

my dear friend, if, for the sake of distinctness, I go somewhat formally to work.

In the first place, then, the views which terminated in my returning to the bosom of our church are not of recent growth,—they have long been gradually maturing. I was always taught from a child, as you observe, to reverence the Church; and, from observing that she was, under Divine Providence, the main support of all our most valued institution, that reverence early ripened into an almost romantic attachment; but then it was rather to her as the ancient and established Church of England, than as the Catholic Church of Christ. I still, however, supposed that there was no divine obligation with regard to the government or outward ordering of the Christian Church; but that each section of the church was at liberty, within certain bounds, to adopt what regulations it judged most expedient in these respects. And, therefore, as I really supposed that Methodism offered spiritual advantages to the simple-minded christian, which he could not find in the church of England, or any where else, I intended ever to remain a Methodist. My first doubts on this subject arose from a maturer acquaintance with Methodism itself. I first perceived its almost entire want of the *pastoral office*. Its preachers, from their system of itinerancy, can have but a slight knowledge of their people; hence I saw that the confidence and attachment of long acquaintance was wanting; there was little on the one hand of paternal watchfulness and tender sympathy, and on the other of seeking, with confiding affection, for the counsel and instruction of their pastors. This constant change obliges them also, even in their public ministrations, to be continually laying again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to the too general neglect of building up the believers in their most holy faith; the consequences of which is, that there is a lamentable want, amongst the Methodists in general, of a deep acquaintance with the things of God.

Mr. Brown—I acknowledge that the evil of which you complain does exist, but still I think you are rather hard upon us, for after all I believe there is much more true piety amongst our people than there is in the members of the church.

Mr. Seeker—That, my dear friend, is not the question,—were it even as you say, which, however, I by no means admit; for I am not now comparing the individual excellence of churchmen or Methodists, but the different working of the two systems. You will grant, that if the clergyman of the parish does not do his duty as a pastor, the fault is in the man; and not in the system of the church; but, on the contrary, in the very machinery of Methodism which is of blame; for, as I have already remarked, it does not admit of its teachers acting as proper pastors to their people. Now, upon serious reflection,

I could not but perceive, that a system so radically defective was not according to the example set by Christ and his Apostles in the first formation of the christian church; and a very slight acquaintance with ecclesiastical history shows that the early christians never gave the care of their churches to itinerant teachers. With regard to the comparative piety of the two bodies of christians, it is a question upon which I do not wish to enter. I think it savours of arrogance in us thus to sit as judges upon whole communities of men. I think that only belongs to Him who searches the hearts, and I hope to convince you, before we close our conversation, that God has given us a much surer ground by which to know his church, than one in which the hypocrite may so easily deceive us. But yet it is perhaps right, in answer to your remark, to tell you what one of your own leading preachers confessed to me, namely:—“That where piety was found amongst churchmen it was generally much sounder and purer than amongst either Methodists or any other Dissenters.”

The next thing which shook my confidence in the scriptural character of Methodism was its want of a divinely appointed visible head, and its consequent tendency to insubordination and democracy.

Mr. Brown—Nay now, Mr. Seeker, you are really too bad, for the loyalty of the original British Methodists is so well known, that fame itself is unable to spread it further; and such is their firm support of the church, especially at home, that in her vestry meetings they fight her battles with almost greater zeal than churchmen themselves; and it is not perhaps hazarding too much, to say that were your charge of democracy correct, many of the late elections might have had a very different result. I do think that this reproachful way of speaking of us is not very creditable to the church; I do not wish to boast, but I do think a little more gratitude would look much better; for I think that no one will deny that British Methodism is the best friend the church of England has got.

Mr. Seeker (smiling)—Pardon me, but I did not intend to say that Methodism was now democratic, but that such are its tendencies, and this I think I can easily show. Not indeed that this evil is peculiar to Methodism, for it pertains, at least, equally, to the Kirk, and to all those other religious bodies which, like Methodism, are subject to a democratic government. In the first place, their example is democratic, for they assemble in their churches as Synods, and they elect their