ religious affections,” entitled “ Admission of the Passions into Religion.” What you propose to express by these two words “ passions” and “ affections,” I find it impossible strictly

to determine, and until they are defined, I cannot decide exactly how far we agree or disagree with you. You commence by saying that your opponent objects, that "you degrade your religious services by making our Saviour the object of your affections." If he does say so, in what sense does he understand your word "affections?" But you have not put this into his mouth, when you gave his objection in detail; you made him commence his objection with the word "often." It implies insincerity throughout, and in its utmost extent goes to no more than this. He argues that a display of enthusiasm is neither necessary to the religion of a Christian, nor a test of its reality; and that by requiring such display you would be degrading religious services.

Supposing, as in truth we are apt to suppose, that, by "passions" and "affections," religionists of your school do mean a display of "animal fervor, ardors, transports," &c. (p. 70); I confess we should be very likely to argue as you have made us argue. But if you define these terms to mean no more than that we are bound both to feel and to shew sincere and lively gratitude, zealous obedience, and, as far as in us lies, co-operation with the spirit of our religion, firm faith in its promises, and to endeavour to regulate our affections and inclinations, so as to make them coincide with the spirit of Christianity, as manifested in the precepts and

example of its Founder, no Christian among us ever dreamt of denying their propriety. Thus it is that we interpret the words love, joy, hope, trust, &c. But you have perverted the objection of your own composing throughout this section, and made your terms "passions and affections," signify both gratitude, zealous fidelity, contemplation of religion; and also transports, ardors, &c. &c.; and even the use of high-flown language, just as happens to suit your purpose of the moment, and abused us, and cried shame upon us, for denying what we never should deny, and what, indeed, you have not ventured to make us deny, otherwise than by insinuation in a multiplicity of confused arguments, every one of which proceeds upon an hypothesis falsely assumed.

The only point I see any necessity for adverting to, is the word love. Upon this word you seem inclined to build more than we may be disposed to allow; hence our denial of the possibility of feeling it towards an invisible being. But this denial also proceeds upon our (as you say, and I hope it may prove) mistaken notion about its test being ardors, transports, &c. (p. 70); for we scruple not to use the word ourselves as applied to God: but we use it in the same sense as we should in talking of a people loving their king, a patriot loving his country, a good man loving virtue, justice, or any

other good quality, and I conceive that common usage makes the use of the word in these instances too familiar to require further definition. In what other sense you can possibly understand the word love as applied to God or our Saviour, I am at a loss to imagine. We should not very readily give a man credit for superior love to his king or country, or to virtue or justice, because he was in the habit of giving way to untimely expressions of fondness and admiration, and was continually going off into rhapsodies about their merits. We should rather be apt to suspect such display of enthusiasm; and even if convinced of its sincerity, still we should but little approve such manifestation of his feelings, far less be disposed to allow to such manifestation, a monopoly of all the loyalty, patriotism, virtue, or justice, in the country. In your conclusion, however, you appear almost unconsciously to have come round to our opinions upon the subject, and to allow, "diligent obedience, or patient suffering," (p. 90), to be the only real manifestations of love towards God!

Your ovations for victory are loud and long, and you are right welcome to all the triumphs you have gained! When you can convict the higher classes of England of denying that God, whether Creator or Redeemer, is a just object of reverential gratitude, and undoubting trust; that the Gospel is

a message of mercy, therefore a subject for hope, or contending that prayer to be effectual, need not be made with humility, reverence, sincere heart, and attentive mind; then, and not till then, will this whole section of twenty-seven pages be any thing more than vague unmeaning declamation, or your victory greater, than that of the little Burgess of Perth, in Scott's novel, over the palum in his garden. As for us, we neither wish "indifference" in religion to usurp the name of "rational;" nor affectation to usurp the name of "real!"

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER IV.

CHAP. III. § 3. 8vo. Edit. p. 91.

Inadequate conceptions concerning the Holy Spirit's operations.

SIR,

IN the third section of your third chapter, you charge us under the honourable appellation of "nominal Christians," with *inadequate conceptions* concerning the Holy Spirit's operations; but here, as before, I have to complain that you neither define our opinions nor your own; you merely quote certain detached expressions of Scripture, and leave the matter in whatever doubt it originally stood. If you mean to say, that the operation of the Spirit is to supersede all necessity of our co-operation, we certainly differ, not otherwise. But this idea, although you would seem to assert it, and re-assert it over and over again, throughout your book, and denounce every body who holds it not, as no Christian; yet, on the other hand, you so abundantly deny and disprove it immediately after

each assertion, that a charge of believing it could not be established against you. If you are not afraid or ashamed of your opinions, why thus go backwards and forwards to the certain danger of leaving your instructions, at least doubtful, to those who would really wish to profit by them? What may be the exact nature and degree of the operations of the Holy Spirit upon Christians of the present day, whether generally or individually, and how the term is to be definitely understood, must, in the nature of things, remain matter of opinion, about which the best and most sincere will partially differ. You may have one opinion, I another; but we have, neither of us, any right to do more than humbly propose such opinion for the adoption of others: I say neither of us, for I suppose you not to claim the inspiration of an apostle more than myself, and without this, you have no right to *impose* even your interpretation; and if you assume the right of doing so, your explanation should at least be definite.

You next, under the title of "*Mistaken conceptions, entertained by nominal Christians, of the terms of acceptance with God,*" (p. 93), proceed in a long preliminary tirade, charging us, too truly perhaps, with laxity, and a want of general religion; but not a syllable of erroneous opinions, unless it be a re-hint at the old accusation of not relying

sufficiently upon the merits of Christ. What may be sufficiently, God only knows ; but you, Sir, appear to me, throughout, to confound our faith and our practice, and to charge us alternately with relying too much, and too little, upon the merits of our Saviour. For primary justification, by which we understand the amnesty which is to bring us into a "state of salvation;" we rely wholly and entirely upon Christ. Secondly, upon his promised assistance to enable us to fulfil the terms required to render that amnesty ultimately effective. And, thirdly, upon his mercy alone, in accepting, from knowledge of our weakness, what must, at last, be but an imperfect performance, on our part, of those terms. We acknowledge, and attempt not before God, either to excuse or palliate our sins of wilfulness. If this be error, God forgive us ! but, ere we renounce it, it must be proved erroneous, and to consist in more than the *ambiguities of language*, which I suspect again to be the root of the difference between us, if not the whole.

We now come to what you call "*Our fundamental misconception of the scheme and essential principle of the Gospel :*" (p. 98, 99)¹.

¹ Upon note (A) p. 98, I have to remark, that the conduct of Mr. Wilberforce's school appears to be just that which has always been a tether to religious improvement. Are we for ever to have Christianity mystified merely to spare the sort of ancestral vanity

That we, in speaking upon this or any other subject connected with religion, should use different

that is loth to allow that its predecessors have ever been in error, or even expressed themselves obscurely? We must come to the point, or that will remain which may mar all our labours. In my mind, it were impossible for a people of ordinary sense, situated as we are now with the whole Scripture before us, honestly to fall into any mistake about faith and works. It is evident, however, from St. James's and St. Peter's epistles, that sundry expressions of St. Paul, whose works, be it remembered, were not then collected, had been mistaken, and from a general superstitious ignorance which had received a sort of sanction from this misconception, a dangerous heresy had sprung up, which St. James, as here quoted, writes to refute. St. Paul, in arguing against those who wished to make it appear that Christianity could only be received through Judaism, puts faith, using the word in a variety of senses, against works, not against the works of obedience, which he himself had been preaching to his converts, as the necessary and absolute conditions which that faith imposed, and which thereby necessarily became works of faith itself, but against reliance upon works of the Jewish law, which, ceremonial, as well as moral, it was contended, were necessary to the very acceptance of Christianity. From a degree of ignorance or wickedness which he did not anticipate, however, some of his hearers, or perhaps only some who had it at second hand from them, chose to understand his word "faith," as meaning simple assent, and his "works" as meaning the moral law; and imagined, that this worthless faith was to save them as by magic; an idea not dissimilar to that belief in charms, amulets, and talismans, which prevails in the East to this day. To check this, St. James argues upon utility, and the object of

terms from those which you would select, is most probable ; but it does not, therefore, follow, that

the promise and revelation, and proves the absurdity of the error by shewing that the devil * had as good a faith of this, and that instead of being better for it, they became, like him, still more direct rebels. The polemics of Mr. Wilberforce's school know all this perfectly well, yet for the sake of their *littera scripta*, they will keep, as it were, coquetting with this heresy, first saying that which any ordinary man must suppose to favour this doctrine, then indignantly denying it ; and when asked to explain, working round in a long rigmarole of special pleading upon the different senses of the word faith, so as to leave the matter just in the same degree of mystery as before ; and all this for the mere sake of glozing over the notorious fact, that, to say the least of it, the fathers of their sect had from their adherence to *epistolic* obscurity, been misunderstood by a large portion of their followers. It so happens, that by "*faith*," the unlearned generally understand *belief*. Knowing this, to avoid the above error, we join with it obedience to what the doctrine of him to be believed in inculcates. We say, therefore, "faith and good works ;" whereas, if faith were universally understood to include good works, we should of course, be unnecessarily prolix ; we should be saying "belief and good works, and good works." It appears to me, from Mr. Wilberforce's explanation, that we inculcate the same thing in

* I have somewhere met with a partizan bolder than our author, who does not hesitate to dispute the matter with St. James, gravely arguing that the devil's was a perfectly good faith, and unavailable only, because it was not proposed to him as a means of salvation.

we really differ. One principal source of misunderstanding between yourself and Objector seems to

four words, which he would do in one. Is there a difference, or is there none? If none, why are we found fault with for speaking the same truth more plainly and intelligibly? For, be it remembered, this point is quite distinct from those fine-spun arguments about human merit, with which he would mix them up! It certainly would be quite fair to defend the writings of a favourite author, by pleading any sense consistent with the context, which the word faith will classically bear, and which are ample for the purpose; but why, in the face of Scripture and common sense, and I may add experience, it should be contended, that Christianity should be preached with this obscurity, in preference to a mode less liable to be mistaken, is to me inconceivable. I deny that St. James speaks of "pretended faith." This, none capable of thinking at all, could have thought available. His example the devil did not pretend, but was perfectly convinced. St. James argues against a superstitious error that had flown like wild-fire among the ignorant, that a promise of salvation had been held out to all who should acknowledge that the Messiah had appeared in the person of Jesus, without reference to that allegiance which was the object of the proclamation.

To enable the unlearned, without much trouble, to conceive how disputes upon the word faith have arisen, I have made the following extracts from the three dictionaries most in use. The word in our testament, translated faith, is *pistis*, derived from the Greek verb *peithomai*; the Latin for which, given by the Hederici Lexicon, is *pareo, obedio*, also *credo*. In Ainsworth's Dictionary the Latin verb *pareo* is derived from a Greek verb signifying "I am present." The senses given from Roman

be, as before, the not having previously sufficiently defined the subject of your argument. You, in consequence, are talking of justification in one sense, he in another; you of primary, he of ultimate justification. This once explained, your arguments are no longer irreconcilable. You say, we “consider not that Christianity is a scheme for justifying the ungodly,” &c. but yet you make us acknowledge it to be a scheme for admitting those who could not otherwise be admitted: and

authors, are,—1st, To appear, or be seen.—2d, To be made out, or proved.—3d, To be manifest, or well understood.—4th, *To obey, be ruled, or governed by.*—5th, *To comply with, follow, or yield to.*—6th, *To perform, or fulfil.* *Obedio*, senses given, are—1st, To obey, or give obedience to.—2d, To follow one’s counsel or advice.—3d, To comply with. *Credo* is always received, as “I believe.” *Pistis* is the Greek word employed both by St. Paul and St. James; its received translation is the Latin word *fides*. The senses given by Ainsworth to *fides*, are—1st, Faith, truth, honesty, allegiance, loyalty.—2d, Trust, credit.—3d, Safeguard, assurance, warrant.—4th, Authority.—5th, Defence, protection.—6th, Faithfulness, conscience.—7th, Friendship, *a solemn league or contract.*—8th, 9th, Inapplicable.—10th, Word or promise.—11, Safe-keeping or custody.—12th, *Justice, uprightness.*

Faith. Dr. Johnson’s definitions are—1st, Belief of revealed truths.—2d, The system of revealed truths.—3d, Trust in God.—4th, Tenet held.—5th, Trust in the honour or veracity of another.—6th, *Fidelity, unshaken adherence.*—7th, 8th, *Sincerity, honesty, veracity.*—9th, Promise given.

what was the reason they were outside the door? was it not sin? However, your assertion is most decidedly and notoriously not true. Take any number of men you like out of the mass of what you are pleased to call nominal Christians, question them as to how this part of the subject is understood by themselves, and to the best of their knowledge and belief, by other Christians generally, and nine out of ten, at the very least, will, in one form of words or another, tell you, it was a scheme for justifying the ungodly. The ideas which seem to be most generally entertained among the higher orders, I believe, and have generally found to be as follows; and I trust they are equally scriptural and equally rational with your own, whatever your own may be. We consider Christ as sent by God to proclaim an amnesty to his rebellious subjects; consequently, "*to reconcile us when enemies.*" For example—Suppose a factious and rebellious town to be under the interdict of its rightful sovereign, who, instead of destroying the rebels and razing their city, had had patience with them, leaving them merely to suffer the natural consequences of anarchy, and, even from time to time, sending amongst them men of confirmed loyalty and ability to remonstrate with them upon their wickedness and folly. Suppose, in spite of this forbearance and care, the city still to remain in a state of

estrangement, consequent upon its first rebellion, but so far reduced to order¹ by time, experience, and the efforts of the few loyalists still remaining, and of those who, for the special purpose, had been sent amongst them, as to afford reasonable hope that, though they knew not how to come forward of themselves, a considerable portion of the population would gladly accept a proffered amnesty, and return to their allegiance. At the time of which the inhabitants had long been forewarned, and accompanied by all those circumstances which had been previously described to them, as marks by which they should recognize him, the son of the monarch appears amongst them, proffering a full and complete amnesty to all who would accept it, and take an oath of allegiance to him as the re-

¹ This part of my example may perhaps be considered as too much at war with the doctrine of human corruption. But it will hardly be denied, that the Jews had been regularly conducted, as by a system of education, (alluded to by St. Paul), up to the particular crisis of fitness for the Revelation intended. The point achieved had been that of entirely conquering their former most unaccountable tendency to idolatry, which, after their re-establishment, was unheard of. Pagan nations, by the side-wind of moral philosophy, however imperfect, had also received a certain preparation for the same event. Their civilization had attained its highest pitch; all, or nearly all belief in their ancient systems of mythology was exploded, and they were all agape for expected truth.

presentative of his father. Here, forgiveness and reconciliation are the consequences—of what? Not loyalty, certainly, for they were either in a state of actual rebellion, or, at best, estrangement, from their sovereign,—but it was to be the consequence of a conviction of their state of guilt, and a sincere desire of reconciliation, leading them to use the means so graciously appointed by their sovereign, and by which alone he had promised to accept them. Now, what was necessary to all this? First of all, that they should acknowledge their rightful liege lord. Secondly, that they should believe in the identity and authority of him who brought the amnesty. Thirdly, that they should perform the further conditions of that amnesty as far as they then could, namely, take the oath of renewed allegiance, with sincere purpose of abiding by it. They were then received into the amnesty, their former rebellion forgiven, and their reconciliation to their sovereign complete, as far as at the moment it could be. This was their *primary reconciliation*, “*a free gift of grace*,” of which active loyalty was to be the “*effect*,” but certainly had not been the cause, as the only loyalty they had to offer was a promise, and if this was sincerely made, probably they would endeavour to perform it. For such as the sovereign might order at the moment to his court, this certainly was all-sufficient;

but for those suffered to remain, all was by no means ended. They had, in accepting the amnesty, taken an oath of allegiance, which they were bound upon their fealty to obey, and which, if they did not obey, the amnesty became for them, *ab initio*, null and void. The law, moreover, which they had sworn to obey, told them this, that such of them as accepted the amnesty, and proved their sincerity by obeying the laws, and living as faithful subjects, should, in consequence of performing their oath, by the very terms of the amnesty, be received at the court of their sovereign, with such degree of favour as the zeal and sincerity of each should be found to merit (this is their *final* or *ultimate acceptance*); while those who refused, neglected, or broke the proffered amnesty, should be left to perish in the conflagration of their city.

Objectionable as I fear this explanation will appear to you, yet I see not why you should condemn us. We equally acknowledge your's and your objector's definition. Man was justified and reconciled to God by Christ, upon the simple conditions, as Mr. Locke—whom I am heartily glad to see, in another place, you recognise as a Christian—has abundantly proved, upon the simple conditions of acknowledging him as the Messiah, and accepting him as his Lord and Master. This “*opened the door of mercy freely to the greatest*

penitent sinner." "*Holiness was to be the effect,*" of course, as, at the moment of reconciliation, man had it not to offer as a "*cause.*" But if faithful and sincere, the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit was promised, to enable him to free himself from former errors and misconceptions, and the trammels of deeply-rooted corruption, to quicken an adequate motive and inducement, and to "*bring forth,*" as you term it, "*the fruits of righteousness.*"

Thus far, I hope, although you may not like my style of expressing myself, we are mainly agreed. But are we to stop here, and look no further? If man could have closed his existence here, all were well, as with the penitent thief on the cross, to whom this free gift was then (probably) for the first time offered, and offered, be it remembered, by the Redeemer himself, who, as has been well observed, "left us this one example that none might despair, and but this one, that none might presume."

Excuse this little digression: but having quoted the example, I would guard against misunderstanding, lest I might be supposed to favour certain doctrines concerning death-bed repentances, nearly allied to your style of argument about religious affections!

To proceed:—Man did not cease to exist upon his acceptance of Christianity; and we must look to its operation upon him as an individual! Holi-

ness, as you say, was to be the effect! But then, if in any one instance holiness did not happen to be the effect, the whole became, to that individual, null and void. Holiness, then, as an effect, was indispensable to the completion of his final acceptance with God, to the perfection of his reconciliation. Therefore, I think, you need not so very severely condemn us, even if we should imagine it to be a cause. If you say to your child at school, "You have been very naughty, idle, and inattentive, but your mother has interceded for you, and will convince you of your misconduct; and therefore I forgive you, if you will attend to her and be good: and, moreover, I will then give you a pony when you come home for the holidays;"—your reconciliation to the boy is a free gift, not for his good conduct, for he had been naughty. His goodness is to be the effect of his attention to his mother! But effect, as it may be, it surely may be considered as the cause of his receiving the promised pony, inasmuch as that, if it is not the effect produced, he will not receive the pony. Is it, moreover, to be supposed, in this instance, that the child is not to hope for his reward, much more, that the forgiveness he has received by anticipation will be withdrawn, if his exertions should not altogether come up to the full measure of perfection which his good mother had probably inculcated? Would

you allow nothing for his *frailty*? And if, in your opinion, he had really endeavoured to amend his conduct, imperfect as it still might be proved to be, if judged in strict justice by the rule of perfection, would you hold yourself absolved from your promise, and punish him for remaining imperfection? Would you not rather receive him with open arms, and be inclined rather to go beyond than to retract from your promised indulgence? And if his schoolmaster should expatiate solely upon his remaining faults, attribute them entirely to the child's misconception in imagining that his amendment was to be the *cause* of forgiveness and reconciliation, naturally including the pony promised as the earnest of its completion, instead of the effect of his mother's advice, in anticipation of which it had been accorded, and add, that because of such misconception, the boy could be only *nominally*, not *really*, amended, and therefore, not only deserved to lose his reward, but even to be excluded from your presence;—would this, I ask you, give you any very exalted idea of the pedagogue's soundness of judgment, or his *peculiar* fitness as an instructor for your son?

In fine, Sir, we contend that free-will remained. All were called: many who would not, but we must not say any who could not, accept. But then, as in the above instance, these said "*fruits*

of holiness," be they ever so much effects, would be, as they ever have been, more or less imperfect, after all; after this admitted justification and reconciliation had taken place: yet we must not, surely, suppose, that on this account the reconciliation was to become void, the atonement vain! How then were men to be judged? By their faith, you will say. But what can *faith* here mean but sincerity? which must be, we believe, the test to Omniscience, as outward actions or visible impulses to our less perfect perceptions. If then they had this quality, "the door of mercy was opened to those, who, on the ground of their own merits (even after justification) could not claim acceptance;" and they were to be "admitted, for Christ's sake, on condition of their having previously *sincerely endeavoured* to satisfy the demands of Divine justice, moderated" from the perfect obedience of the law of works, by the promise conveyed through the Messiah, to the aforesaid quality of faith or sincerity, whichever you please to call it.

You accuse us of "talking too much of terms and performances on our part." If we talk of them "too much," we are wrong, no doubt. But you surely will not contend that we have none to perform, or deny the promises and the threats attached to the performance or non-performance of them! This would indeed be "rendering the word of God

of none effect!" In talking of them, we do not of necessity deny the free gift you insist upon. We admit it as readily as you can do : but we speak of the conditions upon which it is to be *retained* : and as those conditions can, in our opinion, be but imperfectly fulfilled, we allow that after all we have but the mercy of our Master to trust to. We either have free-will or we have it not. If we have it, though we fully acknowledge the necessity of the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit, we must dispose ourselves to co-operate with it, or we cannot expect it. If we have not free-will, then fate is all in all, and we have but to sit still, and wait the event which we cannot control.—But Heaven preserve us from any such belief!

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER V.

CHAP. III. § 4. 8vo. edit. p. 99.

Some practical Consequences of the prevailing fundamental Misconception of the Scheme and essential Principle of the Gospel.

SIR,

HAVING, in my last Letter, endeavoured to show you that our opinions, even in the form you have chosen to put them, are by no means adverse to your own, I now come to what you term "some practical consequences of the errors you have noticed:" errors, which if error there be, I trust I have reduced to one, namely, our different mode of stating our belief. That practical evils may arise from the *abuse* of our mode, as from any other, we do not deny; from its *use* we do. But would no practical evils result from an abuse of yours? You do not deny it; but describe them as well and as truly as we could do. But then, we contend that the practical evils arising from the abuse of our mode, are, beyond comparison, less formidable than those which are the result of the

abuse of your's, and our mode itself far less likely to be abused. Before you can fix your charges upon us, you must prove that we deny our state of sin, and the necessity of Christ to our salvation; that we deny God to be the Giver of victory, because we ourselves must strive for it, or that every good gift is from God. As for gratitude, have we, by our own showing, no cause for gratitude? Do we deny the mercy of God in having borne with us, and even fostered us during our rebellion? Do we deny his mercy in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ? Have we no cause of gratitude to a Saviour, who not only died but lived for us, performing the whole law, an example of its realities, teaching us the true distinction between good and evil, and dying, the *spotless* sacrifice, for our sanctification? Indeed, we may rather retort upon you, in a charge of absorbing the merits of a life of benefit in the single fact of death. You complain that we look upon Christianity as a contract, (p. 99). If we do so, it is referable to what I have before explained of primary reconciliation and ultimate acceptance. I dare say you would not quarrel with the term *covenant*; and this, as we understand it, is a mere synonym with *contract*. I must here notice a remarkable sentence in your book, (p. 100), which, after your indignant denial in your second section of this chapter, (p. 70), I

must presume to have popped out unawares. You blame us, saying, that we “are little apt to kindle at our Saviour’s name, or, like the apostles, (the apostles are much obliged to you), to be betrayed by our *fervour*, into what may be almost an *untimely* descant on the riches of his unutterable mercy,” (p. 100). Now, Sir, in sober earnest, what do you mean by this? Any where else than in an accusation, I should have passed it over as a harmless bit of scriptural declamation, all very pretty, and very proper in its place—but how comes it here? Do you, or do you not, mean to assert, by inuendo, that “religious affections *are*, after all, to be *chiefly* estimated by animal fervour, ardours, rhapsodies, &c. &c. &c.? You next say, that we “rather advise sinners to amend their ways, as a preparation for their coming to Christ, than exhort them to throw themselves, with deep prostration, at the foot of the cross,” (p. 100). If we do, it is no more than John the Baptist did before us: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!” But is this fairly put? Who are the sinners in contemplation? Are they supposed to be Christians or infidels? You will hardly deny that you are speaking of professed Christians, in whom the real sense of that which you assume as your method, and put as a contrast, is of course implied: and here it is that our advice breaks in—Where the

Christian truant, awakened to the sense of his danger, asks our advice, and that advice is there no longer irreconcilable with yours, but merely a continuation or exposition of it. "Repent," "produce works meet for repentance!" The sinner must prove his penitence by breaking short off his course of sin, or I cannot understand what this "*deep prostration*" is good for. Without this, it would be but mere mockery and insult to his Redeemer, and, like Judas, he had better throw himself from the beam of the gallows than at the foot of the cross! If he will not invoke the Spirit by actions as well as words, the Spirit will not come! It is really very hard, that if you can but imagine us to omit even a favourite bit of phraseology of your's, that you should immediately endeavour to make a contrast, treating us as if we thereby denied the indisputable doctrines of Scripture! Now I would ask you, Has Christianity an object on earth, or has it none? If it has, what is it? To furnish a subject for raving and declamation, or to civilize a world, by teaching men, both by precept and example, the essential differences between good and evil, and revealing to them the true attributes, and the gracious dispensations, of the Deity it bids them to adore?

For the next three pages (p. 101, 2, 3), you preach entirely our doctrine, very much what you

have been all along professing to refute, but which you now dress up in your own peculiar style, and give to us as your own, with an air of liberality of concession, which doubtless goes far to cover many of your peculiar opinions, which, by themselves, would be immediately detected, but by this judicious arrangement, it is to be feared, will slip in among the crowd to many a pious brain.

You next, in a bold exordium to a paragraph devoted to the subject, profess to "*answer*" the objection, "that you insist upon metaphysical niceties," (p. 103). I do not know whether your printer has been guilty of an omission, but as it stands in your book (seventeenth edition) you have forgotten even to attempt to answer it, otherwise than by simple assertion. Now I adopt the charge alluded to, and assert, that you do insist upon metaphysical niceties; that what you have required as a point of faith of no less consequence than one which *distinguishes real from nominal Christians*, is "*the perception of a subtile distinction*," and "*not a state and condition of the heart*¹;" and that your words will not warrant any such inference as you wish to be drawn from them. You have put the distinction entirely upon whether "the fruits of

¹ I must beg the reader here specially to bear in mind that I speak of the proposition as stated by Mr. Wilberforce, and am not denying the necessity of Christian motives.

holiness are considered or conceived (you use both words) to be the effects or cause of our being justified and reconciled," (pp. 269. 328); and this, without any explanation of what you would imply by the terms, "justified and reconciled." I congratulate you, however, upon having discovered at last, that a man may, by *sincerity*, be a true Christian, without either learning or study. We thank you for your complimentary insinuation about "preaching the cross¹ to those that perish," (p. 104). Allow me to arrange it for you into a neat proof against us, as you have done us the honour of arranging so many of our arguments; it will be but fair. Say then, "The ungodly are them that perish! Our opponents are, by their own admission, ungodly; they, therefore, are them that perish! But our system is to them foolishness! It is foolishness, therefore, to them that perish! Therefore, it is the preaching of the cross; which, we will freely concede to our opponents, means the Gospel! *Probatum est* ²."

¹ For the meaning of this expression, as well as that of "Take up thy cross and follow me," ere the manner of our Lord's death was revealed, see Discussion upon the Tau of Ezekiel, Quarterly Review.

² Thus, in my great grandmother's Douay Bible, the editor, after contending that, if properly translated, Jacob should adore, not lean upon the top of his rod, and several other points of

I really can hardly persuade myself that there has not been some omission of the press, for I observe you begin the following paragraph by talking of having "removed a formidable objection," (p. 104). All I have to say upon it is, that, unless indeed the press is in fault, well may we all be humble! But what follows? (p. 105). Have you so soon forgotten your own excellent advice, when you lectured us upon "the *folly* of busying ourselves with what is above our comprehension, to the neglect of what is plain and practical?" It seems, at last, your opponent has obeyed you; yet far from commending him, you tell him his is vain wisdom and false philosophy; that he has woven a flimsy web, which you will at once destroy with two of the simplest texts in Scripture commanding belief. What then? are you arguing with an infidel? You know, or ought to remember, that Objector all along represents a professed Christian of the Church of England, about whose compliance with your two texts there can be no question. Were we even Unitarians and Socinians, as you so plainly insinuate that we are, still your texts would not destroy our "flimsy web;" for Unitarians and Socinians admit these texts equally with

Catholic orthodoxy, in like manner adds, "The wicked heretics laugh at these things!"

yourself. Your Objector, Sir, here represents, not merely a nominal, but a real Christian ; a humble Christian, who confessing, as the bulk of Christians, real or nominal, must confess, that he is unequal to the more mysterious and difficult dogmata of Christianity, thinks it better to apply himself to the use of the appointed means, than unprofitably to perplex himself with the analysis of the rock upon which he builds his faith. His profession is to hear and to obey the injunctions and commands of Him whom he has taken for his Lord and Master, in humble sincerity of heart. He does not argue that his Master is austere, requiring to reap where he has not sown, but turns him to the duty imposed. Why, from this, are you to imply, not merely irreligion, but absolute disbelief of all that it concerns him to believe ? Why, if he does not believe, should he be anxious to reduce Gospel morality to practice, as a preparation for judgment ? Who has told him of this judgment, and how it should be prepared for ? and why should he fix upon the difficult realities of practical obedience, in preference to the easier task of ceremonial observance ? Surely, this is an evidence of Christianity—and of sound Christianity too—for it were far easier to say, “ Lord ! Lord ! ” than to do the things commanded !

Your opponent here does not deny all, or any

thing of what you would inculcate ; but feeling himself too unlearned to enter into your disquisitions of cause and effect, or readily to comprehend the the Oriental language of your preaching, he turns to what he, what all can understand ; and if he performs what he professes with the sincerity his language gives promise of, even though the performance be imperfect, He “ who judges the heart,” and “ deals with every man according to his works,” will say to such as him, “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, for I was an hungred and ye gave me meat,” &c. &c.

The text you refer to for authority, Heb. xi. (p. 107) is one where St. Paul impresses upon his Jewish converts, the necessity of holding fast the faith they had engrafted, as they revered the authority of their God ; but what inference you would draw from it, to the support of your system, as adverse to ours, I am at a loss to discover !

Throughout this page and the next, you go on with an unmeaning invective, contradicting your own former arguments right and left, and assuming in your opponents an undefined degree of negligence and denial of points of belief, by no means warranted even by what you have given as your indictment ; so much so, indeed, that one would imagine your objector to represent a person who

denied the very existence of Jesus as an historical fact. You then give a long note entering upon the wide field of St. Paul's epistles, from which, as usual, with religionists of your school, you take the liberty to select texts, which, in most instances, as in the present, are rendered unmeaning by the process. You talk of the value of the argument "that a system is never designated but by what constitutes its prime consideration," &c. (p. 108); quoting the terms "We preach Christ crucified,"—"we determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Now, Sir, this is an example of the very thing we most object against in your school; this bringing forward detached and darkly-worded sentences from the epistles, to overpower the imaginations, not convince the reason, of your pupils. Do we deny the history of our Saviour? Do we deny that this history is to be believed? If we do, tell us how we deny it, as you have not yet ventured to charge us directly with any such denial. You surely cannot mean to imply, that these terms you have quoted from St. Paul, should be taken to have any other interpretation than the words "we preach the Gospel of Christ"—"we recognize no other system or doctrine than what the crucified Jesus has given to us," would have. Whoever takes upon him to instruct others in religion, is bound, not only not

wilfully to mislead, but to be specially cautious that he does not mislead, particularly when handling such subjects as you have here undertaken; and did it never strike you, that there is something, very little, if at all short of impiety, in this sort of (improperly termed pious) fraud upon sanguine temperaments? That, in practising it, you are trifling with the word of God¹? You next allude to various other texts from St. Paul: (p. 109).—First, where he cautions his Roman converts against substi-

¹ I cannot but entreat the admirers of Mr. Wilberforce's work, to be upon their guard through this and similar parts of his book, and to give themselves the trouble of examining what is meant, what is insinuated, and what really proved, ere they include the general body of the upper classes of the Established Church in his sweeping condemnation. "Search the Scriptures, for in them are the words of eternal life!" Worthy reader, bear in mind, that the Scriptures, with this injunction, were not given to the beasts of the field, but to men only. And why? but because God has gifted man with sense and reason to understand them. For the sake of the Giver of the Scriptures, then, do not throw away the means of using them, and from superstitious awe or false humility, however commendable in their sources, suffer yourselves to be led blindfold by any body. Guard your imagination from being led astray by high sounding language, even though it is taken from Scripture itself, for then it is that you are in the greatest danger, because you fancy yourself secure. Search into the meaning, require the reasons, Christianity will bear it all! Fear not, the religion of Jesus is conformable to reason in all its parts, if, with sincere heart and humble faith, you seek to see.

tuting forms, for the realities of Christian practice, and which, you would insinuate, is to your purpose.

Next you take your text from Hebrews, and which, as if in utter forgetfulness that it is nothing to your purpose, you give quite fairly. You say St. Paul reprov'd his Jewish converts, for "relying, in part only, upon the *merits* of their observance of the Mosaic institutions, instead of upon the *merits* of Christ." Of course he reprov'd them; we should do the same! In this reproof, St. Paul shews, plainly to our minds, what are the sort of *works* he means to caution his pupils against relying upon, but which have been confounded but too often with works of Christian charity and obedience.

To your conclusion of this chapter, I have no other objection than to your assumption, that its doctrine is peculiar to your own sect, and the inference you appear to wish should be drawn from thence. Your language may, it is true, be rather more high-flown than what would be adopted by the generality of our clergy, but the doctrine actually conveyed is the same. What those who are better acquainted with your cypher may understand in it, I cannot say; but as far as any ordinary man of common sense can perceive, there is nothing he may not have heard at any church

or chapel in the united kingdom; and with it, as far as I understand its meaning, I most cordially agree.

Your obedient servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER VI.

CHAP. IV. § 1. 8vo. edit. p. 112.

On the prevailing inadequate conceptions concerning the nature and strictness of practical Christianity.

WE now, Sir, come to your fourth chapter, in which you profess to treat of our *inadequate conceptions* of the nature and strictness of *practical* Christianity. You begin by affirming, that “they who hold the fundamental doctrines of Scripture in their due force, hold also, in its due degree of purity, the practical *system* which Scripture inculcates. But they who explain away the former, soften down the latter also, and reduce it to the level of their defective *scheme*.” This is all very plausible as it stands; but what is it that you mean these words to convey? You have told us what you mean by fundamental doctrines, at least in part. Your assertion, therefore, will stand thus: “It is those only who do not mistake the question of whether holiness be the cause or effect of our justification and reconcilia-

tion with God, that are of opinion that Christianity inculcates perfect morality." This is positively what you assert, taking your words by the explanation you yourself have given. You next sum up our religion in the following terms: "A formal assent to Christianity in the gross, and a degree of morality in practice, little, if at all, superior to that for which we might look in a good deist, Mussulman, or Hindoo." Be so good as to remember, that your indictment professes to charge us with "*inadequate conceptions.*" It is of opinions, not performance, that we are arguing. Whatever may be our imperfection as practical Christians, such imperfection is not the result of erroneous opinions, as you contend it is. I shall, therefore, take the liberty of putting your charge thus, and I shall be fully justified in so doing in the progress of your work: "A formal assent to Christianity in the gross, and a *system* of practical morality, little, if at all, superior to that for which we might look in a good deist," &c. According to your former accusation, we contend for *sincerity as all in all*; consequently, our belief in what we hold to be essentials of Christianity, must, according to our *scheme*, be real and unaffected, therefore not merely formal. We cannot, and we do not deny, any part of the morality inculcated by that book, which we, as well as you, believe to contain a correct exposition of the com-

mands of the Master we profess to serve. We, therefore, acknowledge a code superior to that of the Mussulman or Hindoo, and also to that of any, however good, deist, whose reason has not been enlightened by, what we understand in the terms, "the peculiar doctrines of Christianity," viz. all those doctrines of morality, in which Christianity is superior to Judaism, or to any thing which, before the revelation and example of our Saviour, could be claimed for natural religion by the purest philosophy. As a proof of the defectiveness of our system, you ask us whether, "if Christianity were proved to be a forgery, this would occasion any great change in our conduct?" (p. 114). We deny the inference you would draw; but we sincerely hope that our conduct would not be changed. As we trust that Christianity has thus far done its work upon us, as to enable us both to see and to feel the truth and beauty of its morality; and that apart from revelation, we should still continue to adhere to it as the best philosophy; as that which must be most conformable to the attributes and will of the God of nature, and consequently most conducive to our own happiness. That infidels themselves should have discovered the intrinsic merits of Christian morality, and conformed professedly upon the grounds of reason, envying even the philosophic fame of its founders, is, in my

opinion, one of the greatest compliments that human reason can pay to it. You next ask, in a tone of triumph, "Was it for this that the Son of God condescended to become our instructor, and that the apostles voluntarily submitted to poverty, ignominy, and death, that after all, their disciples should attain no higher strain of virtue than those who should still adhere to the old philosophy?" (p. 115). But, begging your pardon, we presume to claim for our opinions at least, a far higher strain of virtue than that inculcated by any system of ancient philosophy. Those systems were deficient in the very essence of our morality, they began not with the heart. You have assumed our answer to your question, as to whether Christianity, being proved a forgery, would make any alteration in our conduct. You have done right: we adopt your assumption; but in adopting it, we do not necessarily say, either that Christian morality is no better than the old philosophy, nor that an infidel who adopts it has complied with the conditions of the Gospel, or even that it is to be expected that his morality will, in time of need, prove equally sound as that of a believer; thus virtually rejecting all that could give, and was designed to give, the requisite authority to the practical doctrines. Why, if we do this, have we not supplied its place by "a more simple and less costly scheme?"

Why do we not hail Mr. Owen as a liberating philosopher, instead of laughing at him as a madman? Why, above all, do we keep up the distinction between ourselves and Unitarians, by making the divinity of our Saviour an essential of our creed. Really, Sir, if we can give you credit even for simplicity, you may well afford us credit for charity at least!

All that you have written under the heads of "strictness and essential nature of practical Christianity," to the middle of p. 122, I cordially assent to, in the name of those whose vindication I have undertaken. Be our practice what it may, this is our belief as a body; all peculiar interpretation of words of course excepted. This, I say, is a true exposition of the opinions of those whose *inadequate* conceptions you have written to refute: nobody will deny your doctrine as here given. This is one of those softenings-down, one of those definitions of true Christianity, which in so many places adorn your book, and give to it an apparent excellence, I am grieved to quarrel with; but quarrel with it I must, as these are the very baits that render it dangerous. You have written all this truth, but in writing it, you have insinuated that it is adverse to our doctrine, adverse to the doctrine of the majority of the Church of England, and the sole and peculiar possession of that minority, whose

cause you appear to be so sedulously and gradually endeavouring to wind up to its pouncing pitch. This doctrine, Sir, is peculiar neither to you nor to us; it is the doctrine of Christianity, under whatever denomination, the ancient Catholic doctrine, ere sects were known. Our opinion as to the perfection commanded by Christianity, being applicable or inapplicable to individuals, is simply this:— Each is absolutely required to do his best, under the circumstances in which he is placed. All Christians, of whatever sect, do, or should acknowledge, the imperfection of their practice, as compared with the perfect standard of the Gospel, which, like all other general laws, of course, in its positive enactments, must receive some degree of modification from circumstances, when applied to individual cases. This will act both ways, in some instances tightening, in others, relaxing the rein. We are bound, not by the letter but by the spirit; and in judging of that spirit, we must be guided by our own reason. We must look to the apparent intention of the enactment; and if we do this, in humble sincerity of heart, we are promised that our reason, enlightened by the Divine Spirit we would investigate, shall not fail us. The precepts are grounded upon the distinction between good and evil; and if we use our reason as directed, we shall not widely err. If we will not use it, we may chance to find ourselves

in the situation of the servant with the single talent, and after passing a life of penury, gloom, and discomfort, miss our reward at last. If we use it improperly, we commit the original sin of our first parents, and shall as infallibly be wrecked in our speculations. We are to remember that the eye of Omniscience is upon us, and to act as children in the presence of a wise though indulgent parent. We must be conscious of our own imperfection, and not too ready to judge others; for we are to remember that our judgment is limited, that God alone can judge the heart. When sect assumes the judgment-seat to judge of sect, let them be especially guarded, and remember the words of our Saviour, "Let him who is guiltless cast the first stone." You will quarrel with me, perhaps, for my expression of "relaxing the rein;" the tightening of it, I presume, you will be ready enough to concede, but we must have both or neither; and if neither, then we are again under the law of works; and this is equally against your creed. We would "evade" no "practical deduction" that is founded upon Scripture, rationally interpreted. But lest you or our readers should mistake my meaning, I would instance the command not to do injury to a fellow-creature, and especially not to take his life. This is a positive enactment. Yet in self-defence we may do so; by judicial sentence we may do so;

and in war, with certain limitations and exceptions, though the subject can hardly be said to be consonant to the spirit of our religion, and Quakers must, in the abstract, be held to be right. Yet I presume you will hardly contend, that a man who in war assails and kills an enemy, is individually a murderer within the meaning of the enactment. But sincerity must be implied in all these justifications of homicide, or the excuse before God will be unavailing. We may deceive other men, we may deceive our ourselves; but Omniscience we cannot deceive!

We now come again, though under another form, to the old subject of religious affections, of which you here give a sort of qualified definition, in the terms "settled predominant esteem, and cordial preference" (p. 124). If these terms are meant to be applied to God or our Saviour, I object to them as inapplicable language; if to Christianity, I readily adopt them, as well as all you say and quote about love to God, in the only sense the word can decently be understood in, as before explained¹. The instance you quote of our Saviour's words, "He that loveth father or mother more than me," &c. has plainly reference to obedience, and means, "He that is more, (*i. e.*) influenced

¹ Letter III.

contrary to me, by father, mother, or any authority whatsoever, is not the perfect servant I desire."

To the conclusion of the section you give us a very good sermon, wholly unobjectionable, but for its assumption of peculiarity.

Section 2d.—You commence your second section with a renewed promise of pointing out errors and misconceptions in the practical *system* of the bulk of professed Christians (p. 129): and, in your note, further explain, that you mean to attack "only such vices, defects, and erroneous opinions, as are received into the prevailing religious system, or are tolerated by it, and are not thought sufficient (by it, of course, not by the laxity of individuals) to prevent a man being a very tolerable Christian." You then proceed with a sort of saving explanation, saying, that this system is not to be understood as a system, but merely as the laxity of individuals. Which is it? Individuals, of course, I cannot answer for, but what can fairly be termed the system of ordinary Church of England society, I will endeavour to explain, in answer to your remarks as they occur.

In your definition of religion (p. 130), the first thing I have to remark upon is your maxim, "Every endeavour and pursuit must acknowledge its presence." We should rather say, "Should be under the influence, even if imperceptibly, of its

presence." But to this you add, "And whatever receives not its sacred stamp, is to be condemned as inherently defective, and at once relinquished." Begging your pardon, this is a *non sequitur*. You have told us that religion is not designed to destroy our passions and desires, but to regulate them. We are to prefer God to the world where they come in competition, but are not required to renounce the world. There are many things that are allowable, that cannot, in any fair sense, be said "to receive the sacred stamp of religion." If this were conceded as an axiom, there is no saying how far it might be carried. To act upon it strictly, every luxury, and most of the amusements which even you yourself would pronounce innocent, must be relinquished, as you would find it difficult, without casuistry, to prove that any one of them could shew this "sacred stamp." You may possibly not mean it so strongly as I take it, yet such is the force your axiom might claim if unguardedly admitted. Your two sentences, taken together, would naturally imply, not merely that neither letter nor spirit of religion were to be invaded by the endeavour or pursuit, but that every indifferent thing must have actual reference to, and be done for, the actual furtherance of religion. As if, in short, you would interpret literally the words of St. Paul, (1 Cor. x. 31), "Whether, therefore, ye eat or

drink, or whatsoever ye do, do it all to the glory of God,"—without any reference to the context. Yet you would hardly say that you eat a plum-pudding, dance a hornpipe, or indulge yourself in any other trifling, though harmless gratification, "to the glory of God:" although, where such trifles give offence, no matter whether reasonably or unreasonably, to the religious prejudices of those you may be among, you might be required to abstain from them, "to the glory of God."

Your following charge (p. 131), although somewhat invidiously, and not very fairly put, we will not deny; the terms may certainly be proved, only we should not say, "Religion can claim only a stated proportion of our thoughts, time, fortune," &c. but "claims only," &c. We hold that religion, far from requiring us to renounce the world, bids us both live in and enjoy it, if we can, with gratitude to the Divine bounty so undeservedly bestowed, and without forgetting her supremacy.

We next come to what you state to be "the consequences of the above error." We deny the error, but admit what you call its consequences as the consequences of our imperfection as Christians. If you ask us why we are not then perfect, I can only answer by the question, Are you? You talk of the boundary of religion's territories, as if it were a reality. Alas! alas! it is a very imaginary

line! All our conduct, I fear, is tainted, more or less, with evil. Perfection is not here! You complain that "religion is checked in her disposition to expand her territory, and enlarge the circle of her influence," (p. 131). This may be too true in reality, but it appears to me, that as you mean it, you are taking the liberty of a figure in grammar, and putting Religion herself for her would-be-thought zealous partisans. It may be true, I repeat, as regards worldly-minded individuals, but it proves nothing as to opinion, inasmuch as our admitting the charge will not prove that every thing which injudicious partisans may contend for, must be, or is likely to prove, a beneficial addition to the "allotment," as you term it, of religion. Witness monastic institutions, &c. Injudicious zeal is as likely to prove injurious to the cause of religion as to any other cause; and we know there is no enemy generally so much to be dreaded as a zealous friend who lacks tact and judgment. We, in resisting the encroachments of intemperate partisans, are not to be set down, as a matter of course, as resisting the real claims of the paramount, whose cause they affect to advocate. We do not thereby lay claim to our faculties and our powers as a franchise, nor refuse the fines, aids, or heriots, customary or extraordinary, that we are satisfied our Lady Paramount requires. But we are not

required to pay them upon demand, unless he who demands produces his authority to demand. Nor do we conceive that our liege Lady wishes us to do so. It would be as little in accordance with her dignity and the maintenance of her real rights, as with the attachment and prosperity of her vassals.

You go on—"Hence it is that so little responsibility seems attached to high rank," &c. (p. 133.) I answer, "So it is," unhappily, but "hence it is not!" for the errors you charge us with are *imperfection of service*, not *inadequate conception*, as we allow the claim to be lawful whenever we are satisfied that it is from genuine authority. *E. g.* If I lend you a sum of money, your disowning the debt is one thing, your omitting to repay it is another, and your refusal to make an unusual payment of any portion of it, at the suggestion of an officious third person, who produces no authority from me to shew that it is my wish, is another thing still. Of the first, as a body, we are not guilty. Of the second we all are in part guilty. And of the third, if guilt you call it, we certainly are guilty, and I hope shall continue to be so!

You next proceed, as you say, to confirm your preceding statement, by "appealing to the course of life of various classes of nominal Christians." These you class by their vices and imperfections; upon which you preach us a very good sermon—

and we admit the justice of all you say upon the subject. But then, this justice applies to the abuse, not to the use of riches; it is the very Scripture doctrine of their danger, instead of making us better, as the enjoyment of so many advantages should make us, we are, as we have been warned, too apt to become lax and negligent in our service. But this, true as it may be, is not an error of opinion—for no one of us would deny the charge, even though, while acknowledging it, he failed to amend. We should never, as regards religion, dream of defending dissipation, sensuality, ostentation, avarice, or criminal ambition, even though we felt our own selves to be guilty of them. But these are abuses, and as such you have described them. What is it, then, that you would say? Do you mean to inculcate the old exploded doctrine of mortification and penance, or say, with certain northern puritans, “Every thing pleasurable is a sin?” If so, we certainly disagree: and if you are right, we must be wrong. In the only argument you have assigned to us, you have first assumed our total want of all active Christian charity, and then made us say, “We neglect no duty,” (p. 134). In speaking for ourselves, however, we beg leave to disclaim this, and to assure you, that we freely allow, that if we permit pleasure to occupy us so as to interfere with our duty, it is an excess, an

abuse, and consequently, criminal. We condemn all "impiety," and abhor "a cold insensibility to opportunities of diffusing happiness," as the worst of impiety. Your next accusation is, that, "even if we acknowledge these excesses and abuses as criminal, we do not condemn them as irreligious." We do so condemn them if the question is asked of us; but our language on this head is not so properly referable to our insensibility to their religious guilt, as to the cautions given us not to judge others with whom we have no special concern, with reference to religion. Every one feels himself guilty, more or less; and hence, all language, of the nature you would have us use, has, by a sort of tacit consent, been laid aside as improper and unsafe.

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER VII.

CHAP. IV. § 2. 8vo. edit. p. 144.

*Prevailing inadequate Conceptions of practical Christianity—
Further Effects of Religion degraded into a set of Statutes.*

SIR,

HAVING assumed, like a true partisan officer, that our resistance to the exactions of your party, in the name of religion, is treasonable resistance to Religion herself, you naturally enough proceed to proclaim our disaffection, accusing us of “robbing her of her best energies, and degrading her into a set of statutes, which we look upon as abridging our natural liberty,” (p. 145). You have made an argument for us as usual! Three out of the six pleas, however, we would beg to decline as not ours, did we not thereby afford you a seeming advantage. Of the three last, one, of relaxation in practice, I have already explained in my last Letter; the other two are simple truisms, which neither of us would wish to deny until something is at-

tempted to be founded upon them by the other. When you talk of dishonest shifts, you of course suppose insincerity, and insincerity I am not defending. I have a right to my interpretation of Scripture, as well as you have to yours. We may differ, but it does not follow that I therefore am wrong or you right. Look at the sect called Quakers. They interpret literally many injunctions in which you allow greater latitude. Who is right? How is the thing to be decided? You must say both are right, provided only both are sincere! If a Quaker were to write a book against you, putting into your mouth such arguments as you have assigned to us, and call it "dishonest shifts," should you allow yourself to be fairly dealt with? The most important enactments are defined and positive, but they generally apply directly, only to principals. Reason, however, bids us include in the spirit, all that in any way contributes to the action. He who commits a crime is condemned by the letter; he who abets it, by the spirit. You accuse us of, at one time standing out for the letter of an injunction, without admitting the spirit; at another, of admitting the spirit of it only, (p. 146). Of the first, I cannot call to mind one single example. Of the second, you might cite perhaps six out of ten of the injunctions of the New Testament. It is a pity you have not

given examples to define the charge you really contemplate. I suspect, however, that it would resolve itself into this, that where you seek to nail us with the letter, we contend for the spirit; and that where you drop the letter, and preach to us the spirit, we differ from you as to what is the spirit, and refer you to the letter, to shew, not that there is no spirit, but that the interpretation you would impose, is not fairly deducible. But to return to our neglected pleas, (p. 145). The two first assertions you have made for us, viz. "Whatever is not *expressly* forbidden, cannot be *very* criminal;" and, "Whatever is not *positively* enjoined, cannot be *indispensably* necessary;" depend chiefly upon the value to be given to the words, *expressly* and *positively*. If these are to be understood to imply in "*totidem verbis*," certainly, whoever used them, was wrong, as I believe, in this sense, the abetting of any crime would not be "*expressly* forbidden." For the second, I must also meddle with the word "*indispensably*;" for the proposition being a sort of converse of the former, if you bind me to the *indispensably*, I can only answer by the converse, namely, the *abstaining from abetting*, or from any other crime, not *expressly* inserted in the Scripture catalogue. Allow me to modify the *indispensably*, and I may cite numerous particulars of charity, and other virtues, included

under general heads, and to which you certainly would not object. The third plea, (p. 145), "if we do not offend against the laws, what more can be expected from us?" I am constrained to reject altogether; it is saying, that Christianity commands no active virtues,—which not being our creed, this consequently cannot be our plea.

The next speech you do us the honour to make for us, (p. 146), is evidently the language of one deprecating what he thinks over-severe censure, but of what, you do not inform us. Although your begging your reader (p. 147) not to mistake this language for that of Christian humiliation, would imply sins of a graver order. If you mean us, in this extenuation, to be answering to a charge of that which is not "harmless and innocent," to extenuate adultery, drunkenness, swearing, and obscenity, as I suspect you do, we deny the fact of our designating them under the terms you put into our mouths! At all events, however, the wrong, whatever it be, is admitted, not defended! The question, however, of our degrading religion into a set of statutes, being assumed, you properly enough descant upon the evils arising from such degradation. But surely you are bound to prove so grave a charge! Let it not be forgotten, that you are here throwing this charge upon a large majority of the Church of England, clergy as well

as laity ; upon all, in short, who do not happen to belong to your particular sect in the Church. If you have written all this in ignorance of our opinions, such ignorance is not excusable. Allow me to inform you, however, that we, as well as yourself, hold the doctrine that you here so modestly assume as the exclusive property of your own sect, (p. 149). We one and all admit and affirm, that in Christianity, "external actions derive their whole character and meaning from the motives and dispositions, of which they are the indications."

After an unobjectionable sermon of four pages, we at last (p. 154) arrive at the grand debateable ground, the subject of Sunday. And here, I fear, I must say much to excite your vehement disapprobation, as it happens to be one of those points in which we differ from the root upwards. You are (strictly speaking) a Sabbatarian ; we are not (strictly speaking) Sabbatarians ¹. I can only, therefore, ask you, to hear what we have to say for our-

¹ I could not help smiling to see how very cautiously our Right Rev. Metropolitan has endeavoured to treat this part of his subject, in his "*untoward*," though in many parts excellent, Letter of last summer ; where, though he scruples not to talk of "boats full of well-dressed Sabbath-breakers," he has only said just enough upon the subject of a Sabbath to show his own consciousness of utter want of authority, where reason, analogy, and expediency, are to be abandoned as *infra dignitatem*.

selves, before you altogether refuse us toleration. You, Sir, are willing to bring forward our supposed delinquencies, regarding Sunday, our not seeming to consider it as a privilege to spend it in your mode, (p. 156), as a proof that religion is not in our hearts. I humbly conceive this sort of judgment to be just what St. Paul means to reprove in Romans xiv. Why are we bound to consider this as a means of serving God, more than you to acknowledge the necessity of Papistical austerities? You say the services of religion are not agreeable to us; that ours is a constrained, not a willing service; that to us religion bears a gloomy and forbidding aspect. Why does it do so? only because it is generally mistaken upon such subjects as the one in question. It is not religion, but the dress in which Superstition has clothed her, that bears this aspect; and it is to the distinction between this "leather and prunella," and reality, that I wish to draw attention. Before you can draw a fair inference against us, you must prove that we show reluctance, and endeavour to evade an acknowledged and required service; and that it is religion itself, and not antiquated and unnecessary observances, forms, and ceremonies, that is really irksome to us. We wish not to deny, that in your questions (p. 155) is described a very pious way of spending Sunday, or any other leisure time. It is equally

undeniable, that few either do or will so spend them. Then comes the question—Have we any fair grounds for supposing it to be the wish or intention of our Lord and Master that they should do so—I mean *definitely*, as you have supposed? In the first place, then, we must look to what the present Christian Sabbath really is, whether it is “expressly enjoined;” whether it was observed, not *casually and variously*, but as a regular ordination, by the first Gentile converts? These two questions must, I believe, be answered in the negative. The convocation of apostles at Jerusalem, convened for the express purpose of deciding upon what parts of the Jewish customs ought to be observed, have omitted all mention of a Sabbath; nor do we find St. Paul any where inculcating it, or any thing nearer to it, than an injunction not to omit public worship. The reason is evident: the converts, many of them either slaves or people in dependence upon others, could not, if they would, have established a Sabbath; and St. Paul, himself a Pharisee, consequently a Sabbatarian, and whose early prejudices and education would have naturally led him to feel strongly upon this point, we must suppose, had good and sufficient reason for not insisting upon, or even naming it. We must then, I believe, resort to analogy for its true origin; and most cordially do I assent to the good policy

and Christian propriety of its establishment, as soon as the government of any country or district, becoming Christian, admitted of its being done. Prior to this, the converts, abstracting themselves in a body from their accustomed tasks, might have created so much disturbance, and so much hostility to the system, as to prove a material detriment to the spreading of the religion. Yet you will not, I presume, restrict the epithet, *real* Christian, to those among them whom the active Judaizers, the opponents of the apostle, might have persuaded to keep the Jewish Sabbath in the Jewish mode, or to such among them as had the means of making, and actually did volunteer to make, a strict legal Sabbath of the first day of the week, beyond the meeting for public worship¹. Whether they understood the matter exactly as you do or not, they had, at all events, the advantage of personal intercourse with St. Paul and his immediate disciples; and if *real* Christians they were, many of them were so, without acknowledging the “indispensable necessity of, or keeping, at least, any positive Sabbath. The real question, however, is, Sunday being now

¹ There is, I think, every reason to believe, that the apostles themselves, and the stricter Jewish converts, kept both days. Their own original Sabbath as a Sabbath, and the first day of the week as a celebration, a religious day, with public worship, but not otherwise a second Sabbath.

established as a Christian Sabbath, how are we in duty bound to observe it? We have, without any *express* authority, abandoned the Jewish Sabbath, which, if the commandment is still to be considered as in full force, we have no *positive* right to do, even though we devote another day in any given manner. This, however, we have done, and made, in some hitherto undefined degree, a substitution of the first day of the week for the original Sabbath. We must first, then, determine for ourselves, whether this substitution is to be entire or only partial; whether, in short, Sunday is, or is not, a *Sabbath*. If it is a Sabbath, then doubtless a strict and rigid conformity, in all classes and sects of Christians, is *indispensably* necessary. We are to obey, not to argue; for it is in this view of the case the detailed command of our absolute Lord and Master—to every letter of which, Christians universally, and to all he thinks implied thereby—each individual is absolutely bound to conform: and it is no more justifiable¹ to make our bed or our pudding, light our fire, roast our beef, or employ even a Pagan servant to do so for us, than to work at our trades, take journeys, or do any thing most

¹ There are exemplary individuals who hold this opinion, and act upon it conscientiously. As long as they are thus consistent, and abstain from waging a war of aggression, no thinking man should ridicule them.

generally allowed to be Sabbath-breaking! If, on the other hand, Sunday is not to be considered as a Sabbath, but that, in conformity to what we *suppose* to be the will of our Master, we *ourselves* have set apart a day, analogous to what we *presume* to have been the *intention* of the former statute—then are we bound by no letter, but by a reasonable rule of conformity to that presumed intention. Where we err in judgment, we are foolish; but where we would deceive Omniscience by pretended error, we are not only eminently foolish, but grossly criminal. We may use our liberty, but not abuse it, remembering we are accountable for the light which has been given to us. If ours is to be a reasonable service, reason must be our guide in the performance of it: but it must be reason with sincerity of heart! *We* have adopted the latter of these opinions; but to determine how our Sunday should be observed, we must also look back to the only enactment extant¹ upon the subject—the Mosaic commandment. This merely says the Sabbath is to be kept *holy*, and prohibits, in definite terms,

¹ Some have imagined—and I am not prepared to say unreasonably—that the fourth commandment was not the original, but the revival of a former institution. I think, indeed, the wording rather favours the idea. The application, however, must have been very different, among Nomade tribes, to that enforced in the ritual.

all manner of work by man or his cattle. Some will contend that the prohibitory part is intended by Moses as the explanation of what he means by *keeping holy*; others, that they are distinct enactments; and each will give his own interpretation of the former term. Probably the truth may be found between the two. The difficulty here lies then in the force to be given to the term *holy*. The Gospels afford us very little light upon this subject; the only notice I remember, as taken of the Sabbath, being in the reproofs given by Jesus to the affected and inconsistent strictness of the Pharisees, wherein he indicates, that works of necessity and charity were not forbidden by the law of Moses. But though he gives us no comment upon the words "keep holy," we have pretty plainly his opinion of *long prayers* and *formal services*, and how desirable *he* thought *them* to be, and how applicable to the human constitution. He specially guards us against any thing of this sort, and to be further understood furnishes us himself with a pattern¹ of what our petitions

¹ It is not unworthy of remark, that this very prayer, given, be it remembered, for the express purpose of avoiding repetitions, is with us itself repeated no less than five, often seven times, in the course of one morning's service! Because four or six would not be sufficient, it is repeated again before the commencement of the sermon!

should be, both as to length and matter. Attention is indispensable, and if there is a difficulty in keeping it up, the religious exercise whatever it may be, is, to that individual, too long. This caution was, we conceive, given, because our Saviour was well aware of our weakness in this respect. As regards relaxations, we have literally no means of judging from any authority, how far they were or were not considered allowable, we have certainly no reason to conclude them utterly prohibited¹. We are left then, as regards the Jewish Sabbath, with the naked commandment of Moses, without other comment, than that "no manner of work" does not include works of necessity or charity, and strong reason to conclude, that length of time devoted to religious exercises, was not understood by our Saviour to be implied in the words "keep holy." We must remember too, that the law of Moses was definite, and to

¹ The only text I have ever heard insisted upon, is where the prophet says, "If thou turn not away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day." To say nothing of the obscurity of this passage, which has evidently puzzled the translators, I will merely remark, that the English words, "doing thy pleasure," signify much more naturally, "doing whatever you please,"—"being under no restraint,"—than they imply prohibition to do any specific thing which may happen to be agreeable.

be observed to the letter, consequently, we may fairly presume that, had all relaxation been meant to be forbidden by him, it would have been mentioned in the commandment, which by no means lacks *minuteness* of wording!

We have now to apply the institution to a Christian state. Christianity, we are told, is the reality of those things shadowed forth by the law. We must, therefore, consider what may fairly be supposed to have been the intention of the Sabbatical institution. This *we* hold to have been,—First, that equal leisure should be thereby afforded to all classes, for attending a public service, and exposition of the laws of God. Secondly, as implied in the command extending to animals; that those who had laboured all the week, should, as well as their cattle, have a day of rest and relaxation. A most merciful, and highly beneficial establishment, well worthy of a prominent place in Christian polity; and, for these purposes, *we* suppose it to have been established. Consequently *we* hold that to be, *de facto*, an infringement of the due observance of the day, whatever tends to impede the objects we presume to have been in view, but nothing else. Infringements, however, even of these, must of necessity exist, and, as in all other things of this nature, there will be much difference of opinion as to what are and what are

not reasonably justifiable in theory. Still, however, in the practice of a large community, it is utterly in vain to expect that any general theory can be strictly adhered to, as the strict adherence would often be productive of more evil than the infringement. Our Lord seems to allude to this when he says, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." Under cover of the latitude necessarily allowed, abuses will creep in—this is to be lamented, but cannot be remedied. We must then endeavour to abide by the spirit of the general rule, as well as we can; the nearer to it, the better certainly, but, it does not follow, that nearer to the letter will always be nearer to the spirit. We are, as the Apostle said of the Jewish converts to Christianity, by it liberated from the letter of the law; but, we must not use this liberty as a cloak,—that is, our deviations can only be justifiable by purity of intention. We must not think to deceive Omniscience! To resume.—The sabbath law was enacted as a boon to the many, not as a day of penance and mortification to the few. The generality are in all communities, those who labour for their subsistence, but there are others who do not, and who, therefore, have no labour to cease from. Some of these have occupations (superintendence), from which, if their labourers cease, they must neces-

sarily cease. Others have pleasurable occupations from which they may, and ought, out of respect to the day, to cease, such, for instance, as occupy length of time, disturb others, or break the general peace against animals, who, by a parity of reasoning, (this part of the object of the institution being considered as mercy and a boon to brutes), have a right to this truce from unnecessary war. Others again, doing nothing on week days, can have nothing to cease from on Sundays. Christianity itself has neither a day of work nor a day of rest, and if these last are the good Christians you desire, they will have been at its work all the week, and will not cease from it upon Sunday ;—but this is distinct altogether, as the question would be for them, rather, whether they are bound, opportunity or no opportunity presenting itself, to make it a work-day in this respect.

In the first place, according to the above definition, as a general rule, we would require, by common consent, a suspension of all public business, and ordinary occupation of individuals, that have any to suspend, directly or indirectly, that all and each may have leisure, as far as possible, for attending the service of the Church, and for such other private devotions, studies, and works of Christian charity, as their feelings and dispositions, abilities or opportunities, may prompt. And

also, that the labouring classes, whether of man or beast, may enjoy that additional corporeal boon of rest and relaxation, which we hold to be the other part of the intention of the institution. We deny that any action, in its own nature innocent, would become criminal, merely by being performed upon Sunday, unless it should become so by infringing upon what has been here laid down as the intention of the institution, or be made so by another distinct principle, viz. by offending the honest prejudices of the society in which we happen to be, (Rom. xiv.) Such, as nearly as I can collect, appears to be the general rule of our system, but even this cannot be strictly complied with. I now, therefore, proceed to define some few acknowledged infringements, which we consider justifiable. First, every thing that can fairly plead necessity, or such degree of general utility as allies it at all closely to necessity. Secondly, we hold those infringements justifiable, which, though they cannot plead either necessity or even general utility, are still eminently conducive to the comfort or enjoyment of the many, though they partially abridge, or even wholly take away the privilege of a few, these few, as regards the latter, not being necessarily the same individuals on each succeeding Sunday. Thirdly, always presuming that the infringement is no more than is abso-

lutely necessary to its object. We conceive we are not unjustifiable in looking to the actual reality of what we infringe; for instance, the artizan and labourer having worked hard and incessantly all the week, require rest and relaxation, they have their homes, their families, they may have many sabbath duties to perform, and have many capabilities of enjoyment, from which the state of the domestic servant precludes him. A task imposed upon the one might be an actual infringement of his privileges, perhaps a cruel one, which might, and probably would, be mere relaxation to the other. The same with cattle, the farm or post horse has laboured regularly all the week, and has real enjoyment and benefit from his privilege, whereas with the pampered horse in the stable of a gentleman, it is exactly the reverse; his Sabbath privilege would in reality be privation. In reason and in fact they are not the same, not the same therefore as infringements of the intention of the sabbath¹.

We now, however, come again to the grand point of distinction as to observance of the day, for *we* look upon Sunday as intended to be a

¹ Any reasonable man must see that the changes which have taken place in the state of society and the world, have rendered such general rules inapplicable in the present day.

joyous festival, wherein all innocent amusement or enjoyment, provided only it be sober and orderly, and does not interfere with the actual duties of ourselves or others, is not only allowable, but thoroughly consonant to the intention of the institution. As regards the labouring classes, many such there are from which they are unjustly and cruelly debarred. Some by legislative enactments, some by the ill-judged zeal of individuals in authority, and in which debarment there is about as much reason and justice as there would be in imposing a Sunday-shackle upon the legs of all cattle turned out, to prevent their profaning the *decency of the Sabbath*. The fact is, all such like notions proceed from an ancient superstition, leading men vainly to imagine, that God could be pleased by penances and mortifications for their own sake¹; and, if this idea is to be retained, I must say, the Papists are a thousand times more reasonable, for they keep up their fast and their feast, neat and distinct, while we endeavour to amalgamate them into one. It really would be much better to go back to the old custom before

¹ This false notion has distinguished almost every system of idolatrous worship. It is a confounding of the good and evil principle. The priests of Baal cut themselves with knives; Elijah did not. But neither Judaism, nor even Christianity, to our shame, have escaped this sort of folly.

our canon is altered, keep the Friday as there enjoined, and so avoid the confusion. But as to the labouring classes, the evil does not end with the injustice done them, but they are actually driven, in many instances, to real sin, by our scaring them, injudiciously, from imaginary sin; and the more this is done, the greater will be the evil result. But you will justly call me to order; it is the higher, and not the lower classes whom you attack, it is we that are at the bar, and I must confine my defence to ourselves. It is so, pardon my digression!

The higher orders you will say are not labourers, therefore, by our own confession, Sunday is not intended as a day of rest for them, they, at least, are bound to abstain rigidly from all ordinary amusements, and to find or make for themselves an occupation peculiar to the day, and follow it without intermission throughout the whole of it; and if they do not, and that cheerfully, it is at once a convincing proof that religion is not in their hearts. To bring this argument to bear however, you must first prove, that we, by professing the creed, have subjected ourselves to the letter of your law; and, moreover, that the letter of this law either *expressly*, or by undeniable implication, which is the same thing, commands us to do so. It happens, however, that neither of

these two suppositions are exactly true. No doubt there exists considerable confusion in the ideas of the mass of the higher orders concerning Sunday, and in conversation you might glean from unwary individuals admissions, more than sufficient to build a legal conviction upon, but if closely and honestly analyzed, you will find the majority of them amount to pretty nearly what I have stated. They are, in fact, not Sabbatarians, that is, they believe that there is good and sufficient reason to suppose it consonant to the will of God, that a day should be publicly set apart for religious worship, and as a day of rest and relaxation from ordinary labours and occupations ; and, of course, that it should be generally observed as such. But they do not believe, that in the promulgation of Christianity, as a religion for a world, it is the will, much less the positive command of God, that the same literal strictness, under each and every varying state of individual circumstances, should be required, as was required of those, to whom, in an actual and acknowledged state of pupillage, the law was delivered. Still less do they believe, that the revelation which explains that, as a matter of course, works of necessity and charity, &c. were never designed to have been included in the Sabbatical prohibition, does, by thus explaining, substitute all or any of them as

the positive and superadded task of that particular day, to the exclusion of all innocent recreation, whether in one class or another. God forbid that I should be understood to deny, that the more devotion and charity, provided they are real and unaffected, can be shewn on this or any other day, the better; or, that I should imagine for an instant, that the mind finding its greatest, or, if possible, its sole gratification in such acts, had not attained a higher grade in Christianity than one more intimately connected with its corporeal partner; but I am arguing of man—such as he was, is, and will more or less be, as long as he is man, and of what, God knowing his state, may, from revelation and reason, be supposed to desire of him, as the means of his rising to this grade in which he may be fairly said to be ripe for translation to a superior world. What are the directions of our Master?—As to devotions, he enjoins that they should not be continued for long together. Why? knowing our infirmity, in plain English, that we should not become bored by them, and lose that activity and elasticity of mind in their performance, which, whether they be prayer or study, is indispensable to their efficacy. Moreover, that we should not be deceived by the weight of the performance into mistaking the means used to effect, for the end to be effected; making thereby, what we suppose to

be our devotions, "vain works," "filthy rags," or any other orthodox appellation you may please to select. As to charity, you seem to suppose the materials for the work always at hand to occupy our leisure time on a Sunday, and in sufficient profusion to occupy every moment of it not requisitely taken up by devotional exercises. But this is really not the fact in far the greater number of cases, or the greater number of individuals. Nor could we, even by contrivance, make a sufficiency, without hoarding up for the occasion during the week, and descending to unnecessary, and even meddling, interference. You accuse us of "dexterously availing ourselves of any plausible plea for introducing week day employments into Sunday, while we have not the same propensity to introduce *any of Sunday's peculiar employments* into the rest of the week." Now, is this the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? How do you define Sunday's *peculiar* employments. I presume by the common terms, works of devotion and charity. But you surely cannot mean to deny that these are also week-day employments to every Christian. The first, though it may not come up to your ideas of orthodox length, a daily habit; the last, performed at least whenever circumstances call for its performance! Thus the charge again resolves itself into one of general

laxity and neglect : that we have not the same propensity to do our duty as to amuse ourselves ! As to introducing week-day employments into Sunday, the criminality must entirely depend upon what these week-day employments that are introduced may be : as examples, you jumble together a host of things of altogether different natures. For travelling on Sunday, for a man who acknowledges even the expediency of the institution, a plea is necessary, as it is a direct infringement upon what he must admit to have been the intention of the institution. If his plea be false, he is guilty of a two-fold misdemeanour. As for writing letters on the other hand, he might as well think of a plea for eating his dinner : if it be necessary for the one, sending by the post included, it certainly will be so for the other, if roast beef and plum pudding be his bill of fare ; and exactly for the same reasons. All actions, in their own nature indifferent, can be estimated, as regards Sunday, only as they do or do not infringe its object. You may, perhaps, put a case to me, and say, “ If you, being a proprietor, think proper, at an hour which would not interfere with your devotional, or other duties, to dig in your garden or prune your trees, would you hold this to be allowable, because it would not infringe upon the intentions you have supposed ?” I answer, that it is a case not at all in contemplation

of the rule ; that, unseen of man, it were unseen of God—but that if I, by an open act, take upon me to offer thus a wanton insult to the letter of the Church's ordinance, and to received opinion, without doubt, I am guilty directly of a crime against society, and thereby, indirectly, of a crime against religion : (I am of course speaking here without any reference to motive or intention whatsoever). As affinities to this, I class all those other things you enumerate, always supposing them to be taken in a sense wherein they could be criminal only by being done on Sunday. Whenever they are offences against society, they are offences against religion ; where they are not offences against society, they are not offences against religion. The same thing which would be wrong if done in England, might be indifferent if done in France : that which would be indifferent in England, might be wrong if done in Scotland.

In alluding to music, whether intentionally or not, I cannot say, but in putting it as a consequence to be apprehended, “relaxing in the concert room,” (p. 158), you have made it appear as if, in your estimation, a greater crime than the rest enumerated in the same paragraph. As you have not excepted sacred music, I must conclude you to have imported the very singular Scotch notion upon this subject ; one I never could account for,

unless as having been adopted originally by way of being superlatively anti-catholic. I have nothing to say to it, however, more than to the rest—that while such is the feeling in Scotland, music ought not to be played there! I only notice it, as not having been aware that it was an opinion held by any sect of our Church. We liberals hold the origin of Sunday, and consequently, the *minutice* of its observances, to be subjects upon which men may conscientiously differ. I cannot, therefore, allow these differences to be any proof of our want either of religion or sincerity. However little you may be inclined to allow that people may conscientiously differ upon the subject of a sabbath, or other equally undefined matters of religion, your want of toleration will not alter the fact, that they actually do so; and the only mode of forming a reasonable judgment from their actions in these particulars, is from the consistency of those actions with their professed belief. Far be it from me, however, to contend, that in practice we are not chargeable with much of what, for the advantage of your party, you are inclined to throw upon our opinions; for I fear that, like all other men, we should be found sadly deficient, even if judged by our own rule: but I can take upon me to say, that such actions as are inconsistent with that rule, would be almost unanimously acknowledged as

wrong, or to need the justification of circumstances.

I have now given you, Sir, as nearly as possible, what may be termed the general opinion of religious liberals, (I fear the terms will sound a paradox in your ears); but, in truth, any defined opinions of the higher classes, as a body, upon this subject, it is impossible to give, as the definition would vary, in some particular, in almost every individual. I have taken care, however, to keep on the outside: the variations are all leanings, more or less, to your own opinions. What I have ventured to give as their opinions, has been drawn from reflections upon what I have observed, both at home and upon the continent; which latter, perhaps, is the fairer criterion, as there their actions are less under the control of what at home might be considered public opinion.

P. 159. In the spirit of meekness, patience, humility, &c. we confess we are like every other body of Christians—lamentably deficient; but we by no means plead guilty to exploding and disavowing them, as they happen to be just what we understand in the terms, *peculiarities of Christianity*, in contradistinction to the *cause-and-effect* doctrine, which, you say, you understand in the same terms. The manner in which you bring forward the terms, “proper pride, and proper spirit,” &c. as a proof of

our misconception, is wholly unfair ; for it is unfair to bring forward, as evidence against the religious feelings or opinions of any large body of people, the strictly literal abuse of language indulged in by the thoughtless and worldly, without any reference to religion whatsoever. As it does not prove either criminal want or misconception of religion in the body generally, but merely that it has among it thoughtless individuals, who will misapply words, which, but for their misapplication, are by no means unreal : for pride and spirit, strictly speaking, are proper or improper, according merely to the object to which they are directed, and the principles and motives which rouse them into action.

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER VIII.

CHAP. IV. § 3. 8vo. edit. p. 160.

On the desire of Human Estimation and Applause—The generally prevailing Opinions contrasted with those of the true Christian.

SIR,

OUR next step is a disquisition upon the desire of human applause and estimation. You begin with what you call “contrasting the prevailing opinions with those of true Christians.” But your argument turns, as usual, entirely upon the contrast between the prevailing practice and true Christianity. You commence by making for us an argument, (p. 164), to which we will not object, until, in the last page of it, you make us “*prefer* a desire for human estimation and applause, for general use, *before* higher (*i. e.*) Christian principles of morals.” We do not *prefer* them, but we do not consider that Christianity disdains the aid of our passions, properly directed ; but, on the contrary, where the spark of good is, will fan it into flame, and direct it to its

legitimate object. You then make an attack upon our vindication, which, you say, "proceeds upon the innocence of error," (p. 165). You should have proved, not assumed the error, and then shown the process. Your Objector urges his vindication always under the supposition of the due regulation of the passions, and defends not their excess. Here, as elsewhere, you seem to forget who you are arguing with, or choose to suppose your opponent not a Christian, and argue, not against the three or four pages of vindication you have given him, but merely against the objectionable sentence I have noticed. Your argument, in fact, supposes us to propose desire of human estimation as a substitute for the motives of Christianity; which you well know we do not. The light left to Pagan moralists, showed them, indeed, the abuses of these passions, but by no means thoroughly nor truly. The whole life of Christ was a practical lecture upon their undiscovered abuses.

You begin your "Scripture lessons" by entirely ceding to your opponent all you have made him contend for—the use of these passions distinct from their abuse. You then rally to a second attack, (p. 167), first upon the maxim, "that glory is true or false, accordingly as the actions it produces, and the pursuits to which it prompts, are beneficial or mischievous to *mankind*." We thus

define the matter, because by this test alone can we judge whether it is, or is not, according to the will of God: for we hold, that nothing which is not consonant to the will of God, can be really beneficial to mankind¹. You, then, in talking of our “exalting ourselves, instead of giving the glory to God,” suppose a distinct wrong, by no means necessary; for we may thank God who has entitled us to the approbation of our fellows, by making us the happy instruments of his benefits, for the benefits conferred, and for the due sense given to others of those benefits. Successful obedience cannot be called an “encroachment upon the prerogative” of him who is obeyed. The conduct of the gallant soldier, though applauded by the whole army, detracts nothing from the merit of the general who directed, the parents who educated, or the country which produced him: his honour is their honour. So, where the minds of men are so far regenerate as to feel in consonance with the Spirit of God, his approval and theirs are one. You say, that “whatever is opposite to, or even different from, worldly interests

¹ It must of course be understood, that I cannot mean this to apply to any acknowledged evil instrument, through whose involuntary agency Divine Wisdom may still work a result ultimately beneficial.

and pursuits, will be deemed needlessly precise," (p. 168.) This is one of those assumptions so often used in default of argument. But be it so. It does not prove the converse meant to be implied, that all that we deem needlessly precise, must, therefore, be genuine Christianity. You now, Sir, in p. 168, assume the question, and immediately cede it again, for the second time, in the course of the two following pages. In p. 171, you again return to the charge, under the head of "generally prevailing notions opposed to those of Scripture:" calling that a misconception, which is no misconception on our part at all, as you yourself confess in the following page, (p. 172), but merely a fact of imperfection of practice, which we do not, because we cannot, deny. Dishonour, disgrace, or shame, may be either real or unreal; but we conceive that one great object of Christianity, and the example of Jesus, was to teach us to distinguish right from wrong, in this particular especially, and that the manner of the sacrifice of atonement was public execution, for this very purpose.

You next bring two proofs, as you call them, of our false notions, (p. 173); but, in fact, they are no proofs of our opinions, but, as usual, of our imperfect practice. They prove merely that we do not sufficiently command our tempers, and that we are too apt, in our outward conduct, to heed more

the thoughtless approbation of the world, than what we know to be the command of God. "We see the right, but yet the wrong pursue." In the instance of duelling, I must confess, you might still convict some portion of society of false notions; yet it might make a plea to your favour, methinks; for, ere we begun to rationalize in religion, when our faith was stronger, it was considered as a judicial ordeal. "Dieu defend le droit!" But, to be serious. It is a remnant of barbarism, which, like war, Christianity has as yet only ameliorated, not exploded, and, like war, it is not wholly without its uses, though its evils dreadfully preponderate. But this is all I have to say for it¹. Duelling is unnecessary: it is in our own power, and at our own choice, to put an end to it; and I, for one, can only beg you, Sir, to accept my cordial thanks for the very excellent and Christian remarks you have made upon the subject, and to allow me to add even my heathen prayer to yours, that, by the blessing of God, they may be universally and speedily attended to. I acknowledge the justice of your admirable remark, (p. 175), upon the guilt

¹ The best defence of duelling I ever met with, is in Arthur Mervyn's letter in *Guy Mannering*. But this only extenuates the individual drawn in by adverse circumstances, but is no excuse for the state of legislation, which renders such circumstances possible.

of habitual determination to commit the crime when called upon : nor can I see any real difficulty in the scheme proposed in your note, nor why, in the ordinary classes of instances, it should not be effectual. The very jockey-club is a warrant that it might be so. Indeed, I can sincerely and gratefully compliment you upon all respecting this matter, but in your having suffered yourself to be deterred from bringing the subject before Parliament. Your fears, I think, were groundless : you would have had every woman, and every thinking man in the country, with you ; and even of your opponents, one half would have been secret well-wishers. I do not say you would have carried it at once ; the slave trade was not conquered in a session : but the cause would have been much advanced, if not actually carried, ere now, and religion and public decency had been spared some recent insults, to which they have been unhappily exposed, and which, still more unhappily, have given such sanction to the practice, as would ensure to its advocates, at this moment, the united support of a powerful political party.

Nevertheless, though I perfectly agree with you upon the abstract question of duelling, and admit that it results from an abuse of the passion for approbation, yet I cannot concede, that therefore the love of esteem is “ of base extraction, and

springs from vanity and selfishness," (p. 176). This passion, like all other passions and propensities, was implanted for good ends, though, like all others, it may be perverted to evil. Say not, therefore, "springs from," but "is often polluted and distorted by selfishness and vanity." It is really worse than idle, to sit down to calculate minutely, as you do, every possibility of evil that may result from the abuse of propensities, which form actually a part of our very nature. What is religion for, but to teach us how to discriminate between the use and the abuse, and to induce us to regulate our passions? You may destroy any member of your body that you may deem dangerous, and thereby effectually bar evil from that quarter; but prove a passion of the mind what you will, you cannot eradicate it from your own mind, much less, from that of mankind. When you come to your "true Christian's conduct in relation to this principle," (p. 178), you not only do not attempt to do so, but even say, "The favourable opinion and praises of good men are *justly acceptable* to him." When? "where they accord with the testimony" of what? "of his own heart." A dangerous maxim enough! However, if this means any thing, it must mean just what we are contending for, that the passions in question are good in their use, though evil in their abuse: and thus you cede the question for

the third time! You now give us about a dozen pages of pretty fair preachment, take it all in all, upon the subject of regulation of our love of approbation, and how we ought to conduct ourselves; but there are some few passages I must notice.

In the first place, your pupil must take care that your advice in page 181, does not lead him too far in the principles of Jesuitism. Let him make the most of truth, certainly, but let him beware of veiling her face, lest he himself should happen to forget her features! Your recommendation to your disciple, (p. 182), not to assume any affected severity of deportment, or peculiarity of language, I cannot object to; but, if he obeys you, let him be sure to "sit loose to the favour and applause, even of good men," for I fear, you will infallibly kick him out of your tabernacle for a nominal, and, then, "How shall he breathe in air less pure, accustomed to immortal fruits!" If, as you say, "a true Christian is sometimes misconstrued," (p. 183), it should make him careful not to misconstrue others! In page 184, you treat us to a piece of philosophy rather beyond the tether of your own spinning, for you say, "it will be matter of no very deep concern to a true Christian, if his endeavours should have been ineffectual." He may have consolation in his concern, but concerned, and deeply, he will be, if he

be perfect. You then tell us that a true Christian “dreads, lest his supreme affections being gratified, it should hereafter be said to him, ‘Remember, thou in thy life receivedst thy good things!’” Not, surely, for being gratified! Must we doubt the mercy, and even justice of God, to be true Christians? This, Sir, is a most important misconception on your part. Is it possible you can have adopted the vulgar error in the interpretation of the parable from which you quote? We hold that Christianity by no means forbids us to enjoy the good things which God has given us; but merely reminds us that they are a trust, that he who gives has a right to require, and that when he does so, though it be to the uttermost farthing, we must not, if possible, even wish to withhold. In like manner, those whose whole efforts through life, whether religious or otherwise, have been made for other purposes than the true one, are said “to have had their reward,” meaning simply, that having succeeded in the only object they sought, they can have no further claim to reward from God, whom they have not designedly, but only incidentally served, in pursuit of other prizes than those by him advertized.

For your expression, “an indifference to the world’s esteem,” (p. 189), we must read, “an independence of,” “a principle beyond,” as an

indifference certainly is not “*essentially and indispensably required*,” as you yourself confess in the two following pages. I recommend your advice in page 189, to the special notice of your disciples. Your parting counsel completely establishes how vain have been all your charges, and your long discussions in this section. You must pardon my remarking upon page 191, that it is far too presumptuous. Who are “we and they;” what “our and their.” This is lifting up the veil rather carelessly! Indeed, you seem to have been rather disposed to forget your own double entendre in the words—“true and real” Christian, throughout this section! Can you boast yourself free from all imperfection in this, or any other respect? Are you so very sure, that even your boasted religion has no aid, directly or indirectly, from love of applause? That, where you condescend to court the esteem of men, it is so very wholly and solely for religion’s sake? Remember what you have said in page 188. In comparing your own merits with those of others, by what test will you ascertain your own impartiality?—How “close the door against painful and malignant passion,” should the world refuse its sanction to the superiority you thus *impartially* arrogate to yourself with such cool complacency? You put me in mind of a zealous conjuror, who, even while

purposely explaining to others, how they are deceived, himself half believes in his own miracle all the time. Your own book, Sir, from Preface to Finis, not even excepting your table of contents, is proof that you have not been able to close the door against a *painful* sense of merit unacknowledged. I will not say *malignant*, for angry, and unreasonably angry as you sometimes are with us, I must do you the justice to say, that I sincerely believe you mean us well. You forgive, but you cannot forget. You love us as your enemies, but you cannot feel for us as friends.

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER IX.

CHAP. IV. § 4. 8vo. edit. p. 193.

The generally prevailing error of substituting amiable tempers and useful lives in the place of Religion, stated and confuted; with hints to real Christians.

SIR,

WE now begin your fourth section, wherein you attack, what you are pleased to call “ the *prevailing* error of *substituting* amiable tempers and useful lives, *in place* of religion.” Here, Sir, I must meet you upon the very threshold with a flat denial, as if I once permit your title to pass, I must be instantly ejected from the window. Once prove that we *substitute*, no matter what, and your battle is won. After two or three round assertions, you, as usual, put a speech into our mouths, but what does it amount to? Do we say, as to justify your assertion we ought, that it is no matter whether men are Christians or Atheists? Not a word of it! Whoever used this argument (p. 194), evidently assumed Christianity as a point needless

to be argued, he was speaking in and of a Christian community ; arguing, not for a separation of religion and morality, but against your proposed separation of them. It is, in fact, exactly the same question that we argued in the commencement, where you attacked us for saying, " It signifies little what a man believes, look to his practice." There as well as here, we are totally misrepresented. When a Christian of our class talks thus, nothing is less his intention than to undervalue, much more exclude, religion. But he is arguing against some peculiar notion or doctrine you are seeking to enforce, in inculcation of some one possessing the qualities in question ; and all the Objector means to say for them is, that the acknowledged possession of these qualities offer the surest test that, whether the creed of the accused be of one Christian sect or another, it contains the real essentials of Christianity. This test, though one of the surest, is certainly not infallible ; but still, I contend, we are not wrong in general society, in resting satisfied with such *primâ facie* evidence. A strict scrutiny into every man's creed would be practically a tenfold evil to any which can result from our non-interference. We suppose every man a Christian until shown to be otherwise ; if his outward actions and manner be Christian, we are naturally confirmed in

our supposition. In nothing are men so shy as about their religion, for fear of being thought to presume. I know that I myself have been set down as an absolute infidel scores of times! I am persuaded, however, that in this matter, we err far less often than if we acted upon the contrary supposition, and I am certain we err more like Christians. But, Sir, what is your objection? Why, just what you abused us for so unmercifully, when you put it into our mouths, use and abuse! We are praising what is real, and by way of censuring our praise, you declaim against what is pretended. We wish to uphold neither weakness nor hypocrisy, nor have we said that Christianity is of no use where the temper is naturally amiable. Your three pages of preachment, therefore, to page 200, are all upon a false text. What you say of "useful lives being so far positively mischievous, as they actually discourage religion," (p. 201), comes little, if at all, short of the common accusation against your sect, of contending "greater sinner greater saint," and recommending sin, "that grace may abound." This were giving religion a monopoly with a vengeance! We hold that good and evil cannot change their nature, and that whether found in Christian or Pagan, every good gift is from God. Evil may mix with it, but cannot amalgamate! But in separating your cha-

racters from Christianity, you put them altogether beyond our argument; we have no more to do with them than with Mungo Parke's charitable negresses. All that can be said of them is, that they are instances in which the stain of original sin appears more than usually faint. We leave them in humble confidence to the uncovenanted mercy of God. May the light reach them, and make them perfect!

You next make us contend (p. 202), that half is equal to a whole, that although duty towards God, and duty towards man are commanded, the first is neutralized by the second. You appear to proceed in this and the last section especially, upon the principle of "throw plenty of dirt, some is sure to stick," and never fear, so it will! By constant repetition you so beat your accusations and insinuations into the confused brains of your readers, that an angel from heaven would hardly get them out, much less such a bungler as poor I. Be it known, however, to whomsoever it concerneth, that we, the higher classes of the Church of England, do *not* contend that our duty towards God is neutralized by our duty towards our neighbour, but merely that it is dependent upon it for proof. As our Saviour says, "He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?" You, Sir, deny

our position, and contend that "it is mere self-deceit and partiality, which prevent our seeing, that he who should attempt to perform the latter without the former, were equally bad as he who should imagine he could perform the first without the second." But begging your pardon, we should be more correct than you in this matter. The son who said, "I will not," and went, is preferred to him who said, "I go, Sir," and went not. The point you give us to defend, however weak, is at worst a positive virtue, whereas yours is a positive sin, whenever the two are separated. You talk of "giving *unequal measure to God*."—Do you then imagine, that human observances are needful, or even gratifying to God, when unaccompanied by their reality, obedience? What says God, speaking by the Prophet to the Jews, when they had ceased "to do justly and to love mercy," when they ceased to obey, though not to pray?—"Your sabbaths, your sacrifices, &c. are an *abomination to me!*" "Can I eat bull's flesh, and drink the blood of goats?" &c. It were better to give no share at all, than such as can only be an insult! An Omniscient sovereign may tolerate the obedient, though neglectful subject, but not the fawning traitor.

You next go on for about a dozen pages, abusing us right and left, for denying what we never

deny, and contending for what we never contend for; arguing with a mere phantom of your own creation, and preaching him, as usual, a very decent sermon, did it not happen to proceed altogether upon false grounds; for it is an oration against us, which has, I hope, been already amply disproved; but if not, we now come to page 214, where, according to custom, you cede to us all we ask; for you there tell us, that amiable tempers and useful lives, “when the external decorums of religion are not violated, form a state, which must be a matter between God and a man’s own conscience,” and that “we should be liberal in judging of others.” This is all we want, all we have from the very commencement contended for! There are many things I might remark upon, but they would be all mere repetitions of what has passed before, redentials to reassumed assertions previously refuted. You then continue your sermon to the end of the section, but it contains little or nothing with which I need meddle, or which I have not already amply noticed. So adieu till next section!

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER X.

CHAP. IV. § 5. 8vo. edit. p. 223.

*Practical Christianity—Prevailing inadequate Conceptions—
Some other grand Defects in the practical system of the bulk
of Nominal Christians.*

SIR,

IN your fifth section you profess to notice “some other grand defects in our *practical system*.” I observe you have most judiciously left out the word “*religious*,” or any other epithet to show what system you allude to; yet being under the general head of “Practical Christianity,” our *religious system* is clearly enough implied, although the system you really attack has no reference whatsoever directly to religion, as you seem to understand very well in the following page. The defects you have complained of have, I say, nothing really to do with our religion or our ideas, adequate or inadequate, of the guilt of sin. It is not that we let “*religion* dwindle into a matter of police,” but that we have been obliged, with reference to

society, to establish a sort of system of police, nearly, if not totally, independent of religion. We are all alike subject to the laws of religion, and equally amenable to an Omniscient tribunal: its threats and its promises are held out alike to each individual, and each has an equal interest in attending to them. But every one feels himself imperfect; that he will have enough to do to settle his own account with these! Did we meddle more with each other's religion, when religion was not immediately in question, and estimate each other's conduct, as you would have us, by Scripture rules, we should never cease from objurgation and recrimination, and become worse than we actually are. We should be like a gang of thieves, continually charging each other with offences against the laws of the land; not only all sinners, but not even orderly among ourselves. Necessity has thus compelled us to establish a sort of secondary police for society, a bye-law to which certain offences are specially amenable. But in noticing these, we do not take them out of the jurisdiction of religion, or declare others, that it would not answer our particular purpose to notice, innocent as regards a more general law: we only say, they are not cognizable before this tribunal. Every club must have its own particular laws and regulations about things specially pertaining to itself; they may

punish some things cognizable by the laws of the country ; but in doing so, they have no intention either of upholding or taking the place of those laws. Other things they may leave unnoticed, but they do not thereby deny the propriety of the law that forbids and punishes them. If they took upon them a kind of secondary and inquisitorial jurisdiction of every thing that is unlawful, the object of their society would be lost, and instead of meeting in charity and good fellowship, the members would meet merely to accuse and judge each other. Thus we have rules and regulations for our society, by which we exclude such crimes as are generally inconsistent with its continuance ; but we do not thereby deny the religious guilt of other crimes, though we do not by experience find it convenient to make them cognizable by the special rules of our society. You say, we “ hold many things grossly criminal in the lower ranks, which we abet in the higher.” Now, in this word “ criminal,” resides the whole pith of your accusation. We hold what is “ grossly criminal” in one class to be “ grossly criminal” in the other. But in the cases you appear to allude to, we make, properly speaking, no reference to their criminality at all. But the one is punished, the other not ! So it would be with a powerful man and a weak one, who should alike take it into their heads to assault passengers : the

weak man would probably get his head broken directly, the strong man's injustice might remain unpunished! We certainly only judge by externals; we can only judge by them, without creating greater evils than those from which we would escape: we tolerate what we cannot rectify! If a man of the higher classes is a sensualist or a drunkard, we cannot help it; and until he obtrudes his vices upon us, we find it more expedient not to notice them; it is his own business, not ours. But when our servants do such things, we find ourselves immediately inconvenienced thereby; and though the effect may operate as a punishment, yet our object is merely to rectify the inconvenience we ourselves experience from such conduct: the crime, as a crime, is left to its consequences, and to be judged by whatever tribunal may be the proper one to take cognizance of it. I give this as the real origin of the apparent distinction to which you allude, but without at all meaning to imply, that where there is influence, there does not necessarily exist a proportionate responsibility, or that we are not bound to uphold religion and morality where we can. It is not that I mean, in this instance, to plead guilty on the part of the higher orders, to an acknowledged neglect, either of general or particular duty, or, in fact, to plead at all, for or against any such charge. But in talking of religion, I do deny that

any such charge is proveable upon our system ; therefore I say, what is the truth, that these things have no reference whatsoever to our religious opinions, and are done in general society without any direct reference to religion. I deny that the "common language" (p. 225) you allude to, is any proof at all of our internal opinion, or of our wish to palliate particular acts or opinions. It may be, and often is, used in palliation of the whole conduct of an individual, implying, that but for the blot alluded to, which, however, we hope, may not be so black as described, the individual would not be to be utterly condemned, having many redeeming qualities. Nobody would be more apt to commit the offence here complained of than your humble servant ; and I can safely say, that I have done so often, where the vice alluded to has been one which I should least wish really to palliate, and upon which, if I thought it requisite to do so, or were required to pronounce upon with reference to religion, I should expatiate as warmly as yourself. If you form your judgment of language from dictionaries, (note, 225), you will necessarily fall into a labyrinth of error, especially where you would compare popular terms in different languages. You have jumbled together, with your usual tact, a number of different terms, some implying inculpation, some a special and limited degree of praise ;

and the force to be given to each must necessarily be understood from the context furnished by the conversation in which they are used, or by the tone, manner, character, and style of the speaker, which are seldom to be mistaken by the person to whom they are addressed. In a world, necessarily of a thousand shades of opinion, it surely cannot be desirable, that in speaking of the faults or follies of others, we should restrict ourselves to the least qualifying mode of speech that we can frame, to suit our own particular ideas! “Freethinking, gallantry, jollity,” generally mean no more than the terms naturally import; and in the absence of the explanation of manner or emphasis above alluded to, I should understand no more by them, than that the person in question was supposed to differ from the speaker’s or from the popular creed; that his manner was considered not sufficiently controlled in female society, or that he was either of a convivial disposition or easily excited by society or wine; all *crimes*, no doubt, much more venial in my estimation than in yours, but yet the inadequacy of my opinion remains to be proved. “A libertine” is another sort of term; and how you make this out to be a diminutive, I do not understand. I should imagine even that it would sound incomparably stronger and more harshly in my mouth than in yours, as it probably would be

said upon much better, that is, much stronger grounds. As to the epithet "*good*," when coupled with the words "*fellow or companion*," barring the effect of particular emphasis, it is sufficiently explained by its adjunct, and it is mere idle cavilling to pretend not to understand its meaning. If I say, "a good man," I should expect, and should almost universally be understood to speak, of moral qualities; if I say, "good fellow," or "good companion," nobody, who understood English, would understand more than pleasant, agreeable, or instructive. "A good heart," is usually meant to imply a disposition generally free from rancour, malice, or uncharitableness, but no more; and that and "good nature" are not unfrequently used as a sort of tacit admission that we reluctantly give up the defence of the accused. I fear you are not correct though, about there being no qualifying terms for theft and fraud. "Taking a *fair* advantage,"—"making a perquisite, a harvest, a good thing,"—"doing, humbugging a man," and many more, are all terms used to express very different degrees of these offences¹. We, Sir, suppose our acquaintance to be as well aware of the claims of

¹ I feel that an apology is due to the reader for having said so much upon this subject; but a recent occurrence has impressed me with the necessity of a full explanation.

religion as ourselves, and should conceive it would be a needless impertinence in us to tell them, upon every occasion, how they or others, who may be the subjects of conversation, are infringing those claims. I really can see no good that could arise from it. You say, (p. 226), "a man may go on in the frequent commission of known sins, and yet no inference be drawn respecting the absence of religious principle." This, Sir, is not true! The inference, as regards religious principle, would obtrude itself; we could not help drawing it, if we would. But what you probably mean is, that we do not punish it, at least, until it reaches to a certain extent. It is true we do not. We are living in a world where it is necessary, for general quiet and good order, that we should not require special conformity to our opinions, excepting in certain particulars. We do not even make profession of Christianity a requisite; we tolerate all alike that will conform to our general rules, and, by common consent, leave religion as a matter between man and God. A Jew, Mahomedan, or Atheist, may, as far as the term imports, be "a mighty worthy creature;" but a man who goes on in the frequent commission of *known sins*, provided the *sins be known*, would not acquire the title of a "very good Christian." You tell us, you read of "no little sins" in Scripture, and that the Sermon on the Mount is

much of it expressly pointed against "so dangerous a misconception¹," (p. 226). As what? As that there are different degrees of guilt? If such is your interpretation, you really must excuse our adopting it. We believe that the laws of conduct imposed by God upon man, were imposed, not capriciously, but wholly and solely for the benefit of those who were to obey them, and that sins are consequently offensive to God in proportion as they have a tendency to be injurious to man. If this offends you, reverse it; it will come to the same thing.

Your doctrine, of being guilty of the whole law by infringing the slightest particle, is just calculated to drive us to that very state of reckless desperation, from which Christianity was designed to save us. If a man hangs over the precipice only by a single hair, he will look upon his condition as hopeless: if it is to be broken, as broken it must be, it will little matter to him by what weight of guilt the destruction is to be effected. But if his support be a rope of many strands, he will have hope of preserving it, and jealously watch its fraying. Your accusation, so plainly repeated here, of our having a different scale of morals for the

¹ Is it the text, "Whosoever shall break one of these *least* commandments, and teach men so, shall be called the *least in the kingdom of heaven*," that Mr. Wilberforce alludes to?

higher and lower classes, (p. 226), is both unjust and untrue. We make no such distinction more than you do. If you mean the insinuation to apply to the restraints imposed by human laws operating more against one class than against the other, where the moral and religious guilt are equal, I answer, that the result is not our fault, but one that flows unavoidably from the nature of the case, as in the instance above mentioned, of the strong and the weak. The laws, in fact, judge not the moral and religious criminality, but the consequences of the act; and if you would contend, that because they cannot prevent all, that therefore they should prevent none, that all might have an equal degree of liberty, your argument is little to the cause you seek to advocate. You differ from the democratic declaimers of the day, only in being a dupe; they urging the argument for an object which would be answered did they succeed; you, for an object that would be annihilated by your success. But, Sir, to what purpose all this wild declamation against us? At least, if you find so much fault, you should propose a remedy. We must live in this week-day world such as we find it, and do our best in it, or we must withdraw from it. Which would you have us do? Is every one who calls himself a Christian, and who would be more than *nominal*, bound to

separate himself from publicans and sinners, and to class among these all who may differ from, and therefore be considered by him as worse than himself? What more did the Pharisees of old? This is certainly not the lesson we conceive Scripture to intend. But is there no medium? you will say. None! I answer. We must either leave religion to men's own consciences, and the efforts of the Church, as we do, or by interfering with it, plunge into a sea of troubles for no good effect; and end, if we persevere, by splitting into sects, and exchanging that polished manner, which you allow us to possess, though you deny it the name of charity, for the brotherly love of religious rancour and intolerance; and all this would happen without our having, after all, effected any amelioration whatever in what now composes the mass of society; but on the contrary, having allowed it to deteriorate by withdrawing the checks which now keep it in some sort of order. Look about you, Sir; we are certainly not grown more sanctified in our demeanour of late years; but, is there no amelioration in the tone of morals? Is all tolerated now in society that you can remember being tolerated? Bad as we still may be, I think I can defy you to deny that we are improved in this respect.

You somewhere have adduced novels as a test of our religion; allow me to adduce them, and

especially dramatic compositions, as a test of our improved decency at least, if not morality; and if you are candid, I think you must admit a difference in our favour. The cause of morality and rational religion are proceeding, silently and slowly perhaps, but surely. Religion has little now to fear from its enemies alone, but every thing from the intemperate and injudicious zeal of those who lay claim to being considered its warmest friends. Many an insurrection has been occasioned by endeavouring to force upon a people benefits they are not prepared to receive, whereas by a more judicious and patient course, they had received them with thankfulness!

If you, Sir, call in the aid of philosophy and imagination to enlighten us upon the unrevealed policy of God, as when you tell us, "We may be a spectacle to other worlds, for the sake of example to which, God *may find himself* OBLIGED to punish us:" (p. 228.) I do not quarrel with, though I cannot quite admire your supposition¹; but you, at least, are bound not to condemn us, if we take

¹ The Koran has, if I mistake not, an idea something similar, and to my mind, as rational. One side of Paradise is separated only by a wall from the regions of the damned; and the inhabitants of that part are to be kept in order and recollection, by hearing the groans and cries of those in torture on the other side of the wall. I suppose the worlds in question are to have the same continuous advantage!

the same liberty, even though our conclusions may not suit your taste. What you admit of "the future punishment of sin not being as a judicial sentence, but happening in the way of natural consequence," (p. 228), is a piece of philosophy to which we also lay claim, but should never have expected your approval of. As it appears to me rather inconsistent with the equality of all sin, and the literal revelation of equality of punishment, for which we should have expected to find you a zealous contender. The next thing we come to, after a sermon of eight pages, is a charge against us of being defective in the love of God: (p. 237). The bare accusation we pretend not to deny. We are, alas, defective in every thing; but you say, "Love outruns the deductions of reasoning. *It* requires not proof, the least hint, the slightest surmise is sufficient:" (p. 238). All this is certainly very undeniable, and a very cunningly devised hypothesis it is for the place you have assigned to it; it is one of the cleverest bits of casuistry in your whole book. I do not mean this offensively, as I believe you sincere; but we must consider what must happen, were you allowed to build upon this foundation. If we are to go beyond revelation, and require no proof, it must come to this,—that every thing that any weak or speculative fanatic or disturbed imagination could find or imagine, or

have at any time found or imagined evil, or any tendency to evil to exist in, must, upon the fealty of our love, be instantly renounced unquestioned. But this is not all. Love seeks to gratify, as well as to avoid offending. Then come fasts, penances, vows, seclusions, and all the exploded bigotry of the worst times of papacy over again. Are you prepared for this? For if you are to impose your opinion of all that should be done or left undone, I also must have the same liberty, and all will be anarchy, until the supremacy of some such hierarchy as the papal be again established, most probably with rogues at the helm. Then adieu toleration, and all the advantages we suppose ourselves to have gained! The fact, however, is, that love should require proof, or it will be apt to miss its object, especially when acting by the suggestions of others. You allow, that our service is to be a reasonable service, which must mean the application of the general rules given us, to particular circumstances, under the guidance of that reason supplied to us for this purpose. Reason must, therefore, be used by somebody. Who is this somebody to be? We no longer acknowledge a pope, nor does our Church claim infallibility. We have, then, no certain and acknowledged guide but our own consciences, and these must be influenced either by our own studies and reflections, or by those of others upon whom

we voluntarily rely ; but then this voluntary reliance must always be held to imply, at least an indirect conviction, for if we cannot imagine ourselves to understand any particular point in question, we can and do imagine ourselves to understand that those upon whom we rely, are competent to, and actually do, understand it. This voluntary reliance forms the power of a Church, and the assent and adhesion of a people to the dicta of its ministry, is conformity. Every individual born and educated in a society professing this conformity to any Church, is bound not to separate therefrom without reverting to his own powers, and experiencing a strong mental conviction of the necessity of such separation. As, short of this, the humility and diffidence of Christianity should forbid an assumption of wrong in those, many of whom he may suppose, better authorities than himself. If you assent to this, as probably you will, it must, on the other hand, result, that as a sort of indemnification for this partial resignation of liberty, a man will not be bound to acquiesce at once in any new imposition, proposal, or suggestion whatsoever, be it even unanimously adopted by those authorities to whom he may be in the sort of spiritual allegiance above described. He can be bound to no more than to hear and consider it. But where the practice of the society in which he lives is, and ever has been,

against any such new, or apparently new proposition, and its supporters are a minority, he is scarcely to be condemned if he refuses even to entertain it; unless, indeed, his habitual use of his natural privilege of reasoning upon such subjects, shall have rendered him liable to be called upon to decide for himself, in a matter that concerns his previous and future judgment upon so serious a subject as his religion. To exemplify the real value of self-denying and officious love familiarly, I must recur to what I before passed unnoticed upon the same subject, where you instanced the activity of imagination we ourselves should require from our wives and children. When we thus put man for God, we must suppose a perfect absence of all whim and caprice! A cool and reasonable man, who believed he had given sufficient indications of his will and humour by precept, explanation, and example, would not, I imagine, be particularly gratified at finding he had been mistaken, and that from unfounded fears, and absurdly rigorous interpretation of sundry expressions, his family had been unnecessarily debarring themselves of numerous little innocent gratifications, to which he would not have objected, and which, indeed, he had given them to be enjoyed. He might, and would, perhaps, receive the sacrifice graciously enough when resulting from imbecility of mind, caress his infants for their docility, and

his wife for her zeal, if he knew her to be a fool ; but if otherwise, his complacency would probably be somewhat cooled by a certain remonstrating—“ I’m sorry you should have thought that necessary”—“ Surely you might have known me better than that !”—“ Did’nt I so and so ?” &c. But if the family were continually harassing themselves to find out, by all sorts of ingenious arguments, what it was possible they might do in the way of mortification to themselves for the sake of pleasing him, and act upon this kind of affectionate sophistry, without any recurrence to reason ; I believe the temper of no man on earth would long be proof against such preposterous love as this. We now come to one of those points to which I conclude all this love business is meant as a preface. You affirm that “ the question of the lawfulness of theatrical amusements would soon be decided if tried by the criterion of love :” (p. 239). Now this we do not grant. You must first convince us, that they are contrary to the will of God, before the retaining or renouncing of them can become a test of our love. I wish not to defend immoralities of any kind, the more decent and moral theatrical representations can be, the better ; but we presume to think, that generally, in the present day, the theatre has far from an immoral effect upon the people. On the contrary, in almost

all plays of the present day, some great moral principle is actually inculcated, and every thing in the shape of indecency almost entirely exploded, profaneness wholly. As to what you say of the motions and gestures of dancers, I must refer you to your own condemnation of exquisite sensibility. *Honi soit qui mal y pense!* A man's mind must, indeed, be singularly prone to evil, if he can feel any in the action of a dancer as displayed upon our stage. No well constituted mind would ever dream of evil in such case, it would see no more than was meant to be displayed—graceful agility. You say rightly, that what is applauded upon the stage would not be tolerated in private society. But this, Sir, is no proof at all. As regards young women, no exhibition that puts them forward to be gazed at individually is approved, it is not their designation; and, though they dance for their amusement, there would be no object in the display that creates wonder upon the stage! I presume your remarks apply solely to women, and that you even would not imagine any indecency in men dancing. Yet they, in private society, exhibit even less than women. I conclude, therefore, there must be other reasons against it than its immorality. In answer to your ingenious supposition of a sovereign, whose courtiers frequented with democrats and jacobins, (p. 241), we deny altogether that the theatre is, as you

would infer, a mere lecture-room for immorality and irreligion, or in any way necessarily evil. It is simply a place of public amusement, consequently a place of public resort. And it were rather hard to deny an innocent enjoyment to the good, merely because the wicked happen to enjoy it also, especially where it almost invariably happens, that should any community of feeling be excited, it will be a conformity of the wicked to the good, not of the good to the wicked, the exciting cause being horror of an evil, or approbation of a generous or virtuous sentiment. In page 248, you return to the charge with something much more like an argument. It is, in fact, one of those redoubts which we must mask, as we certainly cannot storm it. It rests upon the certain existence of evil. You say "the profession of an actress is allowed to be unfavourable to the religious principles of a female," and ask from thence, "whether it is consistent with Christian benevolence to encourage it?" Certainly to the abstract question, I must, as a Christian, answer—no! but then I must also answer no, to a thousand and one other questions of the same sort, which might as easily be framed¹; and when

¹ Whilst actually copying these letters for the press, I have received from, I presume, a pre-eminently real Christian, a whole sheet (*foolscap*) full of texts, proving, in the most orthodox (I beg pardon, *scriptural*) manner, and quite as strongly as you

I had retreated thus step by step from every thing in which a shadow of evil could be imagined, I should have the satisfaction of finding that I had been walking backwards round a circle, or into greater evils than those I had been fleeing from. It is, indeed, in these cases,

“ Dextrum Scylla latus, lævum implacata Charybdis
Obsidet.”

For by this rule, a nation of Quakers would be found, not half-way advanced in self-denials. I answer, then, that the evils you allude to, though undeniable, are by no means necessary consequences, and in the present age, by no means certain consequences. Evil may arise, but so it may and does, just as frequently and certainly in almost all the profes-

prove any of your positions, that we are bound to change our laws and constitution entirely, adopt an Agrarian law, and a division of all property whatsoever, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and an inquisition in certain religious observances. Abolish every national Church, tythes, primogeniture, inequality of ranks, punishment of death *in toto*, and other corporal punishment; fiscal restrictions, and to render illegal alienation of real property for longer than half a century. All this mixed up and standing equally fair with instantaneous abolition of slavery, *coute qu'il coute*, not having the fear of St. Domingo before our eyes, and other things of which you yourself are a strenuous advocate. Which way shall we turn us? Verily legislators have a comfortable responsibility, and “some Christians a comfortable creed!”

sions to which females can betake themselves. Every congregated body of either or both sexes, is liable to the same imputation, but yet the evil is generally distinct from the occupation itself. If there were in the stage itself any thing which made evil a necessary result, or were it the only exposure to which women could be subject, your objection would be worth attending to. But as by the constitution of the world evil must be faced, and some be more, some less exposed to it, let those whose lot it is to be most exposed, meet their trials, as in spite of all our vain endeavours they must do! We encourage not their vices, but their talents, and the exercise we require of those talents is in no way dependent upon their vices for effect, but on the contrary. Female virtue has triumphed even upon the stage, and has met with its due encouragement from frequenters and patrons of the theatre, and I see no good reason why it should be considered as in any peculiar danger. I sincerely believe that the stigma that has been attached to the profession has been more the result of the general heartless profligacy of former ages, than of any thing peculiarly dangerous in the profession itself. Still, however, allowing for popular prejudice, it must be admitted, that there is ample scope for two opinions upon the subject. We accordingly agree, that he who goes to the theatre,

does well ; and he who abstains does well also¹, provided the first goes without violence to his conscience, and the latter stays away, from strict sincerity of feeling. The merit of abstinence in this, or any similar case, must, of course, depend entirely upon faith, that which would be a good deed in one of your opinions, would be valueless in one of mine. If a Catholic eats meat on Friday, he commits a sin ; if you and I do so, we commit none. The Scriptures no where, I believe, either forbid or discourage the use of wine, yet we read of marked commendation bestowed upon the Rechabites for their resistance to a proposal, which, it is not pretended, was in itself sinful, notwithstanding all the abuses which may be charged upon wine, with certainly at least as much justice as those you charge upon the theatre.

To prove us under the title of *nominal Christians*, (p. 245), defective in love of our fellow-creatures, you propose to us a number of questions, amounting simply to this, “ Do you perform every possible duty towards your fellow-creatures in every the most minute circumstance, and in the most delicate cases, with the utmost conceivable perfection ? Because, let me tell you, you ought ! The Scripture

¹ St. Paul, on eating of the heathen sacrifices : be it remembered also, that this apostle alludes to public amusements (the Olympic games) without any thing like censure.

commands all this, and if you fall short of it, you are not real, but only nominal Christians!" Certainly, Sir, at this rate, we are nominal only, very nominal indeed, for we cannot say that we perform half what you enumerate, and which we fully admit to be a correct definition of what the Scripture requires. But, then, if we are only nominal Christians, because we do not perform the whole law in the most perfect manner, those only can properly be called real who do. Where, then, shall we find these paragons, that we may take example? Do you claim this degree of perfection for yourself? If you can, I give you joy; but beware of undoing it by presumption. But if you claim it for a sect, you are at best but the dupe of your own zeal, and probably not merely the dupe, but the tool of hypocrites. As I have before remarked, and may have to remark again, concerning that large portion of your work which fairly comes under the head of preachment, a great, perhaps the greater part, would not only be admissible, but good, did it own itself what it is, and assume the title as well as the style of sermons, proposed as advice and models of self-examination for individual consciences. But when, as in the present instance, it is used to insinuate an imputation upon an entire body of Christians, confounding individuals with the body, and the body with individuals; and when

this imputation is to be made in the form of an odious comparison between these and another party, put forward as an equal body forming a fair contrast, but being in fact no more than a few individuals of high religious pretensions; and more especially, when the individuals of this contrasted party are to be represented as all holding certain peculiar opinions, and it is the evident design to lead the unreflecting reader to confound these peculiar opinions with the perfect practice of Christianity; then I do say such preachment is objectionable in the highest degree.

You next suppose us to make an appeal to the public effects of Christian charity in this country, to shew that Christianity has had its effect upon the public mind at large, and this you would represent as a claim made by us to be considered individually charitable; a claim which not the most vain amongst us would ever think of making upon such grounds. The first effects of the Christian precepts of charity must of course be to induce men to part freely with superfluities for the relief of others, and if they do this, it is so far good. It is certainly no rule that because a man parts freely with superfluities for a particular purpose, that, therefore, he will part with necessaries, or even deprive himself of gratifications, and we have never contended that it is. But still less is it to be pre-

sumed, that because charity has carried him thus far, that, therefore, it will carry him no further, where occasion requires. This were, by reversing the argument, to fall into a still greater absurdity. It is calculated to disgust by overstraining those who really need your counsel; and to distract the weakly amiable who do not need it, and lead them to an improvident and unsatisfactory dispensation of their means, which will not only cause themselves unnecessary privation, but do infinite mischief to the very cause you seek to serve. Let each bear his portion of the burden cheerfully, steadily, and unflinchingly; but let him not gall his shoulder unnecessarily, by seeking to do more, until called upon by special occasion so to do. Privation can only be meritorious where it is requisite, then the submitting to it is an evidence of sincerity. Your doctrine would allow no merit but in a wound necessarily or unnecessarily acquired; no merit to the officer who fights steadily in his ranks, but to him only whose imprudent zeal leads him to dash forward upon every occasion, requisite or not requisite, and expose himself for exposure's sake. Upon a principle something similar, those only are Hindoo saints who perform torture penances, or cast themselves under the car of Jaga-Naut. The rest are only *nominals*. You say that our Saviour, after stating, "that by being kind and courteous to

those who even in the world's opinion have a title to our good offices," (p. 247), we should in vain set up a claim to Christian benevolence, emphatically adds, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." How does He state this, and what does He mean by it? He must mean, that by doing this, and this only, we are not doing all that he requires of us. But then it is implied that a general claim of those who need is not supposed to be included in what the world requires, and what he seeks to effect is, that it should be so included. If we are to take the words quoted, literally, we are constrained to confess our Saviour to have commanded an impossibility, for man on earth cannot be perfect as God in heaven. The command, therefore, can consistently be held to imply no more than a continued endeavour to advance towards the perfections revealed.

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER XI.

CHAP. IV. § 6. 8vo. edit. p. 249.

*Grand radical defect in the system of Nominal Christians—
Neglect of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity.*

SIR,

MY last letter was a disputation with you upon what may be termed our tactics in the war with evil. How far we may, without imprudence, tolerate, what you always appear to forget, its unavoidable presence. We now come a second time to your grand panacea for all our defects, the "*In hoc signo vinces*" of your system. A point of faith, to our imagined deficiency in which, you can trace, as you suppose, the source of all our errors and all our imperfections. But when this supposed deficiency is explained, we must really beg leave to deny the charge as defined in your indictment. Our practical system is not founded in forgetfulness of all or any of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. We do not either deny or forget therein the corruption of human nature, the atonement of

the Christ, or the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit; all these things we learned in our catechism, and have believed from our youth up. The distinction, then, between our religious system, and what you suppose to be true Christianity, if any difference there be, must resolve itself into difference of interpretation.

You begin your argument with not a bad, but by no means new picture of irresolute penitents. Of course, their reformation is incomplete. You pronounce upon it in these words, "The path they are treading is not that which the Gospel has provided for conducting them to true holiness:" (p. 292). But what have you proved? Not that this is not the path that they *should* tread, but that either they do not persevere in treading it, or that they do not commence treading it with sincerity. You have only shewn the irresolution of some, and the original unreality of the repentance of others; not either their ignorance of Christianity, or their forgetfulness of its peculiarities: (p. 252). You then give us a specimen of the advice you suppose us to give to a desponding penitent. Wherein, though it is easy to see that we have not worded it for ourselves, although we might challenge some things which give an unfair aspect of lukewarmness, yet, as intrinsically the advice is most excellent, and in

substance very much what we should give, I hesitate not to adopt it.

You then, by way of contrast, (p. 257), give a specimen of what you say the Scriptures advise under the same circumstances. You begin by saying, "Lay afresh the whole foundation of your religion." But, Sir, suppose, as we take the liberty of supposing, that foundation to have been Jesus the Messiah, how then can your penitent obey you? The commencement of our advice supposes the real and humble penitence of the sinner, it is given to him in this state. He is desponding, we therefore give him comfort in words he is likely to understand. Your two paragraphs are not, as you seem to imagine, contradictions. You have put our advice into the vernacular, a little invidiously, perhaps, your own you express most oracularly, by quotation from Scripture; but this is all the claim it has to being *more scriptural* than ours, essentially they are the same. We do not deny either directly, or indirectly, that we are saved by faith. The word *conditions*, which always appears to excite so much holy horror in your mind, is, as I explained before, solely applied to works of Christian obedience to be performed after primary justification, and which not only by our own Scripture, but by your own numerous quota-

tions from your version, we are commanded to perform, if we would profit by the amnesty, in the first instance so freely accorded to us ¹.

In following you further into the ensuing argument, I am well aware I am committing the trespass of repetition. But the peculiar arrangement of your book has obliged me also in more than this instance to repeat, and to adopt a style and arrangement altogether different to what I myself should have chosen. The whole difference which you so loudly and constantly complain of in the definitions of our respective creeds, is, I conceive, easily reconcileable by attention to Mr. Locke's distinction before alluded to, of primary justification, the being "called into a state of salvation," and the ultimate accomplishment of that salvation. I consequently here again deny your charge, repeated in page 255, that we conceive "that holiness is to be obtained by our own *natural* and *unassisted* efforts." We conceive no such thing. But we do conceive, that grace is not irresistible, and that we may "quench the Spirit;" that we have, in short, to use our own language, free-will. And

¹ As to St. Paul, and his misconstrued word, *works*, you have recommended Cowper to us. Pray read the notes to Southey's *Kehama*, and you may have a better idea of the sort of works the Apostle alludes to, and the sort of ideas he meant to combat.

that, having free-will, we are required to bend that free-will to a humble endeavour to co-operate with the Spirit we presume to invoke, “stedfastly purposing to lead a new life;” and that, if we presume to invoke that Spirit without such stedfast purpose, we shall invoke in vain. The path is cut, the way prepared, the direction post erected. If we believe and enter the gate, we at the same time engage to pursue the path; which, however, would soon be found too difficult for our *unassisted* efforts. Of ourselves, we cannot reach the summit, but we persevere through faith in promised assistance. To whom will this assistance be accorded, to those who cry and strive not, or to those who humbly and faithfully exert themselves as they are bidden to do, not fainting in doubt, though the promised assistance be delayed, but persevering, in faith, that the necessary aid will, in due time, arrive? Yet, Sir, does it follow, that those who thus acknowledge the necessity of their own exertions, who so understand the directions received, must, of necessity also suppose that they could reach the summit without this promised assistance, much more that they could have scaled the mountain ere the path was opened to them? If I understand aright your doctrine throughout, we differ but in language; but here, when you talk so strongly of “resting altogether upon the

operations of the Spirit," (p. 299), in contradistinction to our method, you would give me the idea that you imagined you had nothing to do after entering the gate, but profess, in stated *orthodox* terms, your utter inability to commence the ascent, and allow yourself to be dragged up the precipice, simply taking care to bless every bump you may receive in the course of the operation.

Now what, I pray, do you understand by "cordially embracing the Gospel," is it saying, Lord! Lord! or doing the will of the Father? As you go on to say, "The true Christian knows, *therefore*, that this holiness is not to precede his reconciliation and be its cause, but to follow it and be its effect¹." He knows, according to our creed, and my metaphor, that Christ who opened the gate and made the path, has reconciled to God all those who enter it with sincerity of purpose.—Therefore, that this reconciliation preceded the commencement of his course designed, and without which he could not have had the opportunity of commencing one step of his journey, conse-

¹ This eternal repetition may appear trifling to any one of common sense, but it is really necessary fully to work it out. As, be it remembered, Mr. Wilberforce has not addressed all this to the illuminated, who possibly may, but to us unilluminated, who cannot otherwise understand him.

quently, that his exertions in ascending cannot be the cause of this. But he knows also, that they are designed to be the effect, being the purpose for which he was permitted to enter; and, that, if they are not the effect, the amnesty and promise received and accepted at his entrance are null and void. That if he will not attempt commencing the task he has undertaken, assistance will be looked for in vain. He will remain where he is, at the bottom. He is justified (*i. e.*) accepted into the amnesty, certainly by faith alone, as by faith alone will he seek it. But by faith alone (unless in the wide sense of *fidelity*), he cannot be saved. Nor by his own exertions alone, but "by grace through faith;" that is, by the mercy of God, obtained in the first instance by faith, and secondly, by his own sincere, yet humble endeavours, undertaken and persevered in through the same faith: namely, faith in the promises of God made by his acknowledged Messiah Jesus. Why will you, Mr. Wilberforce, so pertinaciously insist upon imposing upon the imaginations of yourself and others, with high sounding words of mysterious import? Why not, in a matter of argument, drop, at least for the moment, this oracular form of speech, and tell us plainly what you mean? "You are admitted into privileges!" (p. 255). Yes; but do not let your readers mis-

take these privileges! You are here a mortal man as your Saviour was made before you. By his labour, as well as by his blood, was constructed the path you are to pursue, and you must tread it as he trod it, or it is still impracticable. It was rough and difficult to him, and it is your *privilege* to tread it as he left it, with his example before you. That this example may not be deemed illusory, you are required to believe that his incarnation was perfect; that the difficulties were actually overcome by man, different from others, as regards human feelings, instinct, and capabilities of suffering, only in freedom from original sin; but which same freedom will, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, be effected for them, if they will with sincerity invoke it: proving, at the same time, that sincerity, by endeavouring to deserve it, in conformity to the real example afforded them. You must then, to return to my metaphor, undeterred, and unappalled (through faith) by the difficulties before you, actually attempt the ascent for yourself. Its accomplishment were, however, still impossible, did not he who has gained the summit, deign both to encourage and direct, and even positively assist you at your need, that you fall not from slip nor giddiness, while you yourself strive in the ascent. And it will be your privilege to be received by him, when, through his assist-

ance, you shall have accomplished your task. By disobedience man fell from his high estate, and by obedience alone can he regain it. Such are the conditions of the covenant of salvation proclaimed by Jesus the Christ.

You affirm that "it is from neglect of *your* peculiar doctrines of Christianity, that arise the main practical errors of professed Christians:" (p. 256.) From neglect of what peculiar doctrines? The nice distinction between cause and effect? Indeed, I cannot see how this should affect their practice even if they did, as you say, neglect it! They would equally admit all you can say upon the danger and wretchedness of our state having caused the Almighty to send his Son to rescue us. They would not, thereby, deny the guilt of sin, or attempt to reconcile their imperfect practice with the Scripture representations of the perfection they ought to attain, or underrate the gratitude they should manifest to him who not only died but lived for them! The misunderstanding of your peculiarities can never be either cause or effect of the evils complained of; for the error you impute to us should rather have a contrary effect, if any, according even to your own argument in page 323, where you tell us that, "When men are aware of something of difficulty to be effected, they make up their minds to perse-

vere in spite of fatigue and opposition." As for its guilt as a matter of faith, (p. 257), it is really a pity you have not condescended to point out, clearly and definitely, your authority for enforcing your peculiar doctrines as an article of faith.—Where is it said in Scripture that those who do not clearly comprehend these matters just as you have set them down, are not Christians? And whence your right to stigmatise with the epithet *nominal* every Christian whom you imagine to differ from you, even though it be merely in the words of explanation? You really forget yourself, Sir! Your "use of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity" is merely a pompous title going off into what I really can find no other name for than unmeaning rant, (p. 258), charging us indefinitely with an unproved dereliction of Christianity.

"LOOKING UNTO JESUS."—Now, Sir, I would ask you, why is this sentence thus blazoned forth here, and so often in the ensuing pages? It is done clearly for some express purpose, and not all the charity I would wish to feel, or the tenderness with which I would wish to remark upon a harmless rhapsody springing from pure warmth of feeling, will enable me to conceive other purpose than mere stage effect. It must be, and I fear is thus put, for the purpose of exciting enthusiasm in warm-hearted, but weak-headed readers. If so,

whatever may be the prudence of it as a tactician acting as the partisan of your sect, as a Christian teacher, it is not well done. A man who takes upon him the awful and responsible task of writing upon such subjects as those now before us, should disdain—what am I saying!—should never have imagined, or should tremble at having imagined, such tricks; worthy only of a mad or knavish field preacher, whose object it is to work upon the distempered imagination of a mob. But a grave, sober Christian, coolly sitting down to converse in print upon such important subjects with his equals, should not give way even to flights and rhapsodies; for do not suppose it is the heart you touch by them, it is but the imagination, the sickly and distempered sensibilities! Many of a certain class have I seen, who would rave and weep by the hour at this sort of declamation, but whose hearts (*i. e.*) whose reason, if indeed they had any, or whose real feelings and affections, would remain as cased in brass and triple steel.

To proceed:—Your first paragraph, (p. 258), under this head, is no better than a false insinuation against a large majority of the members of the Church of England; for they neither talk of “a composition of duties” nor of “the right of practising little sins.” As to the second paragraph, I must content myself with excepting against any

such expressions as “desperate dreams of Divine benignity,” which surely is to the full as improper a mode of speaking, as any nominal Christian could have adopted. Upon the substance of the paragraph, I could say much on my own part; but as I do not set myself up for a teacher, I must not impugn the popular creed. Suffice it then to say, that I should have hoped one so really pious, as I believe you to be, and who has given so much consideration to these subjects, might have formed some rather worthier notions of the sufferings of the Christ, than “that sin should not go unpunished¹ :” (p. 259). Let it pass, however—for all this is distinct from the inference you wish to draw, and which I wish not to deny. Between this and your summing up, I find nothing very different from ordinary preachment, unless it be in the style and language, which is, as usual, dark and figurative; and in this you seem to repose your chief claim to superiority: but in this you appear to me to mistake your situation. This sort of language, accompanied by a suitably impressive manner, will often do very well to catch the attention of a vulgar audience, for the purpose of taking advantage of

¹ Whoever is curious upon this subject, may find the counter opinion, fully explained, in a little metaphorical work, entitled, *Mithra in the Central World*, p. 130—136.

that attention, to fix in their minds the truisms and explanations you are so capable of giving; but in print it is utterly out of place. Your readers want instruction, not rhapsodies. They can read texts and psalms for themselves; what they seek is explanation and comment. You at last tell us definitely, that "the place held by the *peculiar doctrines* of Christianity, (p. 269), constitutes the grand distinction between nominal and real Christians." Had this been given me as an abstract proposition, I should at once have assented to it; but since you have explained what you mean by "*peculiar doctrines*," I as readily deny it. You mean to say, if we are to believe your own words, that all who think that holiness is the *cause* of reconciliation or justification, are nominal Christians; and those who think it is the *effect*, are real; and this, without any reservation as to whether they, at the same time, confound this reconciliation or justification, with the ultimate salvation of individuals, or not, (indeed, of this matter you appear to have no very clear idea yourself); consequently, you must mean to give it as your opinion, that upon the particular understanding of this proposition, notwithstanding its intricacy, and the weak powers of the bulk of professed Christians for comprehending metaphysical arguments, depends their

reconciliation and justification, and (if they continue in error) their ultimate salvation! Such being your opinion, we can no longer wonder at the great stress you lay upon the necessity of the operations of the Holy Spirit; for it certainly will require a continuous miracle, of no very ambiguous nature, to accomplish the salvation of mankind, if this be really the case. We doubtless have a very different idea of Christianity from this—for we do not presume to think, that the success of the *scheme* of the All-wise, for the re-establishment of the fallen race of man, the incarnation of the Son, the Messiah and Redeemer promised for ages, can depend upon the understanding by man of any such proposition one way or the other. But we do believe in the excellent doctrines, scattered like wheat among the chaff, generally, throughout your book, viz. that sincere religion, pure motives in consequence, and strict morality, in its degree to be judged of by God alone, as concerns individuals, are commanded and required of those who would profit by the atonement of Christ.

If, Sir, I have judged harshly of you in this Letter, may God forgive me; and may he pardon you where you have judged us harshly. What I have said, has been said in sincerity, not seeking to hurt your feelings, but solely to warn your readers

against being ensnared by their own morbid sensibilities. But for them, you never had been troubled with a remark of mine.

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER XII.

CHAP. V. 8vo. edit. p. 272.

*Prevailing inadequate Conceptions of Practical Christianity—
On the Excellence of Christianity in certain important particulars—Argument which results thence in proof of its Divine Origin.*

SIR,

UPON your fifth chapter I have nothing to remark, save that it proceeds in the same strain of assumption and insinuation. As to particulars, I find none that have not been previously observed upon, up to p. 316, in the following chapter.

Chapter vi.—I think, generally, that your fears and deductions are visionary; that you mistake change of language and manner for want of religion. Doubtless, we are far worse than, as reasonable beings, we might be expected to be, with the advantages we enjoy. I say nothing to your general charge and exhortation; but I cannot allow that we have any title to plead want of instruction, or that we are, in fact, ignorant, as you

affirm, of any essential of Christianity. In the days of the eminent reformers you speak of, (p. 293), I firmly believe we were infinitely worse. In what proportion the clergy generally should mingle articles of faith with precepts and doctrines of practice, (p. 296), must remain matter of opinion, and dependent upon circumstances. A parish priest, addressing the same congregation every Sunday, would become intolerably tiresome were he continually to preach upon articles of faith, after he had once made his audience understand what they should believe. He can only recur occasionally to the subject, to keep it in the minds of his flock. For my part, I must do the clergy the justice to say, that in the little preaching it has fallen to my lot to hear, I have not found articles of faith by any means neglected.

Your appeal to novels, as a proof of want of religion in society of the present day, (p. 298), is, in my opinion, far from satisfactory. They are written merely to amuse; and I cannot think them at all proper vehicles for theological or metaphysical discussions, and such seems to be the general opinion. Such subjects, therefore, are usually carefully avoided. If a clergyman be introduced, the author must make him abstain, at all events, from preaching what you would call a *scriptural sermon*, or unless as a satire, as in *Old Mortality*, &c. and

even then with becoming brevity, the thing will not go down. Witness the few experiments that have been tried. The book ceases to be considered as a novel.

What you say, with regard to a certain class of literati, (p. 299), is too true, and very strange it is. But after all it is but a small portion, who would not be noticed but for their power of giving publicity to their opinions. When you complain of those, not infidels themselves, for not discarding a brother philosopher because he is not a Christian, I answer, it would be both absurd and presumptuous so to do. You can scarcely mean to contend, that a Christian is bound to avoid all useful intercourse, showing the charities of life, or an interchange of knowledge, with even an avowed enemy of his faith. You might as well contend, that it were unlawful to trade with infidel countries, or to learn their arts. The very Jews, in the infancy of their establishment, where the professed design was to separate them from other nations, were hardly forbidden this, where the intercourse was unconnected with religious rites. Take courage, Sir, if Christianity be, as we believe it, the will of God, it will be supported, as it has been, through worse times than these. Not one jot nor one tittle either will or can fail! You should consider it a greater triumph, that even infidel

philosophers acknowledge practical Christianity as correct and reasonable, even while they deny its Divine origin, than as a subject of despair, that there should still be infidels.

You allude to an objection against your *system*, as being too strict ; but you really have proposed nothing that can bear the title of a *system*. The very thing I most complain of, that has given me this endless task of repetition, is, that you never will commit yourself to a definition of your opinions, but always shelter yourself under the wording of Scripture, when you ought to expound it. We may, indeed, glean, from the general tone of your book, that in an abstractedly commendable zeal for the theory of Christianity, you would wish, without any attention to the actually existing circumstances of the world, to force its perfections into ordinary, general, and individual practice, in a degree which any man, of common week-day sense, must see that, however desirable, the world is not yet ripe for.

What you call a refutation of the objection, (p. 302), is not even an attempt at refutation. It is, on the contrary, an admission, in part, accompanied by an assertion that you are right, notwithstanding the difficulties you admit.

You profess to be willing to consider *how far* the theory can be reduced to practice, but when it

comes to the point, you fly back to your text ; and if each application in ten thousand varying, nay, incompatible instances, produce not to a fraction the same result, instead of taking a mean, you are for throwing away the whole as imperfect. You forget that the laws of Christianity, like all other general rules, cannot be exactly in the same degree applicable to each varying time and circumstance, all you argue is, that we should be perfect. So we should certainly, if we can ! But we really must descend from this to matter of fact. We are not perfect, neither are you, nor shall we be, can or cannot, while here we remain. It is idle building castles in the air, and arguing upon what might be, if we were exactly contrary to what we are. Here we are, weak sinful men, and to us, such as we are, is the Gospel revelation made, and for us the Christ both lived and died. Shall we then say the mighty "*scheme*" has failed ? Has evil been a second time triumphant, and baffled finally both Creator and Redeemer ! This surely were criminal want of faith ! But no !—“ Christianity, praise be to God, has raised the tone of morals, and amended the standard of public opinion.” It has also corrected the impulses of men ; right now assumes, in the majority, its natural precedence, though alas, it cannot always maintain it, and second thoughts are sometimes worst. Why the progress of moral excel-

lence has been so slow we know not, but it has extended, is extending, and will, we are bound to believe, extend itself. God will protect His own work, and the powers of hell shall not prevail against it.

With regard to this country in particular, if the rest of the Christian world were better than ourselves, then, indeed, there might be some reason for despair. But does humility itself require us to admit this? You yourself confess it is not the fact, though I sadly fear that, despite our boasted Reformation, we are not so much better than other Christian nations, as some will contend for.— Courage, however! let us not find unprofitable fault with what is, nor risk the bursting our boiler or straining our machinery by injudicious endeavours to stop up the safety valves, though the power escaping appear a loss, and though it for the moment may offend our nostrils and partially obscure our sight. In page 316, we come again to a direct attack upon the clergy of the Established Church. It may appear presumptuous in me to say a word in their defence. I may turn to them with a Latin quotation in your style, and say,

“ Neve in *nos* * * * convicia fundere linguæ
 Admirerur eum, vobis quoque digna pudore
 Objicit. —————
 ————— factum defendite vestrum.”

I promised you, however, in a former Letter, argument for argument, assertion for assertion, upon this subject. As usual, you will not come to close quarters, so I must be content to, what sailors call, play at long balls. I will maintain it as a notorious fact against any one, be he radical, be he self-styled evangelical, that the clergy of the present day, are, as a body, as good or better, whether the question regards divinity or morality, or both together, than they, or any other body of men ever were. As for John Wesley and his fellow-labourers, to whom I suppose you to allude in page 318, I give them all due credit.

“ ——— Neque enim benefacta maligne
Detrectare meum est, sed nec communia solus
Occupet.” ———
“ ——— Pars est sua laudis in illis.”

They were in the main good men, and they performed their part. I cannot consent to attribute their success to any superiority in their doctrine or preaching over that of our Church; but to the novelty, and the earnestness of their manner, and to the circumstances of the time when they commenced their labours, a time when want of church room for increased and congregated population, and I am sorry I perhaps must confess a certain degree of laxity in the clergy, not as regards

“*peculiar doctrines,*” but general attention to their business in proportion to its accumulation, had paved their way to success. The austere, the marvellous, and the unintelligible, have always a certain first charm for the vulgar, until familiarity has done its work. These, acting in unison with that universal propensity in nature, from lambs to men, for feeding out of pasture, went far to cause a success, which though apparently hostile, was in fact beneficial to the Church, by giving the required spur to the dormant energies of its ministers. They have been roused, and your taunt upon them in 1829, at least (the date of your edition before me), had been well spared. It had been well spared, even though the pastors of the people, not to create false enthusiasm, and for the sake of being better understood, may give a great portion of their discourses in the changed language of the day, and condescend to explain the difficult and obscure portions of the epistles. Although, instead of wrapping up their subject in mystery, they treat their congregation like reasonable beings, endeavouring to show them that their faith is reasonable, and the practice required of them conducive to their own happiness here, as well as hereafter. Where they preach faith, it is the united faith of their Bibles and their Liturgy; where they preach morality, it is the same morality which both alike

inculcate. They are, as a body, examples of moderation and charity; they attend, as far as circumstances render possible or judicious, to the spiritual and corporeal wants of their parishioners; and if this be not "vital Christianity," heaven help me, for I know not what is, malgre your 400 pages of explanation!

In page 323, you call upon us aloud to proclaim the distinction between God and Baal, as against what you term "the questionable and dangerous policy of endeavouring to soften prejudices against religion, by joining, as far as innocence permits, in the customs and practices of irreligious men."—We agree with you thus far, that we may not do evil that good may follow, and whatever these things may be, however in their own nature innocent, he who does them, thinking them evil, to him they are evil. But we are no where required to relinquish any enjoyment in itself innocent, merely because the wicked also derive pleasure from it, or even heighten apparently their own enjoyment of it, by its abuse. The Baptist, we are told, came with fasting and austerity; humouring the religious prejudices of the Jews, to woo their notice and gain their ear, that he might prepare them for the reality about to be revealed. The Christ himself came "eating and drinking," and not disdaining to mingle with publicans and sinners, that he

might expose the absurdity of those unrealities, of which, had they attended to John, the advanced rays of Divine light would already have shewn them the futility.

Once more, Sir, be comforted as to your, believe me, very unnecessary fears for Christianity. Its influence is "extensively diffused," varying perhaps in form and language, but "not varying matter of substance," from that which you yourself would preach.

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER XIII.

CHAP. VII. § 1. 8vo. edit. p. 328.

Practical hints to various descriptions of Persons.

SIR,

IT is with pain and reluctance that, following you thus from page to page, as the style of your book compels me to do, I find myself under the absolute necessity of adopting a tone of recriminative re-monstrance so uncongenial to the subject of Christianity, and so apparently improper from a younger man of no religious pretensions whatsoever, towards an elder so justly celebrated as yourself. But I have undertaken the task, and must do my duty, fighting you with the weapons of your own choosing; and, if I err in the using of them, I trust every candid reader will admit, that my error is rather on the side of moderation.

You commence your seventh chapter in a tone so extremely arrogant and offensive, and at the same time so absurdly unjust, that it is scarcely

possible to answer you with civility. Be it remembered, that these professed Christians you are speaking of, comprise, at least, four-fifths of the upper classes of the Church of England, clergy as well as laity, indeed, though not ostensibly ; yet the main brunt of your insinuations throughout the book, are directed against that large majority of the clergy who do not conform to what you are pleased to term, *par excellence*, real Christianity ; but which, at best, can only amount to your opinion of the manner in which they should understand, preach, and practise Christianity. I must begin by negating each of your assumptions as you put them, leaving our respective assertions to be judged of from your book, and my remarks upon it in the foregoing Letters.

I affirm, that whatever defects you may have pointed one in our practice, a task unfortunately far from a difficult one, you have proved none in our *religious system*, nor have you proved that we have *other religious system* than that of the Church of England itself. You have not proved us to entertain any “ low idea of the importance of Christianity in general,” nor any “ inadequate conceptions of all, or any, of its leading doctrines ;” nor that the laxity of our observance of its practical system is the effect of any such inadequate conception. Neither, “ more than all,” have you proved

upon us any "grand fundamental misconception of the genius and essential nature of Christianity." The difference between us (a majority of the Church of England) and "true believers," is, therefore, nothing. The difference between us and other true believers, can be no other than trifling, as to be a true believer implies believing in essentials. It can then only be a difference of forms and speculative opinions, and cannot be, and is not, "of the very substance of religion." Our Christianity is Christianity, neither "wanting radical principle," nor "deficient in any grand constituent." It is yourself, Sir, who are deceived by names and high-sounding words, the meaning of which you think it sinful to investigate. Take the beam of prejudice from your own eye, and you may see more clearly to remove whatever may encumber our sight.

You now give us some pages of very good preaching upon self-examination for certain individuals, in accordance with the title of the section. Such individuals as you allude to are certainly to be found, and will do well to attend to your excellent advice. Here you stick to your business, and I have little or no objection to make. But I must say I think you are a little over severe in making it, as you do, a sort of crime to approve of any degree of amendment whatsoever : (p. 333). If

more is expected of elder than of younger people, and more is found, surely, though it may be no great merit, and I wish not to put it forward as any, yet still it is amendment, and, as far as it goes, must be so far good. As for your favourite plan again hinted at here, of requiring society to act the inquisitor upon the belief and secret practice of each and every of its members, where outward decency is observed, I cannot think it desirable ; and you yourself, after a long discussion, admitted as much in a former part of your book. I do not mean that the clergy should not warn generally in their sermons, as indeed they do, or privately, where occasion requires, and opportunity offers, of doing so effectually ; nor that parents should not look to their children, as for the most part they do. But that in society, we should judge charitably of our neighbour, and remain satisfied, at all events, with external decency, because, were we to do otherwise, the ill effects of such inquisition would speedily outweigh the good.

What you say of the actual practice of society, (p. 335), although doubtless it might be proved against too many individuals, is altogether unfair as against society in general, either as a direct charge, or as a representation of its opinions. Parents among us, in general, neither do neglect, nor are indifferent about the morals and religion

of their children, nor do they ever endeavour to screen their partiality under the hypocritical title of charity. It is not uncommon, indeed, to see the most unprincipled and unrepentant profligate, both anxious and watchful to instil into his children the highest principles of religion and virtue.

I cannot quit this paragraph without noticing your expression as against us—“*senseless cant.*”—*Cant!* This is too bad. Did you never hear the old saying, that “those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.” I have carefully avoided this offensive word, nor should I have noticed it even now, but that I think it a good opportunity to define the meaning of the word, in its popular signification, as well as that of the term *saint*, as used ironically. By the term *cant*, then, we mean to express that sort of pompous and wordy declamation, of which you appear so fond, composed for the most part of, perhaps, ill or misapplied texts, and wandering into discursive rhapsodies, where any definite meaning cannot, or cannot without great difficulty, be traced. The word *saint* is used to imply a person whose religion, whether real or unreal, is so strongly tinctured with vanity, as to lead him to obtrude his pretensions ostentatiously or unseasonably in general society; and is intended mainly, not as condemnation of any means by which goodness may be produced, however unnecessary;

but as a reproof for violating the tacit compact of society, and as tending to produce assumption of superiority, recrimination,—in short, for being disagreeable.

Your picture of women is well drawn, and for the most part true. A well merited compliment—“ Sweet lovely woman, thou wast made to temper man ; we should be brutes without thee.” But would not you, Sir, if you could prevail upon women to act upon the letter of your rule, (for in the spirit they for the most part answer their designation well), be destroying a large portion of the reforming charm you would eulogise, and be in danger of giving them, in the eyes of their reprobate husbands, the character alluded to by Burns, when he says jestingly,

“ Ah, gentle dames, it gars me greet
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthened sage advices
The husband frae the wife despises.”

The companion of a man of the world, must be a woman of the world, if she means to preserve her due influence ; and must maintain, as most of our leading females, indeed, do, a far higher character than seems to have entered into your conceptions. They should, indeed, be all you describe ; but this is not enough ; would they accomplish the useful course

that is set before them, they must add to their intrinsic virtues, good taste, tact, and judgment, the results of experience, to be acquired, not by flying from those gaieties which you would represent as snares and temptations, but by encountering and subduing in the ball-room, the evil which would equally assail them, at even greater advantage, in their boudoir. Their principles of religion rendering them watchful against danger, their purity of mind, almost insensible to its presence, although not the less alive to its actual obtrusion.

Thus, exerting, (as they do) a moral influence over society, checking by their presence, what would be its natural tendency to demoralization, if left to men alone, by offering to the youth of the other sex a charming, and at the same time ennobling mixture of sensual and intellectual enjoyment, in lieu of that debasing sensuality, in which it would otherwise take refuge from ennui¹; affording, at the same time, recreation and experience to their daughters, shewing an object for the cultivation of graces and accomplishments, but checking an over valuation of them, and gradually and safely inuring their faculties to meet and conquer those trials to which all must be more or less exposed,

¹ As good food, with temperance, enables the body to pursue its daily labours, and resist infection, so does religion with the mind. But intemperance in either case is weakness.

expanding their minds, and fitting them for that extended sphere of usefulness to which they may be destined.

That vanity and frivolity, in some degree, pollute the saloons of fashion, it were idle to deny. Alas, where will they not intrude; is the very Church sacred from them. But to the proof—the fact! Is there more vanity, jealousy, and real dissipation to be found in the balls and parties of the leading circles of society, than round the tea-table of a country town? Are the leaders of female *ton* remarkable only for arrogance and vanity? I do most positively deny it, and affirm that, taken as a body, they are as good in private life, and infinitely more useful in public, than the strictest conformity to your rules could render them. And if you imagine that sincere, real, and useful Christianity, is incompatible with a rational participation in the ordinary gaieties of fashionable life, you know little of our women, and underrate sadly the pervading power of the religion you would advocate.

Surely, surely, Sir, we have real sins enough, (p. 338), without being so unmercifully taken to task for an idle word, as if we habitually made a grave boast of the innocence of our youth. If a good-natured old fellow does talk of “innocent young people,” even if mistaken in those to whom he applies the term—What then? He is mistaken,

that's all. The young ones have not believed him, and are neither better nor worse for it ; this really is making a mountain of a molehill. You then go on with some generally good preachment, all I have to object to in which, has already been objected to so often, that farther repetition may well be spared. I will merely remark upon your contrast of "regeneration" and "reformation," that the one, of course, implies perfection, whilst the other, in its popular signification, is indefinite as to its degree, it means no more than amendment. By just as much as the practice of any individual falls short of perfection, by just so much it is imperfect ; and I don't think you will find a nominal among us hardy enough to deny this. Your charge, then, is still one of individual imperfection, and is nothing to the opinions of our portion of the Church.

We now come to p. 348 ; and here, Sir, it is, with renewed regret, an excellent discourse upon *humility* scarcely out of your mouth, that I find you again at your old work of unmeasured abuse and uncharitable assumption. Is nobody to be allowed an opinion but yourself ? and are you not required to form your opinion of others charitably ? You really seem to me to go very near to advocating supererogation ; and I think our Saviour's charge against the Pharisees, in the first part of it, not inapplicable to you. Are you to sit in

judgment, dreaming of the evil that may, in any possible case, arise, and tell us, "this is unlawful" and "that is unlawful?" and are we, if we presume to question your dictum, to be reviled as merely nominal Christians, and if we appeal to Scripture, to be taunted as urging the letter of a bond, and designated as Shylocks? You say you urge us to self-denial, "for Christ's sake:" and may we not question the soundness of your opinion, and seek the authority upon which the act denounced is presumed to be contrary to his injunctions? And if we should happen to come to a contrary conclusion, is it for you to pronounce us false? are we necessarily wrong? and are we required, upon our allegiance, to renounce what we consider innocent, at the first hint of every one who declares himself to be more righteous than ourselves, even if we believe him to be so? Are you inspired? If so, unfold your commission, do the miracles of the apostles, and we will obey you! You are conversant enough in Scripture, and ready enough with texts in general, yet have not brought forward one applicable to your present purpose. Those you have ventured to refer to in your note, being nothing whatever to your purpose. Why you should have omitted St. Paul's stumbling-block, I cannot imagine, unless indeed you found his explanations rather too liberal for you, and more

likely to serve us than yourself. “ Surely, if our opponent be not dead to every sense of ‘ candour and humility,’ ” “ he cannot look his own ” two pages “ in the face, without a blush of shame and indignation¹. ” If you think me too severe, remember, the celebrity of your name has passed your book through seventeen editions ; yet here is your abuse—it is, then, wilful and deliberate. To what lengths of evil and absurdity has this very principle of yours been carried, and carried systematically, in the Church of Rome ! Monachism, anchoritism, fastings, floggings, penances—all for the love of God and Christ’s sake, with all those disgusting details in the *Bibliothèque Chrétienne*, pour *l’Edification de la jeunesse*, so well exposed in the *Quarterly Review*. Don’t tell me here, that I am arguing from the abuse against the use. I ask you where we are to stop, if we once go beyond reason and Scripture ? who is to decide ? We are not to use our reason, forsooth, for fear of being called Shylocks ! Yet I presume somebody must,—and who is this somebody to be ? Indeed, but for these nasty stories about the nuns having been sanctioned by the Catholic hierarchy, I should feel inclined to vote for the old Pope again, as our only refuge from the anarchy of universal suffrage. No

¹ Vide ch. iii. § 2. p. 79.

wonder you should, after this, be anxious to refute the objection, that you make religion a gloomy service; but, in fact, you rather justify than disprove the gloom, (p. 351), in the only sense in which it is used by objectors generally. By gloomy, I should understand austere. It is not that we should deny "calm complacency" to a perfect Christian, if such there be, of your, or any other persuasion; but what we say is, that your system would forbid all, or most, of the innocent gaieties of life, and consequently, would have an air of gloom. You tell us here, that "religion prohibits no amusement or gratification which is really innocent." What more say we? But, Sir, how can you be sure, that from the amusement or gratification you may propose to yourself as innocent, some one else may not find out a possible evil, directly or indirectly resulting? The maxim, that "every thing pleasurable is a sin;" that the very act of being gratified is criminal, has been maintained and acted upon by thousands. You yourself do not always appear to disclaim a kindred idea to this; but if you do, how is the matter to be decided? You answer, "By its being conformable to the spirit of Christianity!" But this is not one step in advance; it is only restating the hypothesis, or, in other words, it is the very matter in dispute! We say many things are conformable, which you deny;

others say many things are, which we deny : others, again, may be found, who say many things are not, which you would allow. If we would really act up to the spirit of Christianity, we must begin by judging charitably of each other ; for Christianity, as you truly say, is a religion of motives. You say, (p. 351), that whatever fatigues body or mind, is not fitted to answer the purpose of recreation ; therefore, it is not allowable. This I reject as a loose maxim. You insert, indeed, the words, “ Instead of refreshing them,” as a sort of saving clause ; but the same thing often does both : they are not so incompatible as you seem to imagine.

Your next maxim, (p. 352), though rather an odd combination of money and thought, viz. “ Whatever consumes more time, money, or thought, than it is expedient (I might say necessary) to allot to mere amusement, can hardly be approved,” &c. I will not deny in the abstract, as a Christian maxim ; but then, this expediency or necessity should rest between the individual’s own conscience and his God, and is not to be pryingly and uncharitably judged of by others. When you say, “ Whatever *must* injure a fellow-creature, can scarcely be suitable recreation for a Christian,” (p. 352), keep to your “ *must*,” and we will allow your maxim as a general one. Although good as it appears, at first sight, it is capable of being drawn

out, like a wire, to an indefinite length : but as far as common sense will carry it, we will not object. This maxim, however, if incautiously admitted without reservation, might, in the hands of a skilful advocate, be made to prove almost every possible recreation ; and the former one almost every, if not every, luxury, a sin.

You next designate our pleasures and amusements as “ frivolous dissipation, and coarse gratifications of sensuality,” (p. 353) : and then, in a sneering tone of exquisite commiseration, exclaim, “ It is no wonder that the nominal Christian (we) should reluctantly give up, one by one, the pleasures of the world, (frivolous dissipation and coarse gratifications of sensuality), because he knows not the delights with which true Christianity (your own opinion) repays those trifling sacrifices.” Here’s a pretty specimen of Christian humility and charitable judgment ! What, you would have us supposed to be contending for frivolous dissipation and coarse gratifications of sensuality, would you, instead of for what we deny to be such ? What are we here to understand by “ the nominal Christian,” him who mistakes the effect for the cause¹ ? *All others, then, are quite free from all disposition to coarse gratifications of sensuality, are they ? I am right glad to hear it !*

¹ Vide Ch. vii. p. 1.

Lastly, we come to the old contrast, (p. 356), newly applied. Formerly, we used to understand these characters to represent the man with and the man without religion. Here, I must suppose they are to represent *your* real and nominal Christian. This, then, means as before, broadly to affirm, that all religion consists in your definition: and yet “you do not insist upon metaphysical niceties! !” Really, Mr. Wilberforce, when I think of the just celebrity of your name as a Christian, reflect upon your numerous good deeds, and the sincere and fervent piety I myself believe you to possess, and then read these passages of your book, it does indeed enforce upon my mind the truth of our weakness and corruption, and give me a lesson upon humility, which makes me tremble, and inclined to exclaim, like Felix, “What is truth?”

Your servant,

OBJECTOR.

To Mr. WILBERFORCE.

LETTER XIV.

CHAP. VII. § 2. 8vo. edit. p. 357.

Practical Hints to various Descriptions of Persons—Advice to some who profess their full assent to the fundamental Doctrines of the Gospel.

SIR,

IN the second section of your seventh chapter I have little to complain of. As general preachment, I fully acquiesce in it, and am happy to find it go far to prove, what I have all along contended for, that the difference in our general opinions of Christianity, is very trifling, and chiefly, if not wholly, confined to language.

You begin, indeed, with your usual assumption, but soon fall into a more intelligible strain. When you talk of people “resolving” to do any thing, (p. 358), we must suppose them to have free will. You certainly add, “through the help of the Spirit;” but we say this also. Indeed, the language you here make use of, is exactly what you found so much fault with us for using upon a former occasion,

when you put the same doctrine into our mouths. Your language here acknowledges the power in man to resolve to do a thing by the help of the Spirit: which should mean, not that any extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit must be necessary to the forming, though it may be to the accomplishment, of his resolution. But you justly observe, that when he has formed his resolution and invoked the aid of the Spirit, that "his work is not then done; and if he so considers it, he will have to begin over again." Let us see! what is the work he has to do? "To strive," you say, "with persevering alacrity, for the acquisition and improvement of every Christian grace." This is all right. Your present distinction between nominal and real, is perfectly intelligible to us, and the only one that is so: we know nothing of "another sort" of either! As to pretences to superior sanctity, we hold that they are never allowable; they would of themselves suffice to desecrate one, who, but for them, would be perfect!

Section 3d, p. 362.—Your third section you address to sceptics and Unitarians. Your dissertation upon "the progress of infidelity," though put in the usual form of insinuation, amounts to a definitive charge against us, as false as it is heavy. "Young men bred up by what we have termed nominal Christians!" (p. 363). Why, Sir, you

have so termed us all, whether laity, or clergy, by whom every young man of condition is educated. “*If* their parents preserve *still more* the customs of better times, they are taught their catechism, &c.” Then a boy being made to learn his catechism, is an exception to the general rule, is it? Now, Sir, will you pretend to tell me that you do not know that it is not an exception? What then shall I say to this little word, “*If*?” When you say that “travelling tends to weaken our nursery prejudices,” if you really mean “nursery prejudices,” it is well; but if this, as is more probable, is meant as a sneer, I deny it. He who has nothing to lose can lose nothing. But if, as is often the case, the germ of real religion be obscured and obstructed by, what may very appropriately be termed nursery prejudices,—the young man sees other Christians than his own countrymen, other forms both of Christian faith and worship than his own; this teaches him toleration, his mind is expanded, and he learns to distinguish genuine Christianity from outward forms, manners, and language; to distinguish the real from the unreal. Those parts of religion which, as you say, are calculated to perplex and offend, are just those which are the common subjects of controversy, therefore can hardly be called essentials, as that which is essential really must, if the religion itself be just, be plain

and reasonable : (p. 364). You say, " our youth know Christianity chiefly by the difficulties it contains." I should say, on the contrary, as indeed you told us in your first chapter, that they too seldom, perhaps, know much about its difficulties. They know it chiefly by the two first articles of the Apostles' creed, and by its moral doctrines, of which reason shews them the propriety, but to which, alas, they are too generally disobedient, because they are weak and thoughtless, and yield to their corrupt passions and inclinations against both reason and acknowledged precept. I do not mean to say, that the case as you have here put it, may not sometimes occur ; nor should I have observed upon it at all, but for the general charge of scepticism endeavoured to be thrown upon us.— You seem to think it necessary to apologise for your extraordinary liberality in condescending to use the name Unitarian, lest it should be thought to be too near Christian. I have always understood that those commonly called Unitarians believe in the Christ, and look for salvation through him only ; indeed, for all I know to the contrary, many of them would assent to all you have written in the book I am now reviewing. I remember no such definite assertion of the divinity as should forbid the possibility. I think with you, that there is a material error in the Unitarian creed ;

but I am aware also, that the distinction between actual divinity and perfect inspiration, is no such broad distinction as to be utterly inexcusable ; and as you say, in page 370, “ We should examine circumspectly on all sides, and abide by that opinion which, on carefully balancing all considerations, appears fairly entitled to our preference.” The advantage of our creed is or should be this, that, “¹ in proportion to the strength of our conviction of the real and essential divinity (Godhead) of the Christ, will naturally be the earnestness of our obedience to his precepts, and attention to his doctrine ; and, in like manner, proportionably as we believe in the reality and perfectness of the incarnation of that Godhead, that as Jesus he was actually, *bonâ fide*, man like ourselves, (original sin only excepted); so will the efficacy of his example, and our confidence in, and sensible comprehension of the possibility of the necessary obedience to those precepts, and imitation of that example, be raised, and strengthened within us !” But notwithstanding, he who believes Jesus to have been merely “ that prophet,” “ Him who should come,” in short, the promised Messiah, giving a different interpretation to the term “ Son of God” cannot with propriety be denied the name

¹ Mithra in the Central World.

of Christian. The advantage you allude to as being possessed by Unitarians in particular, I confess I cannot understand. The faith of the whole Christian world must be founded upon Scripture, and the very fact of so large a majority having determined, that the Scriptures assert the divinity of Christ, of itself proves to my mind, (taking into consideration that it is a point of acknowledged importance, and has been minutely canvassed), that the weight of evidence to be produced from Scripture leans, apparently at all events, to the interpretation put upon it by the majority.

We come next to those you term "half unbelievers," (p. 371), a term which, like "nominal Christians," you would appear to think applicable to all who study and reason for themselves upon religion, unless they should just have the luck not only to adopt your opinions, but to express themselves to a tittle, according to your formula; which, I apprehend, it is at least a thousand to one they will not. Did we all study as you would have us, this class would increase a hundred fold! I am heartily glad to find, in page 373, that you have at last discovered that the darkness of this age is not quite so thick as you before seemed to imagine. I presume I may take it as an admission, that our clergy have not been remiss in literary labours at least, or do you allude merely to the

Tract Society when you extol the cheapness as well as the plainness of the productions ?

Section 4, p. 375.—We are now, Sir, arrived at your last section, which you commence by an appeal to those “ who *really* deserve the name of *true* Christians,” whom you remind of their political importance, which you tell them “ was never more critically exigent than at present.” Now, Sir, upon the two little words—“ *Really*” and “ *True*,” depends the truth or falsehood of this paragraph. If we are to understand these terms as they should be meant, to imply perfect Christians, or sincere Christians ; those who both unfeignedly believe and zealously obey, without reference to peculiar opinions, I grant every word you say. But I fear we shall find these words of yours bearing a very different sense ; and I am not without my fears that the double entendre is not wholly undesigned. When you talk of the admissions of experienced politicians, we are bound to understand you as relating to real Christians in the ordinary received sense. But when we turn to page 376, we learn a different lesson. We are there told of those who “ *really* deserve the appellation of *true* Christians,” that “ their system is that of the national Church,” and “ as their system prevails, in that very proportion the Church itself is strengthened.” These true Christians are limited, then, as regards opinion,

not only to one Church, but to one particular sect or portion of the Church of England. "The charge of singularity must be incurred." They are, then, a small minority of the Church of England; and this single sect, and no others, "can feel zeal for religion, or can be expected to shew devotedness and uniformity in conduct, or perseverance in exertion." Therefore, this sect, *i. e.* that portion of the Church alone, who hold these opinions, whatever they may be, that are alluded to, "*really* deserves the appellation of *true* Christians." Well, Sir, this must be an excellent sect who have thus taken out a patent and secured the monopoly of such valuable titles, it behoves us to consider whom they may be. It has for some time been sufficiently evident, that some one set of people has been alluded to; but you have not until now sufficiently drawn aside the veil, to enable us to decide upon whom these may be. Now, however, by narrowing the field, you have enabled me to hazard a conjecture. By the fruits we may guess at the trees: let us see, then, who they may be supposed to be, who are so complacently, and as regards other Christians, so charitably alluded to. Are they those who are not of your opinion in your *grand distinction*? Certainly not. Who are they, then? What set of people is it that lays claim to representing exclusively the real Church of England, although at

present a minority in that Church? Which talks in high-flown rhapsodies, of faith, grace, original sin, preaching the cross and Christ crucified, washing of regeneration, love, the Lamb, &c. *cum multis aliis*? And which, almost denouncing Christian morality itself under title of works of the law, contends, with a strange sort of consistency, for a Pharisaical observance of sabbaths, and other outward ceremonials? And, moreover, which holds all religious subjects desecrated, if not expressed in language taken by whole sentences from the Bible? Who are these, I ask? Why the self-styled Evangelicals¹! These, originally the Genevan party, beguiled into conformity by their own ambition, and the equivocal wording of our articles, half-deceived, half-hoping to deceive; now, where not still designing puritans, a sort of Creole production from the ultra-superstition of both parties, like lamp-black half fetid, half odorous, from the mingled smoke of tallow and wax,—

¹ It is a common mistake that there is no such thing as a High Church Evangelical. The hybrid not unfrequently exhibits traits of the female parent. The difference is observable in the character of its superstition, which, in this case, receives its colouring a trifle more from Popish mythology; in the other, a trifle more from Judaism. But a strong dash of Calvinism is a never-failing characteristic. And this is supported chiefly by a childish misinterpretation of St. Paul's meaning.

“ Who, bolder e'en than Nimrod, think to rise,
By nonsense heap'd on nonsense, to the skies.”

and, cuckoo like, would shove their foster-brethren from the nest, were it not for those *unscriptural* thorns of reason which happily fence it round. We have it then at last, these are your *real Christians*, whose supremacy, you have, by inuendo, been advocating throughout three-fourths of your book. This is that truly singular set, who as true Christians ought to be, are free, each and every of them, from those vices, weaknesses, follies, and imperfections, so profusely, and, I grieve to say, so justly, charged upon us; and more than free, these, and these alone, possess the talisman which will enable them to keep free. Oh, for a faith that would remove the mountain-barrier so fatally interposed between us; or that this mountain were a Sinai, upon whose table-land we might meet to mingle our hallelujahs! It must not be. The analysis you have given of its composition forbids the hope! Let us but attempt it, and an avalanche of absurdity precipitates us into the ocean of infidelity. We thank you for this analysis, your *grand distinction*; we cannot meet you upon this “narrower than Al Sirat's bridge!” I trust, however, for your sakes as well as ours, that “sincerity” will be “all in all,” and that if you are, as I believe you, sincere, a light may be sent to you as to St. Paul, which

shall turn you from your mistaken zeal, to the more weighty and efficient, and really peculiar, doctrines of Christianity, of which humility and charity are the principles.

At length, Sir, we have finished our contest. If I can claim to have sustained your shock, and fairly broken a lance with you in defence of our opinions, it is all the victory I wish to claim. Think and act upon religion as seems good to you, I'm sure it will be well. We wish not to interfere with you in your own province; but abstain from a war of aggression upon us, and live beloved, honoured, and respected, within your pale, "thinking no evil, believing all, hoping all, enduring all; putting away childish things, remembering that you see but darkly."

With sincere respect,

I have the honour to remain,

Your humble servant,

OBJECTOR.

THE END.





