

THE PEARL.

HALIFAX, FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 11, 1838.

A CATHOLIC NOT A LATITUDINARIAN SPIRIT.—On a late occasion we apologized to our readers for the unfortunate insertion in our columns of a piece, condemnatory of one class of our fellow christians. Had the article in question been of a purely argumentative character, we should have passed it by without note or comment. As it contained, however, the expression of the opinion of its author that in many instances Universalists are given over "to strong delusion that they should believe a lie,"—that such *despise* Truth though supported by the whole weight of scripture testimony—that their hearts are obdurate and their understandings *wilfully perverted*—that the consequences of such perversity and obduration are *fearful and dismaying*, which, however, must be borne by themselves under circumstances of *hopeless remedy*:—as the extract was of this description, we considered ourselves bound by the pledge of our prospectus, to acquaint all concerned, with the circumstance of its introduction to our pages. We felt more grieved than we can well express that a fallible, mortal creature should have found it in his heart, to pronounce condemnation in such unmeasured terms on any professing to love and serve the same God with himself;—while it was also a source of acute pain to us that the fulmination of such an ecclesiastical anathema should have taken place in our periodical. If we could, most gladly would we have wiped it away with our tears. To the Father of the spirits of all flesh we could not but sigh out the prayer,

Let not this weak, unknowing hand,
Presume thy bolts to throw,
Or deal damnation round the land
On each I judge thy foe.

If I am right,—thy grace impart,
Still in the right to stay;
If I am wrong—O, teach my heart
To find that better way.

Calmly and dispassionately, and in the spirit of meekness and gentleness, we composed our apology. Our brow was not clouded with anger, nor was our heart ruffled with passion, when we penned our remarks. Cherishing no ill will towards any, but owing to all mankind a generous and christian charity, we felt a brotherly kindness for the author of the denunciatory opinion—and in consequence endeavoured to write as kindly as possible. We called no names—impugned no motives—charged no crimes—threatened no evil. We say this with the more confidence because those best acquainted with us, will not place our gentle mode of defence to any dread of our opponents:—we have as little of the spirit of trepidation in our composition as most men, but while we quail before none, we hope that we love all. Anger, and malice, and all uncharitableness, we wish to have put far away from us. Whosoever *doeth* the will of our Father in heaven, despite the peculiar opinions they may entertain, we cordially regard as our brother and our sister. If we have one desire in our breasts, more glowing and operative than all others, it is to see the manifestation of more christian love, irrespective of names and creeds, and the exercise of more mutual candour and forbearance, amongst all the children of God. For our own part, never do we feel ourselves more truly blessed than when promoting harmony and good will amongst the followers of God.

Pained as we felt at first in approaching the subject of dispute, yet do we feel more so in having to revert to a topic of so unpleasant a nature. Although we wished not to give offence, yet the writer of the controverted piece, appears to have taken great indignity at our apology. As the editor of "The Wesleyan," he has thought fit to employ its pages in an attack upon us and our journal, and accordingly in the last number of that periodical we are assailed by ungenerous insinuations and odious personalities, and which have no bearing whatever upon the point in debate. But let these pass—if they do not harm their author more than ourselves, we shall be glad—"Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."—With the spirit which prompted such uncharitable and ill advised observations, we have no desire to combat—quarrel we will not with any man—nor shall we, whatever may be the provocations, employ any other weapons than those of kindness and fair argument. To those accusations however, which apply to our conduct as public journalists, we shall deign a brief reply: the rest we shall leave where we find them, and for the edification of all who love such kind of commodities.

We are not aware that as many as six Universalists subscribe to the Pearl—that hundreds of the opposite opinion take our paper, we do know. Judge then of our great surprise when we found ourselves charged with "tamely yielding up essential and important doctrines of the Bible, and sacrificing christian Truth, to gain and retain the favour of Universalist patrons." Now such a proneness to doubt the sincerity, to censure the motives, and to depreciate the virtues of an antagonist, as is displayed in this quotation, we do most earnestly repudiate. Forsooth, we cannot think that an Universalist may be a man of genuine piety without having flung in our face the charge of sordidness—that instant we must be represented as holding the balances, with the truth of God in one scale, and the pelf of earth in the other, while the latter we make to kick the beam. Now, is this kind—is it generous—is it just? Because our views are somewhat more liberal than those of the editor of "the Wesleyan" must it therefore be, that we are base, that we are wicked? O! tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph and rejoice. But we can forgive the insinuation, and at the same time assure our good friend that had he charged us with folly in rendering ourselves liable to offend our numerous anti-universalist patrons, he would have been much nearer the mark. When shall it be that religious people will learn to argue, without hacking and hewing each other's characters—and to differ in opinion without bearing any hatred to each other. Surely this may be done, or what is christianity better than heathenism? "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

A second accusation we must now notice is that, "the cause of true religion can never be advanced by the publication of quotations from the works of a professed Socinian, in which dancing and the amusements of the world are advocated and recommended." Very well, but how does this prove that it is right to heat and anathematize your fellow servant for a difference in opinion?

It may be right or it may be wrong, to publish citations from Socinian writers, but what has all this to do with the expression of an opinion that Universalists are given over to delusion—that their hearts are obdurate, and their understandings wilfully perverted etc. etc.—and why has it been introduced? Was it not enough to charge us with loving Mammon more than the word of God, without condemning our journal for the introduction of pieces months ago? But we shall not complain of this—we will even assume that it has been done from a pure motive? Still we conceive that we have a right to inquire why the name of the author of those extracts was omitted? why the character of his book was not mentioned? why his restrictions on dancing were not introduced? and why the very amusements of the world advocated were not specified? Nine out of every ten readers of the Wesleyan will suppose that our obnoxious author recommended dancing without any limitation, and amusements of all sorts, innocent or wicked? And is it just to produce such an impression on their minds—or to lead them to conclude that we are the votaries of the God of this world? Surely it cannot be right after this fashion to injure the reputation of individuals! Now we do call upon the editor of the Wesleyan, by that common justice which one man owes to another, to state the whole truth on this matter—and if he will not, we are quite sure that an uncharitable world will judge him somewhat unfit to lecture his brother on amendment and restoration. Let him find a Universalist who could hurt the good name of a fellow christian by a partial testimony, and yet who would not repair the injury inflicted, by the publication of a statement, complete and full, and he will soon learn that with us profession is nothing, without an accompanying holy life and conversation. We shall, however, think on the side of charity, and hope that the editor of the Wesleyan will yet do us ample justice. In the meantime we may remind our readers that the professed Socinian as he is termed, was Dr. Channing—that the pieces referred to were copied from an address ON TEMPERANCE, delivered before the Massachusetts Temperance Society, and published by request of the Committee—that this address was highly extolled in England and America—that the amusements recommended for the avoidance of intemperance were "such innocent pleasures as produce a cheerful frame of mind, not boisterous mirth; such as we can partake in the presence and society of respectable friends; such as are consistent with and are favourable to a grateful piety; such as are chastened by self-respect, and are accompanied with the consciousness, that life has a higher end than to be amused." Now these are the kind of pleasures lauded by the Doctor (but stigmatized by our friend as amusements of the world) and the encouragement of which he desired as an important means of temperance. But does he not recommend dancing? Yes—in the same way as Dr. Watts, and Mrs. Sigourney the beautiful American poetess, recommend it? Not however the dancing of the ball-room—or the dancing that is connected with extravagance of dress—vanity—late hours—exhaustion of strength, etc. Such dancing is condemned by Dr. Channing, whilst it is domestic dancing he is chiefly favourable to. "It is desirable," he observes "that members of the same family, when confined by unfavourable weather, should recur to it for exercise and exhilaration; that branches of the same family should enliven in this way their occasional meetings; that it should fill up an hour in all the assemblages for relaxation, in which the young form a part—and that it should be extended to the labouring classes of society, not only as an innocent pleasure, but as a means of improving the manners." And Mrs. Sigourney, whose name is loved by people of all parties and denominations, remarks that, "as a mode of exercise in the domestic circle, dancing is healthful, and favourable to a cheerful flow of spirits. I was once accustomed to witness it in a happy family, where the children at the close of the reading and lessons, which diversified the long winter evenings, rose to the music of the piano, while the parents, and even grand-parents, mingling with the blooming circle, gave dignity to the innocent hilarity in which they participated. There was nothing in this to war with the spirit of the prayers which were soon to follow, or to indispose to that hymn of praise, which hallowed their nightly rest." But had our opponent referred to the particular pleasures advocated by the Doctor, and to his limitations with regard to dancing, we should have been spared the trouble of inditing these remarks. With the knowledge thus furnished, if any persons had objected to our course of procedure, it would not in the least have affected us. But we shall complain if any condemn us in ignorance and without a cause. The approbation and esteem of the good and wise we ever desire to secure; and it will be no small grief to us, to be robbed of that regard by means which, we think, are improper and unjust.

By a reference to our article in number sixteen, our readers will perceive that we avow our recognition of true disciples of Christ in all sects—that with regard to Universalism we concur in opinion with the great and good Robert Hall, whose praise is in all the churches, that "every one must form his own judgment on the subject—that the belief of the eternal duration of future misery is not an essential article of faith—that it is never proposed as a term of salvation—and that the individual who believes in Christ is perfectly secure of salvation whichever hypothesis he embraces on the subject." Now until these four positions are met and refuted it is ridiculous to charge us with latitudinarianism. But most strange to tell, the editor of the Wesleyan does not attempt to confute them:—there stand the four mountain arguments in his way of denunciation, but he will not put forth a finger to move them. He finds it much easier and more convenient to pursue another course, and hence is lavished upon us charges of tamely and cowardly surrendering truth—and doing this to avoid the frowns or to solicit the smiles of the advocates of error—and again ours is pronounced to be a dastardly course—and meanness of conduct. Now, will our offended brother allow us to say "that the cause of true religion can never be advanced by the publication" of such opprobrious rebuke. And if "the Wesleyan" is to be made the vehicle for the utterance of such detraction, we venture to predict that it will have but a short duration. But its Editor informs us that "he has no fellowship with that latitudinarian spirit, which under the semblance of christian liberality, and at the expense of christian truth and fidelity makes it a matter of perfect indifference what a person's religious creed may be, so that he professes to be a Christian." But where is such a spirit to be found? Not, we are certain in the Universalist, the Pelagian, the Socinian or the Roman Catholic—not one of these, and indeed no man of a sane mind, holds the truth of God at so cheap a rate, as to account it a matter of perfect indifference what creed another professes. But

may not a christian highly esteem every iota of the word of God, and be fully persuaded in his own mind of his religious opinions, without usurping the prerogative of Christ; and assuming the office of the omniscient Judge, by scrutinizing the hearts of others, and excluding all those from the pale of divine mercy who entertain different sentiments. We blame no man for holding with an unflinching hand, what he conceives to be scriptural truth—but when he lifts up his arm to hurl the mimic thunderbolt of denunciation at his brother, we are ready to exclaim, Stop friend, that is not your work—you are not Judge—you are not Lord of the conscience—it becomes you not to be clothed with the garments of vengeance—Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? Nor do we condemn any man for exerting all his talents for the overthrow of what, after a full and candid investigation, he views as error—may we contend that he ought to do so, and yet that he is wrong when he expresses indignation, and retributive contempt and dislike for the advocates of the error.

The March number of the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine contains a long review of Mr. Watson's works, in the course of which the reviewer says—"He never forgot that the same law which required him to love God, required, likewise, that he should love his neighbour; and he who properly loves his neighbour cannot be uncharitable. Besides, he had a very powerful conviction of the weakness of the human faculty, and its consequent exposure to mistake; while, therefore, he held his own opinions firmly, yet, believing in the general honesty of purpose with which others had arrived at conclusions different from his own, he felt himself bound every way to treat them with the respect which one man, and he a disciple of Christ, owes to his fellow-man and his fellow disciple. And he did not forget this even in controversy where it is so often forgotten."

Now we would not say to our editorial brother, in the spirit of taunt, "Go and do thou likewise," and yet we do think the example is worthy of his imitation. But our friend further informs us that "he does not envy the principles of those public characters [mark the emphasis of italics] who in the exuberance of their charitable feelings, lend their influence to the support and propagation of opinions decidedly unscriptural, and practically, exceedingly dangerous." Whether the italics of this quotation belong to us or not, it is certain that to us they will be affixed. Will the author of this declaration be so good as to substantiate the heavy charge; will he state to the public when and where and how we thus gave our sanction to error? Does he mean to assert that Robert Hall did this, or that we have done it by citing his views? If our accuser had the opportunity, and could condescend to listen to our weekly ministrations for a few months; we pledge ourselves that he would be satisfied that we give no countenance to anti-scriptural opinions in any shape or form. We desire above all things to be known as lovers of the pure and unsophisticated scriptures of Truth. He would learn also, that we abridge no man's liberty of judging for himself—that we never revile any for differing from us in opinion—that we invariably conclude that others are equally honest with ourselves, in their search after truth—that we never pronounce condemnation of any for not beholding things in the same light as we do—and that we never attack persons but principles, and then always in as mild and temperate a manner as we can. Now if this be latitudinarianism, we pray that we may possess more of it. Next we are told, that with "these religious latitudinarians, an individual may be a Pelagian, or a Socinian—or a Papist, or a Universalist—or a sincere believer in Christ—with equal regard to propriety and safety." Is this also intended for us, for if so we demur to the propriety of affixing but a solitary note of exclamation to the long sentence—with all due deference we submit, whether a few more such notes were not indispensably required to give force to the proclamation, that we think a man may believe almost any thing and every thing with equal propriety and safety. Never was such an idea cogitated in our brain—we think no man safe and secure who is not a sincere believer in Christ—but we trust there are such believers amongst all sects. And does our opponent differ from us here, and adopt the name of the venerable Wesley for the title of a religious paper in which such illiberal views are broached? Although we dare not make his authority the standard of our own belief, yet we should be truly sorry to have such uncharitable opinions imputed to him. Describing a man of a catholic spirit, he remarks that "he is one who loves us friends, as brethren in the Lord, as joint partakers of the present kingdom of heaven, and fellow-heirs of his eternal kingdom all of whatever opinion, mode of worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus; who love God and man; who rejoicing to please and fearing to offend God are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works." To the question why such an amiable character is so rarely found, he says "Why, there is a delicate device, whereby Satan persuades thousands that they may fall short of it and yet be guiltless. "O yes," says one "I have all this love for those I believe to be children of God; but I will never believe he is a child of God, who belongs to that vile congregation! Can he, do you think, be a child of God, who holds such detestable opinions? or he that joins in such senseless and superstitious, if not idolatrous worship?" So we may justify ourselves by laying the blame on others! To colour our own devilish temper, we pronounce our brethren children of the devil!" See Wesley's Works. Vol. vi. page 180. And when he wrote to Pelagians, Socinians, and Universalists did he declare that he considered that they were given over to delusion to believe a lie? Far from it—his words, are now before us addressed to Dr. Taylor, who was a Pelagian, a Socinian, and a Universalist;—after enumerating Dr. Taylor's natural and acquired endowments—his strong understanding—lively and fruitful imagination—plain and easy, yet nervous style,—Mr. Wesley then makes the following christian acknowledgment—"And I believe you have moral endowments which are infinitely more valuable and more amiable than all these. For (if I am not greatly deceived) you bear good-will to all men. And may I not add, YOU FEAR GOD?"

Such was the treatment which the opponents of Wesley received at his hands. With regard to Roman Catholics, his liberal views are an honour to his memory. What work did he circulate more widely, or recommend more strongly than the Christian's Pattern of Thomas a Kempis, the work of a Roman Catholic! In what veneration did he hold the piety of the Marquis de Renty, another Roman Catholic! How frequently did he take occasion to declare his belief that many members of the Church of Rome were holy, devout persons. Says he, "I believe I know some Roman Catholics who sincerely love both God and