

Ecclesiastical superiors which the Word of God enjoins, or in disturbing that ministerial order which at least he must acknowledge had existed from the earliest ages in the Church. Indeed I cannot but think that a man of Mr. Wesley's piety, talent, and learning ought to have given a deeper consideration, than by his conduct he appears to have done, to the important truth I have just intimated, namely, that the leadings of the Holy Spirit will never be in opposition to the principles of conduct which are taught us in those sacred scriptures which Himself inspired, and gave us as a rule of life.

Mr. Brown.—I fear I must give up this point also; and attribute much of what Mr. Wesley thought to be Providential direction to his too ready listening to his own pre-conceived ideas of what was most advantageous to the cause of God, instead of making constant reference to the teaching of the Bible and the authority of the Church; which latter, since my conversations with you, I do more clearly see ought to be submitted to with affectionate respect, even as Christ teaches, saying that if any one "neglect to hear the Church, he is to be unto us as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. xviii. 17); and also St. Paul, when speaking of those who are over us in the Church, he exhorts us to "obey them that have the rule over us, for that they watch for our souls as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 17.) I think therefore that I can see how Mr. Wesley, by not giving due consideration to all these truths, might mistake his own conceptions in some things for Divine suggestions.

But, my dear sir, you have not yet given me an answer to that strong argument in favour of Methodism which is afforded by its success; and in very truth, Mr. Secker, I think it is one which you are afraid of encountering; and I do not wonder at it; for it has always, as you know, been considered an unanswerable defence of Methodism as a whole, even by those who admit that in its details, or particular parts, there are serious errors, or imperfections at least, connected with it.

Mr. Secker.—No, indeed, Mr. Brown, I have no hope that the success of Methodism will prove that it is right; and it is a part of the argument upon which I have thought much. First, then, its success is far more apparent than real. The peculiarity of Methodism in its practical effects is, that it is much more a religion of *feeling* than of *principle*; a large proportion of its members are, I fear, much too ready to be content with those emotions which they may feel in some of their various religious exercises, without sufficiently testing their soundness by the practical holiness of their lives. *It is formal.*

Mr. Brown.—Nay now, Mr. Secker, you must pardon my interrupting you, for the very excellence of Methodism is that it is not "formal;"

*formality* is the peculiar evil of your own Church, *our* danger is rather from *enthusiasm*, as you have just stated.

Mr. Secker.—I know that such is a common opinion; but the truth is that enthusiasm and formality are much more frequently connected than is generally imagined. In support therefore of the assertion that most of "the success of methodism is more apparent than real," I again repeat that "It is formal," and that too in the most dangerous manner, for it is a *spiritual formality*; and, indeed, I may say that much of its formality arises from its enthusiasm. What I mean is this: that the Methodists encourage those occasional excitements under the influence of which persons frequently make high, and at the time I believe sincere, professions of attachment to Christ and his religion; but as this excitement passes away, so alas! too often do their feelings of supposed devotion and love to God vanish with it, because they were not based on those deep principles of contrite obedience and grateful love which are the genuine effects of the true operation of the Spirit of Christ on the heart. But still the individual is committed by such a profession, and does not like to admit either to others or to his own heart that he was mistaken; hence he bolsters up his conscience by continuing as a member of Society; and, at least, occasional attendance upon the Class Meetings, Prayer Meetings, &c. Again, this spiritual formality is evidenced by the satisfaction which very many display in the bare fact of being members of a Methodist class; it is looked upon, I fear by no small number as a sort of guarantee for their salvation, and especially is this the case if, along with their membership, there is some fluency in prayer, and a ready use of spiritual phraseology; indeed that these qualifications do give amongst the Methodists and, some other sects, a most dangerous notoriety to the individuals possessing them, I know by painful experience. Often have I been grieved by seeing those whose lives little corresponded with their profession, brought on this account prominently forward both in public and private meetings; and what is this but the most dangerous formality? awfully dangerous to themselves, inasmuch as it blinds their eyes to their real ungodliness, and hardens their hearts against reproof; and almost equally dangerous to others, through the odium they bring upon evangelical and spiritual religion. I appeal to yourself, Mr. Brown, whether this formality is not extensive?

Mr. Brown.—Alas! Mr. Secker, it is all too true; and yet to tell the truth it makes me uncomfortable to hear you speak thus; I feel as though you had learnt lightly to esteem the religion of the heart, and that private intercourse of Christians which I cannot but think tends to its growth. Permit me to ask, my dear sir, Is it so?

Mr. Secker.—No, Mr. Brown, I trust it is not,