

REVIEW

OF THE

CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE

METHODISTS AND PRESBYTERIANS

IN

Central Virginia.

By

Henry Buffum D. D.

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REVIEW

Of the Controversy between the Methodists and Presbyterians in Central Virginia.

WE are not advocates of bitter, of ill-intended, or of unnecessary controversy; even on subjects which concern the everlasting welfare of mankind. But the most dangerous principles are often clothed with plausibility and propagated with zeal, and pressed into the unguarded minds of many thousand people. The world is filled with busy, unlearned and heedless multitudes, who are in such cases exposed to deception, unless timely controversy shall awaken them to reflection, and lay before them the evidences of truth and error. While different opinions exist in society, they must come into collision; and by their collision, lights are struck out for the direction of honest minds. It is only when the parties in controversy become blinded by passion,—and when the *just cause* is improperly defended,—that evil can grow out of controversy. When our Saviour and his Apostles undertook the propagation of Christianity, they gained every step by controversy with established systems. When heresy arose in the church, the apostles contended earnestly for the faith which they had delivered to the saints; and they enjoined it on others to follow their example. When popery had long buried gospel truth and liberty under its blinding despotism, it was by strenuous controversy that Luther and Calvin opened so many eyes, and rescued so many captives. Since the Reformation, a

multitude of sects have sprung up among the Protestants, all (except the Atheists) professing something true and good. But many of their systems are so mixed with pernicious principles, yet so bedecked with fair pretences—that unless they had been exposed by controversy, they might have deluded whole nations to their ruin.

We must observe, too, that it is not the notoriously absurd and irreligious systems, which are most dangerous. The common sense of mankind, is in itself a strong barrier against the progress of such systems. Where pernicious principles are mingled and glossed over with much that is good and captivating; then it becomes more especially necessary to lay open the imposing system; or the people may discover, when too late, that deadly poison has been wrought up with the medicine which they have swallowed. If it be justifiable to come forward unprovoked, in opposition to such principles; much more is it a matter of duty to expose them, when their advocates are rushing against other systems on every side, undermining by policy, and battering by violence, every bulwark of truth and liberty which stands in their way. With these introductory observations, we enter upon a historical and argumentative Review, of the controversy now in agitation between the Methodists and Presbyterians, in the central parts of Virginia.

In the spring of 1827, the Presbytery of Lexington resolved to publish a Pastoral Letter to the churches under their care; with the view principally of defending the Presbyterian doctrines and institutions, against the unfair and violent attacks of Methodist preachers. They had for a long time, borne these attacks, without making any general or public defence. The clerical members had, in the pulpit, scarcely ever alluded to Methodist

preachers or their conduct; while these preachers were, in some places, uttering against them, from their pulpits, the most provoking personal invectives. They had seldom, in their sermons, entered on a formal defence of these doctrines, on which Methodist preachers were so often pouring forth brawling torrents of abusive misrepresentation. Nor had they made any public defence of those Presbyterian institutions, relative to the support of the ministry, from which their adversaries were constantly drawing matter of railing accusation. Much less had they shown any disposition, to make unprovoked assaults on Methodism or Methodists.

Encouraged by this patient endurance, some of the Methodist preachers added another instrument to their battering machinery. By means of a certain proselyte, they got up a pamphlet of personal scandal against Presbyterian ministers, elders and people; and dispersed it, underhand, through all parts of the country. The Presbyterians disregarded the statements of the pamphlet, because where the persons, accusing and accused, were known, these statements were perfectly harmless. But they resolved to be silent no longer, after all these measures of hostility had been resorted to, by men who often mingled professions of friendship with a course of conduct which betrayed the most unfriendly intentions. They had the Pastoral Letter prepared; and in October 1827, ordered it to be printed and distributed.

After a suitable introduction, the Letter unfolds in a frank and candid manner, the causes of complaint against the Methodists. It employs no abusive epithets nor railing declamation; but a simple statement of facts, and an undisguised expression of sentiments. "We allude," (says the Letter) to a society, whom as Christians we

would love; but against whom as persevering assailants, we must at length defend ourselves; we mean the Methodists. But we wish you and them to know, that we complain not of any fair arguments which they have used against our doctrines; we complain of the line of policy which they seem to have adopted, which certainly they have too often pursued respecting us." Then the Letter, after specifying the subjects of complaint, continues: "We allude not to these things for the purpose of provoking an open rupture or an angry controversy. Our aim is, if possible, to prevent such a deplorable issue, by a candid exposition of our sentiments. May we not hope that the more liberal and considerate portion of that society, will, when they hear of our wounded feelings, exert a salutary influence on their brethren; and check a course of conduct, which, if continued, must lead to consequences that every good christian should deprecate." Then the Methodists are invited, if they are "resolved to prosecute hostilities," to declare openly their intentions respecting the Presbyterian Church. "If (says the Letter) they candidly declare their intention under a sense of duty, to destroy our church; though we may think their views illiberal, and their measures harsh, we can nevertheless give them credit for honest intentions and fair dealing." After two or three short paragraphs more, the principal of which will be hereafter quoted, the letter proceeds to doctrinal arguments. The reader can from the above extracts, form a correct judgment of the style and spirit in which the Presbytery spoke of the Methodists.

The Methodists are accustomed to assail and to misrepresent the doctrine of God's Decree, including the Decree of Election; the Presbytery therefore, briefly

explained and defended this doctrine. Then they made a few remarks on the Presbyterian custom of supporting the ministry, by pew-rents and subscriptions. This custom is almost a necessary part of the plan of having settled pastors in every congregation, but the Methodist preachers had often taken occasion from it, to revile the Presbyterian clergy as avaricious hirelings. The Methodist plans in relation to the same subject, were by way of self-defence, alluded to, and shown to be as liable to objection as any other; although the Presbyterians had never busied themselves to publish those objections. The salaries of the Methodist preachers were noticed; the defects of their travelling system for the supply of the church were touched on; as were also the burdensome hospitality to which it subjects many members of the church, and the contributions which their rule of collecting money, draws from the poor slaves.

The Presbytery thought proper also to guard their people against the doctrine of sinless perfection in this life; not only because it is an unscriptural and enthusiastic doctrine, but because the Methodist preachers are accustomed to inculcate a perfection of that nature, as necessary to salvation; and to denounce the opposers of it, as advocates of sin. Having argued concisely against that error, they closed the Pastoral Letter with some practical admonitions.

The publication of that Letter, produced a violent explosion among the Methodists. They censured the letter as abusive; they denounced it as false in its charges; they affected to consider it as a malicious and unprovoked attack on a friendly, inoffensive people. From their outcries, a stranger in the country could have supposed that, towards Presbyterians, their lan-

guage had always been charitable, their conduct always fair and liberal. When called on to specify the false and abusive portions of the Letter, they could muster only some three or four small particulars; and even these they had to pick out, from the midst of other expressions, which would enable the candid reader to understand them in a true and justifiable sense. Presently rumours got afloat, that a severe chastisement was to be inflicted on the Presbytery, for that slanderous production. The rumours thickened apace; and about five months after the letter had been published—that is, about the beginning of summer, the long expected publication saw the light. It proved to be “A Reply to the Pastoral Letter of the Lexington Presbytery. By William Monroe.” This pamphlet contained 30 pages, duodecimo. The Reverend author had been preacher of the Augusta and Rockbridge circuit, during the year in which the Pastoral Letter was prepared and published. One reason of his long delay, probably, was, that according to a rule of his church, he submitted the manuscript “Reply” to the Annual Conference of his brethren; who examined, corrected, amended, and approved it. This “Reply” was therefore, in some measure the joint production of the whole Conference though not issued in their name.

If red pepper and green gall are proper to be applied in such cases, then was this “Reply” of Mr Monroe and his conference, a sovereign remedy for the evil of the Pastoral Letter. The subject is introduced by a comment on the sublime scene of an assembly of Divines [the Presbytery,] convened for the purpose of transacting the business of the church, “but (say the Replyers) what sensations must it produce, when on receiving

the Pastoral Address, they [the people of their charge] discover, that after a few hasty and barren remarks on the state of religion among them, they suddenly leave the people of their charge and *break forth in a course of most unchristian and unbecoming abuse on one of their sister churches?*—A very sisterly church it had proved itself, indeed! And because the Presbytery, after long forbearance, had complained of certain things as *unsisterly*; Mr Monroe and the Conference were pleased to consider themselves as horribly abused!—Let us see a few more specimens of the *spirit* of this “Reply.” “I had all along suspected that the *delicacy* with which many of those gentlemen seemed to treat us was *false delicacy*.” Again, “I have no doubt, that these gentlemen begin to suspect, that if *we continue successful* in our labors, it will finally *endanger their craft*.” Here they unwarily slipped out a hint of the species of *success* for which they *labor*.—Again: “Such a plan may indeed exist in the *bewildered brains of these Calvinistic Divines*.”—Once more;—“If so, *sin itself becomes a duty*—and, when they [the Presbyterian clergy] *slander their neighbor*, and increase their wealth *by fraud and oppression*, it will answer the double purpose of gratifying their desires, and preparing them for *their duty*; and I think it not impossible that *this was the principle on which the Presbytery acted*.”

The author and revisers of the Reply, besides pouring out vials of such Gallic acid on the offending Presbytery, undertook also to answer the arguments of the Pastoral Letter. They *replied to very few* of the charges concerning Methodist policy—unless it were by hurling them back, dipt in venom and hissing hot. The principal facts of which the Presbytery complained, they tacitly

admitted to be true--nor indeed was it possible to deny them, without denying what thousands in the country had witnessed.—The “Reply” was, however, received with great satisfaction by the Methodists.

Immediately on its appearance, “A Presbyterian,” wrote off and put to press in a few days, “a Letter to the Methodists of Central Virginia, concerning William Monroe’s Reply to a Pastoral Letter of the Lexington Presbytery.” Having been composed hastily, under the first excitement of Mr Monroe’s Reply; this Letter to the Methodists contained, as might be expected, some rather tart expressions. A subsequent Methodist writer has pointed out the following, to prove the offensive spirit of the Letter. The “Presbyterian” observed that when the Pastoral Letter appeared “a general explosion of wrath was heard among you”—the Methodists. Mr Monroe “has come forth, brimful of wrath.” “The distinguishing trait of your religion is, you know, a hot and noisy enthusiasm;”—that is, the Methodist religion is so distinguished from the Presbyterian. One may, easily perceive, that such expressions breathe rather a spirit of good humoured ridicule, than of heart-burning spite, like those above quoted from the “Reply.”

The “Letter to the Methodists” goes over the whole ground of the Reply to the *charges* and *arguments* of the Pastoral Letter. It leaves the truth of the *charges*, or complaints about Methodist conduct, to the judgment of the public, who are acquainted with the facts; and it marks how Mr Monroe attempted to evade or retort them. Whether all was done satisfactorily to the candid reader, we need not say—let such readers speak for themselves.

On the publication of this Letter, the stormy clamour

against the pastoral Letter, sunk at once—and there was a dead calm in the Methodist Society. Now and then, indeed a low murmur was heard; indicating that the vexed billows still chafed a little, although the tempest had blown over: on the whole, however, there was a sweet serenity in the religious atmosphere; and the gentle accents of peace and brotherly love, were heard from the Methodist pulpit. The Presbyterians began to hope that a new era had arrived—that the “money-preachers—the fraudulent oppressors of the poor”—the “Calvinistic Divines”—might be, at last, suffered to live and to labour in peace; and might receive from the Methodist preachers, if not brotherly kindness, at least some decent respect. But the controversy was not to be given up so easily. The “Presbyterian” had been provoked to strike on a place where the Methodist itinerant system is exceedingly sore, and cannot be touched without feeling great pain and taking high offence. He exposed the arbitrary power of the travelling clergy, and the dangerous tendency of their ecclesiastical system and policy. This was not to be endured; so about the beginning of winter, a second Methodist writer entered the field of controversy, with a pamphlet of 64 small pages, entitled “Review of the Pastoral Letter of the Presbytery of Lexington, Virginia, and also of a Letter in answer to a piece written by the Rev. William Monroe. From the Holston Messenger, Edited by Thomas Stringfield, Knoxville, Tennessee.” The author, we understand, was formerly a presiding elder in the travelling connexion; but seems to have located himself at Knoxville, as editor of a little Magazine called “The Holston Messenger.” The Pastoral Letter having been republished in the Calvinistic Magazine, printed at Rogersville, Tennessee the Reverend Editor

of this Holston Messenger, made a Review of it in his little periodical. Few copies of that review having been seen in Central Virginia, it was unnoticed by the Presbyterians; and would soon have been forgotten, had not the Letter to the Methodists called the Editor to a new and more laboured effort. He reviewed that also; and having put both reviews together in a separate pamphlet, under the title aforesaid, he gave it into the hands of his travelling brethren to disperse through Tennessee, middle Virginia, and we know not where else.

In temper and spirit, Mr Stringfield's production is milder than Mr Monroe's. A few pinches of wormwood are thrown here and there into the composition; but were the author as accurate in his assertions, as he is moderate in style—and had he not put in one or two scraps of personal scandal, against Presbyterian clergymen—scraps gathered and circulated, we apprehend, by his itinerant brethren—were he not thus defective in accuracy, and somewhat given to tale-bearing, we would say that he has offered us, if not a strong, yet almost a genteel defence of his cause. He labours chiefly at a vindication of Methodist government and policy. His review of the doctrinal arguments of the Letter to the Methodists, is extremely defective; touching only here and there, and then with all the little artifices of a caviller hard-run—as we shall hereafter prove.

Having reviewed the origin and progress of the controversy; we shall next take a view of the principal matters which have been introduced into the publications on both sides—especially the arguments *pro.* and *con.* relative to the doctrines and institutions and policy, of the respective churches. We desire the reader to have all

the publications in hand, for reference, as we proceed: but as this will in most cases be impracticable, we shall quote arguments and assertions, so fully, in the words of the authors, that the reader will have the whole subject before him in a plain and accurate shape. No answer having been published to the Methodist Review; we shall examine every thing of consequence in the whole compass of that production. Matters of vital importance to the religious and *civil* interests of the country, are at stake. We wish the public generally to understand the true grounds and merits of the controversy. They will then feel its importance.

The most important subjects in controversy are the DOCTRINE of *God's decree*, including the decree of *Election*; and the GOVERNMENT and POLICY of the Methodist church. Our first object is to review the doctrinal arguments. But here we are suddenly arrested by the outcry of the Methodist writers, against the Presbyterian clergy, for *concealing* some parts of the Calvinistic system in their sermons and writings. Mr Monroe urges the charge of concealment in these terms: "It is not a little strange, *that* while those Reverend Divines have such unbounded confidence in the evangelical purity of the Predestinarian doctrines, *that* they should so generally in their pulpits *endeavor to conceal* the prominent features in the Calvinian system, and preach, or *seem to preach*, the doctrines of free grace and general redemption!" The "Presbyterian" noticed this charge, and remarked that the doctrines of *free grace* [grace freely offered to all] and of general redemption [redemption for all believers whomsoever] were prominent parts of the Presbyterian system, long before Methodism came into the world—and he referred the question to the public,

whether Presbyterian or Methodist preachers, more frequently preached those parts of the Bible which speak of Divine Decrees, Election, Predestination, &c. and whether Methodist preachers were *ever* content to introduce those Predestinarian texts to the notice of their hearers, in *the simple language of inspiration*; or whether they *always* took care to clothe them with Wesley's and Clarke's criticisms, "lest the naked scripture should look too much like Calvinism." Here was a fair proposal to leave this Methodist charge against Presbyterians to the public judgment. But the Knoxville Reviewer was by no means satisfied. He charges the "Presbyterian" with practicing the same *concealment* in this very proposal, because he did not distinctly name the doctrine of Reprobation. He had in his preceding review of the Pastoral Letter, pressed home this same charge on the Presbytery, because they did not name *Reprobation* in conjunction with Election. See how vehemently he pushes the charge. "Why do they so carefully *conceal* one half of their *doctrine of decrees*? Why leave out the decree of REPROBATION? Is it because they are ashamed to acknowledge frankly and openly, that the doctrine of election as embraced by them, includes that of "reprobation to damnation and wrath, for the praise" of God's "most holy justice?" The reviewer seems, by the marks affixed to this last clause, to quote the words of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. But he does not quote correctly as a reviewer ought to do—especially when urging a charge of *concealment*. He ought not to have *concealed* the true features of the doctrine in question, by a garbled quotation. This charge of concealment is a favorite stratagem of the Methodist preachers. Fletcher, in his

sophistical "Checks," first taught them how to set this trap for the unwary. Various cunning contrivances are employed to give it effect. The most horrible notions of Calvinistic reprobation are busily propagated. Sometimes they print the word REPROBATION in capital letters, to make it look big and terrible. When Presbyterian Ministers in their pulpits, contend for their peculiar doctrines, and expose the absurdity of Arminian notions,—they are represented as seeking a controversy, and making an attack on the Methodists. When they do not frequently preach on *decrees*, &c. then they *conceal* them through shame or fear; and preach, not Presbyterian, but *Methodist* doctrine—or *seem* to preach what they do not sincerely believe. If they state their Calvinistic doctrine, in a form less revolting than suits the purpose of their adversaries—then they do not "understand their own doctrine," "they leave their confession of Faith," and "come over to Arminian ground"—as the Knoxville reviewer has condescended to inform us in his review.

Reprobation being so pleasant a theme of Methodist declamation, and so capital a part of their *exhibitions* against Presbyterians; we shall prove that what is so commonly presented under that name, is a doctrinal hobgoblin, conjured up for sectarian purposes; and that Methodist preachers have no objection to the doctrine, when it is fairly represented.

The Presbyterian Confession of Faith never uses the words *reprobate* or *reprobation*; all that it contains relative to the non-elect part of mankind, is summarily comprehended in the following extracts; which we shall first set down, and then defend them from misrepresen-

tation, by a few remarks. We boldly head them with the title of

CALVINISTIC REPROBATION.

1. "*The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth and withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth; for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures—to pass by, and to ordain to dishonor and wrath for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice.*" Conf. Chap. iii, Sec. 9.

2. "Others not elected, although *they may be called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the spirit*, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore they cannot be saved." Ch. x, Sec. 4.

3. "All the elect, and they only, are effectually called; although others may be, and often are, called by the ministry of the word, and have some common operations of the spirit; who for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered them, being justly left in their unbelief, do never truly come to Christ." Larger Catechism, Quest. 63.

To these we add another for explanation: "God hath endued the will of man with that *natural liberty*, which is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good or evil." Chap. ix.

Taking all these passages together, as they ought to be taken; we find the following points of doctrine clearly taught.

2. God gives to all men (especially where the Gospel is preached) a "day of grace." To the non-elect, as well as to others, he offers salvation through Christ—affords them opportunity to accept it—and draws them by the

convincing and persuasive influences of his spirit.—What more do the Methodists allow him to do, for the salvation of any man? The non-elect have according to Presbyterian doctrine, as much *liberty* and *opportunity to be saved*, and as much *grace* and *help* from God, as the Methodist allow even to the very elect.

2. The reason why the non-elect are not saved, is, that after all which God does for them, they *will not* truly come to Christ—they resist the Holy Ghost, neglect and despise the offered grace, and of their own free will, persevere in their wickedness and impenitency. Therefore God gives them up to their hearts lusts, to their chosen uncleanness, to their own delusions, to hardness of heart, &c. according to the scriptures; which represent the reprobation of such persons in stronger terms, than the Confession has used: See Gen. vi, 3. Psalm, lxxxi, 12 Rom. i, 24, 28. John xii, 40, and 2 Thess. ii, 10, 12.

3. Such persons God was pleased to pass by, and ordain to dishonor and wrath *for their sins*, and for nothing else. Whosoever denies that God has ordained to punish those who refuse the offers of the gospel, and die impenitent, (and such only are calvinistic reprobates) is a Universalist—or something worse.

4. But God has not ordained to punish even those self-destroyers, to gratify a cruel disposition. He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but he designs to *glorify his justice*, as the righteous sovereign of the universe.

5. Yet, being infinitely wise and powerful, he *could* convert, and often does convert the most obstinate sin-

ners; though it were as hard, as for "a camel to go through the eye of a needle." "Nothing is impossible with him." Read Matthew xix, 24—26. Why he was not pleased to make his grace *effectual* in every sinner, belongs to "the unsearchable counsel of his own will." Rom. xi, 33. Eph. i, 11. But, with respect to sinners, "he extendeth or withholdeth mercy" according to his sovereign pleasure. "As a potter hath power over the clay, so he hath power to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor." The confession of faith, in reference to God's sovereignty, only borrows the inspired language of Paul, Rom. ix, 7—22. They who object to it, contend not against the Confession of Faith, but against the word of God himself. God has bestowed grace on all men—but he has not seen fit so to work in all men that they choose to work out their own salvation. Philippians ii, 12, 13.

Here then are the several parts, and the total amount of the Presbyterian doctrine of Reprobation. The three first particulars are the only essential parts of the doctrine. The two last might be omitted, without changing the nature of the doctrine; which contains in brief, these three points. 1. God gives all men a day of grace. 2. Some resist the spirit, despise the offer, and will not come to Christ. 3. God has passed them by and ordained them to punishment for their sins. Now compare the following statement of METHODIST REPROBATION, according to one of the Tracts which the travelling preachers sell for sound doctrine. "*God predestinates, or fore-appoints, all disobedient unbelievers to damnation, not without, but according to his fore-knowledge of all their works, from the foundation of the world.*" This, though more rudely

expressed, is in substance the Presbyterian doctrine; for when God ordained those who reject his mercy, to dishonor and wrath "*for their sins*;"—it was "*not without but according to his fore-knowledge of all their works.*" So the Methodist preachers have really no objection to Calvinistic Reprobation. They profess substantially the same doctrine. How is it then? Have the Presbyterians stolen the Methodist doctrine, that they are so vociferously charged with concealing it? But they held it in its present form long before Methodism existed. May we not rather say that the Methodists have filched the genuine doctrine out of sight, and put forth in its stead a spurious monster to scare people, and to have something to exclaim against; while they *conceal* the true cause of their hostility against Calvinism?

Election by grace, is the real object of that hostility. With respect to the non-elect, there is no material difference between the Calvinist, and the moderate Arminian. But Presbyterians, while they allow as much grace to all men, as the Methodists allow to any, believe in a *special* grace, which converts and saves the innumerable "*host of God's elect.*" Here lies the real difference of the two doctrinal systems, relative to the divine plan of salvation. According to the Presbyterian system, God does *a great deal more* for the salvation of sinners than Methodists are willing to admit. *Special* converting grace, is grace upon grace; it is victorious abounding grace. It goes beyond *common* grace. It conquers sin by efficacious power; it delivers captive souls from the dominion of Satan; it secures to Christ a satisfactory reward for his sufferings; it fills the mansions which Christ went to prepare for all his people; it

forms happy heirs for the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. John xiv, 2. Matt. xxv, 34. All these effects of special grace are so much *clear gain* on the side of mercy and salvation. But the Methodist preachers will not believe, that grace is so glorious in its power, so decisive in its effects. They limit divine mercy to the uncertain effects of *common* grace—such as the ungodly perish with—such as *secures* not one convert to the gospel, nor one heir to the kingdom of Jesus.

They are accustomed to contend against the doctrine of salvation by special grace, on the ground of some difficulties which they have raised from the doctrine of God's eternal decree; which, as they would make out, leaves the non-elect no choice but to sin and perish.—But this supposition of theirs is contrary to the very terms and substance of the Presbyterian doctrine. The doctrine is, that the non-elect *have* the free choice of life or death; and the *common* grace of God in their souls; until they banish it from them by their perverseness. God decreed that they *should have* all this, and it is only because he knew that, after all, they *would not* truly come to Christ, that he ordained them to wrath for their sins. Whosoever, in the wide world, makes a better choice—yields to grace—and seeks salvation on gospel terms, is not *passed by*, but is ordained to eternal life. It is true that none whom God has passed by, do, in fact, choose life on gospel terms; and it would be absurd to suppose they should; because in that case God's "fore-knowledge of all their works" would be falsified and deceived.

But the Methodist preachers refer to the doctrine of God's decree in general; "God has foreordained *whatsoever* comes to pass;" which, say, they, renders it impos-

sible for a reprobate to choose otherwise than he does choose, or to obtain salvation on any terms. But let it be observed (1) that God, according to the Confession of Faith, has so ordained all things, as to secure to every man the natural liberty of his will; (2) that God foreordained the actions of free agents in the way of *permission*, according to his *foreknowledge* of what they would do, without any violation of their moral agency; (3) that foreknowledge produces the very difficulty, and foreknowledge alone produces it, which the Methodists erroneously impute to the Divine Decree; and (4) that the Decree of Reprobation (if we must use the term) is one thing, and the foreordination of human *actions* another. The doctrine of reprobation *does not* deny to reprobates a free choice of life or death; it affirms that they *have* the choice, and the common grace of God besides--and *no hindrance*, except their own perverse will. If this be inconsistent with *another* doctrine, then let that other doctrine answer for its own sins, if it have any; but let the doctrine of reprobation be tried by itself, and answer only for what properly and necessarily belongs to it. What belongs to it, is found in the above extracts from the Confession of Faith: in which, extracts, when rightly interpreted, even a Methodist can find nothing very different from his own doctrine. We shall hereafter consider the other doctrine, on which the difficulty here alluded to, is built; and we shall undertake to show that the Methodist ideas of the subject, instead of removing the difficulty, only pile other difficulties upon it, like "Alps on Alps in wild confusion hurled."

ELECTION.

Having vindicated the Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation, from the ignorant, or the artful, cavils of its Methodist opponents; we proceed now to the doctrine of election, a subject on which there is a real and important difference of opinion. The argument of the Pastoral Letter is simple and concise; but of so stubborn a character, that the Methodist writers have been driven by it, to the most pitiable shifts of evasion and absurdity. The main part of it is thus expressed:

“The argument seems to be condensed into a very narrow space by the question of the Apostle Paul.—Who maketh thee to differ? Or what hast thou which thou hast not received? Or in other words, the whole argument seems to resolve itself into this question.—Whether the real efficient power of converting sinners be in God or in creatures? If God converts the sinner, we presume it will be admitted that he knew beforehand, or that he knew and determined from all eternity, whom he would convert; and this would constitute the doctrine of Election.”

Mr Monroe began his “Reply” to this part of the Letter, by disputing that Paul in the question, “who maketh thee to differ,” had any reference to the doctrine of Election. He might have saved himself the trouble of criticising that question; for the Presbytery did not introduce it in proof of election; but merely as a convenient form of the question on which their argument turns. Hence the “Presbyterian” passes over this superfluous criticism of Mr Monroe, without notice.

Mr Monroe, when he came to the *argument* of the Presbytery, began in this manner: “As to the real efficient

power of converting sinners being in God, and in him alone, it has never been either questioned or doubted of among the Methodists." Here was, *in words*, a fair admission of the main point. "But (said he, in continuation,) if by God's determining from all eternity whom he would convert, they mean that he *determined absolutely and unconditionally*, whom he would convert, we do not admit the position." Here he first began to dispute the position of the Presbytery; and here the "Presbyterian" began to take him up in the following manner. "He objects not to an eternal determination, provided it be not absolute but conditional. Such a conditional determination is absurd. Take a particular sinner, say Paul; God either always knew that he would convert Paul; or he knew it not. There is no middle in this case, between knowing and not knowing a thing. If God did know it, then he had determined to convert Paul; he had determined it positively and unchangeably; for how could *he know* that he would, without having determined whether he would or not? If God did not always know that he would convert Paul, then he had no determination about it; for if he had determined the matter, he must have known it." The Methodist reviewer, in looking over the Letter to the Methodists, selected this as the only tangible part of it, in relation to the doctrine of Election. We extract the principal part of his strictures, interspersing a few remarks to show their futility. He begins with the pretence that the "Presbyterian" misconstrued Mr Monroe's language. "It is manifest that he [Monroe] uses the terms "absolute" and "unconditional," *not as opposed to any hesitancy or want of decision in the Divine mind.*"

The reviewer begins his criticism on language very unfortunately ; he *meant* the very contrary of what his words express. If Mr Monroe's terms are not opposed to the idea of *hesitancy* in the Divine mind, the Presbyterian was right. He would have said, had he not been bewildered, that Mr Monroe did not use the terms "absolutely" &c. to signify that God hesitates or wants decision of mind—"but (continues the Reviewer) to embrace that doctrine of the Presbyterians *quoted from their Confession of Faith*, which represents the Almighty as having determined to convert and save the elect without any foresight of faith, &c. *as conditions*." But Mr Monroe did *not quote* or refer to the confession, to illustrate his meaning, when he denied that God had "*determined absolutely and unconditionally*," nor according to the plain grammatical construction of his words, could he have meant to *admit* any thing more than *conditional* determinations, respecting the conversion of sinners. "The Letter writer however (says the reviewer) gives Mr Monroe's words another meaning, attributing to him an *opinion* that there is an uncertainty in the Divine foreknowledge." The reviewer is mistaken again: the Letter-writer indeed *proved*, that conditional determinations are *inconsistent* with certain foreknowledge ; but he attributed no such *opinion* to Mr Monroe who is surely not the first Methodist writer that has been convicted of holding inconsistent opinions. But it happens, that Mr Monroe did favor the idea of uncertain or defective foreknowledge in God, where he said in a subsequent part of his Reply; "Our opponents can never carry out their views on *Infinite Foreknowledge* without destroying the Infinite harmony of the perfections of God."

The reviewer attempts to answer the "Presbyterian's" argument as well as to correct his pretended *misconstruction*. His answer is substantially comprised in this sentence. "We grant that God always knew that he would convert Paul; but the question is, Did God always know that he would convert Paul *unconditionally*? That is without a foresight of *faith*, &c. as *conditions* of his salvation." Here the reviewer confounds two things wholly distinct: he imagines that because *faith*, &c. are conditions of *salvation*, they must also be conditions of *conversion*. But conversion is no less a *condition* of salvation than *faith*. Therefore, if faith be a condition of conversion, it is a *condition* of a *condition* of *salvation*. He thinks to escape the absurdity, which the Presbyterian pointed out in Mr Monroe's notion, by shifting the condition from the *determination* to convert, to the *conversion* itself. He thinks there is no absurdity in supposing that God *absolutely* determined to convert Paul *conditionally*! But he ends the argument, by denying that God ever *determined* any thing, either absolutely or conditionally! We shall hereafter expose these absurdities more fully. At present, we add only this observation, that no candid reader can peruse Paul's account of his conversion, and believe that God waited for Paul to exercise faith before he proceeded to convert him. While the unbelieving Paul was raging against the church,—God struck him down by a miracle—Christ appeared to him at the same time in a miraculous manner, and spoke to him; Paul immediately inquired with all the submission of a true convert, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do." God soon after directed Ananias to go to Paul, and say to him, "The God of our fathers hath

chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will and see that just one [Jesus,] and hear the voice of his mouth."

This obviously refers to Paul's vision of Christ at his conversion. Acts xxii, 14. God had chosen him to receive that *special* grace. The Apostle declares (Gal. i, 15.) that God had *set him apart* from his birth, and called him by *his* grace, when he was pleased to reveal his Son in him. See also Acts ix, 14. Yet the reviewer will have it, that God converted Paul on condition that Paul first exercised *faith*!

Mr Monroe and his Conference, having denied that God "determined absolutely, &c." proceeded to make another exception.—"When they [the Presbytery] say, 'This willingness to receive the Gospel, or to apply to God for his sanctifying grace, is the beginning of religion and nothing but the sovereign grace of God does, or can, give it. If by the sovereign grace of God they mean, an immediate irresistible act of grace, we are opposed to the sentiment.'" On this the "Presbyterian" remarked—"Some of our old writers used the term *irresistible*, to distinguish that act of God's efficient power," by which the sinner is converted. It does no violence to the mind, but delivers the heart from bondage; it does not force the sinner, but *creates him anew* in Christ Jesus. Mr Monroe has admitted that the "efficient power of converting sinners is in God alone." That efficient power is, I presume a power that *effects*, decides, and brings to pass, the conversion of the sinner. If not, what is it? Mr Monroe keeps clear of the points; he only tells us it is not irresistible grace, or in other words, it is not "efficient power."

Here was a fair occasion for the reviewer to explain

what the Methodists mean, when they say that the efficient power of converting sinners is in God alone. But he would not explain. Like Mr Monroe, he in general terms, ascribes conversion to God, yet when they come to exhibit their theory of conversion, they leave the efficient power of God entirely out of view. Mr Monroe having denied irresistible grace, next lays down his doctrine of conversion, in the following terms.

“We believe that (not independently) but by Initial Grace, the human will is free, and also that Christ is “the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “that the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal,” and that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men;” and that *it is thus* that man is constituted a moral agent, and properly accountable for his actions; and when the Gospel is preached to him, in the demonstration of the Spirit, we believe he has power to receive or reject it; and that God has predetermined to convert those that receive the gospel and yield to its authority, and that he has predetermined to leave those unconverted, who reject the gospel.” This is the whole statement of the Methodist doctrine of conversion, according to Mr Monroe and his Conference. We shall copy out the argument of the “Presbyterian,” on this doctrine, because it goes to the very core of the subject.

“He (Mr Monroe) next proceeds to tell us what he allows to God in the conversion of sinners, and a curious piece of doctrine he makes of it. He does in fact, ascribe the conversion of the sinner to himself. He ascribes all to the sinner except two things. The first

is "initial grace," by which the will is made free, and man is constituted a moral agent; and the second is the preaching of the gospel, in what he calls "demonstration of the Spirit." This last phrase is put in merely for a blind. It cannot mean here what Paul meant by it, namely, miracles in proof of the gospel. Nor can it mean any influence of the Holy Spirit, which decides the sinner's conversion, or works on the impressed hearers more than on the rest; for the only effect which he ascribes both to his initial grace, and to the demonstration of the Spirit, is that the sinner is thereby enabled "to receive or reject the gospel." It amounts to nothing more, after all, than constituting man a moral agent; so that he can choose, whether he will "receive or reject the gospel,"

Then he says, "God has predetermined to convert those who *receive* the gospel and *yield* to its influence." *Now if that change of mind which is expressed by receiving and yielding to the influence of the gospel be not conversion;—what is conversion?* If there be any sense in Mr Monroe's language, it must signify that God predetermined to convert the sinner, after he had converted himself. And so, this is Mr Monroe's "efficient converting power of God!" It is exercised as much on the unconverted, as on the converted. According to this system, God's efficient power and grace do nothing in effect for man, but to constitute him a moral agent with power to receive or reject; and to reveal the gospel for moral agents to preach or not, as they may happen to choose.

He says, "It is thus (by initial grace) that man is con-

stituted a moral agent, and properly accountable for his actions." Well, what would fallen man be by *nature*, without this initial grace? Depraved, no doubt, with base passions and a perverse will, like a natural brute beast; but not accountable for his actions,—that is, not a sinner, not liable to guilt and punishment. On these principles, it is *grace* that makes man a sinner. The only sure and universal effect of grace is, to make man guilty, and to expose him to eternal misery. This initial grace does not take away our depravity, it only renders us accountable for it. Now after grace brings man into this guilty and miserable condition, it leaves him (according to Mr Monroe) to work his way out by moral agency, if he will; but it does not bring him out. It does not secure the recovery of a single sinner whom it has made guilty; but lets multitudes sink to hell, in the depravity for which it has made them accountable. Paul says, "By grace are ye *saved*." Your writer is authorized by his principles to say, "By grace are ye *damned*, by yourselves are ye *saved*."

So thoroughly did the "Presbyterian" dissect and expose the Methodist doctrine! He presented two points, on which it stood in grievous need of the reviewer's helping hand. The first was that to *receive and yield to the influence of the gospel, is conversion*. Here the reviewer was the more specially called on for explanation; because his own theory of conversion is substantially the same with Mr Monroe's, which was in such danger of appearing to be an absurdity. The second point was, that, by the Methodist principle of initial grace, it is *grace that makes man a sinner*. The reviewer ought

certainly to have brought some relief to this doctrine of initial grace; when it came within a hair's breadth, or nigher, of being proved a most impious and detestable doctrine. But no: in relation to all those passages of the Letter to the Methodists, he is as mute as a mouse. He adopted an easier device, than to meet the 'tug' of those arguments. If he could not refute, he could assert. When he came to that part of the Presbyterian's Letter, which relates to Election and conversion, he said—"The writer before us takes no notice of Mr Monroe's principal arguments, but fixes on a few remarks which he misconstrues; and availing himself of that misconception, fancies himself the conqueror." We have seen the only *misconstruction* which the reviewer *fixes on* for proof; we have seen all Mr Monroe's arguments on Election, and the Presbyterian's answer—except the Methodist writer's *affirmation*, that God's decrees are inconsistent with moral agency, which although it did not properly belong to the subject of Election, the Presbyterian also took up and showed by a plain argument to be a groundless affirmation. All those main parts of his argument, the reviewer slyly covered from his reader's sight with the broad mantle of the assertion aforesaid. He is a right cunning reviewer.

CONDITIONAL CONVERSION.

By means of this, the Methodist writers have attempted to evade the argument of the Pastoral Letter, in support of Election. Mr Stringfield exhibits the same theory as Mr Monroe, but has put it into a more distinct form. The following quotations from his Review, embrace all the ideas of that theory, which he has chosen

to express—except what he has said in relation to man's will. That subject will come to hand after a while.

“We allow that God knew from all eternity whom he would convert, foreseeing at the same time *the reason why* he would convert them,—namely their *compliance with the terms of the gospel.*” The Methodists believe that God converts no sinner, but *on condition of repentance and faith.*” “What, absurd for God to determine to convert none, but *on condition* of their embracing the Saviour by *faith!* Does God determine to convert sinners on any other ground?” “We believe that God foresaw from eternity whom he would convert; but he foresaw at the same time, *as a reason why* he would convert them, their *compliance with the terms of salvation.*”

Here we have it in plain terms, that God converts no sinner, but *on the condition*, and *for the reason*, that the sinner first have *faith and repentance.* When a thing is to be done conditionally; the condition must be first performed, or it is no condition at all. So, according to the Methodist doctrine, God requires the sinner to believe and repent, beforehand; and then after the sinner has complied with the condition, God performs his part, and converts the sinner by efficient power. The sinner's faith and repentance must also be of the genuine saving kind, before God will convert him; for the reviewer calls them “conditions of salvation.” They cannot be a DEAD faith, and a mere *legal* repentance, or conviction of sin; for many have this kind, whom God never converts.

Now we shall undertake to prove this doctrine to be utterly unscriptural and absurd. We shall demon-

strate that God converts sinners by giving them faith and repentance; and that the exercise of faith and repentance is conversion.

1. Faith and Repentance are the gift of God. Eph. ii, 8. "By grace are ye saved, through *faith*; and that *not of yourselves*, it is *the gift of God*." 1 Cor. iii, 5—7. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos; but ministers by whom *ye believed*, even as *the Lord gave to every man*. I have planted, and Apollos watered; but *God gave the increase, &c.*" John i, 12, 13. "The sons of God—who *believe* on his name,—were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God*." Acts xi, 18.—"Then hath God also unto the Gentiles *granted repentance unto life*." 2 Tim. ii, 24—26. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle towards all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if *God, peradventure, will give them repentance* to the acknowledging of the truth; that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are led captive by him at his will."

We might quote more to the same purpose; but these texts are amply sufficient, to satisfy those who are willing to abide by the plain language of Scripture.—They teach us, that man's saving faith is not of himself; but is the gift of God—that when ministers of the gospel preach, "God giveth the increase;" converts believe, according as, "God gave to every man;" and if an opposer of the preached gospel, be at any time brought to acknowledge the truth, that is, to *believe*; it is because *God giveth him the repentance*, by which he is enabled to

recover himself from the snare of the devil, to whom he was a willing captive.

So, if faith and repentance be conditions of conversion, God himself bestows them; and of course chooses those on whom he will bestow them. If God choose the sinners, on whom he will bestow faith and repentance; the Presbyterian doctrine stands on as firm ground as ever. God still chooses whom he will convert, by choosing on whom he will bestow *the conditions* of conversion. Unless the Methodists can show, on what *condition* God bestows the conditions of conversion; they are just where they were. Does God give *faith* and *repentance conditionally*? If so, it must be *on this condition*, that the sinner *attend* to the gospel, with a *heart open* to conviction. Can there be any other *condition* of believing the gospel? Well; even this *open-hearted* attention to the gospel, is ascribed to God; as in the case of Lydia, "*whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things spoken by Paul,*" and in consequence she believed. Acts xvi, 14, 15. So when, on one occasion, the Apostles preached; it is said, "*divers were hardened, and believed not.*" Acts xix, 9. But on another occasion, it is said, "*a great number believed.*" How does the inspired writer account for this successful preaching? why, "*The hand [or power] of the Lord was with them,*" who preached. Hence it was, that "*a great number believed.*" Acts xi, 21. Yet the others who "*believed not,*" had the same gospel preached to them. How was the hand of the Lord exerted on the great number who believed? Surely, as it was on Lydia; he opened their hearts, or else, like the others, they

would have remained “hardened” in the enmity of their carnal minds, and voluntarily “blinded” by the “God of this world.” See Rom. viii, 7, and 2 Cor. iv, 4. Until God take away that wilful enmity and blindness, and open the heart to conviction; carnal men, we fear, will never “receive the word in an honest and good heart;” but will, as so many do, harden themselves and believe not. When the gospel is preached, it sounds in vain, till “God giveth the increase.” So he that planteth, and he that watereth, are nothing; it is God’s efficient power,—his ‘hand’—that makes the seed of the word take root and grow.

2. God converts sinners by giving them faith and repentance. Conversion signifies *turning*. So when God sent Paul to convert the Gentiles, he sent him to *turn* them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Acts xxvi, 18.

Faith is, in Scripture, sometimes said to be “in God”—sometimes “in Christ”—and sometimes “in the Gospel.” It is said, also, to “work by love,” and to be “with the heart unto righteousness.” Gal. v, 6, and Rom. x, 10. True faith is, therefore, such a view of God, of Christ and of the Gospel; as excites the sinner’s love, and turns the heart to righteousness. Faith without love, and without turning to righteousness, is *dead*,—and availeth not to salvation. He who receives the truth in love, and out of love, turns to righteousness; has the witness in himself that he is a true believer. The spirit of God beareth witness with his own spirit or conscience. His conscience testifies that he does affectionately *turn* to scriptural righteousness; and the Holy Spirit, speaking

in the Gospel, (and no other way,) testifies that he is, therefore, a child of God, a true convert to Jesus Christ. In the very exercise of faith, then, a sinner is converted.

So repentance, which arises out of faith, is such a view of the evil of sin, of the excellence of the violated law, and of the mercy of God in Christ; as produces godly sorrow, and turns the sinner from his sins to God.—Godly sorrow *alone* is not repentance; it “worketh repentance unto salvation,”—2 Cor. vii, 10. Without turning from sin—that is, without conversion, there is no evangelical repentance. It is not till conversion takes place, that true repentance gives any evidence of its existence. When a sinner *turns heartily* to the Lord, then he has the exercise, and the *evidence* of true repentance.

Thus faith, repentance, and conversion, are inseparably connected, as branches of the same root; and thus we see, why the Bible promises salvation, indifferently, either to faith, repentance, or conversion; sometimes mentioning one and sometimes another, *as the condition of salvation*. God has promised salvation to every one that believes, repents, or turns to the Lord; because these three things are *in principle* the same, and always exist together. But God has not *promised conversion, on any condition whatever*. He requires it of all sinners, as a *duty*, and he bestows it on some of the disobedient, as a *grace*; but, whatever he may foretel of his future operations, he gives no *promise* of conversion to any sinner, on any terms or conditions. Therefore, if God convert the sinner, he does it *unconditionally*; first choosing the person, then bestowing the grace, ac-

according to the counsel of his own will. This is the plain doctrine of scripture.

But the Methodist writers have turned it wrong end foremost, and upside down.—Where the sinner needs divine grace, to open his prejudiced understanding, and to regenerate his carnal heart, that he may believe the gospel; there they leave him to get faith and love, whenever his blind heart of enmity may choose. But when the sinner has done the work, and of his own will, turned his unwilling soul to God;—then, they say, God comes with his efficient power and turns him!—Thus too, in their hurry to drive away from Calvinistic Election, they have run foul of their own favorite Free Will. After the sinner has faith and repentance—that is, after he hates his sins, and loves God—discerns his danger and his remedy—feels his misery, and longs for deliverance—as every believer does;—if he still need divine power to convert him,—he cannot have the power of a free agent. No man can be called a moral agent, who needs a divine impulse to make him shun what he hates, seek what he loves, and exert himself according to the views of his own understanding. Yet if God convert the sinner, *only for the reason, and on the condition*, that the sinner first believe and repent;—the divine power must be exerted simply for this: namely, to *push the sinner's will* into action, after the sinner has got all that a *moral agent* needs for his conversion.

According to our doctrine, God converts by efficient power—“yet so (to use the language of our confession) as thereby no violence is offered to the will of the creature.” He converts, not by compulsion on the will, but

by effectual inward teaching, and teaching never violates liberty, or else there could be no teaching among free agents. What the sinner needs for his conversion, is not a power to choose—God gave him that by nature;—but deliverance from the wilful blindness, and enmity, of his carnal mind. While he voluntarily blinds himself, by his passions and prejudices, he “receives the grace of God in vain;”—he hears the gospel without faith, and consequently without benefit. He hardens his heart, and stiffens his neck, against all the means that can be employed for his conviction, till God, by a regenerating influence, “opens his heart,” so that gospel truth gains admission to his understanding, and with the light of its evidence and beauty, shews him his delusion, his guilt, his danger, his remedy, his peace and his exceeding great reward. Thus “taught of God,” he, of his own free will—though it may be after much struggling with his lusts—cometh unto Christ, that he may have life. See John vi, 44, 45. Now what has God the Father done, to draw the sinner to Christ? Forced his will? no: he has taught him the truth, convinced his rational understanding, and gained the affections of his heart. Instead of destroying his moral powers, he has rectified them. We understand not how the divine teacher operates, but we believe that when he undertakes the work of moral regeneration, he has wisdom sufficient to do it *effectually*.

We observe further, that while the Methodist preachers do, in their theory of conversion, ascribe the whole work to the sinner’s own will, under the preaching of the gospel; they do, in their prayers, most palpably contradict

what they preach and write upon this subject. They petition God to convert sinners, to open their eyes, and melt their hearts,—to give his word a saving power,—to give this and that obstinate sinner, repentance, faith, &c. What do they mean by such petitions? Do they mock God? Or do they really expect him to do according to their prayers? If they do pray according to their faith, then they are Calvinists in heart, whatever they be in theory. In fact, they cannot pray according to their *creed*, without shocking the feelings of every pious hearer. We have, in two or three instances, heard them pray *consistently* with their preaching, and we desired never to hear such prayers again. It is by a happy inconsistency between the workings of the brain in controversy, and the workings of the heart in devotion, that we account for the amiable piety of many opposers of those truths of scripture which they call Calvinism. After all, it is not real Calvinism, which they oppose, but a spurious sort of doctrine, an imaginary Calvinism, which Arminians have got up for sectarian purposes, and which well-instructed Calvinists have always disowned.

The Pastoral Letter, after stating the argument on election, makes the following observations. “But perhaps some may attempt to evade the argument, by saying that God has revealed his word, and offered his sanctifying grace to the world, and that the sinner who is willing to accept the offer, shall be saved. To this statement we fully agree. But this does not change the ground of the argument; the question still returns, who makes the sinner willing to accept those offers? That all men are not willing to receive the gospel, when preached to

them, is matter of constant and lamentable experience. This willingness to receive the gospel, and to apply to God for his sanctifying grace, is the beginning of religion; and nothing but the sovereign grace of God, does or can give it. Will it then be asked; If God converts sinners, why does he not convert all sinners? This is a question which it behooves all Christians, *who pray for converting grace*, to answer as much as us. But we cannot answer it."

The Holston reviewer quotes the whole passage, and in his remarks on it, has resorted to the usual Arminian string of absurd and frivolous evasions. We shall quote the leading ideas, which he has put forth on the occasion. Relative to the question, why God does not convert all sinners, he remarks;—"The aptness of all they have said on this subject, is founded on the supposition that mankind have *no power of volition*, but such as is produced by the irresistible impulse of regenerating grace."

Could not the reviewer discern, that a sinner may have a power of volition, or a *will*; and yet be obstinately unwilling to receive the Gospel? Does not every man know, that such is the fact? And do not Methodists pray for converting grace, in behalf of such unwilling sinners? Is there, indeed, no aptness in the question, why does not God convert all such sinners;—except on the supposition, that they have no natural power of volition? His phrase about the "irresistible impulse of regenerating grace,"—is intended to express the Calvinistic doctrine of conversion;—but he evidently misunderstands that doctrine; as our remarks on that subject have shown.—He then gives, what he calls "the ration-

al view of the subject.”—“Mankind have power, as easily to *use* or *abuse* the saving grace of God, as they have power to *use* or *abuse* medicine, for the cure of bodily diseases.—The reviewer imagines, or pretends, all along, that he is arguing against men who deny that sinners, have a *will*; and who deny that sinners can *use*, if they will, and *abuse* if they will, whatever God has put within reach of their hands. But he ought to have known, that the Presbytery not only asserted the moral agency of man, in other places; but in the very passage before him, every sentence implies that sinners exercise choice in their conduct. Now we ask, of what benefit is the power of either using or abusing medicine, to a patient who does not believe that he is sick—or rather, who *loves* his disease; loathes the medicine; and has no confidence in the only physician who can heal him? Will his power to use or abuse, save him from perishing in his beloved disease? And does not the reviewer pray the great physician, to come and heal this deluded patient, without waiting for the obstinate creature to apply for the medicine? And if the physician do not apply the needed remedy according to his petition: does he never think of inquiring—why not?—In fact the sinner’s disease consists in that very unwillingness of heart. That unwillingness is the thing that needs to be cured. Take that away—let the sinner’s enmity against God, and his love of sin, be removed—and he is healed. Yet this sagacious reviewer will have regenerating grace to be unnecessary, because the sinner has the *power of volition*!

He says, “The answer” to the question, “why God

does not convert all sinners, is plain.”—How then does the reviewer answer it? Thus, gentle reader;—“Because some sinners receive the grace of God in vain!!” Verily, we are much instructed by the answer! But suppose we were to put the question in this form: why does not God, with whom nothing is impossible, *make his grace prevail with all sinners?* We doubt the sage answer from Knoxville, would scarcely do in this case. Moreover, although the reviewer acknowledges, in words, that *God converts sinners*; yet his answer only signifies that all sinners do not convert themselves.

There is a main question, in the above passage of the pastoral Letter, which the reviewer, and Mr Monroe and his conference, have all evaded. “*Who makes sinners willing to accept the offers of the Gospel?*” We do most vehemently desire a clear and direct answer to that question. If God makes them willing: then why does he not make all willing? If man makes them willing, then how is it that God converts them?—We beg for information.

Once more; the reviewer says, “There is nothing in the philosophy of the human mind, nor in the system of Bible theology which contradicts the theory, *that man can govern his WILL*, as well as his reasoning powers and affections.” Ah! can this philosophical theologian govern his *will*? If so, he has found out a secret. Instead of acting, as other people do, according to his will; he has discovered how to make his will act according to him. Common people can do nothing, but what they *will* to do; and they know not how to make their *wills* go any other way, than just as *they will*. But we see what this theological philosopher is driving at. He

would make out, that a sinner, in the gall and bitterness of his God-hating mind, may *convert himself*—simply by giving the word of command to his *will*. But we have two doubts on the subject; (1) whether the sinner, while he hates God, would willingly command his will to turn him to God; and (2) whether if he should command it, his *will* would be willing to obey him.

DIVINE DETERMINATIONS.

In the arguments on Election, the Pastoral letter says, “If God converts the sinner; we presume it will be admitted that he knew before hand, or that *he knew and determined* from all eternity, whom he would convert.” Mr Monroe admitted, that God might determine *conditionally*. But the Tennessee reviewer, finding even conditional determinations in the Divine mind, to be incompatible with Methodist doctrines: boldly aimed a blow at the root, and denied that the Supreme Mind has any determinations at all. Lest this should seem incredible, we shall quote his own words:—“As to divine determinations, purposes, &c. we would say that God, possessing every possible perfection, can never be in danger of doing wrong. His own adorable attributes are a sufficient directory in all his ways. There is, therefore, no necessity that he should make any decrees, or determinations, respecting himself or his conduct; such decrees being entirely useless.” Here is a notable discovery! Because the Deity has every possible perfection;—therefore he determines nothing,—he has no *will*! A determination is merely an act of the will; and a will which comes to no determination, is a

nullity. But, says the reviewer, "His own adorable attributes are a sufficient directory in all his ways." But can any rational being imagine, that *attributes* may direct an agent, who has no will, or determination to act? Some things hardly admit of being proved; because there is nothing more evident by which to prove them: and some propositions can hardly be refuted; because the absurdity of them is so astounding, that we are almost struck dumb with amazement. We shall add no more than this—that a man who can deliberately believe an intelligent being to act, without any purpose or determination to act; may bid defiance to all his opponents. He has soared far above the reach of argument.

But let us hear him again:—"The very circumstance of an agent's binding himself to act in a marked out course, is occasioned by the supposition that he may possibly change: violate his promise, and disappoint others, either from want of integrity or knowledge. But God is unchangeably good and wise, there is therefore no necessity that he should bind himself to pursue any course whatever."—Christians! Here is another discovery for your comfort and edification! When God made you "great and precious promises," he did not bind, or pledge himself, to pursue towards you any course whatever. And when he "confirmed his promise by an oath," that was not (as the apostle vainly supposed) "to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel" in order that they might have strong consolation." Far from it; for "the very circumstance of an agent's binding himself, is occasioned by the supposition that he may possibly *change*, violate his promise, and

disappoint others." So, Christians, if you adopt the reviewer's sentiments, you will beware how you trust securely in your Creator's oath and promise. See Heb. vi, 17, 18. Once more, hear him: "Certainly if God can do any thing, without being bound by an immutable determination to do so, he can foresee that he will do it." Which is, being interpreted; If God can do any thing without having *decided* whether to do it or not, then certainly--aye, then *certainly*—he can *foresee* that he *will do it!!*

The reviewer lays great stress on the idea that if an agent determine his own actions, he *binds* himself; from which the reviewer would infer that the agent is not *free*, being *bound*. But we common people have a notion, that an agent's freedom consists in this very thing, that he determines his own conduct. The reviewer admits the Divine Foreknowledge, while he denies that God determined the course of conduct, which he foresaw that he would pursue. Now, since God cannot deceive his own foresight, he is as much *bound* to pursue his foreseen course of action, as if he had decreed it:--nay more;—if he has not determined it for himself, then a *fate* superior to his own will has determined for him: for *determined* it certainly is; since God cannot vary from it, without deceiving his foreknowledge--which is impossible. This heathenish sort of *fatalism*, is the necessary consequence of separating God's decrees from his foreknowledge.—No human ingenuity can rescue the Methodist doctrine from this fatalism. Nothing but the admission that God foreordained his own acts, can avoid the heathen notion of a *fate* superior to the will of God; unless we fly to

Doctor Adam Clarke's theory, that God foresees nothing as certainly coming to pass.

To close this part of the discussion; we refer to the Holy Scriptures, which abound with texts that speak of God's counsels, purposes, decrees, determinations, &c. respecting his own future conduct, and the events that should come to pass under his government. Have the Methodist writers never read, how God "hath chosen" his people "before the foundation of the world;" and "predestinated them," "according to his eternal purpose;" "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will;" which counsel "determined before what was to be done?" All these things are affirmed, word for word in Eph. i, 4, 11 and ii, 11; Acts iv, 28, and ii, 23. We ask the reader to peruse those texts in connexion.

Not only does the argument of the Pastoral Letter on Election stand unshaken; but the absurd opinions, and miserable shifts, to which it has driven its opponents, must convince impartial readers, that the Presbyterian doctrine of election is built on immoveable foundations of reason and scripture.

We are now prepared to review the arguments on the
 DIVINE DECREES IN GENERAL.

The Pastoral Letter thus exhibits the ground work of its argument. "By Divine Decrees we simply mean that plan, which the infinite wisdom of God had in view, when he created the world. We trust it will not be said, that when God created the world he had no plan in view. We believe that no rational being ever undertook any important work without a plan. There was

some end to be answered, some purpose to be accomplished, some consequence to be effected, by every important work, that was ever undertaken by any rational being; and of course, to deny that God had a plan in view when he created the world, would seem not only to deny his possession of infinite wisdom, but even of common rationality. Now this plan is the Divine Decrees; and the only question which remains is, whether God had sufficient wisdom and power to execute his plan; or whether his plan has been defeated. If defeated; when and by whom was it done? Was it defeated by the first introduction of sin and misery into the world? But upon this supposition, every subsequent scene of sin and misery brought into the world, was another defeat. If the plans of God have been so repeatedly defeated, since the creation of the world—how may these defeats be multiplied in the infinite course of our future existence? Is not the supposition dishonorable to God? Does it not unsettle our confidence in the management of his affairs, and destroy all the hopes of the Christian? Does it not, in fact, render every thing unsafe, both on earth and in heaven?"

"We believe that man is a moral agent; that his will is free; that the offers of the gospel are freely made to him. We are in fact willing to carry the free will, or moral agency, of man as far as it can be carried, without defeating the counsels, or violating the plans of God; and further we cannot consent to go. Moral agency will doubtless exist in heaven. If it can break the plans of God, it can break his promises; so that the Christian is not only uncertain of reaching heaven; but should he ar-

rive at that happy world, he must be uncertain of his continuance there."

"When we use the expression that God decrees sin; we simply mean that God determines to permit sin to exist, as a part of his plan."

Such are the leading ideas of the arugment. Mr Monroe, in his reply, caught at the last expressions quoted; and framed his opposing argument, as follows: "Here I take my stand, and venture to assert--that God would not execute the plan which they have described, for they tell us that "He determined to admit the existence of sin as a part of his plan." Now here is a part of his plan which he could not execute; for it is expressly declared in scripture, that God cannot lie: not that he wants the natural ability, but because lying is sin, and the infinite purity of his nature places him at an infinite distance from sin of every kind."

To this the "Presbyterian" answered: "Had the Presbytery said, that the plan of God admitted of sin in God himself, Mr Monroe's argument would apply. But he could not understand them to mean any other sin, than the sin of creatures. Mr Monroe's argument is wide of the mark, unless sin in creatures be sin in God; for, otherwise, it is nothing to the purpose to say that, because God is holy, therefore he could not, in his scheme of providence, admit the existence of sin among his creatures. Now we know, that in the actual course of his Providence, *he does admit the existence* of all the sin that takes place. We say that his actual Providence, is according to the scheme which he had in view at the creation. If Mr Monroe had met the point fairly, he would have admit-

ted this, or denied it explicitly. He takes his stand on the assertion, that God "could not execute a plan, which admits the existence of sin among his creatures." If he believe that God had any plan, scheme, counsel or design, when he created the world; he has affirmed that *God was defeated*; for whether God intended to admit the existence of sin or not, sin exists."

Next Mr Monroe seized hold of the admission, that Moral agency will exist in heaven; and attempted to frame a "sad dilemma,"—thus; "they conclude that if moral agency can break the decrees,—then the abuse of that agency in heaven might subject them [the saints] to an expulsion from that happy place ; but if the Divine Decree secure their continuance there, they are free from danger whatever use they may make of the moral agency. Here then they have involved the Almighty in a sad dilemma; for it is fully evident that nothing but the abuse of their agency could endanger their continuance in heaven, and if the decree of God secures their continuance there, while they are liable to abuse their agency, then they may breed disturbance among the angels, assail the first born sons of light, and invade the throne of God, and there is no redress, and this is the legitimate conclusion to which their premises conduct us." To this dilemma, Mr Monroe adds a doctrine, which he recommends, that will appear in the following extracts from the "Presbyterian's" answer to the dilemma.

"The whole ground of this argument is, that if moral agency exist in heaven, the decree or grace of God cannot prevent the abuse of it; if the saints in heaven be moral agents at all, they must be liable to abuse

their agency. This opinion about moral agency Mr Monroe must intend either to ascribe to the Presbytery or to profess for himself. He surely cannot mean to ascribe it to the Presbytery; for the notion that a saint may sin in heaven, contrary to the purpose and grace of God, is the very notion which they mainly oppose in their argument. He must therefore mean to declare it as his own view of the subject; and it is perfectly conformable to all the ideas of moral agency, which he has expressed in his Reply. Then he does, in the fullest sense admit, all the consequences which the Presbytery ascribe to the doctrine, that the counsels and promises of God may be frustrated by the moral agency of creatures. Mr Monroe acknowledges, in substance, that "every thing is insecure both on earth and in heaven."

"But unable to look his own frightful conclusion full in the face; or wishing to veil its horrid features from the notice of his readers; he desperately plunges into the very jaws of Calvinism. He exhorts us "to seek by faith and prayer, that assimilation to the Divine likeness, which will cause us to aspire continually after deeper and closer communion with God, until we pass the vale of death; and then bind us in voluntary and delightful allegiance to the eternal throne, and make it our element to plunge deeper and deeper in the Godhead's boundless sea."

"If my poor intellect comprehends the meaning of this rhapsody, it signifies--that the *likeness of God*, or a holy character, once obtained, will *insure* our growth in grace, while we live; and after death, will *insure* our eternal allegiance to God. This doctrine he re-

commends, as much better than Calvinism! The bewildered man! It is Calvinism—with *one exception*. Calvinism ascribes our perseverance, here and hereafter, to the promise and grace of God: Mr M. ascribes no part of the saint's security to God; but assigns the saint's own goodness, and that gotten solely by his own seeking, as the *cause* of the whole effect."

"But lest, finding so much Calvinism in his doctrine of perseverance, he should start off some other way again; we must hedge him up on all sides."

"You will not deny, that Mr Monroe either *does* believe, or *does not* believe, that they who possess the Divine likeness, will infallibly persevere in holiness forever."

"Let us suppose, first, that he *does* believe it. Then what becomes of his argument, that the saints in heaven are "liable to abuse their agency?" And why does he argue at all, against the security of the saints?"

"Moreover, he must believe there is some *cause* of this infallible perseverance of saints. He clearly assigns their assimilation to the Divine likeness," as that which "will *cause* them to aspire continually, &c." Let me ask you, whether Adam and Eve had not, at first, as perfect an assimilation to God, as any of their fallen children have on earth? And whether the angels had not all, at first, as perfect a likeness to God, as any saint will have in heaven? Yet our first parents fell on earth, and many angels fell from heaven. Can that same likeness to God, be, of itself an infallible security, or a sure cause of perseverance, when the most perfect creatures on earth and in heaven, have found it insufficient to secure them? What other cause will Mr Monroe assign? Moral agent

cy? He says it is liable to be abused; as it certainly is when left to itself. What else, brethren? Where shall we go for a cause of the saints' perseverance, either on earth or in heaven? Why not go to our Father in heaven and acknowledge that He, and He only, is the great and sufficient cause of the perseverance of saints? But he has not caused all his *holy* creatures to persevere.-- We cannot rely on his mere ability to secure us: we must see a promise; that is, we must know that he not only *can*, but *will* secure us, moral agency and all; in a word, we must know that he has unchangeably *decreed* our eternal perseverance."

"Here, methinks, I see some of you start back with horror exclaiming, *Calvinism!*"

"Let us then suppose, in the second place, that Mr Monroe does not believe in the infallible perseverance of saints, either here or hereafter. In that case, he does in the fullest sense admit, that no one is secure either on earth or in heaven; God's most absolute promises and most anxious care, insure no one's happiness. I hope, then, that for consistency, and for truth's sake, Mr Monroe will never more declare against the honor of his Maker, that the saints have God's promise of *Eternal life*."

Such is the argument, which Mr Monroe's attempt to fix a "sad dilemma" on the Presbytery, drew from the "Presbyterian." We have quoted the form and substance (though not all the words) of it; because, unless it can be fairly refuted, it must settle the controversy respecting God's decree. The Methodists must either reason it down, coming honestly to the point--or admit

that saints may fall from heaven—or acknowledge their error—or stick to the error, in spite of an unanswerable argument.

One would have thought that the Knoxville editor and reviewer, seeing the necessity of the case, would have done something for his cause, when he came athwart this part of the Letter. But no: he passes over the whole, with a slurring sort of remark, which gives his reader not a glimpse of the argument nor of the way in which it might be fairly met and vanquished. Can our readers form any conjecture of the reason, why the reviewer skipped so nimbly over this, and most of the other arguments of the “Presbyterian?”

Although the Methodist reviewer thought it expedient to overlook the Presbyterian’s answer to Mr Monroe, in relation to God’s Decrees; yet he was not silent on the argument of the Pastoral Letter, respecting the Divine plan. Our readers will recollect that argument—especially the beginning of it in these words: “By Divine Decrees, we simply mean that plan which the infinite wisdom of God had in view, when he created the world. We trust it will not be said, that when God created the world, he had no plan in view. We believe that no rational being ever undertook an important work without a plan, &c.” Now listen to the Reviewer.

“Here we find these gentlemen building their system on a mere presumption. They “trust it will not be denied that God had a plan in view when he created the world?” and yet they tell us, that this “plan is the Divine Decrees.” They are certainly quite kind to themselves; saving themselves the trouble of proving

the very point in dispute, &c. Where have they any authority for saying that God works by a '*plan*?' Does not the very idea degrade the infinite mind? Has not the infinitely wise God sufficient knowledge to direct his operations, without (mechanic-like) a '*plan*' to go by? The doctrine that God has bound himself up, by eternal decrees, to pursue a prescribed course, according to an eternal plan, is much better suited to a system of heathen mythology, than to enlightened views of the Great God."

In this lofty strain of indignation, does the Methodist reviewer animadvert on the argument of the Pastoral Letter. He treats it with perfect scorn, as mere presumption, or assertion without reasoning, though a common reader would be apt to find a piece of reasoning, in what the Pastoral Letter said concerning the Divine plan, or scheme of creation. The Presbytery did not go into a full detail of reasons, for the supposition that God created the world according to a *plan*, or distinct idea of what he intended to make, and of the ends to be accomplished by his work. They thought it scarcely possible for a rational being to deny the existence of some plan or scheme, in the mind of God, when he began his creation. Perhaps, even the Tennessee Reviewer would have admitted a Divine Plan of some sort; had not the Presbytery said that the *decrees* of God were nothing else, or worse, than the Divine plan. Seeing *decrees* in the plan, he dashed it from him, with an instinctive jerk; like a man who discovers, that he has unwittingly picked up a viper.

All that he has said, in the way of reasoning, against

the *plan*, is comprehended in this question: "Has not the infinitely wise God sufficient knowledge to direct his operations, without (mechanic-like) a 'plan' to go by?" We answer, that the *knowledge* which *directed* the Creator's operations, is the very 'plan' in question. If the infinitely wise God had sufficient knowledge to direct his operations; then he had in his mind, a complete idea of the world which he designed to make; he knew for what purpose he would make it; what end he had in view, and what means he would employ: he foresaw the nature, the parts, and the arrangement of his Creation; what he would do, as Governor of it; what every creature would do, *under his government*; he saw through the whole course of his Providence, and through all the ages of human life and action—quite to their final issue in eternity: he discerned all those consequences, growing out of his will to create the world: he saw them all coming to pass, either by his power, or by his permission. With all this "knowledge to direct his operations," the infinitely wise God proceeded to his mighty works of creation and providence; and has, *we presume*, carried them on thus far, according to the original views of his unerring mind. If his original views did not extend so far,—if they were not clear, but dark—not complete, but defective—not decided, but hesitating:—then undoubtedly, the Creator had not "sufficient knowledge to direct his operations:" not having a perfect *fore* view of his works, he must have wrought partly, with a dark understanding and a wavering hand. Now, we request our Methodist readers not to be horror-struck at the mere sound of a word; when we repeat the declaration, that

by God's eternal decrees, we mean nothing more, nor worse, than those perfect views of the Divine Mind, prior to the creation of the world. They constituted the 'plan.'

But the reviewer is of opinion, that the Divine Character is degraded by the supposition of a 'plan to go by,' because it is 'mechanic-like.' The inspired writers were of a different opinion. They chose to represent the Divine Builder, as having--mechanic-like "laid the foundations of the earth," "stretched the line" and "set the compass" upon it; and as having "spread out the heavens" over it, like a royal canopy for the King of Kings. Job. xxxviii, 4--6; Prov. viii, 27 and Isa. xl, 12, 22.--They speak of the human frame too, as a wonderfully contrived machine; which impressed the devout Psalmist with the idea, "that all his members had been written" or marked out--in the Creator's "book" (namely, his *plan book*) "when as yet there was none of them." Ps. cxxxix, 14, 16. In short, the sacred writers would have us to believe, that the Heavenly Architect performed his operations in a very masterly and workmanlike manner--showing that he had both a mind to contrive, and a hand to execute his work, to the admiration of his intelligent creatures.

But the reviewer makes bold to say; "God has nowhere informed us, that he has a plan by which he regulates his conduct towards his creatures." But at least the reviewer himself has given us that information, where he says, in the latter part of his pamphlet; "It is certainly as easy for God to determine that he will convert a sinner according to his own prescribed plan of salva-

tion—as it would be for him to determine to convert him in any other way.” After such good authority for a Divine ‘plan;’ we shall add only the remark, that here, for once, common sense caught the reviewer napping.

We shall now introduce some passages from the Confession of Faith, in order to illustrate the Presbyterian doctrine relative to

GOD’S PERMISSIVE DECREE AND MORAL AGENCY.

Chap. 3. “Of God’s eternal decree.”—“God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever cometh to pass; *yet so* as thereby, neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.” Chap. 5.

“Of Providence.” “God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions and things, from the greatest even unto the least, by his most wise and holy providence, *according to his infallible foreknowledge*, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy. Although in relation to *the foreknowledge* and decree of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out *according to the nature of second causes*, either *necessarily, freely*, or “contingently.” The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission,

but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be, the author or approver of sin."

We beg the reader to consider these extracts attentively, impartially, and in due connexion: to observe specially;

1. That God ordained future events in such infinite wisdom; that while he upholds, directs, disposes and governs, every thing for his own holy ends, he establishes the liberty of the creature's will or choice, and the contingency or conditional nature, of second causes, that is, of created causes.

2. That God ordains or decrees events, not simply according to his own will, but also according to his foreknowledge of what creatures will freely choose to do, under permission of his overruling providence. Divine providence disposes and governs the circumstances of men; but leaves them free to choose their way, according to their own view of what is before them. Foreseeing every choice they will make, he ordains his own acts of providence in relation to them, exercising "his wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy," in permitting, and disposing, of their affairs, for the manifestation of his own glory.

3. In relation to God's foreknowledge and decree, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; immutably in respect to his decree, or plan of action; for he was too wise to adopt a plan, which he would have to change;

and *infallibly* in respect to his foreknowledge; for his knowledge would *deceive* him, if things could happen differently. “Yet (says the Confession) by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out *according to the nature of second causes*”—that is according to the course of nature, and the various kinds of causes in the world. Some things he ordains to happen *necessarily*, or according to a fixed and regular course; such as the succession of day and night, and the flowing down of waters: some *freely*; such as the actions of moral agents, who are not compelled, like brute matter, to move in a particular course; but freely choose their own way: and some *contingently*; that is accidentally, or conditionally, such as cannot be foreseen by man, or such as depend on certain conditions. Thus every man’s salvation or destruction is *conditional*, depending on his own choice and conduct; although to God the event is certain and unchangeable; because his foreknowledge takes in every man’s conduct; and his decree has fixed a just sentence, according to that conduct.

4. God ordains sinful actions in the way of permission, giving to moral agents the liberty of choosing evil as well as good. But then his providence extends farther than to a *bare* permission—that is a *general hap-hazard* permission, for creatures to sin without limit or control.—Such a permission might occasion universal wickedness and misery. When he permits sin, he joins with the permission, “a most wise and powerful *bounding*,” he keeps sin under wise limits and restraints: and he otherwise “orders and governs it:” never by impelling or tempting the sinner to evil; but by *setting in order*, and

wisely arranging, the times, plans, and circumstances, in which he will suffer a sinner to commit iniquity; and by overruling the evil devices of men and devils, to the promotion of his own holy ends. Thus, while he "neither is, nor can be, the author or approver of sin," he "maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof, he restraineth."

To illustrate this doctrine, the Pastoral Letter refers to the striking case of Joseph and his brethren. See the whole story, and particularly Genesis xlv, 5--8. We refer also to the case of our Saviour, who was delivered by Judas and slain by wicked men, yet "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Acts ii, 23. Many other cases might be cited from the Bible; but those are sufficient. What the Almighty could do in such cases, he can do in all. He can let wicked agents contrive their devices, and put them in execution; and when they have accomplished their evil designs; behold, the wisdom of God has overruled their chosen devices for good; and made even Judas, and Pontius Pilate, and the impious Jews, contribute to the salvation of mankind!

We have said enough to convince an unprejudiced reader, that God's decrees, according to Presbyterian doctrine, offer no violence to the creature's will. But since the Methodists are venting perpetual declamations to the contrary; we shall give the substance of what the "Presbyterian" said on the subject, in his letter to the Methodists. He began by saying; "I wonder what your teachers mean by Moral Agency! The phrase is perpetually in their mouths; ready to be let forth when-

ever they are at a loss for argument; but they never, to my knowledge explain what moral agency consists in. They seem to mean by it almost any thing that militates against the sovereign counsels of God."

Moral Agency consists only in the power of rational judgment, and the power of acting according to our judgment. The power of rational judgment is *reason*, by which we are enabled to distinguish right from wrong, the *WILL* is the power of acting according to the judgment, or view of the rational mind. Put these two together, and they constitute a moral agent. The want of either destroys moral agency. Brutes and idiots have not the power of judging rationally; therefore they are not accountable for their actions. Persons of weak understanding, children, persons brought up in ignorance, are not deemed so highly accountable, as men of great knowledge and discernment. A crime is greater, when deliberately committed, than when the doer is hurried to action by a sudden excitement; because in the latter case, he has not so much power of forming a rational judgment.

On the other hand, a slave driven to action by a master, is less accountable than his master, because he has less power to act according to his own judgment. A man disabled by bodily infirmity, or hindered by outward obstacles, from performing duties, is excused; because he *cannot* do as he *would*. He is judged according to his disposition; so far as he has power both to judge rationally, and to act accordingly, so far both God and man hold him fit for reward or punishment, but no farther.

Now we know that men have, under Divine Provi-

dence, the powers both of *reason* and of *will*; both of judging rationally, of acting according to their judgment. The *actual Providence* of God, therefore, leaves to man his moral agency. Wherever *Providence* leaves man a moral agent—there the eternal decree leaves him a moral agent; for Providence is the execution of the Decree; God governs the world exactly as he *decreed* to govern it. It is not the *Decree* of God that touches man at all. The decree exists only in the eternal mind; and has no influence or operation on any one creature under heaven. *Providence* acts on man; the *decree* is the plan of Providence. Providence secures the moral agency of man so does the decree. *This we know.* And this is the Presbyterian doctrine. Neither God's decree, nor foreknowledge, comes in the way of moral agency at all, so long as Providence leaves it inviolate. Providence does, we *know*, often limit, and sometimes destroy, a man's reason or power of action; but that is the act of God; and so far the Divine Judge acquits man of all responsibility.

Here is a plain theory, dictated by common sense, and proving the outcry about moral agency to be entirely groundless. But observe; there is a mystery, a real difficulty in the case, which Calvinists have always acknowledged. How can an agent freely choose a course of action, which was unchangeably marked out before he was born? The difficulty arises wholly from God's foreknowledge. We have shown above, from the Confession of Faith, that God ordains his *own acts* according to his *own will*; but the acts of moral agents, according to his *foreknowledge* of what they will choose to do under his *permission*. Hence it appears, at once,

that the difficulty lies entirely in reconciling the eternal foreknowledge of God, with the freedom of the creature, whose acts were eternally marked out in the foresight of God. Let the nature and foundation of the difficulty be once understood; and one may easily see how ignorantly, and absurdly, it is charged upon the Presbyterian doctrine, by those who admit the Divine Foreknowledge.

The Presbytery, in the Pastoral Letter explained the doctrine respecting God's permission of sin, according to the view above stated from the Confession of Faith. But the Methodist reviewer was by no means satisfied with their statement. He quoted Doctor Hopkins, who is not our standard, and the Confession of Faith, which is our standard; and misunderstood them both, in order to correct the Presbytery's account of their own creed. He was pleased also to say, with all the modesty and politeness of a Methodist reviewer, that "these reverend gentlemen renounce part of their own articles of Faith, and manifest a spirit of quibble and evasion, have left their old standard and come over to Arminian ground, have certainly either not made themselves properly acquainted with their own doctrine, or they have designedly misstated one of their opinions in reference to the foreordination of sin." We have heard of other Methodist preachers setting up to be dictators of Presbyterian doctrine, and correctors of Presbyterian interpretations of the Confession of Faith. Finding that Presbyterians have a creed which defies their noisy assaults; they now take upon themselves to prescribe what the Presbyterian faith must, and shall be, for their accommodation. But

why should we wonder at this? When, in order to shun our doctrine, they fly to the opinion that the Supreme being determines nothing—that he had no design in creating the world—and that he converts sinners after they have converted themselves; can we wonder at any other shift to which they may resort? If they can swallow their own doctrines, why should they not attempt to thrust what is hardly as nauseous, down the throats of their neighbors? We intend this just rebuke for none except the individuals to whom it is applicable.

DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

Is a subject of the utmost consequence, in the controversy respecting God's *decree*.—We shall, therefore, give it a more particular review.

The Presbytery observed, in the Pastoral Letter, that “the Divine decrees, when rightly understood, produce no more difficulty as to our conceptions on the subject of moral agency, than Divine Foreknowledge.” They briefly remarked on Mr Wesley's and Dr Clarke's attempts to evade the doctrine of foreknowledge. The Holston reviewer says; “Our letter writers notice the opinion of Mr Wesley, (an opinion by the by common to Calvinists,) that with God all things, past, present and future, are an eternal now. They, however, were careful not to bring forward the arguments on which Mr Wesley relied in support of his doctrine.” This is a bungling artifice of the reviewer. Why should the ‘letter writers’ be *afraid*, as he intimates they were, to bring forward arguments relied on in support of a doctrine “common to Calvinists?” The Presbytery did not aim to refute Mr Wesley's opinion; they did not

even dispute its correctness; they showed only, that it affords no relief to Arminian doctrine in relation to foreknowledge. But the opinion is not common to Calvinists; some have favored it; the majority reject it, partly because it bears too much the aspect of *fatalism*.

In their remarks on the permission of sin, the reviewer fancies that "they have admitted a principle which will overthrow the Calvinistic system of Predestination." "If God (says he) can foresee sinful events without any decree to produce them; then he can foresee all other events in the same way: so down goes the argument in favor of decrees, drawn from the foreknowledge of God." That argument has not stood the shock of so many giants, to fall at last by the trip of a pigmy. The Presbytery admitted no principle, which has not been generally admitted by Calvinists. It has never been supposed that God's decree "produces sin." No; God forbid. But do not Arminians, as well as Calvinists, "admit the principle," that God produces persons, who do, according to his foreknowledge, *produce sin*? And do they not all "admit the principle," that unless God produced the persons, the persons could never produce sin? Well then; if the creature cannot act until it is created; neither can its actions be foreseen, until its creation is foreseen. God must know that he will create an agent, before he can know his actions. The conclusion is plain. God's foreknowledge of a creature's actions depends on his will, purpose, or decree, respecting that creature. Not until he knows his own will, or purpose, respecting the creature, can he know any thing about the creature; because its existence, and consequently its actions, depend on his will.

Among all the absurdities of Methodist doctrine, this is one of the greatest; that God foresees things coming to pass, independently of his own will or purpose. "In him we live and move." Acts xvii, 28. "In whose hand our breath is, and whose are *all our ways*." Dan. v, 23. He foresaw us from eternity, thus depending on his will and permission, in all our ways and movements. But how is it conceivable, that he should foresee us depending on his will and permission, when he had no will, purpose, or decree, respecting us? Or how could he know his will concerning us, before he had such a will? How could he foresee himself creating and governing us, before he had determined whether or not, he would create and govern us?

The Presbytery observed; "If God foreknows that a thing will take place, that thing certainly must take place; all the difficulty lies in reconciling the certainty or fixedness of events with the moral agency of man."—On which the reviewer says; "In this passage, as is commonly the case with Calvinists, they use the terms 'certainty' and 'fixedness' as synonymous words.—And in this very confusion of terms lies the main flaw in their argument. It supposes that an event cannot be certain, unless it is 'fixed' or made certain by a decree. But this is a capital mistake. Let us clearly distinguish in our minds between *certainty* and *necessity*, as it regards *present* actions or events, and we can easily apply such distinction to *future* or *past* events. Yonder, for example, is a man cursing and swearing in the street; he *certainly* is; but will any one affirm that he swears of necessity?" We answer *no*; we suppose he swears of *choice*, and therefore deserves of the insulted Deity.

to have his impious breath stopped. But that is not the point. Will any one affirm that it is not both certainly and necessarily a *fact*, that he swears? Can it by any possibility be otherwise? Now; *that* is precisely what we say of things *foreknown*. It is impossible for them not to happen. How can a thing be foreseen as coming to pass, and yet never come to pass?—When a foreseen event comes into actual existence, it is not a whit more unchangeably fixed and determined, than it had been when only foreseen. It is equally impossible in either case, that it should be otherwise. If any man dispute this position, let him give a reason; let him show how a foreseen event can fail, or be avoided, or changed; any more than after it has come to pass. Of what use, then, is the reviewer's quibbling distinction between "certainty" and "fixedness?" And where is the "capital mistake?" Since God's foreknowledge proves beyond question, that all events were somehow unchangeably fixed from eternity; how came they to be *fixed* before they *existed*; unless God, by his will, freely ordained them? On his will they depended; he knew they so depended; and, therefore, his will was the cause of the *certainty* which eternally belonged to them. We do not infer from this, that man is not a free agent; we say only that whatever difficulty lies on the subject of free agency, arises from the fact of God's eternal foreknowledge. His decree ordained the free agency of man; but his foreknowledge convinces us of our incapacity to understand his mysterious ways.

We shall close the doctrinal part of our review, with the 'Presbyterian's' exposure of Dr Adam Clarke's theory of Divine Knowledge. A few remarks were

made on that theory in the Pastoral Letter. Hence Mr Monroe, who evidently favored it, took occasion to help himself with a large extract from Clarke's Commentary, containing a full statement of the theory in question. Whereupon, the Presbyterian in his Letter to the Methodists, handled the learned Doctor in the following passages, which we copy the more willingly, because the theory has found considerable currency among the opponents of Calvinism—especially among the Methodists.

“The Doctor's theory is twofold. It gives two distinct views of the subject. I shall set down so many of his words under each head, as will serve to show his meaning plainly.

First view. ‘God cannot have foreknowledge strictly speaking, because this would suppose there was something coming, in what we call futurity, which had not yet arrived at the presence of the Deity. Nothing can be past to him, because he exists in all past time: futurity and preterity are relative terms to us; but they can have no relation to that God who dwells in every point of eternity; with whom all that is past, all that is present, and all that is future, exists in one infinite, indivisible and eternal now.’”

Second view. “By contingent I mean such things as the infinite wisdom of God has thought proper to poise on the possibility of being or not being; leaving it to the will of intelligent beings to turn the scale. God foresees nothing as absolutely and inevitably certain, which he has made contingent; and because he has designed it to be contingent, therefore he cannot know it as absolutely and inevitably certain. I conclude that

God, though omniscient, is not obliged in consequence of this, to know all that he can know; no more than he is obliged, because he is omnipotent, to do all that he can do." See A. Clarke on Acts ii.

"Let us for a moment consider the last sentence. Dr C. thinks, that as the power *to do all things* is omnipotence so, the mere power *to know all things* is omniscience.—But the power to know all things is not *knowledge*. It is power only. I have power to count the hairs of my head; do I therefore know their number? A lazy ignoramus may have power to know many arts and sciences; is he therefore a *knowing* man? Such reasoning you see instantly to be absurd.—Just as absurd is it to say that God is omniscient, or *all-knowing*, while he has no certain knowledge of any thing which depends on the volitions of his intelligent creatures.—Now, I beg your attention to a more particular examination of Dr Clarke's *two-fold theory* of Divine Omniscience.

On the first view of Dr C's theory I have some plain remarks to make.

1. If there be, as he says, no futurity with God, but an ETERNAL NOW; then no part of our future conduct can be unsettled or uncertain, in any way, to him. Our future acts are not future to him, but present; even *now* they are with him. Neither can God's own acts be future to him; if they were, then there would be a futurity in God's view and not an eternal *now*. So according to Dr C. all the actions of men, all God's dealings with men from first to last, were as much present with him at the creation, as they will be at the day of judgment.

2. Nothing can be uncertain or contingent in God's view, according to this theory. If all times and all things be now with God; if none of them be yet to come; they must be perfectly evident to him; unless we suppose him uncertain of what is actually present to his all-seeing mind. If the past and the future be all one to God—all an eternal now; then, the things yet future to us, are as certain to God as the past.

3. But suppose that God shuts his eyes on some things, so as to be himself uncertain about them; then we must forever feel the same uncertainty. The moment you admit that God will in future come to a certainty about them; that moment you acknowledge a future with God. You say he is now uncertain; but in future that uncertainty will give way to clear knowledge in his mind.--But if all things be now to God, that certain knowledge can never reach him: future certainty may come to us, because to us there is a future. With God, according to Dr C. there is no future--whatever he can know, he must know even now, for past and future have no relation to him.

So, according to the first part of the Doctor's theory, all future things are present with God, and therefore fixed and certain with him. Consequently nothing is contingent or uncertain to him; if any thing were uncertain to him *now*, it would always be uncertain.

But when we come to the second view of his theory, all is reversed. Earth and heaven are full of uncertainties and contingencies—things merely possible, of which God keeps himself in a state of voluntary ignorance. We hear no more of past, present and future things existing to God in one indivisible now. We hear

no more, that the reason why God has no proper foreknowledge is, that all things are actually in present existence to him, whose presence extends through all eternity. The reason against foreknowledge now is, that God, looking forward to futurity, discovers an infinite multitude of things to be possible; but choosing not to know whether they will ever come into existence, he leaves it to free agents to determine whether they shall or not. It follows necessarily, also, that God knows none of his own future acts relative to free agents; for his acts of providence, to be wise, must be adapted to the acts of his creatures. Until he knows the acts of creatures, he cannot know how he will deal with them. This *divine ignorance* and uncertainty covers all the future affairs of the world, so far as moral agents are concerned, or God is concerned with them; for Dr Clarke asserts that so far as God certainly foresees the acts of his creatures, he destroys their free agency.

He says that "God foresees nothing as absolutely and inevitably certain, which he has made contingent."—From the terms "absolutely and inevitably," we must understand that God may *almost* foresee what a free agent will do. But if absolute certainty in God, destroy the creature's accountability; *almost* certainty in God, must have almost the same effect.

In the world, one thing grows out of another; one action gives rise to others, which would not have existed, but for the action which caused them. Thus, I should not have written this letter, had I not seen Mr Monroe's Reply; nor would he have written that, but for the Pastoral Letter, which itself grew out of a previous combination of circumstances, which were links

in a continual and multifarious chain of events, extending back to the creation of man. Those things have all depended, we may say, one on another for their coming to pass.—Now these are acts of free agents, and therefore, as Dr C. says, were foreseen only as possible, not as certain things. The Deity then may have foreseen, that *possibly* the Pastoral Letter might be written. Then he saw, that the Pastoral Letter might *possibly* lead to the Reply; and the Reply, by a *third possibility*, to this Letter; you may see, at a moment's reflection, that the second possibility is weaker than the first, because it unites the uncertainty of both in itself. The third possibility is weaker still; for it takes in the uncertainty of all that it depends on. God foresaw, that if the Pastoral Letter should happen to be published, and if, in that case, Mr Monroe should happen to Reply; then, if both these haps should turn up, *possibly* I might write this Letter. Now what proportion would there be, 2000 years ago, between the possibility of my writing just this Letter, and the possibility of its never being written? [God must have looked through countless millions of bare possibilities, to discern even the *possible* existence of this Letter; and if one of those bare possibilities should fail, the chain on which this Letter hung, would be broken, and all the after links would fall away and be lost.] A volume of figures could not express the number of chances, that would lie against the single chance in favor of the event. In fact, where a world of creatures are left to act contingently, or uncertainly, it is impossible to express the infinitely various combinations of possible events. If God knows them only as possible; every thing like knowl-

edge of what *will happen*, is entirely excluded. It is now evident that Dr Clarke's theory of contingencies, leads to the conclusion, that God is almost totally in the dark, respecting the future affairs of the world which he has made, and which he governs."

"Now think of the Bible prophecies, concerning individuals, cities, nations, and the church; extending over a great part of the world, and through a long succession of ages; foretelling human actions of every description; and necessarily requiring a wonderfully nice combination of human actions, to fulfil them all: and then say in your consciences, whether the Doctor's theory is founded in reason and scripture."

Such is, in substance (and with a few exceptions in words) the Presbyterian's thorough dissection of the famous Methodist Commentator's theory, by which he hoped to shake the foundations of Calvinism. Our readers may judge of the theory, and the Methodist Divines may, if they can, put the dissected members of it together again. As for the Tennessee reviewer, though he does not adopt the whole theory, he has attempted in two places to nibble a little at the Presbyterian's argument. His first remark is merely a repetition of his petty quibble on the word *fixed*—which quibble has been already noticed. His next is in these words; "The author of the Letter has misrepresented some of his [Dr C's] arguments. Take the following as a sample. The Doctor says that "God foresees nothing as *absolutely* and *inevitably* certain, which he has made contingent." Commentating on these words, our Letter writer says; "From the terms 'absolutely and inevitably,' we must understand that God may almost foresee what a free

agent will do." No one can carefully read the Doctor's remarks, without understanding him to mean, by the terms "absolutely and inevitably certain," that which cannot be otherwise. It is synonymous, as used by him with *necessary*. So the reviewer would have his readers believe, that according to the Doctor's theory, God may not only *almost* foresee—but may foresee to an absolute certainty—what a free agent will do: this he would fain make his readers believe, when with his own reviewing eyes, he saw Dr Clarke's assertion, that "God cannot know, as absolutely certain, what he has made contingent;" and that "God is not obliged to know all that he can know." What is it that God can know and does not know, except it be the *certainty* of what free agents will do? What is it that Dr C. says God "cannot know,"—except it be what he says himself, the absolute and inevitable *certainty*—not *necessity*—of contingent actions?—but the reviewer felt bound to say something,—and he knew that any sort of petty cavil would do for one class of his readers. This being his last stroke at the "Presbyterian," he dismisses him in the following manner. "There is such a great want of candor and fair dealing in many parts of this pamphlet, that it must be censured by all impartial readers, who understand the important points at issue, a useless business to follow him, in every particular." After the full expose which we have made of the doctrinal arguments of 'this pamphlet,' and of the reviewer's management in relation to those arguments;—our readers can be at no loss to judge, why he dismisses it with such a sweeping censure.—There is a certain animal, who, when he gets a bone that he can neither bite nor swallow, quits it with an an-

gry growl; finding it "a useless business" to gnaw it "in every particular." We use this simile, not offensively, but for good humoured illustration of the subject.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND POLICY.

The Presbytery, in the Pastoral Letter, compared the Methodist and Presbyterian institutions, relative to the support of the clergy; but as their sole object was *defence*, they went no farther, in their strictures on Methodist institutions, than was absolutely necessary, to prove the unreasonableness of the Methodist invectives against the Presbyterian ministers. The most objectionable parts of the Methodist polity were left untouched; until Mr Monroe and the Conference drew the storm on themselves, by their treatment of the following sentence in the Pastoral Letter.

"The frequent appearance of double dealing in their [the Methodist] policy towards others; the proselyting spirit which they often manifest; their exultation when they make a breach into other churches; *their constant attempts to form societies in the heart of congregations fully supplied with means of grace*; their apparent eagerness to swell and magnify their numbers, and the exceedingly easy terms, on which they enrol members; the occasional boasts made even in their public assemblies, that "the Methodists will take the world:" these and other things, have infused a general suspicion of their harboring ambitious designs." Six or seven particulars are specified in the sentence; all of which together, and other things of the like nature, are mentioned as grounds of the suspicion which extensively prevails, concerning the designs of the Methodist clergy. The Meth-

odist writers have not presumed to deny the statement in general; but have fixed more especially on the clause respecting "their constant attempts, &c." which seemed best adapted to the purpose of perversion. Any candid reader, taking it in connexion with the rest, would understand it to mean such "attempts," as indicate a design to subvert other churches. Why else should it be mentioned as a cause of suspicion? Could any reasonable man take it as a complaint of the common custom of all denominations, to preach in one another's vicinity? as the reviewer has construed it. There is a way of going to work among the people of another denomination, which the Methodists frequently adopt, and which other people discern to be the way of sectarian ambition. Mr Monroe converted the clause in question, into a claim of the Presbyterians "to exclusive dominion over certain tracts of country." "Having invented this meaning for them (says the Letter to the Methodists) he takes occasion from it, to launch against them the stale slander, that they are aiming at an establishment of religion. Waxing most sublimely patriotic, he bestrews his page with figurative encomiums on our civil and religious liberties; and indignantly rebukes this arrogant claim of dominion in spiritual affairs. He warns all patriots to awake, and beware of the Presbyterians, &c." The letter refers to a pamphlet, printed in Richmond in 1816, containing documents by which it is proved beyond all question, that when, shortly after the revolution, an establishment of religion was strongly supported in the Legislature of Virginia, the Presbyterians strenuously opposed the measure by memorials, and objected to every kind and degree of legal support for the clergy.

The Presbyterian clergy took a leading part in this opposition to any religious establishment in Virginia. Yet the old, and oft refuted slander, is still unblushingly propagated among us, without one tittle of evidence to give it plausibility. The Presbyterian then introduced his account of Methodist church government and policy, in this manner.—“Since Mr Monroe is so hot for civil and religious liberties; and sounds so loud an alarm of danger to those liberties; let us see where the danger lies; and whether Methodism or Presbyterianism tends most to exclusive dominion. Mr Monroe has given us noisy declamation; I shall give you facts and reasons. The government of the Methodist church is exclusively in the hands of the *itinerating clergy*. The people have no part nor lot in the matter. The bishops and circuit-riders, in Conference, make all the rules and regulations of the Society; and these rules made by the clergy only, the people under their care are bound to obey, under pain of the highest punishment which the church can inflict. These rules too, the clergy can alter at pleasure, to suit their own views and circumstances. As the people have no liberty of choice in the formation of laws; so neither have they the liberty of choosing their pastors. The bishop appoints your pastors, according to his own good pleasure.”

Such is the outline which the Presbyterian gave of the system: and so far the correctness of his statement is undisputed. The Methodist reviewer put forth his most labored efforts to defend this system, and to convict the Presbyterian of misrepresentation in some other parts of his statement. We shall give the whole subject a thorough investigation; and shall prove to the satisfac-

tion, we trust, of every impartial reader, that the Methodist government and policy are fully as despotic; as ambitiously sectarian; and as dangerous in their tendency, to the civil and religious liberties of the country, as the Presbyterian declared them to be.

We shall first take up the arguments, with which the reviewer sets out in his defence of the Methodist system of government. When our readers see them, they will justify us in calling them.

ARGUMENTS FOR CLERICAL DESPOTISM.

The first argument of the reviewer, is taken from Scripture. "One leading feature of our church polity (says he) is a well organized system of Itinerancy.—When Jesus Christ commissioned his apostles to evangelize the world, he commanded them to *travel*. To "go and teach all nations." The Divine Redeemer not only gave this command; but he set the *example*: "He went about doing good;" so long as he preached, he was a *travelling* preacher. The Apostles followed his footsteps. They soon extended their labors to every part of the then civilized world. We, therefore, believe that we as a church have more substantial authority for our travelling system, than any other church has for its regulations."

This sounds very well; but the reviewer forgot, or did not choose to mention, a very important feature of the apostolical system. After the apostles had founded a church, they uniformly, with the consent of the people, ordained settled pastors for it; and our Saviour and his apostles, when they departed from the earth, left the churches in the charge, each of its own settled pastor or pastors, and of them only. They ordained no

“well regulated system of itinerancy;” they did not commit the churches to a body of travelling bishops, presiding elders, and circuit preachers. Such a system of itinerancy was never heard of before the days of Mr Wesley. See Acts xiv, 23, and xx, 27, 28; Titus i, 5.

The reviewer’s argument proves the duty of sending out missionaries to plant churches; and to supply them, until, according to the apostolical plan, they can obtain resident pastors of their own. And what church does not send forth missionaries for those purposes? And what ecclesiastical rulers except the Methodist, have so far departed from the scriptural plan, as to deprive the *local preachers* of all share in the pastoral charge of congregations? Compare the 17th and 28th verses of Acts xx.

These remarks furnish an answer to the absurd argument, which the reviewer afterwards adduces, concerning the choice of pastors by the people. “Do they [the Presbyterians] send missionaries to labor in no places, until application is made for the very men who go among them: verily they do:” Aye, *verily they do*: but could not the reviewer understand, that a church must exist, before it can call a pastor? And that vacant churches may be visited by missionaries, both to afford them temporary supplies, and to give them opportunity to select agreeable pastors? “Their missionary plans are but imperfect imitations of our itinerant system”—says the reviewer in continuation.—As “*their missionary plans*” are much older than “*our itinerant system*,” he might as well have said that St. Paul’s missionary plans were but imperfect imitations of Mr Wesley’s; for if the Methodist Apostles be the standard of perfection, then the plans of the inspired apostle of Christ, were very “imperfect.”

The *second argument* is founded on a supposed distinction between “the *sources* of power, in church and state.” “In human governments, (says the reviewer,) the sovereignty, &c. is in the people. They only have the right to govern. This right they *delegate* to one or more for the general good, and as the people have the sovereign right to make laws, and to choose their own rulers; so *their benefit* is the *object* of all their [the rulers’] ministrations. *But this is not the case in the church.* The sovereign right to make laws and rule, is in the great Lawgiver, the King of saints, [Jesus Christ.]—The object of the Divine government is *the glory of God.* It is a plain and correct principle, that delegated power must originate in *the source of power*; hence the maxim that *no man should preach*, unless he be “moved by the Holy Ghost,” to take upon him the sacred office.”

The reviewer is cautious not to apply the principles of this argument, too distinctly to his subject. But the drift of it cannot be mistaken. His design is to prove, by his distinction between the “sources of power,” that the members of a church have no right to elect any of its officers; or to have either in person or by delegation, any share in its regulation and discipline. He allows the people to delegate *civil* authority to rulers of their choice; but says they have no such right in their church. He even denies that *their benefit*, is the legitimate object of a church ruler’s ministrations. Christ, as King of saints, has delegated his sovereign power over the church to the clergy; who are consequently independent of the people whom they rule, and are responsible for their administration to none but Christ. Whatever rules and

regulations they may think fit to make; in whatever way they may choose to exercise authority;—whatever sort of men they may appoint—they are in no way responsible to the subject people; who are bound by Divine authority to submit. Church members having no right to elect their rulers, have no right to remove them; having no share in forming regulations, they can have none in repealing them; and to refuse obedience to their clergy, is rebellion against Christ whose delegates they are.

Such, without exaggeration, is the conclusion which necessarily follows from the premises laid down in the argument. Were such sentiments peculiar to the Knoxville reviewer, they would not deserve notice: but to the astonishment of thousands, the General Conference of the Methodist travelling Clergy, have, at their late meeting, explicitly avowed the same principles. From them, no doubt, the reviewer borrowed his argument. Many of their people petitioned for such alterations in their church government, as would give the people some check on the power of the itinerant clergy. In a report (unanimously adopted, we understand,) in answer to the petition, the clerical Conference rejected the prayer of the petitioners; and made the following declaration of their principles. “The great head of the church himself has imposed on us the duty of preaching the gospel, of administering its ordinances, and *maintaining its moral discipline, among those over whom the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers.* Of these also, viz. of gospel doctrines, ordinances and moral discipline, we do believe that the divinely instituted ministry, are the Divinely authorized *expounders*, and that the duty of

maintaining them in their purity, and of not permitting our ministrations in these respects to be authoritatively *controlled by others*, does rest upon us as a moral duty."

Although the Conference here wrap up their power in a round about phraseology; their language admits of but one interpretation. They are giving reasons for their refusal, to let the members of the church have any share in its government. Like the reviewer, they refer to Christ, "the great head of the church," as the only source of their power: from him, through the designation of the Holy Ghost, they claim the power exclusively, not only to preach, and to administer ordinances, but also to *maintain moral discipline*; that is, to establish and to administer, as they think fit, all the rules and regulations which relate to the admission, government, duties, trial, and expulsion of church-members. They profess, indeed, not to claim an independent power of *making laws*; but they claim what sets their power quite as far above human restriction,—that is, they declare themselves to be the Divinely authorized *expounders* of doctrines, ordinances, and discipline. To understand the extent of this *expounding* power, we must connect it with the *ruling* power which they both claim and exercise. Those travelling preachers are the sole rulers on earth of the Methodist church. They rule without any election or appointment of those subject to their authority. They claim this power by Divine right as delegates of Christ. They administer in profession, the laws of Christ; they apply those laws to the people, and exercise the authority of those laws over the people. Now in addition to this they claim to be the sole *expounders* of the Divine laws. They allow the subject

people no voice or judgment in *expounding* the laws which the clergy administer. The clergy only are to determine what are the *doctrines* which the people are to believe; what the *ordinances* which the people are to observe; what the *duties* which the people are to do; and what the *rules* by which the people are to be tried for alleged offences. They declare that their "ministrations in these respects"—(that is in respect to their *ruling and expounding* powers) are not to be "authoritatively controlled by others. They mean more than they express by these last words. They do not permit their *ministrations*--their exercise of the *ruling and expounding* powers to be even *checked*, or limited in any degree, or in any respect by their people. Both in *principle* and in *practice*, they claim, by Divine authority, an absolute control over the faith, and the conduct, and the spiritual privileges of the people—absolute, it unquestionably is, so far as the people are concerned.—They hold themselves subject, limited in the exercise of authority by Christ only, under whom they rule; and they claim to be the sole judges of what Christ has authorized them to do in their administrations of church-power. And if *they only* are the Divinely authorised expounders of *doctrine*, to the people under their care: then the people are to receive their expositions of doctrine with implicit faith; and to believe otherwise than their clerical rulers teach them, must subject them to be expelled from the church, at the will of these same absolute rulers;—and all by Divine authority.

Thus do the Methodist itinerant clergy assume all that ever the Pope and his clergy assumed, over the spiritual concerns of mankind. If they do not in so many

words claim infallibility; they claim what implies it, and what amounts to the same thing in practice; they claim uncontrollable authority on earth, to expound the laws of God, and to enforce their own exposition upon the people; by expelling from the church all who do not submissively receive their expositions. Their disclaiming the power to *make* laws for the church, is no sort of check, while they retain unlimited power of expounding the laws of God. But in fact, they do in their book of Discipline, assert explicitly, that they, the General Conference, have "full power to *make* rules and regulations" for the church.

The reviewer continues his argument in this strain:—"Some men are so fond of *politics* and *political institutions*, that to make themselves popular as ecclesiastics, they form their church government after the same mode." Here he aims a side blow at our Presbyterian Church; but unfortunately for him, the mother of that church, in Scotland, was not formed after the *mode* of the civil government of King, Lords and Commons; but took a republican form, sorely against the will of the King and his Lords. But hear him further:—"And for the sake of having it [the church government] of a *republican* cast, they rob the King of saints of his sovereign prerogatives, and ascribe them to the *subjects* of his government."—Rob!—Who is robbed when "sovereign prerogatives" are taken from the *clergy*? The reviewer certainly must believe, that all the sovereign prerogatives of Christ reside in the clergy, or he would not argue thus. He thinks that the clergy are not "subjects" of the Redeemer's government—but Lords of his people! He supposes that delegates of the people could

not be subject to Christ ; but would rob him of his *sovereign prerogatives*, whenever they took any part in church regulations!--But hear him further : "The analogy between *church* and *state* should be as remote as their sources of power are opposite; not only because there is difference between their respective sovereignties; but because it is much easier to effect their union, when a striking analogy exists between them, than it otherwise would be." This argument would work different ways in different countries. Where the civil government is despotic--there the church ought to be republican; but where, as in our country, the civil government is free, here the clergy ought to be despotic,—lest too striking an analogy should produce a union between them. So, at all events, one of the "respective sovereignties," that of kings or of priests, ought to bow down the backs of the "subjects." But we fear that such priestly despotism, supported by such arguments, instead of saving us from oppression, will, if it gain prevalence in the country, only prepare the people for submission to any and every sort of despotism. The reviewer concludes the argument by exhorting every man "deeply to ponder the subject in his mind." So say we:--let every freeman ponder it deeply.

Having exhibited the principles of the argument, we shall now offer a few remarks by way of answer.

1. The distinction between the "sources of power in church and state," is unscriptural and unreasonable. God is equally the source of both civil and ecclesiastical power. "The powers that be [to wit, civil rulers] are ordained of God;"---the civil magistrate "is the minister of God;" therefore we must obey him "for conscience,

sake," Rom. xiii, 1,—5. On this passage, tyrannical kings have founded their divine right of sovereignty;—arguing on the very same principles, and with quite as much reason, as the Methodist clergy. No christian can doubt that God has ordained government and rulers, both in church and state;—God sanctions the just and lawful authority of both species of rulers, and holds both rulers and subjects responsible to himself, for the manner in which they discharge their relative duties.—But he has not designated what individuals shall rule; nor how they shall be chosen; nor how the various powers of government shall be distributed; nor how the people, whose *benefit* is the object of all earthly government, shall be guarded against tyranny, injustice and folly in their rulers. All these matters are therefore left to the *people* themselves, both in church and state,—they whose temporal and spiritual benefit is the design of government, are at liberty to exercise their own discretion, wherever God has not prescribed a particular course.

2. God has ordained a gospel ministry in the church: he has described the qualifications and duties of a minister of the gospel; and thus he has enabled every considerate man to judge, whether he is "called of God" to preach. The three great duties of ministers are preaching, administering ordinances, and *ruling*. But in *none* of these are they authorised to act without the choice and consent of the people for whose salvation they are to labor. They have no right to compel people, by any sort of penalty, to put themselves under their spiritual care. And in governing the church, the clergy according to *apostolical example*, can establish no rule, and ex-

ercise no discipline, without the sanction of the people. It makes no essential difference, whether the people, in giving their sanction, act in a body, or choose representatives from among themselves, to act in their behalf. Even the inspired apostles would not establish a *rule* for the direction of the Gentile converts, *who asked for direction*, without the consent of the people. See Acts xv, 22—25. And in exercising discipline on offending members, the people had a *principal* share. 1 Cor. v, 12, 13, and 2 Cor. xi, 6.

3. The Methodist itinerant preachers argue inconsistently. Their argument applies equally to all ministers of the gospel, who alike derive their authority from Christ. Yet they have assumed all the ‘prerogatives’ to themselves; and reduced their local brethren, who are far more numerous, to the condition of subjects.

By way of a *third argument* for clerical despotism, the Methodist reviewer informs us, that the people are under a “capital mistake,” who indulge the “opinion that to regulate a church is a *privilege*, and should be contended for by the membership as their *right*, an object to be *desired*. Whereas it is in reality a *heavy burden*, a *laborious task*.”

This argument is very much in the style of those Kings and Lords, who complain of “the weight of royalty,” and “the cares of state;” but no sooner do their subjects petition for a share of the *heavy burthen* and *laborious task* of managing their own concerns, than those same complaining rulers rebuke them, for presuming to meddle with their “Divine rights.” The design of such lordly groanings is obvious enough; it is to make the subjects thankful, submissive, and liberal. If the exercise

of dominion be not desirable to the human heart; why is it so universally and eagerly sought, often with persevering toil, and at the hazard of life? And why is it almost never given up, until it is wrung from the deadly grasp of the possessor?

No men in our country chaunt forth the plaintive story of their labors and distresses, so loudly as the itinerant preachers; none have so much power, and none hold their power with more unyielding firmness. The reviewer eulogises them, "that in exercising their authority, they take to themselves most of the *toils, drudgeries, sufferings and privations*, which have to be experienced by the church." And he tells us as a great matter, that for attending their conferences, they are paid only for their expenses, while civil officers usually have a competent salary for doing the public business. He ought to have mentioned, but he did not, that the travelling preachers have also a competent salary. But all this is nothing to the point in hand. Neither the trouble, nor the salary, of an office in the church, is of any importance; compared with the evil tendency of clerical despotism, and the security of our religious rights and privileges.

As a *fourth* argument, he speaks of "the strictness of their itinerant regulations," which renders the clergy similar to "a well regulated army." We acknowledge the fact; and should think it a good feature of the system, were there any effectual restraint on the power of this clerical host. But assuming as they do, an absolute control over all the conquests they make; the regular organization and the army-like movements of this zealous body, only make them more dangerous to the liberties of the country. With a sovereign control over their nu-

merous people; with a military energy in their own operations; they naturally have high expectations, indefatigable zeal, and powerful means of extending their sway over the whole country. In the youth and vigor of their mighty enterprise, they will exercise a severe discipline among themselves—that is necessary to success. But success will gradually introduce pride, ambition, avarice, and all the unholy passions, which uniformly spring from unbridled power over men. We shall say no more on this topic, at present; but proceed to notice the use which the reviewer makes of this argument.

He answers the objection that the Methodist people have not “the liberty of choosing their pastors,” by observing truly that so long as they retain their itinerant system, it will be impossible for all their circuits and stations to be constantly supplied, in any other way than by *appointment*” of the bishops. “And to prevent clashing of interests and authorities, it is found most convenient”—he might have said, absolutely necessary—“to vest this authority,” of appointing pastors, “in a general superintendency”—that is, in the bishops. “In this way our missionary operations (for ours is a missionary plan throughout) moves on *regularly and successfully*.—It is like a *well organized army*, with a commander in chief, and *subordinate officers*.” But unfortunately for the liberties of the people, this is a self-appointed, a perpetual, and a sovereign army. The reviewer reasons correctly, when he gives us to understand, that the people cannot enjoy the common rights of human nature, under the dominion of this “*well organized army*.” The itinerant system would be weakened and the efficient

organization of the army destroyed; by suffering the people to choose their pastors or to exercise any restraint upon the powers of the clergy. Reformation in the Methodist church is hopeless; that church may be reduced by division; but it will never be reformed, while the itinerant organization of the clergy can maintain its existence. The people who submit to its authority, must calculate on wearing the yoke from age to age. Next, the reviewer breaks out afresh on "the privations and sufferings" of his itinerant brethren. He always joins their distresses with their power; that sympathy for the one, may produce submission to the other. "*Our servants* in the ministry (he artfully observes) do not lay *burthens* on others"—(he means not *powerful* burthens, but the *burthen* of power)—"which they will not touch" (no, they not only touch, but grasp.) "They have taken the *principal* burthen on their own shoulders." Yes, the whole of it; and have left to the people no *burthen* at all, but only the *privileges* of obeying and paying. "*Our servants* in the ministry!" This expression in the mouth of an advocate for absolute power in the clergy, reminds us of the Pope; who at the time when he trod on the necks of both kings and people, styled himself, with profound humility, "the servant of the servants of God."

The reviewer enumerates several supposed advantages of this 'well-organized' system of clerical supremacy.—We shall notice such as are of any consequence. (1) "Our plan of supplying stations by appointment [of the bishops,] prevents our having any vacant congregations; as there are among the Presbyterians." True: the itinerant plan scatters pastoral labors over all parts of the

field; but while it gives every congregation a *share*, it gives none a *full supply*. Most of the Methodist societies enjoy only a flying visit from their pastors, once in 3, 4, or 5 weeks—and then comparatively few of them see him on the Lord's day. On an average the Presbyterian vacancies are nearly as well supplied by Missionaries, or occasional visits of neighboring pastors: and could the Presbyterians multiply preachers as easily as the Methodists, their small vacancies might be as fully supplied as the small Methodist societies, while the larger congregations would enjoy the superior benefit of resident pastors. It is not then the itinerant system, which gives the Methodist any advantage on that score; but the custom of putting illiterate men into the ministry, who are of course not so well qualified to instruct their people, as if they had *learned* more before they undertook to *teach*. (2.)

“Our plan (says the reviewer) allows none of our preachers to leave their charge, and go in search of more agreeable and lucrative employments, as does that of the Presbyterians.” So, because the Presbyterian *plan* does not compel pastor and people to continue together like man and wife, till death shall separate them, the Methodist *plan* of shifting pastoral charges almost every year, by authority of a bishop, is preferable—is it? (3.) “Our plan admits of no wrangling among preachers, as to what congregations they shall take charge of”—No, despotism is a sovereign remedy for wrangling. Do slaves under an overseer, ever wrangle “as to what they shall take charge of?” And why not stop the *political* wrangling of this free country, by adopting Methodist principles, and appointing a *master* for the wranglers? But it is not true, that Presbyterian ministers *wrangle* for the charge of

congregations. Several may happen to visit a congregation before the people make a choice, and then the people are not always unanimous. But the preachers do not quarrel on the subject.

But says the reviewer—"A sample of this [wrangling] was lately given in Buncombe county, N. C. No fewer than five clergymen went to that place, in quest of a call, some of them struggled occasionally for more than 12 months. They carried their disputes so far as to indulge in personal abuse, disputing even about the money which was collected at their sacraments. One of them, it is said, claimed and kept the most of it. The consequence of these strivings for the mastery was, *a division among the congregations*, some voting for one preacher and others supporting another. And the result, so far, has been a determination on the part of one or two congregations, to have nothing more to do with any of them; choosing to continue destitute until they can be better pleased. *This is one, out of many, instances, which might be noticed*, as a proof of the evil effects of that policy which requires each congregation to choose its own pastor."

When we first read this scandalous story, although we had never heard any thing on the subject, we had no doubt that the facts of the case were grossly misrepresented by the Methodist reviewer. To obtain a true statement, we wrote a letter of inquiry to the neighborhood of the scene of action. We have in consequence received a certificate, under the hand and seal of two respectable laymen, ruling elders of *the only organized congregation* that existed in Buncombe county, at the date of the transactions in question. We would gladly insert

the whole certificate were it not so long. It details every circumstance, that has any bearing on the case. In *the course of three years*, five Presbyterian clergymen did visit Buncombe county. Only one of them offered his services as a pastor; but not being elected, he left the county. Three of the others declared themselves *unwilling to accept a call*. One, on being invited, at first declined; but after some time consented, and is now the pastor of the congregation which embraces Ashville and the neighboring county. Last June, a second congregation was organized at Davidson's creek, 30 miles south of Ashville. Since that time no clergyman has visited them, "in quest of a call." Before their organization, the people *invited* one of the *five* to settle among them, but he *declined*. The certificate concludes with the following contradictions of the Reverend reviewer.

"Mr Stringfield says that "no less than five clergymen, came to our county *in quest of a call*." That is false, as you see above : and that "some of them struggled for more than 12 months." That is false, for none of them staid so long in the county. Again, "they carried their disputes so far, as to indulge in personal abuse." That is false, for we never heard of an unbecoming word between them, on any account whatever. And, "disputing even about the money collected at their sacraments. One of them, it is said claimed and kept the most of it." That is false, for we were officiating elders at every collection made during that time : and every collection was made exclusively for Mr B. who labored much among us. Mr M. told me (R. Williamson) that Mr B. divided with him, and urged him to take more than he was willing [to take.] Mr L. [another

of the clergymen] told me the same. I never conversed with the others on the subject. All, therefore, that is said about the money is false. Again "the consequence of these strivings for the mastery was, a division among the congregations." This is false; for at that time, there was but one congregation in the county; but *three places* of preaching. So the following statement of Mr Stringfield [about some of the congregations choosing to remain destitute] is false. There was a disturbance among the members on Rim's creek, but not a word about who should be their pastor.

We the undersigned do certify, that the above statements are just and true; and that we are able to support them (if called upon) with good evidence. Given under our hands and seals.

ROBT. WILLIAMSON.

ROBT. BRANK."

This certificate needs no comments. We have, in the former part of our review, given specimens of Mr Stringfield's hardihood of assertion. He has, in years past, been convicted of disregarding what every man of common honor, not to say *piety*, holds sacred. We say this concerning his character, not to injure him; but to protect those, whom he, an editor and defender of Methodism, is accustomed to assail with defamatory stories and uncandid assertions. For our part, we disdain to pick up and blaze abroad, even scandalous *facts*, which may occur among a numerous and widely extended people. Much more would we disdain to convert innocent or trifling things, into matter of scandal, to support any cause—religion out of the question. We would rather bury in oblivion, momentary circumstances of misconduct in professors of religion, contrary to the

general character even of the individual—much more of the body to which he belongs, than to gather them up as treasures, put them in print, and send them galloping to the four winds of heaven, in the saddle-bags of travelling heralds—of the gospel. It was such conduct in Methodist writers and preachers, that first roused the Lexington Presbytery to a necessary defence of their cause. Oh! How beautiful on the mountains are the [horse's] feet of him, that bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace"—and carrieth *scandal!!* Hail his approach ye perishing multitudes of the wilderness; for lo! he bears you the messages of Divine benevolence, and the tales of sectarian malignity! But thank heaven! There are many of a better sort found among the preachers of any denomination. We apply not our exclamations to any, but those who are known to deserve them. Such conduct ought to be scourged with the scorpions of keenest satire, and rebuked into shame with the most unsparing indignation. There will be no peace among christians, while it is tolerated. Let us argue our differences; for argument promotes truth: but let us abominate wilful slander; for it is false and malicious as the old serpent, its original author.

The reviewer says, that "the liberty and privilege of Presbyterians, as to choosing their pastors, is more imaginary than real; for they can only invite!" What an empty shade is liberty! It is so destitute of that substantial blessing, *compulsion!* Let us all, therefore, fly to the protection of despotic bishops, who will send us pastors without allowing us either to *invite* or *reject!* But says the reviewer, in addition; "the popular preacher," being invited by many congregations "is set

up at auction; the highest bidder takes the prize." Not always, we answer: but the circumstance proves, that Presbyterian ministers have *every* motive to improve their talents, and to cultivate, by good conduct, the esteem of the churches. Depending on that esteem for employment, they must "commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," and cannot act "as Lords over God's heritage." Again, the reviewer says, that the congregations, who fail to get the popular preacher, must "remain destitute, or put up with such as they can get." We guess that mankind have generally to put up with such things as they can get: but even this allotment is better, than to put up with such as an earthly master may choose to give.

Finally, he argues, that the Methodist plan is better calculated than the Presbyterian, to furnish the church with an efficient ministry. To prove his proposition, he compares the numbers of ministers and communicants, in the two churches. He states the Presbyterian ministers at 1288 (licentiates are not included;) communicants, 146,308. Methodist travelling preachers, 1600; local preachers, 5000; communicants 421,103: from all which he infers, that the Methodist ministry is more efficient than the Presbyterian. We have a few remarks to offer on this statement. (1) With respect to the ministers, we admit that the Methodists have a very efficient way of making preachers *numerous*; they bring them out by thousands of every age, occupation, talent, and degree of knowledge. Few men get into the Presbyterian ministry, with less than 7 or 8 years study; and many at the expense of all their patrimony. The Presbyterians think that, *in general*, a man is best qualified for the

calling to which he has been brought up; that the shoemaker knows more about the soles of shoes, than the souls of men; that the blacksmith can hammer an anvil more efficiently than a pulpit; and that a minister who has, by long study, acquired some good degree of the knowledge which our Saviour gave his apostles by miracle, is likely to be more useful in the church, than one who remains in the untutored and unqualified state of the apostles, before they received the Holy Ghost. We cheerfully admit, that many uneducated preachers are useful; but we reason on general principles: We find that among those denominations who do not require learning in their ministers, *very* few are learned, and many are very ignorant. Hence as a general rule, we prefer the plan of making the ministry *efficient* in qualifications, rather than in number. That plan may not spread a sect so rapidly, but it will do the work to better purpose, so far as it goes; it may not make so many disciples, but it will give them more sound instruction, and have on the whole, and in the long run, a more salutary influence on human society.

(2) With respect to the numbers of communicants, we have several remarks to make. First: the returns of the Methodists are complete, those of the Presbyterians are not—several hundred congregations having failed to report. Second: the Presbyterians of the United States are six or seven distinct bodies, who agree in doctrine and government. The numbers in the above statement are those under care of the General Assembly; the ministers and communicants of the Dutch Reformed; the German Reformed, the Associate Synod, and others, are not included. Third: the Methodist preachers take

members into communion, who profess not to be converted. Until we know the number of those professedly unconverted converts, no fair comparison can be drawn from the lists of communicants. Presbyterian ministers require candidates for communion to give satisfactory evidence that they are true *christians*, the Methodist preachers enlist all who will agree to be *Methodists*, by submitting to the government of the clergy.

The Reviewer asserts, erroneously, that the Presbyterian ministry has been in operation on this continent, ever since the first settlement of New England. We advise him, before he reviews again, to ask the school-boys of some neighbouring Academy, whether the New Englanders have not always been, for the most part, Congregationalists. They are not Presbyterians in church-government, though they are Calvinists in doctrine. If the reviewer will have them to be all one as Presbyterians, then he ought to have included their ministers and communicants in his statement. He would not, in that case, have had such a boastful superiority, even of numbers, to show. We have gone through his introductory arguments.

We shall now, from the Methodist Book of Discipline, and other authentic documents, give a distinct

VIEW OF METHODIST CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

1. *The General Conference* is the highest ecclesiastical body. It is composed of travelling preachers only, who are delegates chosen by the travelling preachers of the Annual Conferences. The General Conference has “full powers to make rules and regulations for our [the

Methodist] church;" under certain restrictions, which, however, the travelling preachers reserve to themselves the power to remove. See Book of Discipline, Chap. 1. Sec. 3. This Conference is, therefore, the *Legislature* of the Methodist church—they have, and they exercise, the power to "make rules, &c." which have all the force of *laws* to the whole church; and for their acts, they are responsible to no one on earth, except their constituents and brethren, the travelling preachers.

2. The twelve *Annual Conferences* are composed, each of the travelling preachers within certain bounds, and of them only.—The bishops preside, and appoint the preachers to their respective charges for the ensuing year. Among the matters which come under the cognizance of these bodies, we need mention but three:—the trial of their own members, in the last resort:—the appropriation to themselves of the monies collected from various sources:—and "the *electing* and *ordaining* of elders and deacons."—Elders are preachers authorized to administer all the ordinances. Deacons, to administer baptism only. Under these, are *preachers* who are merely licensed, and *exhorters*, who cannot take a text. The Bishops are elected by the General Conference. Dis. Chap. 1. Sec. 3.

3. *Presiding Elders*, appointed by the Bishops, have each the charge of a *District*, composed of several *Circuits*. The Presiding Elder has power, in the absence of the Bishops, "to change, receive, and *suspend* preachers in his district, during the intervals of the Conferences." During those intervals, none but the Bishop or Presiding Elder, has any power to check or restrain the

conduct of a circuit-rider. The preachers are in no wise responsible for their acts to the people, or representatives of the people.—An aggrieved society, or individual member, can only complain of him, to those high clerical officers, his brethren; who may regard the complaint, if they will,—if they will not, there is no help for it—that is all. Should they even suspend their circuit brother; a majority of the Conference may restore him; for says the discipline; whenever a travelling preacher is condemned for any thing,—“the Annual Conference shall re-consider and determine the whole matter.”—Discipline, Chap. 1. Sec. 5 and 18.

4. The Presiding Elder holds a *District Conference*, composed of the *travelling* and *local preachers* in the district. “The said district conference shall have authority to *license* proper persons to preach, and to renew their license: to *recommend* suitable candidates to the Annual Conference for deacons or elders, orders in the *local* connexion, for *admission on trial* in the travelling connexion; and to try, suspend, or acquit, any *local* preacher, &c. Provided no person shall be licensed, without being first recommended by the Quarterly Conference.” Chap. 1. Sec. 20.

5. “The Presiding Elder is “to be present, as far as practicable at all Quarterly Meetings [Society meetings and communion-seasons, once a quarter;] and to call together, at each quarterly meeting, a QUARTERLY MEETING CONFERENCE, consisting of all the *travelling* and *local preachers*, *exhorters*, *stewards* and *leaders* of the circuit, and *none else*, to hear complaints, and to receive and try appeals.” Chap. 1. Sec. 5.

As this is the only tribunal to which an aggrieved

member can appeal, to get an unjust sentence against him reversed; we shall examine particularly, how it is constituted.

1. The presiding elder, who has a casting vote, is appointed by the bishop, and responsible to him, and his brethren in Conference, only.

2. The travelling preachers of the circuit, who vote as members, are in like manner appointed, and responsible.

3. The local preachers are licensed by the district conference of preachers, and responsible to that conference. If ordained, they are ordained by the annual conference of travelling preachers.

4. Stewards (who see to the temporalities of the church) are *nominated* by the circuit-preacher, and the nomination is approved or rejected by this Quarterly Conference, and they are responsible to that same Conference, the majority of whom are dependent on the circuit-preacher. Disc. Part 2. Sec. 3.

5. The class-leaders are appointed, and removed from office, at the pleasure of the circuit-preacher. They depend constantly on his mere will, for all the dignity and power which they possess in the church. They are, no doubt, the most numerous portion of this Court of appeals, who revise the decisions of this same circuit preacher;—for every class, or little society of three or more members, has a leader. Chap. 2. Sec. 2. and Chap. 1, Sec. 9.

6. *The Exhorters.* The circuit-preacher is “to license such persons *as he may judge proper*, to officiate as exhorters in the church, provided no person shall be so licensed without the consent of the leader’s meeting, or of

the class of which he is a member." Chap. 1, Sec. 9. Here, for the first time, we have a glimpse of the people, in this system of church government. The class-meeting is to *consent* to the circuit-preacher's licensing one of their number, to exhort. And there ends the voice of the people, first and last, in the choice of any officer, high or low, in the church. This is their portion their whole portion, in their own ecclesiastical government. The class may *consent*, that the preacher, who rules them with nearly absolute power, shall license *an exhorter*! But no sooner has the preacher gained their consent, than the Book of Discipline provides for making the exhorter, thence forward, dependent on the circuit preacher and his itinerant brethren: thus—"the exhorters, so authorised, shall be subject to the annual examination of character in the Quarterly Meeting Conference, and to have their *license annually renewed by the presiding elder, or preacher having charge of the circuit, if approved by the Quarterly Meeting Conference.*" So the exhorters depend on the travelling preachers for the continuance of their license, and the people, having once given consent, forever lose all authority or influence over the only officer, who is appointed even with their *consent*. What binds the exhorter more to the interest of the ruling clergy is, that if he displease them, he will not only lose his dignity as exhorter, but with that he will lose all hope of rising in the church. He desires, of course, to be a preacher, or he would not be an exhorter. But for license to preach; and then, for ordination as a deacon or elder; and most of all, for a place among the ruling clergy; he depends mainly on the circuit preachers, and not a whit on the people or

their delegates. To the preachers he must look for promotion; for employment with a competent salary; for a much honored station in life, with almost absolute authority over a devoted people. If he desire those things, he *must* please the circuit preacher; and he *may* disregard the people. If he displease the preachers,—his race is run; they can soon put him out of the way.

Thus it appears, that all the members of this Quarterly Conference, are either travelling preachers, or their dependents; except perhaps some of the local preachers, who may not desire to enter the travelling connexion, but they being a small minority, are no restraint on the power of the ruling clergy. Such is the only tribunal to which an oppressed member of the church can appeal, from a sentence of the circuit preacher. The preacher himself votes on the appeal, and has a controlling influence over a large majority of the other votes.

This view of the Methodist Conferences, taken from the express provisions of the Book of Discipline, confirms beyond all reach of doubt, that the "Presbyterian" was correct, in the following propositions: (1) that the Bishops and clergy *ordain* ministers without allowing the people or their delegates, to judge of their fitness; and then, the Bishop appoints the pastors from among them, according to his good pleasure. To *consent* to the licensure of an *exhorter*, is a very different matter from judging of a man's fitness for the pastoral office. (2.) The travelling preachers are not responsible to the people, in any way. The people can neither choose their pastors; nor restrain their arbitrary powers; nor dismiss them

from their charges; nor appeal, with any hope of redress, from their decisions. (3.) If they do appeal, the preachers have still a controlling power over the case. The Quarterly Conference is so contrived, that the preacher appealed from, can by his own vote, and the votes of his dependents, always secure a majority. He can select his class-leaders and his exhorters, of such materials as will suit his purpose; and with their consent, he has equal discretion in the choice of his stewards.—Indeed, this mixed Conference seems to have been artfully contrived, for the purpose of screening the absolute power of the clergy, with the delusive shadow of a popular tribunal. Yet in all these three particulars, the reviewer pretends, that the Presbyterian was guilty of misrepresentation.

Let us next examine the *form* and *practice* of the rules enacted by the clergy for the

TRIAL OF CHURCH-MEMBERS.

Among the “duties,” or rather powers, of the circuit preacher, we find the following, in the Book of Discipline;—“To receive, *try*, and *expel* members, according to the form of discipline.” Chap. 1, Sec. 9.—So then, the preacher is both to *put in*, and to *turn out*, the members of the church, according to the *form* of discipline.

The form of discipline is thus expressed. “*Question*.—How shall an accused member be brought to trial?—*Answer* 1—Before the society of which he is a member, or a *select number of them*, in the presence of a bishop, elder, or deacon, &c. If the accused person be found guilty, by the decision of a *majority* of the members before whom he is brought to trial, and the crime

be such as is expressly forbidden, &c.—let the *minister or preacher*, who has charge of the circuit, expel him.” Chap. 2, Sec. 7.—In this manner, then, the preacher *tries and expels*: (1.) He arraigns the accused, and superintends the proceedings; (2.) “He directs who shall hear the case.” This is admitted by the reviewer. He not only presides as judge of the court; but in addition to the powers of a civil judge, he chooses the jury-men, and determines their number; and what is more, a bare *majority* of the jury which he *selects*, may render a verdict. Putting all these things together, we find a tremendous power in the judge of this spiritual court; especially as his power and influence are great in other respects, and he can ascertain the sentiments of the jurors, before he selects them.

But (3); after the clerical judge has packed his jury, he submits to their decision only the question of *fact*; all they are to say, is, whether the accused has done the specified acts charged upon him. Then the preacher is to *expound the law*; and if he choose to affirm, that the act or acts which a majority of his select jury find sustained, are contrary to the word of God, or the rules of the church, he may *expel* the accused. The language of the Discipline is artfully framed; but a little attention will enable the reader to discern, that such must be its true construction; and we shall presently show, that so the rule has been put in practice. Observe the form of expression; “If the accused person be found guilty [namely, of the acts charged] by a majority, &c.” there the power of the jury ends. Then it is said—“and the crime be such, &c;—the minister or preacher—shall expel him.” It is left for the minister to decide

if the crime be *such*, &c. and his sentence it is, which must *expel*.

Now let us see what sorts of offences expose a member to expulsion, "according to the form of discipline."

(1) "If the crime be such as is expressly forbidden by the word of God, and sufficient to exclude a person from the kingdom of grace and glory." (2) "In cases of neglect of duties of *any kind*, imprudent conduct, indulging sinful tempers, or words, or *disobedience to the order and discipline of the church*;"--the offender is to be reproved for the two first offences, and 'cut off' for the third. (3) "If a member of the church shall be clearly convicted of endeavoring to sow dissensions in any of our societies, *by inveighing against* [that is, finding fault with] either our doctrines or *discipline*, such person, so offending, shall be first reproved by the senior minister or preacher of the circuit; and if he persist in such pernicious practices, he shall be expelled from the church."--We shall soon see what an arbitrary use has been made of this last rule. Suffice it to observe that in all those cases, the preacher is the sole judge of what is a violation of the rule. If he can select a jury, the majority of whom will convict the accused of some act, which he (the preacher) can control, or distort, into a violation of any law of God, neglect of duty, or rule of discipline--he is authorized to expel the member, "according to the form of discipline." And for an unjust use of this power, he can hardly be punished even by his clerical superiors; for if he say he acted according to his judgment, how can he be convicted of intentional wrong? He only used the power which the Discipline gave him. Here let the reader

call to mind the forementioned claim of the General Conference—that the clergy are “the Divinely authorised *expounders of doctrines, ordinances and moral discipline!* and that they are not to be “controlled by others” in those respects;—and he will see what they allude to, and what a tremendous use they can make of their Divinely authorised, and uncontrollable, power of *expounding*.

But that power is not yet fully unfolded. “If in any of the above-mentioned cases (says the Discipline) the minister or preacher *differ in judgment* from the *majority* of the society, or of the select number, concerning the guilt or innocence of the accused person, the trial in such case may be referred by the minister or preacher to the ensuing Quarterly meeting Conference.” So, if even the majority of a select number of a dependent society, do not decide according to the minister’s pleasure! he may nullify their verdict, and refer the case to his still more dependent creatures, the *class leaders, exhorters, &c;* among whom he and his brother preachers sit and vote. There he can hardly fail of a majority, to quell a refractory member, or to acquit a devoted favorite. Besides all this: the preacher may blot out the names of members by his own “arbitrary decree,” (as the Presbyterian called it) for absenting themselves from class-meeting. For all these rules of the Discipline, see Chap. 2. Sec. 7 and 2.

To manifest the practical operation of those clerical rules of Discipline, we shall now cite a very important example. It is well known, that for a good many years past, an increasing number of the members and local preachers of the Methodist church, have advocated

a reform in its government and discipline. Finding themselves unable, for want of concert, to act with advantage, they formed themselves into a "Union Society;"—simply, as they declared, "to embody their sentiments, and act together advisedly." They also published a paper called "Mutual Rights," in which they argued with decent firmness in favor of their sentiments. In November, 1827, a Convention of their delegates met in Baltimore, to prepare a Memorial to the General Conference. With the memorial, they also published an Address to their brethren, in which they declare, that "ministers have been suspended, members arraigned for trial, under an extraordinary combination systematically organized, to break up the Union Society of Baltimore, and all this has been done, merely because they have advocated in "Mutual Rights" a lay representation [representation of the people] in the legislative department of the church." Again, they say, "It has been attempted to deprive our brethren of the *liberty of speech* and of the *press*; they have endeavored to wrest it from us by various stratagems, and have at length proceeded to open violence. They have arraigned our [local] preachers and people, and dragged them before their tribunal, for no other reason, but *because they supported the efforts that are making to bring about a better state of things in our ecclesiastical government and administration.*" This violent treatment of the advocates of reform is explained in the report of a committee appointed by the Convention, "to inquire into the grounds of certain trials, &c." The report states, that a number of local preachers had been suspended, and members expelled, "*purely on the ground of their holding*

dissent from and publishing their objections to, some parts of their church-government and its administration." The most important fact remains to be mentioned. It appears that the circuit-preacher in Baltimore, appointed a committee, or "select number," to try the question; whether the accused members had done certain *specified acts*. The "select number" reported that "the first and second specifications were sustained;" that is, the two first acts charged, were proved; namely, that the accused belonged to the "Union Society," or Reformers; and that they patronized the "Mutual Rights" paper, which argued for reform. Whereupon, the circuit preacher told the accused in writing, that he would *expel* them from the church, except they promised "forthwith to withdraw from the Union Society" (or party of Reformers,) "and to withhold their aid from such publications." Many others, we understand, have since been expelled on the same grounds. See the printed Proceedings of the Convention.

These facts need no comment. They prove by a practical demonstration, the despotic power and arbitrary rule of the itinerant clergy. By means of the "select number" they convict members, and expel them; merely for advocating some of the most plain and precious rights of man. They not only refuse to give the people the least share in their own government, but they wield the arbitrary power which they possess, to stop the mouths of all under their control, who dare complain of the galling yoke, or seek relief from its grievous oppression.

The Holston reviewer, with reference to the "select number," asks, "Are there no *dirty* cases, which should

not be brought before the female part of a class?" We answer, yes; but was there no way in which the clergy might have surmounted that difficulty, without making "dirty cases," a pretext to assume a power, which subjects the character and privileges of every church-member, to their own arbitrary disposal? They ought to have adopted a *clean* reason for assuming to themselves the choice of the "select number."

There remains yet to be noticed another important rule, which the Methodist clergy have enacted; and which may, in the course of human events, produce an entire revolution in the civil government of this country. We allude to the rule by which the travelling preachers have assumed a judicial superintendence over the civil transactions of their people. We shall copy the principal parts of the rule.

Disc. Chap. 1. Sec. 9. "On any dispute between two or more members of our church concerning the payment of debts or otherwise, which cannot be settled by the parties concerned, the preacher who has charge of the circuit shall inquire into the circumstances of the case; and shall recommend to the contending parties a reference, consisting of one arbiter chosen by the plaintiff and another chosen by the defendant: which two arbiters so chosen shall nominate a third; the three arbiters being members of our church." [Then the Discipline allows an appeal to the Quarterly Conference of preachers, class-leaders, &c. who may, if they "see sufficient reason," grant a new trial with a jury of 5 arbiters.] "If any member of our church shall refuse, in cases of debt or other disputes, to refer the matter to arbitration, when recommended by him who has charge

of the circuit, or shall enter into a law suit with another member before these measures are taken, he shall be expelled, unless the case be of such a nature as to require and justify a process at law. Whenever a complaint is made against any member of our church, for non-payment of debt; when the accounts are adjusted, and the amount ascertained, the preacher having the charge shall call the debtor before a committee of at least three, to show cause why he does not make payment. The committee shall determine what further time shall be granted him for payment, and what security, if any, shall be given for payment, and in case the debtor refuses to comply, he shall be expelled; but in such case he may appeal to the Quarterly Meeting Conference, and their decision shall be final. And in case the creditor complains that justice is not done him, he may lay his grievance before the Quarterly Meeting Conference, and their decision shall be final; and if the creditor refuse to comply, he shall be expelled."

Before we comment on the provisions of this clerical law, we shall notice the scriptural authority on which the "Divinely authorised expounders" rely for its justification. The only passage of the Bible which affords them the least shadow of "divine authority" for it, is 1 Corinthians vi, 1--6. "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints, &c?" From this, the reviewer, in imitation of his brethren, thus argues: "Here St Paul prohibits the practice of christians going to law before any persons but the *saints*. That he did not forbid it on the ground of civil officers being *heathens* as the letter writer asserts, appears from the fact that although

he did not allow his brethren to "go to law" before them, yet he enforced the necessity of being "subject to the high powers," for, said he, "the powers that be are ordained of God." Rom. xiii, 1, 2, 3. From the above with many other passages of scripture, it appears that the members of the christian church should submit themselves to the civil authorities of the country in which they live; yet nevertheless, they were not allowed to "go to law" among themselves, before the unjust, that is, those who are not "saints." The practice of our church is therefore sustained by *Divine authority*."

Such is the argument. Now what are the facts of the case? The Corinthian christians lived under *heathen* magistrates who, often oppressed and persecuted the Christians. It was therefore obviously improper for christians to refer their disputes to the enemies of their religion, who would thence find occasion to inflict additional injuries on both christians and christianity. The Christians being at that time considered by the heathen rulers as a mere Jewish sect, were of course, allowed the privilege that the Jews had, in every part of the Roman Empire, to choose magistrates of their own nation, who should decide their intestine disputes. See Josephus Antiq. B. 14, Ch. 10. Paul therefore re-proved the Corinthian christians for carrying their law suits into *heathen* courts when they might refer them to christian judges. In verse 4th, he mentions their "judgments in things pertaining to this life" or rather, as we may translate the *βιωτικὰ κρίματα*, "secular judicatories," which christians in common with Jews were permitted by the Roman Government to have. But in our country the church is in very different circumstances. The body of the nation is professedly christian; the laws

are formed and administered on christian principles; and in the very oath that binds them, judges, jurors and witnesses acknowledge the true God, and the authority of the holy evangelists. Our civil courts are, therefore, the very sort of tribunals to which the apostle directed christians to resort, in preference to heathen courts. By "the saints" he meant simply those who acknowledged the truth and obligations of the gospel; the heathens, he distinguished as "the unjust," and in verse 6th as "the unbelievers." By these terms, he no more intended to signify that all the saints were morally sanctified, than that all "the unjust" were unrighteous judges in civil affairs. He characterised each class according to the sort of religion which they professed.

The reviewer quotes Rom. xiii, 1, and other precepts which enjoin obedience to government, in order to prove that Paul did not prohibit christians to go to law in heathen courts because the judges were *heathens*, but merely because they were *civil* officers. There is no middle ground. Paul must have intended to keep christians out of all courts except church courts, or he must have meant to debar them only from *heathen* courts. If he meant to confine them forever to church courts—there is an end of all civil courts wherever the gospel prevails. Now the reviewer admits that christians ought to submit to *civil* government, while he denies them the right of going to law in *civil* courts. Why, then, might not Paul require christians to submit to *heathen* government, although he disapproved of their resorting to *heathen* courts? And what right have any set of men to carry the apostle's prohibition farther than he carried it himself? He spoke of *heathen* courts—and none other. He could not have meant *civil* courts as such; because, if christians

be allowed to go to law in any way, the court which exercises jurisdiction over their civil affairs, is to all intents and purposes, a *civil* court, whether it be composed of saints or sinners, clergymen or laymen.

We are not advocates of litigation. When disputes can be settled justly, without recourse to legal process, the parties ought certainly to prefer the more peaceful and speedy way. But the Methodist rule is not designed to prevent litigation; it only establishes a court of civil jurisdiction, different from the tribunals provided by the law of the land. Before the church court, the rule permits the subjects of Methodist government to be as litigious as they please: it only forbids them to submit their differences to the unsanctified courts over which the travelling preachers are neither legislators nor judges.

The powers of the circuit-rider over the civil affairs of church-members will appear from the following list, which we have taken from the provisions of the rule above quoted.—*First*; The preacher is to judge whether “the case be of such a nature as to justify a process at law,”—consequently, Methodists dare not venture on a legal process without first gaining their preacher’s permission.—*Second*; The parties must appear before the preacher whenever he may please to summon them, in order that he may “inquire into the circumstances of the case.”—*Third*; To prosecute the inquiry with effect, the preacher may send for persons, papers, &c.; examine the parties, their witnesses, *papers*, &c.—*Fourth*; The preacher being a man of ‘many businesses,’ “here to-day and gone to-morrow” he may, as a court of inquiry, adjourn the case from time to time, until he has wrought the parties into a compliant frame of mind.—*Fifth*; Having gotten the parties in train, and ferretted out the circum-

stances of the case, the preacher is qualified to deliver a judicial opinion on the merits of the case; and may advise the parties how to settle their difference without farther proceedings. The parties having a profound respect for his judgment, and quite as profound a fear of displeasing their spiritual ruler who bears "the prerogatives" of Christ, will hardly reject his advice. They will beware of the "select number."—*Sixth*; The preacher shall, (if the parties do not otherwise settle their dispute) "recommend" a reference to arbiters. But what the discipline artfully calls a recommendation, is in fact an authoritative *command*, which the parties must obey under pain of losing their church privileges. The preacher expels all who say *nay* to his recommendation. He is not forbidden also to recommend the arbiters; and if he do, what member would think it expedient to make another choice?—*Seventh*: The preacher, in case either party appeal to the Quarterly Conference, would sit as judge in that court of appeals, among his dependents, the exhorters, class leaders, &c. The said court of appeals, may, if they "see sufficient reason," grant a new trial. The circuit preacher, having formerly "examined into the circumstances of the case" and presided at the trial, is of course, the only judge in the court of appeals, qualified to give an opinion whether a new trial ought to be granted. The rest must take their opinions from him, unless they re-examine the parties, witnesses and papers, which, if a new trial be allowed would occasion no less than four examinations of the case before its final decision; two of them by the arbiters, unless the arbiters take the circumstances from the statement of the preacher. Would not the parties generally prefer to leave the matter at once to the preacher's decision? They might

as well.—*Eighth*; Should a creditor, after his claim “is adjusted, and the amount ascertained,” find his debtor slow, or unwilling to make payment; he must, in order to get his money, go and make his complaint to the preacher, who “shall call the debtor before a committee of not less than three, to show cause, &c.”—*Ninth*; as the preachers assume all powers which they do not expressly grant to the people—the preacher may of course select the committee, as he does when members are tried for spiritual offences. By this power of selection he is enabled to govern every thing relative to the payment of debts. Creditors must look to him for the means of obtaining their dues from slow or unwilling debtors. If instead of going to him, they resort to the laws of their country for justice, he will expel them from the church.

Who that considers the above particulars, can fail to perceive that the travelling clergy have assumed a complete jurisdiction over the civil affairs of their people, with powers greater in several respects, than a judge is allowed to exercise in our civil courts? They take under their authority every thing among their members which could be brought before a civil officer. And what in all free governments is so carefully avoided—the same persons make the law, expound the law, and carry the law into execution. They have *all the powers* of government, both ecclesiastical and civil, in their own hands. They are at once legislative, judicial, and executive officers—and in all, they are neither limited nor responsible. If they do not inflict civil penalties, such as pecuniary fines and imprisonment—their people may thank the laws of the land for that—and so may we all. They carry their penalties as far as they can.

We do not suppose that the clerical judges think it good

policy, as yet, to exercise their whole power in ordinary cases. If they would work the business craftily, they must stretch the exercise of their civil power, by imperceptible degrees, and wait till the people's minds are habituated to it, and filled with slavish fanaticism, before they proceed to exert the whole might of their civil authority. It was by not snatching the reins of absolute control too suddenly, nor bearing them at first with too a tight hand, that the popish clergy trained the people at last to complete submission to their despotic rule.

The rule under consideration does, in its present form, suppose the possibility that some disputes among Methodists may "require and justify a process at law" in the civil court. Of that however the preacher is to judge. The cases supposed, are probably such as the preacher may find to be totally unmanageable in his ecclesiastical court. But any permission to "go to law before the unjust, that is, those who are not saints," is inconsistent with the pretended "Divine authority" of the rule. If Methodists may sometimes go to law before those who are not saints—that is, not Methodists—why not always? Hence we infer that such supposed cases are only a temporary concession granted through necessity, until the times may enable the clergy to carry their "Divine authority" into complete execution. When those times shall arrive, we apprehend that consistency will lead the church rulers yet a step farther. If "the unjust" have no Divine authority, or qualification, to judge between Methodists; what better right or fitness have they to judge between a *saint*, (that is, a *Methodist*,) and another man? The same principle which, in this country, would make it wrong to refer disputes between Methodists to unholy jurisdiction, would make it wrong

to refer any dispute in which a saint is one of the parties, to an unsanctified tribunal. When the progress of Methodist principles shall give the itinerent preachers control over a majority of our citizens, we may expect that the unhallowed courts of the land will be compelled to give up jurisdiction over all cases in which a saint is concerned, and leave them to the sole cognizance of those who wield the Divine authority.

One thing is certain. The progress of Methodism is undermining our civil courts. By drawing people into their society, the travelling preachers are drawing law-business from the civil into the ecclesiastical courts. In proportion as they gain disciples, they diminish the importance, by diminishing the business, of our public tribunals. If they did so by destroying litigation itself, they would do well. But their rule only transfers it to their own jurisdiction. Should their active zeal and extensive views be crowned with success; should they *methodize* the generality of the people—what will be the immediate and inevitable consequence? The civil courts will have dwindled into insignificance; while the clerical courts will have grown into the chief tribunals of the country. The clerical legislature will put their courts under a new and enlarged system of regulations; and will ordain a code of laws for their government. The Methodized people, filled with religious enthusiasm, and grounded in the slavish principles of the clergy, will look on the ruling preachers as the vicegerants of Christ, and feel bound to submit implicitly to their authority. They now do so. Custom will add its force to religious fanaticism, and every year fasten the clerical jurisdiction more firmly on the community. Thorough going Methodists (and Methodists are generally such) are now remarkable for

their devotion to every doctrine and practice inculcated by their preachers. Their minds are proof against reason and argument. They will hardly even read anything in opposition to their own opinions. This bigotry, united with the fervors of a shouting enthusiasm, will grow and become general with the progress of Methodism; and will make it utterly vain for the remnant of our citizens to endeavor to convince them of their delusion, or to save the country from the overwhelming torrent of fanaticism, and to check the despotic power of the clerical aristocracy. Do we not see a proof of this in the "tame submission and zealous devotion" of the Methodists to the despotic rule of their clergy? Perhaps about one tenth of them have taken the alarm, and have labored to convince their brethren of the danger—but in vain. The great body of them are fixed immoveably in their unlimited devotion to the principles and the rule of their sovereign priest-hood.

Does it not become all the friends of civil and religious liberty, to investigate the nature and tendency of a system which is producing such effects in the country? If not stopped in its progress, will it not in the first place break up our courts of justice, and then as a natural consequence, subvert our state legislatures also? What need of civil courts, when the people are debarred, by clerical authority, from using them? what need of judicial laws, when the courts who administer them are reduced to nothing? What need of a legislature to make laws, which the citizens, once Methodized, are no longer to be governed by? Let Methodism gain a decisive prevalence in the country—and not only will both the legislative and judicial departments of our government be reduced to insignificance, but the majority of the people,

who rule the country, will themselves be under the despotic control of the Methodist clergy. It requires no prophet to tell us, that if the spiritual Lords shall even permit the form of a civil government to continue, they will by their authority over the people, control the measures of the government, and as the popish priests formerly did, they will employ the "secular arm," to carry their spiritual decrees into execution.

Having exhibited the principal features of their government, we shall now draw out a few lines of

THE POLICY OF THE METHODIST CLERGY.

We shall undertake to display, in true colors, their politic *methods* of acquiring obedient disciples and abundant revenue. In discharging this unpleasant part of our office, we shall proceed, as heretofore, in the way of *argument*, not of loose declamation. We shall employ no abusive language; but we shall, without fear, favor or affection, declare the truth, for the instruction of our fellow citizens on a subject of great consequence to both their temporal and spiritual welfare. We catch no flying rumours; we tell no tales of personal scandal: we ground our arguments chiefly on what the Methodist clergy themselves have written; and for the rest of what we advance; we go on facts of the most notorious character.

We first present to our readers

THE BOOK CONCERN.

The following manifestations of this great *concern* are found in the book of Discipline, Part 2. Sec. 7, and Chap. 1. Sec. 8, 9, 16.

There are in New York "an Editor and General Book Steward, and an assistant to act under him; both of whom are chosen (by the New York Conference) from among

the travelling preachers.” There is also a Book Agent in Cincinnati, who manages the *concern* in the Western country; and is, by virtue of his appointment, a member of the Ohio conference” and therefore also *a preacher of the travelling connexion.* “The Editor and Book Steward shall publish such Books and Tracts [only] as are recommended by the General Conference, or such as may be approved by an annual Conference,” or by a Book Committee—*all travelling preachers.* So much for the publication of the Books; and now for the disposal of them.

“It shall be the duty of every presiding Elder, where no Book Steward is appointed, to see that *his district be fully supplied with books.* He shall have the books distributed among the several circuits in his district, and keep an account with *every preacher* who receives or sells them, receive the money and forward it to the General Book Steward.” “It shall be the duty of *every preacher* who has charge of a circuit, to see that *his circuit*” and “that *every society*”—“be duly supplied with books.” He must “be diligent to *spread the books.*” “If the preacher who has charge of a circuit be negligent in *dispersing the books,* the presiding elder shall commit the charge of the books to another.” So much for the distribution and sale of the books: now for the proceeds of this vast business.

“The profits arising from the Book Concern shall be regularly applied to the support of *the distressed travelling preachers* and their families, the widows and orphans of preachers, &c.”

We now call the reader’s attention to some remarks on this singular Book Concern.—(1) Observe the jealousy with which the *travelling preachers* confine the manage-

ment of the whole concern to themselves; a layman or local preacher is not to touch it, unless it be as a subordinate salesman in his neighborhood. (2) Mark the anxious concern of the ruling clergy to have every *district, circuit and society, duly and fully* supplied with books--and in general to *spread and disperse* the books wherever purchasers of any description may be found. (3) Consider the objects which those clergy evidently have in view--namely, to gain money for themselves, and to extend their power by supplying the people as much as possible with Methodist reading. These objects deserve to be more particularly unfolded.

One direct and primary object unquestionably is to make money by a universal system of Book trading.—The travelling clergy sell their books at least as high, often higher, than other booksellers. Therefore, it is no part of their design to furnish the poor with *cheap* reading. They make no provision for supplying any class of people--not even the poorest--with good books at a small price. They circulate books only for gain. They profess, indeed, to devote the profits of this mighty and gainful traffic to the distressed travelling preachers, their families, widows, &c. But by the *distressed* preachers they mean themselves in general.—They annually divide their gains among themselves; though they may bestow some small proportion on the widows of their deceased brethren. Those widows must be comparatively few, and their portion consequently small. This plea of *distress* we formerly noticed. They never fail to introduce it when *money and power* are in view. It is employed here to promote the Book-trade. They importune their people to buy for “sweet charity’s sake;” they are in distress! We shall see yet

more of this moving argument. For the same reason, we apprehend, the widows and orphans of preachers are joined with distressed travelling preachers. They add at least as much to the sale of the books, as they get from the profits. *No separate fund is provided for widows and orphans.* Whatever is done for them, must be done for the travelling preachers too; and the travelling preachers have the sole power of dividing the profits.

The "Presbyterian" asserted that the Methodist clergy govern nearly all the reading of their people. Can the fact be doubted by any man who looks at this Book Concern, in connexion with the power and influence of the travelling clergy over their people? The clergy select the books, take effectual measures to glut every society with their books—and urge the people to buy for the charitable purpose of relieving their distressed preachers, their families, widows and orphans. Must not the result be, that the Methodists generally have their libraries so filled, and their pockets so emptied by the preachers, as to leave them little time to read, and little money to buy any other books? And is it not a notorious fact, that the common people among the Methodists read scarcely any books or tracts, except those which their preachers have selected and sold them? Now it is not easy to conceive a more effectual way of obtaining absolute control over a people, than this scheme of supplying them with nearly all their books. To govern a man's reading, is to govern his sentiments; for no man, even of strong mind, can resist the influence of ingenious writings, when he confines himself to a particular class of books, which are all adapted to bend his mind towards one set of opinions.

The Book Concern, like money at compound interest, multiplies its gains by the effect of its own operations. While it furnishes a present supply of cash for the preachers, it creates yearly a new stock of customers, by diffusing Methodist principles and extending the dominion of the clergy. The "Presbyterian" truly characterised their books as "mostly controversial, and almost exclusively Methodistical; and calculated to prejudice readers strongly against other denominations, by giving perverted views of their doctrines, and unfavorable opinions of their character." No intelligent man can be ignorant of the fact, who has read their *favorite* publications, such as "Fletcher's Checks"—"Doctrinal Tracts"—"Wesley's Works" and the volumes purporting to be "Lives," chiefly of Methodist preachers.—These volumes seem designed to delineate the "perfection," "the labors, toils, drudgeries and sufferings" of Methodist preachers, and their "persecutions," which they are said to have met with from ministers of other denominations, who are of course, in these Methodist biographies, nearly always money-preaching hypocrites, and their people not much better. They stood in the way of Methodist preachers: therefore they were persecutors, and all that.

The Methodist reviewer says that the "Presbyterian" misrepresented the character of the books, because in the list are found such books as "Alleine's Alarm," "Baxter's Call, &c." Yes, we know they "disperse" books under those excellent titles; and since the Methodist writer appeals to them, we shall do the public an act of justice, by exposing the disingenuous policy of these clerical booksellers in relation to such works. They have taken certain books of Calvinistic Divines,

books universally popular, and therefore profitable articles in the way of trade: but finding passages in them too Calvinistical to answer the double purpose of making money and making Methodists, they have mutilated and corrupted the books, mangling and altering until they have made the venerable authors ⁶²¹⁹ speak a language ¹⁹³¹ when dead, which they would have abhorred while living;” and now they vend those depraved books under the original titles, and yearly deceive thousands of unsuspecting purchasers with their false ware. To Calvinists, they sell them as the works of Calvinistic Divines. It is time to warn Calvinists of this deliberate system of imposture. It began with Mr Wesley himself; and his followers do without scruple what they have seen with their father. If any one desire proof of their corruption of Calvinistic books, let him compare, for example, the genuine Alleine’s Alarm with what the Methodist clergy sell under that name: but the Methodists will not attempt we presume, to deny the fact, whatever reason they may allege in excuse for such a sly policy.

Next, let us mark their *policy* in relation to the great national institutions, in which Christians of nearly all denominations have united to promote their common Christianity. The chief of them are “The American Bible Society” and “The American Tract Society.” The “Presbyterian” observed that the Methodist Itinerant Clergy generally keep their people from associating with other denominations in support of these institutions. The fact is avowed. The Methodist Book Concern, with the Bishops at their head, have come out in open opposition to them. From them the Knoxville reviewer has borrowed the following *reason* for their opposition.—“The Methodist preachers have been long since con-

vinced, that most of those institutions which are got up as National or American, are under the entire control of the Presbyterians, and are conducted with a special reference to their advancement." This plea, or rather charge, of the Methodist clergy *cannot possibly be true*. No man in his senses will believe it, when he is acquainted with the following facts. (1) The American Bible Society publishes nothing except the pure Bible without "note or comment;" and the American Tract Society publishes only such Tracts as have been examined and *unanimously* approved by a committee of five clergymen, of different denominations, *one of whom is a Methodist*. (2) Both these great Societies are conducted by officers chosen, in just proportion, from among Episcopalians, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans and other denominations—among whom, also, while they were willing, was a reasonable portion of Methodists: and the supporters as well as officers, are of nearly all denominations except Roman Catholics. Some high-church Episcopalian bishops have raised their voices against the Bible Society, but their objection is, that the Bible is circulated without note or comment."

Now the charge made against these institutions by the Methodist travelling clergy, cannot possibly be true; unless the pure, simple Bible, and Tracts in which a Methodist can find nothing objectionable—have a tendency to advance Presbyterianism exclusively. They cannot sustain their charge without admitting that the pure Bible is against Methodism and in favor of Presbyterianism: nor without supposing that Baptists, Episcopalians, &c. are stupid enough to support mere Presbyterian institutions without suspecting any thing of the matter! The Methodist clergy must fight under false colours.

They are not so irrational as to believe what they assert. They artfully put up a mere pretence (the best they could find) to veil their real motives from public observation. But our readers are prepared, we suppose, to see through the flimsy covering, and to discern that they really have no other reason for opposing the Bible and Tract Societies than this, that these societies interfere in some degree with their own gainful and sectarian scheme of book-selling. Each of these societies is a Book Concern, supported by the common charity of Christians, for the disinterested and philanthropic purpose of diffusing the pure Word of God, and the fundamentals of their common faith, without regard to sect or party. Meanwhile the itinerant clergy are driving a lucrative trade with their sectarian Book Concern: they find many of the poor and destitute supplied with "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation," but not put into Methodist form; and they see them supplied by the hand of charity, often "without money and without price," and always without paying a *profit* to "the distressed travelling preachers." They perceive also that these charitable Book Concerns do not *especially* promote Methodism; they only promote Christianity. The Methodist Book Concern is formed exclusively for the advancement of the sect; its managers show no partiality for the pure Bible; they disperse apparently with more zeal, the Sectarian Bibles and Testaments of Wesley, Clarke, &c. The Methodist Concern is adapted to gain subjects for the despotic rule of the itinerant clergy; the concern of the others is only to gain subjects for the easy yoke of Jesus Christ, and converts from Satan unto God. Now we would ask, Why do the Methodist Clergy oppose the Bible and Tract Societies? Would they rather

see multitudes perish in darkness and sin, than see them converted to any thing but Methodism? If they really prefer the salvation of men to the advancement of their sect and the profits of their Book Concern—why oppose the circulation of the pure Bible and faultless Tracts, while they are themselves trafficking so diligently in Fletcher's Checks, Wesley's Testament, and their controversial Tracts? We leave the subject with our readers, and are perfectly willing that all who can, shall assign a liberal and disinterested motive, to the strange conduct of those clerical opponents of the best religious charities of the age. They are also assailing the American Sunday School Union; with similar pretences, and no doubt, for similar ends. We shall not say any more on the subject, but pass to another feature of their policy.

On reading their Book of Discipline we were struck with the remarkable care which they have taken not to acknowledge any Christians, nor any church except their own, while they represent the conversion of the world as their own peculiar work. We lay no decisive stress on the following particulars taken singly, but on the whole in connexion. (1) In the beginning of the Book they say that Mr Wesley "was the father of the great revival of religion now *extending over the earth by means of the Methodists.*" A pregnant hint this, of their extensive views. (2) "The world says 'the Methodists are no better than *other people.*' This is not true in the general." Ch. i, 14. Note, those 'other people' must be 'other professed Christians,' or they must be people of the world in general. On the first supposition, there is a marked avoidance of acknowledgment, and a claim that Methodists are better than other Christians; on the latter supposition, all but Methodists are

lumped together as the world. (3) They often speak of "the work of God," by which they mean the conversion of mankind: Thus Ch. i, 17: "If we [the itinerant clergy] be united, *what can stand before us?* If we are divided, we shall destroy ourselves, *the work of God*, and the souls of our people." Here they openly affirm that "the work of God" depends on them, and plainly hint that by union they will carry *all* before them," sweep down every thing that stands in the way of their "taking the world," as they express it in their song. (3) Chap. i, 22. "Let no person who is not a member of our church be admitted to the communion without examination, &c. No person shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper among us who is guilty of any practice for which we would exclude a member of our church." Here is obvious reference to professors of other denominations; for they are distinguished from members "of our church." They are admitted to occasional communion "on examination;" their profession in another church counts nothing, they are not even acknowledged as members of any church, or it does not appear from this Book of Discipline that another church can exist, where Methodists are. The phrase "our church" does imply some other; but they could not avoid that phrase, and the other church may be in Europe, or it may be a false church; as we use the phrase "our God," to distinguish the true God from them "that be called Gods." (4) Ch. 2. Sec. 4. is headed "of the privileges granted to serious persons who are not of our church?" Those "serious persons" may attend class-meetings and love-feasts;" but the same person not more than twice *unless he become a member.*" Does this signify the end for which privileges are granted to "serious persons not of

our church?" (5) Sec. 5, is "On Marriage." "We do not prohibit our people from marrying persons who are *not of our church*, provided they "have the form and are seeking the power of Godliness." They condemn intermarriages with "*unawakened* persons." So they give us to understand, that "persons not of our church" may be any thing but Christians and members of a church, they may be "awakened," "serious," "having the form, and seeking the power of Godliness," but nothing more.

Now it may be, that the Confessions of Faith and regulations of several denominations, do not happen expressly to mention other branches of God's Church. But that omission will bear no comparison with these, unless those confessions, &c. have in like manner purposely and frequently avoided such acknowledgment when it came in their way, and have given such broad hints that their clergy alone are to carry "the work of God" over the earth.

We shall next bring forward some other parts of the Methodist book of discipline, to show what means, in addition to the Book Concern, are employed by the travelling preachers, to raise money for themselves. We wish to make our readers acquainted with this subject, because those travelling preachers are in the habit of railing against the Presbyterian ministers as money-preachers, and of making an outcry about subscriptions, pew-rents, &c. The Discipline, Part 2. Sec. 5, gives the following among other directions: "*Every preacher having charge of a circuit shall earnestly recommend to every class or society in his circuit, to raise a quarterly or annual collection by voluntary contribution, or in such other way or manner as they may judge most expedient.*" Quere: What other way than voluntary contri-

bution do they allude to? And what Methodist will disobey the *earnest recommendation* of his circuit preacher? That earnest recommendation actually draws forth regular quarterly contributions from almost every Methodist pocket, big or little, male or female, bond or free, in which a mite is to be found. If the preacher be not satisfied with the amount, he gives the hint to his steward, who is required by the Discipline, "to write circular letters to all the societies to be more liberal." Part 2, 4. Public collections from the people are also made at every annual and general Conference. Moreover, "Every preacher who has charge of a circuit, shall make a *yearly* collection, and if expedient, a *quarterly* one, in every congregation where there is a probability that the people will be willing to contribute." Part 2, Sec. 5. As the members of society are also a part of every congregation, they have generally *four public* and *four private* opportunities per annum to contribute to the support of their preachers; and we presume they seldom fail, and that few of any congregation, whether they be members or not, can fail to open their purses, when they hear the preachers call for their money. The Discipline furnishes the preacher with a ready made speech for the occasion, which, if it were not too long we would gladly copy in full for the edification of our readers. This speech was made by and for those travelling preachers, who so often let loose their invectives against money preachers. The following extracts will show in what terms, and with what spirit, those same travelling preachers call for money.

"How shall we send laborers into those parts where they are most of all wanted? Many are willing to hear but not to bear the expense. Does it not lie upon us,

meanwhile to supply their lack of service? To raise money out of which, from time to time, that expense may be defrayed? By this means, those who willingly offer themselves may travel through every part, whether there be societies or not, *without being burdensome to any*. Thus may the gospel, *in the life and power thereof*, be spread from sea to sea. Besides this, in carrying on so large a work *through the continent*, there are calls for money in various ways, and we must frequently be at considerable expense, or the work must be at a full stop. *Many* too are the occasional *distresses* of our preachers which require an immediate supply." After a few words more, the preacher is supposed to raise his voice to the topmost pitch, and to cry out—"Men and brethren, help! was there ever such a call since you first heard the Gospel sound? Help to relieve your companions in Jesus [us preachers] *who are pressed above measure*. Help to send forth *able* and willing laborers into your Lord's vineyard! Help to propagate the gospel to the remotest corners of the earth! So shall it appear that *we* are indeed one body united by one spirit. So shall the *baptized heathens* be once again constrained to say, see how these *christians* love one another!"

On this singular piece of eloquence we remark, (1) All who in this christian country are looking on the Methodists are characterised as "baptized heathens," while the Methodists are the "christians" who love one another. (2) "The work of converting the world is still represented as a peculiarly Methodist work: if the people do not give the itinerant preachers money enough, they say "the work must be at a full stop." (3) They who call so earnestly for money, apply all they get

to their own use; they carry it to the Conference, and there these "able and willing laborers" divide it among themselves. (4) While they are nearly all carrying on their collections at once, and generally at the rate of eight times a year--each one ingeniously represents his collections to be mainly for the purpose of supplying the destitute "who are unwilling to bear the expense, and to send laborers to every part without being burdensome to any," while these laborers in every part are living on the hospitality of the people and gathering money wherever they can get it. (5) They still complain of their "*many distresses*;" they are "*pressed above measure*." Now in good truth, what do they mean by those perpetual cries of distress; What are their peculiar sufferings? Have they to walk their circuits? Are their horses lean? Do they, more than other men, suffer famine and nakedness and perils and stripes and imprisonments? Does it rain and blow on them only? Does no house receive them; and are they supplied by their entertainers with miserable fare? And is the exercise of dominion over submissive multitudes--and is the extension of that dominion by new exertions--a thing so grievous to human nature? If in all these respects they suffer no extraordinary hardships--especially as most of them were accustomed to hard labor before they became preachers--what do they mean by their cries of "help! help!" "give! give!"

Finally, we have in this part of the discipline a glimpse of the policy, which we know has sometimes, and which we fear has frequently, been practiced by the itinerant preachers, when they begin their "work" at a place. If it be a destitute place, where the people are unacquainted with matters of religion; they first endeavor to

fill the people's minds with admiration for their disinterested benevolence, in travelling through frost and storms for their benefit, and with prejudices against the doctrines and ministers of other denominations, especially the Presbyterians, whose doctrines they represent as a horrible system of antinomian fatalism—their people are mere formalists, and their ministers as college-bred idlers who will not preach without a great salary. They strengthen these impressions by means of their *books* and *tracts*. Thus they work until they get a society formed. Then they begin for the first time to intimate the propriety of some small contributions of money, not for *themselves*—oh no, it is the *Presbyterians* who preach for money—but only to “send laborers into those parts where they are most wanted.” Having by degrees got the people trained to the business; then, “Men and brethren, help!”—But if they find a place already occupied by a pastor and congregation; they begin their work with professions of universal charity for all denominations, especially for such as they find on the ground. Thus they get invitations to preach in their houses, and opportunity to “work” on the ignorant and wavering part of the people. Having gained friends in this way, and organized a class, they next want a meeting-house. While that is in agitation, they are peculiarly liberal and friendly in their sentiments: they and other christians are all “brethren;” and why should they not help one another in their endeavors to do good? The subscription paper goes to every man in the neighborhood, ministers not excepted. When, through the liberality of Presbyterians and others, they have got a house of worship, then come the presiding elders, with their train, the quarterly meetings with their bustle—the

war-whoop is raised in the camp--the Calvinists are cold-blooded hypocrites--their pastors are money preachers, sleepy preachers, persecutors--and "the Methodists will take the world." The people in several parts of central and western Virginia, can testify that both these sorts of policy have been pursued by Methodist preachers. We rejoice to believe, however, that some of the travelling clergy disapprove of such conduct--and we mention it only that by exposing it to public reprobation, we may contribute to check a course of policy, which is injurious, not only to other denominations, but to the general cause of religion. We could refer to a considerable number of documents to prove that this same policy has been pursued by Methodist preachers in other times and places. We shall name only the Life of Devereux Jarret, and the pamphlet of Josiah Cresse, who had been a local preacher among the Methodists in Delaware, but quit the connexion.

We have not done with money matters. Besides the "Book Concern" and all the collections above mentioned, the travelling clergymen devised another scheme to increase their income; namely, "The Chartered Fund." The Book of Discipline, Part 2, Sec. 6, thus introduces the subject--Question. What *farther* provision shall be made for the *distressed travelling preachers*, for the families of *travelling preachers*, and for the superannuated and worn out preachers, and for the widows and orphans of preachers? Answer. There shall be a chartered fund to be supported by the voluntary contributions of our friends; the principal stock of which shall be *funded* [put out on interest] under the direction of trustees chosen by the General Conference, and the interest applied under the direction of the General Confer-

ence; according to the following regulations, viz. 1. The presiding elders, and those who have the oversight of circuits shall be collectors and receivers of *subscriptions*, &c. for this fund." We have quoted enough to show the plan of this fund. It was begun many years ago, and is constantly accumulating, by the efforts of 1600 clerical agents who have appointed themselves to receive and collect subscriptions for this ever-growing independent, and perpetual source of revenue to themselves. Here we again find the policy of pleading *distress*, and of joining *widows and orphans* with the preachers in one fund. Thus they can both work on the feelings of their *friends*, and share at their own discretion the profits of the fund. Here too it appears that when the travelling preachers rail against *subscriptions* for the support of ministers, they mean all and any ministers except themselves. Should the Methodist itinerant clergy continue successfully to gain disciples and accumulate funds, we predict that they will, after a while, be the most wealthy, as they are now the most despotic, order of clergy in the United States.

Other churches have permanent funds too; but those funds are for charitable uses, not for the Clergy. Other clergymen also solicit contributions for religious purposes, but instead of soliciting for their own pockets, they are generally, in proportion to their ability, among the most liberal contributors. The funds of other churches are managed in great part by laymen; and such particular accounts are published from time to time, of receipts and expenditures, that no improper use can be made of the money without speedy detection. The Methodist clergy jealously exclude laymen from all share, not only in church government, but also in the disposal

of their ecclesiastical funds. We do not know whether they publish their cash accounts so fully as to show where every item was collected, and how expended.-- If they do not publish such *particular* accounts, then they do not give to the contributors of the money the opportunity of ascertaining how their several contributions have been applied. More general statements, without the particular items of receipt and expenditure, do not secure the people against imposition.--We are far from charging individual preachers with embezzling any thing which they collect, or the Conferences with designing to deceive the public, in relation to their pecuniary matters. We mean simply to show what is necessary to secure the people against impositions:--for aught we know, the conferences do publish every item of their receipts and disbursements; and for aught we know, they sit with open doors when they transact their pecuniary business. If so; they ought to be discharged from all suspicion on that score. We happen only not to know how they act in relation to their accounts.

Having delineated some leading features of the government and policy of the Methodist clergy; we shall present the reader with a brief sketch of the famous society of Jesuits. They were an order of Roman Catholic Priests, founded shortly after the Reformation had given a severe shock to Popery. They were designed to sustain and to spread the Popish religion. They made vows of poverty (like other monkish orders) and of unlimited obedience to the Pope. They were constituted like "a well organized army with a commander in chief and subordinate officers." They were distinguished from other orders by the regularity and strictness of their discipline--their secrecy--their union and energy

of movement--their artful policy--their sectarian zeal--and their indefatigable labors. They soon pervaded every country, almost in Europe; they travelled as missionaries to the wilds of America, and to the unwholesome climes of Asia. They penetrated into the heart of China and Japan. They insinuated themselves with equal adroitness and success into the courts of princes, the dwellings of common people, and the wigwams of savages. By winning favor and pleading poverty, they soon acquired both power and wealth--the latter of which they kept as much as possible concealed. All their gains were put into a common stock, and divided among the members.--Success enlarged their views and corrupted their hearts. Feeling the energy derived from union, discipline and policy--and growing ambitious as they grew powerful; they presently aimed at nothing less than universal dominion, because universal dominion seemed to come within the reach of their exertions. They gained such an ascendancy in several countries of Europe, Asia and America, that nothing but a timely discovery of their designs, and an immediate banishment of their order, prevented them from acquiring complete sovereignty. They became so unprincipled, so powerful, and so evidently dangerous, that they were banished successively from one country after another, until the Pope, finding them injurious to his cause, and threatening if successful to subvert his own power, finally suppressed the whole order; though he has lately revived them, as useful auxiliaries, while they can be kept within due limits.

Before their suppression, the "Secret Instructions of their chiefs to the inferior members, were accidentally discovered and printed in Holland. Those instructions

unfold their artful and corrupt policy in gaining disciples and money. An English translation of them was published in England in 1722, *about seven years before Mr Wesley began his career.*

The following extracts from those secret instructions will show their policy in some striking particulars.

“It will be of great importance for the rendering our members [that is their clergy] agreeable to the inhabitants, to explain to them the *views* of the Society in the manner prescribed by our *rules* [or Book of Discipline,] where it is said, *that the Society* [of Jesuit clergy] *ought as diligently to seek the salvation of their neighbors, as their own.*—Wherefore let them frequently visit the poor, &c. that the novelty of such uncommon and diffusive charity, may excite the admiration and affection of the principal inhabitants.” “Let it be remembered that the privilege to exercise the ministry of the Society [in a new place] must be requested in a *modest and religious manner*; and they must endeavor to gain the favor of all, but chiefly of *those ecclesiastical and secular persons of whose authority we stand in need.*” Let them also remember to visit *distant places, where, having declared the necessities* of the Society, they must readily receive the most inconsiderable alms. Let all seem as though they breathed the same spirit, and consequently learn the same exterior behaviour. We must always get *as much money as we can* from widows, by *laying open our extreme necessities to them.* Let it be preached and every where published in discourse, that they come only to instruct youth, and for the good and welfare of the inhabitants, and that they do all this *without the least view of reward, or respect of persons, and that they are not an incumbrance on the people* [not “burdensome to any”] as

other religious orders are. Let the defects of other religious orders be diligently canvassed and remarked.”

“Let it frequently be published that the Society consists partly of professors [clerical members] so very poor, that excepting the daily alms of the faithful, they are entirely destitute of the common necessities of life, and partly of others, poor indeed, but possessed of some little matters by help whereof they subsist, being neither for their studies nor the duties they perform, an incumbrance to the people, as the other mendicants [begging priests] are.”

“Let widows and other devotees, who seem with fervency to aspire at *perfection*, be induced to this as the most effectual means of attaining *the height of perfection*, to give up all they have to the Society, &c.”

“The better to persuade the world of the Society’s poverty, let the superiors borrow money, &c. “Let our members chiefly endeavor at this, always to act with unanimity, even in things of trifling moment, or at least to have the appearance of doing so: for by this means, whatever confusions arise in the world, the Society will always increase,” [“If we be united, *what can stand before us?*”]

“Let it be also publicly declared that a very great fund of learning is not so absolutely necessary in pastors, provided they discharge their duties as they ought.”

These extracts are sufficient to show some of the points and spirit of Jesuitical policy. The great and primary aim was to advance the Society—that is, to gain power and money. To get footing in a new place they were very modest and complaisant to the pastors and influential people of the place—yet they marked the faults of other orders to use them for their own advantage. They extolled their own disinterestedness and labor—and pretended not to be burdensome to the people like

the money-preachers of other orders. To get money, they always pleaded their poverty and distresses, and greedily caught at every mite that was offered them.-- To attach enthusiastic devotees to themselves, they promised to put them in a way of attaining *the height of perfection*.--To attain their ends, they were careful to act with at least the appearance of unity, even in common exterior behaviour; knowing what influence that appearance has on mankind. To these features of their policy, add their army-like organization and discipline--their zeal--their sectarian ambition--their energy of movement--and we have a pretty good picture of the Jesuits. If there be a striking similarity between their government and policy, and those which Mr Wesley adopted and taught his clergy to pursue; and if the publication of their Secret Instructions shortly before he organized his Society, furnished him with some useful hints--why that is not our fault: we only state unquestionable facts for the consideration of our readers.

SALARIES.

We are sorry--nay, we are almost ashamed--that pecuniary matters should occupy so large a space, in a discussion between two denominations of christians. But on the Presbyterian side, we have been constrained, in self-defence, and for the sake of future peace to investigate these matters. The Methodist clergy might have carried on their ingenious schemes to raise money for themselves; they might have divided their gains among themselves, in *secret* conference;--they might have excited compassion by their doleful complaints of distresses, labors, burdens, &c.--many such like things they might have done, without disturbance from the Presbyterians;

could they only have found it in their hearts, to let Presbyterian pastors enjoy in peace whatever salaries their congregations were pleased to give them. But since we have been goaded into an examination of the subject, we think it best to lay the whole matter open to public view; in hope that hereafter, the travelling clergy will deem it expedient to let their Presbyterian brethren alone; and if they cannot be easy about salaries, to be, at least, as easy as they can.

Having unfolded their schemes to raise money, we shall close our account of their pecuniary schemes with a statement of the salaries, which, by a law of their own making, they have assigned to themselves. Supposing one of them to have a wife and six children of certain ages; he would be entitled to the following items of allowance, to wit: Cash salary for himself, 100 dollars; Ditto for his wife, 100 dolls.; Ditto for 3 children under seven years of age, 48 dolls.; Ditto for 3 children between 7 and 14 years, 72 dolls.; House, furniture, fuel, and provisions for the table, worth, say 360 dolls.; Riding horse, travelling equipage, expenses and board on the circuit, say 120 dolls; Total worth of salary about 800 dollars. In a large town it would be considerably more. We have made a small allowance for his riding horse and travelling expenses, because Presbyterian ministers have to provide these at their own cost.

The salaries of Presbyterian pastors are very unequal, but may be estimated to be, on an average, in villages and country situations, about 400 dollars per annum—though we suspect that a smaller sum would be nigher the truth. Our ministers are somewhat noted for early marriages, and for the blessing of a full quiver in their houses (Psalm 127)—the fruit of domestic virtue and

temperance. Six, eight, or even ten young plants, are often seen growing around them.

Methodist preachers have the advantage, not only of a much superior salary, but also of a secure provision for their families in case of their premature decease. Their widows and orphans continue to receive the allowances assigned to them. The Presbyterian church has made no such provision; and her ministers must lay up for their families, or expose them to want in the day of their bereavement.

When it came to be generally known that Methodist preachers had a salary, the policy was to represent it as a very small salary; and now when the fact comes out that it is a full provision for the preacher and his family, the travelling clergy begin immediately to allege that they do not obtain their full allowance. It may be so; the circuits, we suppose, do not universally provide a house and furniture for the preacher. But to say nothing of the fact, that Presbyterian ministers often suffer by the non-payment of their salaries; we should like to know whether, among the *secret* doings of the conferences, some allowance is not made to *distressed* preachers, for house-rent, fuel, provisions, &c. when the circuits have failed to provide them, according to the Discipline. The plan of the Discipline is to put all the travelling preachers on an equality with respect to salary, for which reason the whole amount of their collections is thrown into a common stock at conference, and then shared equitably among the members. But if some preachers with families obtain houses, furniture, fuel and provisions from the church, while others do not; their salaries would be very unequal. Hence we suspect that where circuits fail to provide all that is required by the

Discipline, the preacher is compensated out of the common fund. But we pretend not to knowledge on this subject; for we can no more penetrate the *secret doings* of a Methodist conference, than the mysteries of *Freemasonry*.

The Methodist preachers also plead their circuit-riding and frequent preaching, to extenuate their salaries and to show that if they *get* more, they also *deserve* more, than Presbyterian ministers. It is quite amusing to see the accusers of "money preachers" reduced to defend their superior salaries on this ground! 'Tis true, that they spend more time than resident pastors do, on horse back and in the pulpit; but on the other hand, the resident pastor devotes all his ministerial studies and labors to the one or two congregations that employ him: in proportion as they contribute to his support, so is he bound to contribute to their edification, by his labors in the closet, in the pulpit, in catechising, at the sick bed and from house to house. Presbyterian congregations choose their pastor, determine the amount of his salary and the mode of raising it, and contract with their minister on specific terms; with which, if he do not comply, they can take effectual measures to discharge him, and to employ another who will serve them better. How differently these things are managed in the Methodist church, has been already explained.—How small a portion of his time each society commonly enjoys, and how few societies ever see him on the Lord's day, is well known to the public.

There is another consideration of great importance. Presbyterian candidates for the ministry have to go through a long course of preparatory studies. They generally spend 6 or 7 years in the study of languages

and sciences, before they begin the study of theology. When they have completed that part of their education, they are qualified to enter with advantage on any of the learned professions. Law and physic offer to their talents and industry a competent living, and would put them in the most hopeful way of obtaining distinguished wealth and honors.—The Presbyterian ministry offers them a laborious life, an incompetent salary, no political honors, and a very limited authority even in the church. This, in respect to worldly matters, is a poor prospect for a young man, who has spent so many years and so much money to prepare himself for a profession. And then, if he choose the ministry, he must spend a good deal more in the study of theology, before he can obtain license to preach. Our candidates for the ministry have therefore no rational motives to desire the sacred office, but such as are pious and disinterested. After spending the prime of their youth, and much or *all* of their inheritance, in preparing for the service of the church; they at last obtain from the church, in most cases, not above half, and in few cases the whole of their living. They are consequently obliged to make up the deficiency of their salaries, by the extra labors of some other occupation.

Whatever be thought of this in other respects, it has the happy effect of keeping the Presbyterian ministry free, in a great measure, from the intrusion of vain, selfish, and ambitious men. In the Methodist church a young farmer or mechanic, may at no expense of money, and very little of time or study, get into the clerical office; which, if he enter the travelling connexion, promotes him at once to a degree of power, distinction and good living, that he could never hope to reach in any

other way. His office may be tolerably laborious, but surely not more so than delving in the corn field or hammering in the shop. How is it possible for any ministry to maintain its purity, when it presents such temptations to unhalloved minds?—For an untutored young man (or even if he be not young) to ride at his ease through the country, mounted and dressed like a gentleman;—to fill the ears of devout listeners from stage to stage;—to govern submissive societies with lordly sway;—to live at free quarters on the best continually; to have a good salary besides; and, if a single man, to have the prospect of marrying by virtue of his office, far above what he could aspire to by virtue of any thing else:—these circumstances must have a deleterious effect: they make the ministry an object of unholy desire, and have a pernicious influence on the minds of those who are in the ministry. We do not mean that all the travelling preachers are consequently corrupted; we rejoice to believe that many have sufficient grace to withstand these corrupting influences. But if we know any thing of the nature and history of man, we may safely affirm, that whenever the clerical office presents temptations to covetousness, vanity and ambition, it will soon be filled in great proportion by greedy, vain and ambitious men. Hence it is that religious establishments have always corrupted the ministry, especially where rich benefices and places of lordly authority have been offered as prizes to the winner. Whatever in the clerical office excites the same desires, will have the same effect. Nothing can save the travelling ministry from an evergrowing corruption, while they retain their prerogatives, and require little except apparent zeal and a certain volubility of tongue, as qualifications for the sa-

cred office. To what multitudes must the Methodist ministry hold out better prospects of rising in the world, than any other office or occupation within their reach! While this is the case thousands will be constantly pressing for admission in that ministry, as the easiest way to power and distinction; and no human care will be able to exclude great numbers who never would have desired the office, if they had been required to go through a long and expensive preparation, or if there had been nothing in it to tempt their worldly ambition. The only remedies are, to make the office less desirable to improper characters, and less attainable by those who are unwilling, for its sake, to undergo a long and expensive preparation. The more successful the Methodist clergy are at present in gaining disciples, the sooner and the worse will the moral principles of their body become depraved. As yet, we believe that much piety exists in the travelling ministry, but perhaps their purity has already, to a sensible degree been corrupted by a baser mixture. Some have remarked that Methodist travelling preachers do more commonly than others, manifest a spirit of self-confidence, arrogance and sectarian pride—a disposition to magnify every thing belonging to Methodism, and to disparage whatever pertains to other christians.—We might mention other particulars; but we forbear, because, although we have spoken with some severity of certain *principles* and *practices*, we wish to avoid, so far as we justly can, every appearance of *personal* hostility to our Methodist brethren.—What we have now intimated respecting their personal character, does not, we are persuaded, attach to them all; and we have felt bound to mention these particulars, in order to give a salutary illustration of the consequences which

result from inordinate power in the clergy, especially when the sacred office may be gained without much labor or expense, and by men who have never been taught even to know their own ignorance.

How can illiterate young circuit-riders avoid being puffed up with self-conceit, when they find themselves elevated to a sort of sovereign authority over multitudes, and read such praises of themselves as the Knoxville editor lavishes upon them in his review? He pronounces the Methodist ministry to be in the most rapid process of improvement, of any ministry in America. "Our preachers (says he) have peculiar advantages.—They can read as much every day as their minds can well digest. And the very circumstance of their travelling so extensively, gives them an opportunity of a more general acquaintance with mankind.—Another source of improvement *peculiar to our travelling ministry*, and of service to our young men especially, is their constant intercourse with one another. [Query. Do they travel in companies?] The knowledge that is acquired by reading, &c. is much improved by *daily practice in the pulpit, in the class-room*, and by christian converse. Thus by *extensive reading*, general observation and *daily practice*, it is impossible that a travelling preacher should not improve, &c."—Well done! we often hear of the laborious, daily riding, the frost and storms, the "privations and sufferings," endured by the travelling preachers. Now if, in addition to these, they read extensively, preach, examine classes, and converse with one another constantly—then indeed must the itinerant system be established in its authority by the best of all evidence, namely the *miracles* which it enables its practitioners to work.

SHOUTING ENTHUSIASM.

The "Presbyterian," in answer to Mr Monroe's invectives against the Presbyterian clergy, made the following remarks: "Another part of their policy is to throw all calm exercise of the understanding into contempt—to fill the minds of their disciples with a wild and shouting enthusiasm, and to set them in pursuit of a visionary sort of perfection." This the Holston reviewer declares to be all "mere assertion"—"uncharitable and quite censorious." We presume the only question ought to be, whether it is *true*. If it be true, no man has a right to complain that it was mentioned in a defensive exposure of Methodist clerical policy. The reviewer himself goes far to establish its truth in his very next paragraph, in these words: "As to shouting, we will only say, that it is frequently *commanded* in Scripture, that it was practised by Bible saints, and has been the triumphant employment of thousands, many of them Presbyterians, in the last struggles of expiring nature. If shouting then be a mark of wild enthusiasm, we will add, if it be a *delusion*, it is a happy one,—one in which we would be willing to live and die."

See there now. Has the reviewer forsaken the exercise of his understanding so far as to be willing to die in a *delusion*, so he may only have the happiness of *shouting*? And this delusion is thus cherished by an editor and late presiding elder of the Methodist church. Such, in fact, is the prevailing sentiment of the itinerant preachers. But is not shouting *commanded* in Scripture? Yes, in the figurative language of poetry, not only are living creatures of all sorts called on to make a joyful sound,

but also the sea is commanded to roar, the floods to clap their hands, and the hills to be joyful. Psalm xcvi. But who in his senses, ever understood the poetical figures of the Old Testament, to be intended as literal directions for Christian worshipers? And if shouting be a prescribed part of Christian exercises, why do not the Methodist preachers, in the plenitude of their authority, *expel* those members who perversely disobey a Divine command, and violate order in the church by their quiet and decent behaviour? They ought certainly, on the reviewer's principles, to be dealt with as disorderly members.

There is a New Testament rule, expressly laid down for Christian assemblies, which the Methodist preachers seem never to have observed. We beg leave to introduce it to their notice. As the first Christian teachers had not generally, nor could have, the benefit of a learned education, the Redeemer made up the deficiency, by conferring on them sundry miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as the power of speaking and of interpreting divers languages, the gift of prophecy, which enabled them to interpret Scripture without study, to preach, to pray, and to compose psalms by Divine influence, &c. In the Corinthian church, many persons had been favoured with these wonderful gifts. Some became vain of them, and through eagerness to display their powers, they made no little noise and confusion in the church; one would speak in an unknown tongue, another would preach, another prophecy, another pray, and another sing—all at once perhaps, and consequently without profit. St. Paul, (1. Cor. xiv.) strongly expressed his disapprobation of such irregular proceedings. ‘If, (said he) there come in unbelievers, will they not say that

ye are *mad?*” “Let all things be done to edifying;” that is, let all your exercises be calculated to instruct the mind. He directed them to speak only one at a time, “that all may learn and all may be comforted—and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” By the last expression, the apostle teaches us, that even the prophets or Christian teachers, who were endowed with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, could yet control themselves in the exercise of those gifts, and could not plead that the spirit had driven them into disorderly acts. How groundless then is the pretence, that worshippers, now-a-days, are sometimes so full of a Divine spirit that they cannot contain; but must, like bottles full of new wine, give vent to the fermenting vapour, and disturb the congregation with their frantic noise and gestures! Whatever is working so mightily within them, it is certainly not the *Holy Spirit*; for Paul says, in relation to such out-breakings, that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, [that is, of quiet order] as in all the churches of the saints.” He then directs “women to keep silence in the churches,”—declares that he utters “the commandments of the Lord,” and concludes the subject with this general rule for worshipping assemblies: “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Now we appeal to all who have frequented Methodist meetings, and especially Camp-meetings, to say whether they are usually conducted according to these plain and solemn precepts of the Apostle. Do not the preachers endeavour, with all the power of frenzied rhetoric and strained lungs, to produce a burst of enthusiastic rapture or demoniac terror among their hearers? Do they not labour to stun their senses with sound, set the nerves

in a quiver, and the fancy in a flame—and when they can thunder down sinners, and blow up a hurricane of shouting, jumping, clapping, and a wild hubbub of frantic disorder; do not the preachers esteem it the proudest triumph of their eloquence? Do they not go forth with sublime satisfaction, amidst the uproar, like the poet's angel, to "ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm?"

Such behavior in religious meetings is a violation, most gross and palpable, of the order and decency enjoined by the word of God. It is worse in several respects, than the disorderly conduct of the Corinthians, because they respected the inspired Apostle's directions, when they received them; but the Methodist preachers, who encourage such noisy confusions, pay no regard whatever to one of the plainest rules of the Bible, and that too in a matter so solemn as the worship of God.

Such boisterous scenes in the church, especially when ministers of the gospel habitually promote them, must have the effect of filling people's minds with enthusiastic delusion, and of making them regard nervous agitations, flights of fancy, and ebullitions of animal feeling, as the principal part, if not the sum total, of religion. Other circumstances contribute to their disastrous effect. The most ignorant people are the most prone to such disorderly outbreakings, and such erroneous notions of religion. The Methodist ministry is not generally well qualified, nor much disposed, to correct these errors of conduct and of sentiment. On the contrary, many of them have themselves risen directly from the *shouting* ranks to the office of teachers, with almost the same narrow views, and hurly-burly ideas of religion, which they had in the ranks below. Their way of attempting to make religious impressions, and of dealing with those

who are under impressions, is such as might be expected from such a training for the ministry.—They direct inquiring souls not to a calm and rational self-examination—they set before them no clear views of religious truths and experience; they refer them not to the moral fruits of religion as the only sure test of regeneration: but they resolve every thing into an internal feeling—a blind persuasion that they are born again; which, as it is not grounded on reason or evidence, is supposed to be therefore a gift of the Holy Spirit. If they can terrify an ignorant sinner until every faculty is overwhelmed, and can then get him to imagine that his sins are pardoned, they assure him that he is born again, and that he needs only cleave to that persuasion, rejoice with burning rapture, and go on to perfection. But if the boilings of his enthusiasm should languish, if reason should return, and conscience should raise suspicions, the plan is to blow up the fire of his fanaticism again, in the tumult of the meeting-house, or camping ground, and thus to keep up during life, if possible, the fervours of a heated, and we fear, too often, a deluded imagination. We do not believe that such “religious quackery” is universal with the Methodist preachers; but we lament that it is so common, if not in every particular as above described, yet to such a degree as to render it very dangerous to souls. Nor do we suppose that the Methodist clergy have adopted this system of management through mere craft, in order to establish their absolute power over the minds of men: but the *effect* of it undoubtedly is to drill ignorant enthusiasts into blind devotees of the clergy, to whom they look for the stated dose of exhilarating gas, which is to enrapture them, which makes them gloriously happy, and which becomes as necessary

to them, as any other stimulant does to any other person. Indeed, ignorance, bigotry and fanaticism united, prepare a man for any thing to which his spiritual guides may choose to lead him.

Having concluded what we felt it incumbent on us to say respecting the government and policy of the Methodist church, we shall now exhibit a brief outline of

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

1. Every congregation has a CHURCH SESSION, composed of the pastor (if there be one) who acts as moderator, and two or more ruling elders, elected by the people in whatever way they most approve. The ruling elders are the representatives of the people; and being in fact a part of the people, they of course feel a common interest with them. Being judicial officers, and needing experience to qualify them well, they are chosen to act during good behaviour. But since an elder may, without committing a crime, become incapacitated through infirmity, or in some way unacceptable to the congregation, the Constitution provides that, in such case, the session shall take order to procure the retirement of the elder. Should an improper person, however, remain in the eldership, no considerable injury can result to the church; because any number of elders may be appointed, and the majority of them can easily overrule a wrong-headed brother.—An elder's authority is limited to the congregation which elected him. If he remove to another congregation, he ceases to be an elder, unless he should be re-elected.

The principal duty of the session is to maintain order and discipline in the church, by watching over the members, and trying them for alleged offences. An

accused member is entitled to a fair trial, according to established forms of process. An offending elder is dealt with precisely as a private member of the church; if suspended from communion, he of course loses his seat in the session.

2. A PRESBYTERY is composed of the ministers, and one ruling elder from each pastoral charge, and one from each vacant congregation, within a certain district. The vacant churches are nearly always more numerous than the ministers without pastoral charge; consequently the representatives of the people generally are, or may be, if they will, a majority in the Presbyteries and Synods.—The Presbytery receives candidates for the ministry, assigns them their trials, examines them, and licenses and ordains them, when they are approved. Thus the delegates of the people have their full share in judging the qualifications of candidates for the ministry; and not only so, but after a minister is ordained, he can take no pastoral charge, until he is chosen pastor by the free suffrages of the people.

When a congregation desire a pastor, they have a right to elect any minister of the Presbyterian, congregational or other church in full correspondence with the Presbyterian church. When they have agreed on the person, they meet and formally prepare a written call, specifying the terms on which they are willing to employ him as their pastor. This call they sign and present to the Presbytery, who judge whether every thing has been done in due form, and whether the terms are such as they can conscientiously ratify: if so, they hand the call to the minister, and on his acceptance of it, they take measures for his installation, which is a solemn conclusion of the contract before the Presbytery, or a

committee of them. The design of this solemnity is to give a religious sanction to the engagements between pastor and people, and to secure their mutual fidelity, as far as possible, by making them responsible to the Presbytery.

The Presbytery tries its own clerical members for alleged offences,—hears complaints, and issues appeals from church sessions.

3. A SYNOD is composed of several Presbyteries, who meet annually in one body, to review the proceedings of Presbyteries, to hear complaints, appeals, &c.

4. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY is the highest judicatory. It is composed of an equal number of ministers and ruling elders, delegated by the Presbyteries, each of whom send more or fewer, according to their size. The Gen. Assembly receives and issues appeals in the last resort; hears overtures respecting any subject of general interest to the church. But no alteration can be made in the Confession of Faith, or Constitution of the church, until such alteration is ratified by a majority of all the Presbyteries.

A few general remarks will sufficiently exhibit the form and spirit of Presbyterian government.

1. A person condemned by a lower tribunal, has a right to carry an appeal upwards to the General Assembly, before he is bound to submit to the sentence.

2. Any person or persons who are dissatisfied with the proceedings of a lower judicatory, may lodge a *complaint* against them before a higher judicatory, who are bound, if the complaint seem to have any ground of reason, to give it a fair consideration.

3. Every judicatory from the session upwards, is required to keep a record of its proceedings, and submit

the same, once a year, to the next higher judicatory for review ; so that if any thing has been neglected or wrongly done, it may be discovered and corrected. The General Assembly, being the highest body, print every year the whole of their records, interesting documents and cash accounts, for the information of the church, so that if an error should occur, it would be discovered.

In these three ways is the church secured against neglect, mistake, or fraud, in its judicatories. All these judicatories *sit with open doors*, unless it be sometimes to save the feelings of a young candidate under examination, or some very peculiar affair.

4. The rights of the people are not only secured by the elders who sit in the judicatories, but also by the election of pastors. Every preacher is dependent on the choice and approbation of the people, for employment and salary as a pastor. This circumstance has such influence, that the clergy in Presbyteries and Synods often incline more to the popular side of a question, than the elders. Hence arises the propriety of choosing elders during good behavior, that they may be less disposed to yield to every breeze of popular opinion. Were the elders as dependent on the people as the clergy, the councils of the church would have too little steadiness; but since the elders are part of the people, and have the same interest, they are sufficiently disposed to guard the rights of the people.

Taking this whole system of government into view, one may easily perceive that its form and spirit are essentially republican—that the clergy are in fact dependent on the people, and cannot by any possibility usurp the rights of the people, nor “lord it over God’s heritage.” Respecting any establishment of religion which

the Presbyterian clergy have been so malignantly charged with seeking, we cannot for our lives see a single motive which could induce them to seek a religious establishment. The Constitution of the Presbyterian church makes the clergy dependent on the people for employment and salary, and gives the people in other respects a preponderating weight in forming ecclesiastical regulations. The clergy then could gain nothing by a religious establishment, unless at the same time the Constitution of the church were subverted, and every citizen compelled to pay tythes to the clergy. But are Presbyterian ministers such fools as to dream of effecting either of these things? Do they not know that they have no power to deprive the people of their privileges, and that any minister who was even suspected of a serious design to render the Presbyterian clergy despotic, like the Methodist, would immediately become an outcast from every congregation in the Union? And where is the Presbyterian minister in the United States, who has ever written, spoken, or done any thing in favour of a religious establishment in this country? On the contrary, we may affirm with confidence, that our ministers are with one consent opposed to a union between Church and State, because they are persuaded that such a union would profit them nothing, whilst it would inevitably injure the spiritual purity and welfare of the church.

The tendency of Presbyterianism has always been against arbitrary power, both in Church and State. It was the Presbyterians in England and Scotland, who first opposed the tyranny of the Stuarts, and preserved whatever there is of freedom in the British Constitution. It is true that those ancient Puritans were infected with the fanaticism of the times—that like other Christians in

those ages, they sometimes persecuted those whom they esteemed pernicious heretics--and that they considered a religious establishment necessary to the welfare of a country. These were errors of the times--remnants of old sentiments, which were generated in Popish darkness, and which gradually faded away under the light of the Reformation.

The Methodist reviewer has made some puny assaults on the general character of the Presbyterian church. He begins them with saying, that "the Bishops and itinerant preachers of the Methodist Episcopal church disclaim all right to interfere with the *civil* authorities of our own country." No doubt they do: but they had not been charged with *claiming a right* to interfere; their *system* of government was charged with a *tendency* to interfere--that was all. But, says the reviewer--"They have never been found at legislative halls, praying for exclusive privileges. They have never been supported by a tax on the people, as have the Presbyterians in New England, and as they now are in Scotland. They have never been guilty of the inhuman practice of whipping Baptist preachers, and of hanging unoffending Quakers, for non-conformity with their religious opinions and practice. No: and we hope the character of our church will never be tarnished with such foul blots.--" "Facts are stubborn things," and if our Presbyterian clergy do not wish to hear of them, they should not attack, with so much fury, religious societies who have never given occasion for disingenuous reflections."-- Disingenuous reflections, indeed! after bearing for many years the disingenuous reflections of Methodist preachers, the Lexington Presbytery took up their defence; the controversy brought to public view the arbitrary and

dangerous character of Methodist government:—but after all, the Presbyterians did not broach that subject, until driven to the discussion by the slanderous charge of their aiming at an establishment of religion—and now the reviewer complains of “furious assaults,” and whines about the dove-like harmlessness of the Methodist preachers, who never gave occasion for such things: and by way of retort, he has uttered a string of “things,” which, he gives us to understand, the Presbyterians have been guilty of:—“Stubborn facts,” he calls them:—“stubborn” they certainly are, but unhappily for this veracious writer, there is not (so far as Presbyterians in the United States are concerned) a single “*fact*” among them.—American Presbyterians have not “prayed for *exclusive* privileges”—nor “whipped Baptist preachers”—nor “hanged Quakers”—nor “been supported by a tax on the people”—any more than Methodist preachers. We agree that Methodists have never whipped nor hanged people, for non-conformity with their opinions, and that their church has never been any where established by law. But before they *boast* of this, they ought to show that they have ever refused to persecute, and to accept an establishment, when they had them in their power. We do not mean by this to charge them with desiring either the one or the other; but we remark, that the days of violent persecution among Protestants were over, before the Methodist Society was founded, and that every church now established by law, had been established long before the days of Mr Wesley.

We have now concluded our Review of the doctrines and principles introduced into the present controversy, excepting the subject of sinless perfection; which we shall pass over, as it has not been much insisted on by

preceding writers. We the more willingly omit it, because the Methodist writers cannot be induced to give any clear and *consistent* view of their doctrine of perfection.

We shall now, at the close, make a number of remarks and reflections on the general subject of this controversy.

The nature of our undertaking has made it necessary for us to dwell almost entirely on the erroneous and pernicious principles of the Methodist system of doctrines, government and policy—to correct the misrepresentations, expose the absurdities, and refute the arguments, of the Methodist writers in the controversy. In doing so, we have spoken freely, and fearlessly—occasionally expressing our warm disapprobation—using satire and ridicule in some cases, where we thought that mode of treatment best calculated to give the reader a just idea of the subject. Perhaps we have in a few cases gone too far in this way. If so, we regret it; we can assure the reader that while we have “nothing extenuated,” we are not conscious that we have “set down aught in malice.” We have written in haste, under the pressure of various avocations, and under the excitement of feeling produced by the occasion. We have desired to keep always within the limits of truth and justice—but we cannot flatter ourselves that we have escaped the common lot of human errors. We may in some cases have misunderstood, been misinformed, or been warped in our judgment by prejudice. Whatever mistakes or misrepresentations may exist in what we have written, we shall most willingly acknowledge, and so far as we can, also correct them, when they are made manifest. In every thing of much importance, we feel confident of our

accuracy; we have gone upon evidence which can hardly leave room for mistake: but in small incidental matters, no doubt, some errors exist. Let them be pointed out. Our cause needs no support, but what truth and reason can give.

After having gone so fully into the errors, misrepresentations and dangerous principles of the Methodists, we think it due both to them and to ourselves, that we should now express the approbation which we sincerely feel, of many things in the principles, character and conduct of the Methodist church and people. We believe that there is much truth in the Methodist doctrines, and much real piety in the people. We believe that there are, even among the travelling clergy, many sincerely devoted ministers of Jesus Christ—that a large amount of good has been done by the Methodist clergy in general—and to their honor be it said, they have been especially useful to the more ignorant part of society, and to the scattered inhabitants of the mountains and secluded regions of our country. We also admire the active zeal of the Methodists in the prosecution of their measures. What they do, they do with might. We like the simplicity of dress and of manners which they have adopted as a general regulation. We could dilate on these and other matters—we could commend our Methodist brethren for excellencies which entitle many of them to the praise of all the churches. But we have said enough to show that we have not written under the impulse of a blind and malignant prejudice. With Methodists personally we have always been on friendly terms; among those with whom we happen to be acquainted, we have seen many with whom we would love always to associate on terms of Christian fellowship.

We trust that an attentive reader of our Review has discovered nothing inconsistent with the declarations now made. We have no where intentionally denied that the Methodist doctrines are in many parts true--that the Methodist people and preachers have among them a great deal of genuine religion--and that in many respects the Methodist church is to be acknowledged as a branch of the Redeemer's Kingdom. What then, it may be asked, has been the object of this Review? We answer that in the first place, our object has been to defend the Presbyterian doctrines and institutions, which many Methodist preachers have long been in the habit of misrepresenting and abusing. In this conduct of theirs, they have done great injustice to the truth as held by the Presbyterian church; and so successful have they been, that vast multitudes have, from these misrepresentations, conceived invincible prejudices against the Calvinistic doctrines, and against every church that professes them. We could not be faithful to our views of truth and duty, if we suffered this broad current of misrepresentation to flow through the land, without an effort to check it, merely to avoid the disagreeable effects of controversy. Another part of our object has been, to give our countrymen a timely warning of the dangerous principles contained in the Methodist system of church government and policy. We were led to examine this system, by the attacks which Methodist ministers frequently made on our Presbyterian institutions. We were surprised and alarmed to find so much in the Methodist system that tends inevitably to corrupt the purity of religion, and to undermine the civil institutions of our country.

In the Pastoral Letter, the Lexington Presbytery specified several circumstances which induced them and many

others to suspect, that some, at least, of the Methodist clergy were aiming at a sort of universal dominion in spiritual affairs, and that they had adopted an unfair policy, with the view of destroying other churches. Perhaps no member of the Presbytery had at that time sufficiently examined the subject, to perceive that the foundation of that policy was laid in the Methodist Book of Discipline, and that the Methodist institutions were of such a sort, as must in the natural course of events, introduce corruptions into that church, by bringing ambitious men into the ministry, and through their means, gradually directing the policy and efforts of the ministry more to the acquisition of dominion, than to the salvation of souls.

The history of mankind and of the church especially, affords impressive examples of the dangerous tendency of clerical power. We believed it to be our duty, both in a religious and civil point of view, to call public attention to this subject. We knew that the Reforming party in the Methodist church had broached the discussion; but we supposed that their publications had circulated very little out of the Methodist community. We thought the public mind ought to be roused to consideration. We believed that the best way to excite attention, was not only to lay the subject fully open, but to do it in a style which would make a strong impression; cold essays, filled with charitable excuses for what we thought very pernicious, and with professions of love, &c. towards those who were propagating such principles: this way of doing the thing, though many think it the *only* Christian way, we thought was neither required by the example of Christ, nor most likely to be effectual in the particular circumstances of the present case. We adopt

ed a style which we intended should produce a strong sensation, while it was at the same time just. We anticipated much censure, not only from Methodists, but Presbyterians who did not understand the reasons of our conduct. But we were willing to bear it, so we might accomplish our ends, which are in brief these following:—1. To induce our Methodist brethren to cultivate peace with Presbyterians, by treating them with candour and respect. *Experience* has taught us, that we cannot obtain such a peace from that people, until we make them feel that it is for *the interest of their sect*, to treat us decently: such an ascendancy has the sectarian spirit got among them. 2. To convince the Methodist clergy (if possible) that they will have to reform the *corrupting* and *dangerous* parts of their system, both for the sake of religion and for their own sake. We do not suppose that what we have written, will of itself produce this conviction in any one of them: but we venture to say that it will start a train of inquiries, which in time will produce effects. 3. To impress our Presbyterian brethren with a just sense of the value of their doctrines and institutions. Many Presbyterians have been influenced by the enemies of Calvinism, to misconceive and dislike the doctrines of their own church. We desired, so far as we could, to rectify these misconceptions, and to reconcile all Presbyterians to their venerable Confession of Faith. Such are the ends which we have in view. We have no desire to destroy the Methodist church. So far as they propagate truth, convert sinners to God, and save the purity of religion, and the liberties of mankind, we can heartily bid them God speed. But where they inculcate erroneous doctrines, misrepresent and abuse their neighbors, circulate personal scandals,

pursue an unfair policy, design to subvert sister churches, and spread a despotic and dangerous system of clerical power, there we *must* oppose them, and endeavor to prevent the pernicious consequences which would follow from the successful propagation of their principles. Such are our views, and we leave them to the judgment of our readers.

We learn that in the course of publication in the Visitor and Telegraph, our Review has been quoted and attacked in various ways. Among other things, we are charged with having misrepresented the Methodist theory of conversion. Those who make this charge against us, must surely not have read the whole of what we said on that subject. Our argument was predicated entirely on the theory of conversion, exhibited by the Methodist writers in the present controversy. We fully quoted the words of Messrs Monroe and Stringfield. Our readers can judge whether we put a fair construction on their language. Mr Monroe is a travelling minister, and if he complied with an express rule of his church, he submitted his "Reply" to the examination and correction of his Conference before he published. Mr Stringfield has been a presiding elder, and is a veteran editor and expounder of Methodist doctrines. We had never heard an objection made by any Methodist to the doctrines laid down by these writers. We had a right therefore to consider their theory of conversion as the prevalent one among the Methodist preachers. We allowed them the right to *interpret the creed of their church*.—If they misinterpreted, then on them let the blame fall; we disclaim the responsibility. If any Methodist writer shall come forward and give a different view of their doctrine of conversion, then we hope the same writer will fairly

meet the argument of the Pastoral Letter, and show how God converts sinners without electing them before their conversion. We are willing to meet them on any ground.

We have carefully avoided all *personal* reflections, except in *one* instance, when we noticed the Methodist reviewer's scandalous tale about the five Presbyterian clergymen. We then felt impelled to make an unfavorable remark on his character. On recurring to that passage again, we have thought proper to offer a word of explanation. We would be understood to allude simply to his character as a *controversial writer*, and to convey this idea alone,—that when he tells a defamatory story, or makes assertions unfavorable to an opponent, he is characteristically *inaccurate*. With his private character and motives, we have nothing to do. We made the remark to guard the character of others, not to injure his.

Finally, we say in the sincerity of our hearts, that we are weary of this controversy, and desire to close it forever, as soon as the interests of truth and liberty will permit. Our Methodist brethren have the right to answer our review; if they will meet our arguments fairly, construe our language candidly, and then agree to drop the discussion, we, for our part, will agree to shake hands with them, and leave the subject to the public judgment.

At all events, we cannot consent to have any more discussion with the Knoxville reviewer. He may write what he will, but we believe he can never again obtain the honor of an answer from any Presbyterian writer.

We have done. May the Divine Author of our religion employ our discussions to the promotion of truth and piety, and pardon whatever on either side has, by reason of our frailties, been said amiss.

POSTSCRIPT.

We hasten to correct an error into which we fell, by some inadvertance, in our account of the Methodist Conferences. In the brief notice of the "District Conference," we said it was composed of "*travelling and local preachers.*" The Presiding Elder is the only travelling preacher of the district, who sits in this Conference.—He presides; the other members are all local preachers.

We gladly correct the mistake. It is one however, of no consequence to our argument on Methodist church government. The District Conference has nothing to do with making rules and regulations for the church; it can exercise no sort of authority over any society or person except the *local* preachers:—it cannot *ordain* ministers of the gospel; it can in fact do but three things: 1st, license exhorters to preach who may be recommended for that purpose by the Quarterly Meeting Conference; 2d, recommend its licentiates to the Annual Conference for ordination, or to be received on trial as travelling preachers; and 3d, to try, suspend, expel or acquit local preachers in the District.

We are indebted to Mr Monroe, author of the Reply to the Pastoral Letter, for the first notice of this mistake. In a late letter of his, published in the Advocate and Journal, he has mentioned this, and another thing, as instances of our disregard to truth. Really, we should be great fools to tell a wilful falsehood, when it was of no importance to our cause, and could be so easily detected by any reader who had the Book of Discipline.

He also charges us with a "palpable mistake" about another matter of quite as little importance. Speaking

of the delay which occurred in the publication of his Reply, we said, "One reason of his long delay *probably* was, that according to a rule of his church, he submitted the manuscript "Reply" to the Annual Conference of his brethren who examined it, &c. &c."

The rule to which we referred is in these words: "No travelling preacher is permitted to publish any book or pamphlet without the approbation of the Annual Conference to which he belongs, or of a committee chosen by them. It is recommended to the annual conferences to caution and restrict our preachers from improper publications."--Disc. Part 2, Sec. 7. In addition to this rule, we will state, that while the Conference was in session or shortly after, it was reported that they had appointed a committee to answer the Pastoral Letter.--Again; although Mr M. had written his Reply before the meeting of Conference; it was not published until some considerable time after Conference.--Such are the grounds on which we supposed that the Conference had examined and approved the "Reply," and of course amended and corrected whatever they thought improper. We feel perfectly indifferent on the subject; if mistaken, we are willing to correct the mistake. We still believe, what Mr M. has not denied, that the manuscript was taken to Conference, and at least *unofficially* and *informally* examined and approved by the author's brethren. But we shall not dispute about so unimportant a circumstance. If Mr M. can draw any consolation for his sufferings as a writer, from these small matters, he is heartily welcome to it: and if he will point out any other mistakes or misrepresentations in our Review, we shall in like manner correct or explain them.