

CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE.

A few remarks were made on this subject in a former number, in reply to "Senex." Since then we have learned that the querist is a very intelligent, and most excellent baptist brother. The motives that prompted the suggestions made by him were, we doubt not, the purest. Had we then known the state of things at which he was looking, when he made the communication, a very different reply would have been given. Not that it would have, in any thing, opposed the former article; but, from the study of the Word of God we have learned to answer all inquirers with reference to their circumstances.

John preached repentance to all; but his definite instructions, as to the manner in which they were to manifest its fruits varied, with their peculiar circumstances. In the same manner, the apostles replied to the interrogatories of anxious sinners. To the unbeliever, faith was proclaimed; to the believing, reformation and baptism; and to the penitent believer, "arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acting on this principle—having in our mind, one with whom (every week) we break the monumental loaf—and supposing that he might possibly be opposed to the manner in which he imagined we desired to see the congregation edified, our exposition of christian forbearance, though purely scriptural, had direct reference to that point; and so with the other queries. But now having learned that our Baptist brother had the "Evangelical Union" in his eye, or the degree of fellowship which should be extended to those who, notwithstanding their prayerful devout lives, refuse to obey the command of the Holy Spirit, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," &c. the question is an important one. At present we cannot do it justice; but we will endeavour to state it fairly, and make a few preliminary statements, which we hope may suggest such a train of thought as will lead to favourable results: *Does christian forbearance require of those who take the Word of God alone as their rule of faith and duty, an avowal of christian fellowship for those who, so far as men can discern, live devout prayerful lives, although evidently PERVERTING and COUNTERFEITING or ENTIRELY NEGLECTING some of the positive ordinances of the Gospel?* There was a time when our old, uncompromising Baptists would, without hesitation, answer: "We bestow our christian fellowship on all who give evidence of being the Lord's people; but we can grant church fellowship only to those who have been immersed, and belong to churches of our faith and order." How far the "open communion" principle has extended, or what effect the "Evangelical Alliance" has had on the Baptist communities in general we are unable to determine. But the change must be very great, when dignitaries of the "Church of England" and the long persecuted and stigmatized "Anabaptist" can meet as the disciples of the same master, together with the whole phalanx of self styled evangelicals, and commune in every thing except, perhaps, the "Sacrament of the Lord's Supper."

We refer not to this matter from any feeling of jealousy because the Baptists have been so highly honored after all the dishonor that has been heaped upon them, and the persecution and suffering which they have