

ponents, the truth would have rolled onward like a mighty torrent ; nor would all the vituperative and argumentative energies of anti-reformers been able to retard, much less to stop it. I say, *seriousness* ; because when we converse with a friend or foe on a subject so serious as is the subject of the Christian religion, solemn seriousness becomes us ; nor can all our *witticisms* concerning *long-facedness*, alter, much less destroy the nature of this obligation.

4. *The reformers have frequently contributed to the production of the evils complained of in the query, by an unskillful use of the Sword of the Spirit.* Nothing is more common than for young disciples, in private at least, to attempt the propagation of their sentiments before they themselves understand the christian religion ; and, in scores of instances I have known them advance most extravagant errors ; which errors were immediately caught up and trumpeted by the opposition as fixed articles of our creed. Now, when young disciples, who are not well informed, permit themselves to circulate their fancies in this way, and to do so too in some cases with considerable asperity, what can they expect but to injure the cause of truth ? The most of us are probably rather prone to give ourselves credit for more knowledge than we really possess ; and hence liable to become inflated with a kind of spiritual pride. Young disciples should most studiously court humility—not pride:—they should never suffer themselves to be puffed with a belief that they possess much spiritual knowledge, when indeed they have not advanced beyond the *Christian Alphabet* ! Much injury has also been done in some congregations, by speakers who have not been careful to confine their discourses within the sphere of their knowledge ; and who have consequently given the people their own speculations and fancies instead of the word of the Lord. I am willing that all the brethren should teach in the congregations, who can teach so as to edify ; but I do insist that no man should attempt to teach that which he does not himself understand. Teaching should by all be considered a matter of fact work. But if, when a speaker tells his congregation that he goes for facts, and blames in terms of awful severity the whole religious world for its speculations, it should be ascertained that he himself is as speculative as those whom he blames, what will the shrewd hearer say of him ? Will he not say that the reformers are in this respect as others—only they have a class of speculations peculiar to themselves ? I do indeed think that if the brethren of our congregations would confine themselves on their First Day meetings to the breaking of bread, singing, prayer, exhorting one another to a holy life, and would have less to do with *chapter-commenting*, it would be infinitely better for us and for the world ! We have done much harm by the unskillful use of the sword of the Spirit. But the mammoth evil, that which contributes more than all others to the obstructing of truth in its progress, is—

5. *That reformers do not, in their every day deportment, conform, with sufficient strictness, to the Christian religion.* We have by profession taken an elevated stand. We call ourselves Christians, New Testament Christians, Reformers, &c. We proclaim these things