

**Essay upon the influence of the imagination on the nervous system,
contributing to a false hope in religion / By Rev. Grant Powers.**

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Powers, Grant, 1784-1841

Publication/Creation

Andover (Mass.) : Flagg and Gould, 1828.

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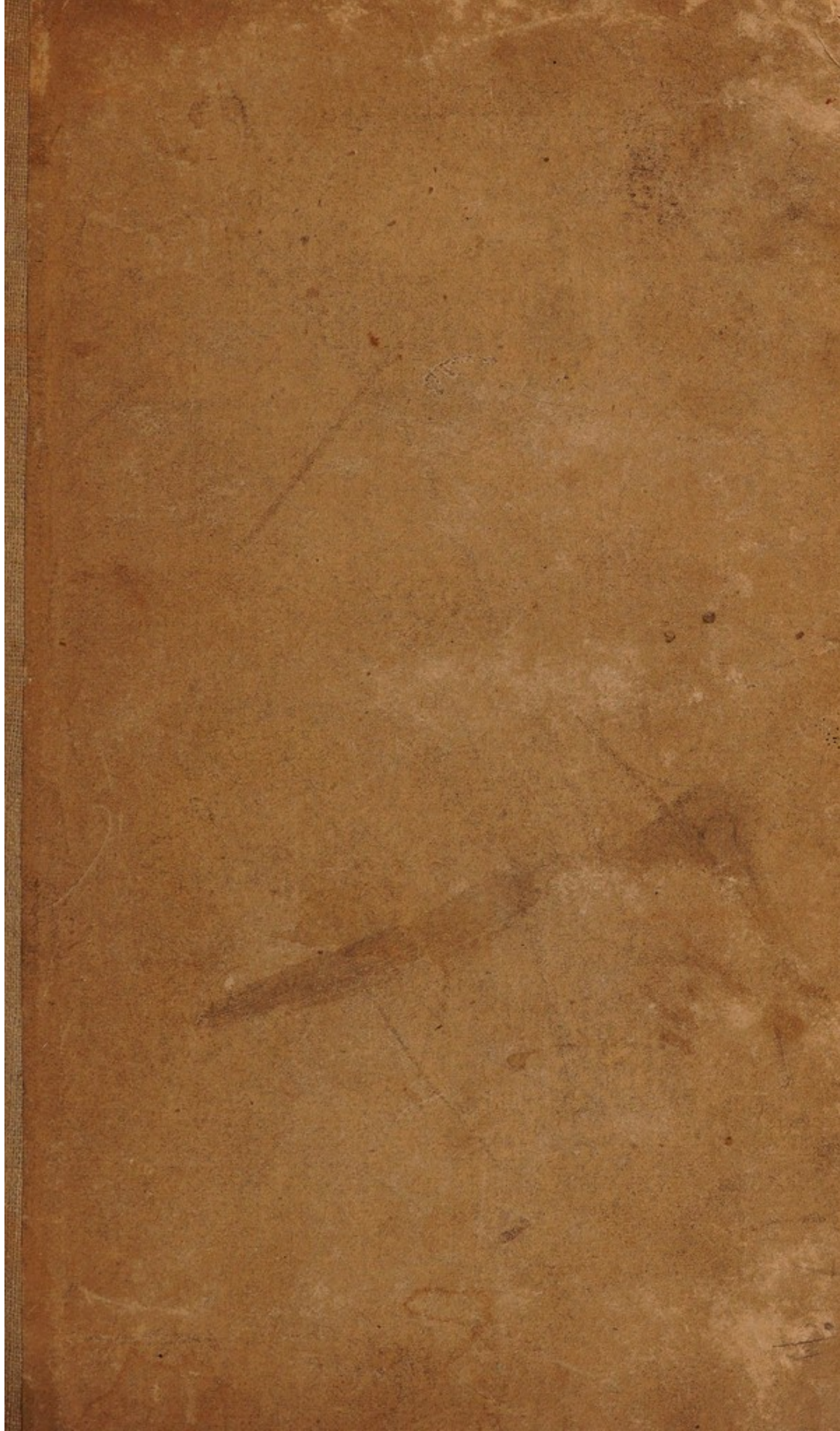
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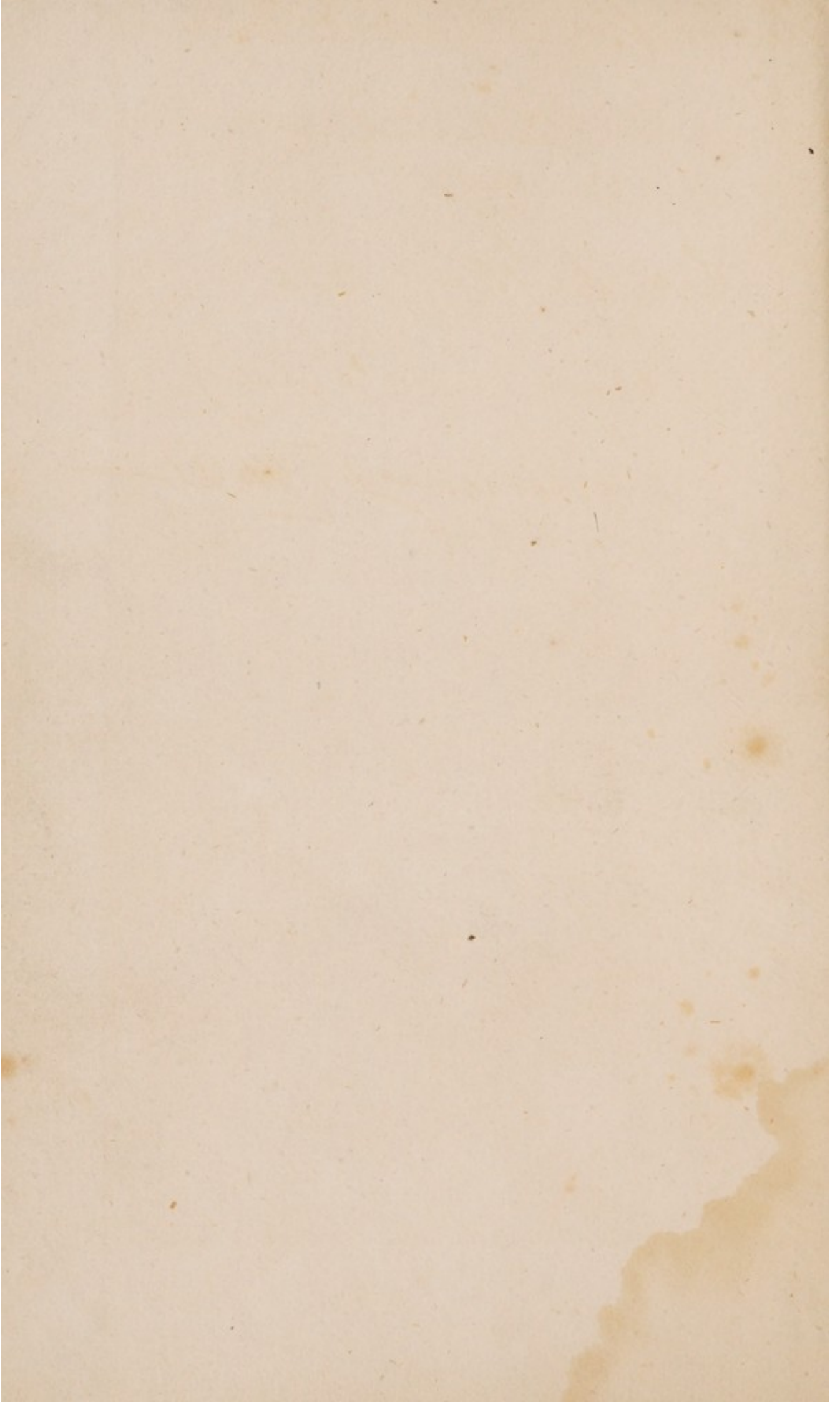


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Henriette Mumford Powers'

Presented

by
her Father on

New-Year's day

January 1st 1831—

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ESSAY

UPON THE

INFLUENCE OF THE IMAGINATION

ON THE

NERVOUS SYSTEM,

CONTRIBUTING TO A

FALSE HOPE IN RELIGION.

BY

REV. GRANT POWERS, A. M.

Pastor of the Congregational Church in Haverhill, south-parish, N. H.

ANDOVER:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY FLAGG AND GOULD.

1828.



DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, to wit :

District Clerk's Office.

Be it remembered, that on the twelfth day of December, A. D. 1827, in the fifty second year of the Independence of the United States of America, Flagg & Gould of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors, in the words following, *to wit* :—" Essay upon the influence of the Imagination on the Nervous System, contributing to a false hope in Religion. By Rev. Grant Powers, A. M. Pastor of the Congregational church in Haverhill, south parish, N. H." In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, " An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an Act entitled, " An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints."

JOHN W. DAVIS, { Clerk of the District
 { of Massachusetts.

PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Essay informs the reader, that this subject was assigned to him for investigation and discussion about two years since, by the Orange Association, of which he is a member. He first wrote without the least intention to publish, and with much uncertainty in his own mind as to the light in which his brethren would view his effort to elucidate so intricate a subject. But that exhibition of facts and deductions was far more satisfactory to them than he had anticipated. And being requested to write again with a view to the publication of what might be written, he was induced to prosecute his researches and to lay the result before the public, if it should be thought best by competent judges. The Essay in its present form has been submitted to the inspection and consideration of about thirty literary gentlemen, many of whom are eminent for piety and talents, natural and acquired, and they have been unanimous in the opinion, that the Essay is calculated to promote the cause of true religion, and that the present state of things in the religious community requires its publication. From the confidence he has in the judgment of these gentlemen, rather than from a reliance on his own, he presents this Essay to the public with the hope, that it will be read with attention and candour, and that by the blessing of God, it may become instrumental of good to the interests of Zion. It will be readily perceived, that to develop a subject of this nature must be attended with difficulties, as the writer himself may be under the undue influence of that power, which he is endeavouring to illustrate ; and that it is hardly possible to exhibit facts, in such a case, without awakening jealousy in some, that he is influenced by party feelings ; or that he is unfriend-

ly to that religion which warms the heart, animates the affections, and assimilates the life to the obedience of Christ. But possessing a good degree of conscious rectitude in these respects, which is more to him than the smiles or frowns of his fellow men, he is enabled to submit to any imputations, which he may incur by this publication, being sustained by the hope, that it will be owned and blessed by the Great Head of the church. If it should appear by this exhibition of facts that any one denomination of christians is more the subject of his remarks than another, it is because that he there finds more to illustrate his principle than in another; and he trusts that the candid and enlightened reader will perceive, that he has adduced no more facts in any case than were necessary to do justice to the subject, which he has endeavoured to illustrate. The writer has in no instance adduced any testimony, which he did not believe to be valid, nor has he intentionally given a false colouring to any thing exhibited in this Essay; and if it should hereafter appear that he has misapprehended any facts, and made deductions from them prejudicial to the truth, or to the best interests of individuals, or any body of christians, he will cheerfully correct the mistake as publicly as he has given currency to the error. With these views and sentiments, he commits this little work to the public, praying that it may effect *nothing against the truth*, but much *for the truth*, and by a divine blessing, become a tributary to that river, *the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God*.

THE AUTHOR.

ESSAY.

THE design of the following treatise is to illustrate the effects of the imagination on the human system through the medium of the nerves, and to show how these effects *may* lead to a fatal deception in regard to experimental religion.

In order to this, it may be expedient for me to explain the two terms, *Imagination*, and *Nervous System*.

The *Imagination* is that power of the human mind which enables it to form images of those ideas which it has previously received from sensation, when those ideas are recalled by memory, and to represent things as present, which are absent.

The *Nervous System* is that component part of the human body which is constituted the sole medium of communication between the mind and objects of sense. The nerves, as described by anatomists, originate in small fibres within the brain and spinal marrow, and after combining with one another until they become visible to the naked eye, they proceed through the bones enclosing the brain and spinal marrow, in the orifices which the God of nature provides for them, and in the form of small tendons, they proceed as directly as they can with safety to themselves, to those

parts of the system, which they are designed to animate with the power of feeling. And when it is considered that every part of the human system, in its unimpaired state, is sensible to the touch, in so much that not the point of a pin can penetrate it without causing pain, we must be sensible that the extremities of these nerves must be exceedingly numerous and very minute. It has been demonstrated by the ablest anatomists, that each fibre in the *retina*, or expanded optic nerve, cannot exceed the size of the 32,400th part of a hair.*

Thus far there has been a wonderful agreement among anatomists. They have, however, differed in their attempts at explaining in what way these nerves make an impression upon the brain, and thus communicate ideas to the mind; which, so far at least, as the understanding is concerned, is believed to have its seat in the brain. Some have argued that the nerves were solid fibres, and acted on the brain by *tremors*, as a tense wire vibrates when acted upon; and that the slight touch of a pin upon any part of the surface of the body, was enough to cause the nerve to vibrate to the seat of consciousness, the *brain*. Some have believed that the nerves were small tubes, and were filled with a pulp of the nature of the brain, and that an impression upon the extremity of the nerve communicated motion to the body of the brain, as a tube, filled with any fluid, could not receive an impression at one end without affecting the other. Others, again,

* See Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, Vol. I. article Anatomy.

have argued that the nerves were tubes, and that they were occupied by a more subtile fluid than the spiritous part of the brain, viz. galvanic electricity, and that sensation depended on the operations of this fluid; while another class of physiologists have supported the hypothesis, that the brain was a gland which secreted the peculiar fluid which was the great agent in sensation, and that the nerves were secretories, or conductors of this fluid to every part of the human system, and that they depended on the brain to supply the exhaustion of this fluid, which they might experience while in the discharge of their appropriate functions.*

But it is not necessary, I conceive, for my present purpose, to decide on the *manner* in which the nerves operate upon the brain, or the brain on the spirit; it is enough to establish the fact, that the nerves do communicate with the brain, and that through this medium the soul receives impressions from objects without. That this is a fact, is proveable beyond a doubt. If we destroy the nerve which proceeds from the brain to the ear, the spirit receives no sensation through that organ. If we destroy the nerve that leads to the eye, the mind discovers no natural object. It is the same with every other sense. And if we destroy the nerves leading to any member of the body, the person has no more sense of feeling in it, nor has he any power to command it. The human system is

* Good's Study of Medicine, Vol. III. Physiological Proem. Class 4th, pp. 18—21.

furnished with forty pair of nerves—ten originate in the brain, and thirty in the spine.*

Now we are all conscious that we receive ideas of things foreign to us, either in the method described, or in some other way, that they are pleasing or painful, and that they produce an effect upon the animal system according to their real or supposed importance. Harmony in music, which the spirit receives by the ear, is pleasing; a discord is painful. A view of verdant fields, or the blue expanse of firmament, affords a pleasurable sensation; but darkness, sickness, or violence, when seen, is painful. And these different feelings produce their different effects upon the animal system. Pleasure exhilarates the spirits and lights up the countenance; sorrow produces despondency and a gloomy countenance. Insult induces resentment, and is seen in its characteristic features; while indecency or impropriety, produces shame and a blush. These effects are known and realized by the whole world, and are the occurrences of every day; nor are we wanting in evidence to show that stronger impressions of mind produce more strikingly visible effects on the human system. These are witnessed in instances of excessive joy, grief, fear and anger. And since it is my object to develop in this Essay, the astonishing power of the human mind over the animal system, I shall record some facts of which I have availed myself since this subject came under distinct consideration.

It is recorded of a Roman lady, that she fell suddenly dead of joy on meeting her son as he returned

* Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, Vol. I. article Anatomy.

from the battle of Cannae, where she had supposed he had fallen by the veterans of Hannibal.*

In 1805, John Mancer, a boy of seven years, being at school in Beardstown, Ky. fainted and fell instantly upon the floor, on hearing that his mother, Abigail Mancer, had arrived in the place to visit him, from Louisville, Ky.†

A young lady in the city of Edinburgh, in 1798, while sitting with company at the tea-table, was suddenly informed of the most joyful news to her; upon hearing which, she uttered a piercing shriek, threw back her head, and instantly expired.‡

In Francestown, in this state, a year or two since, Uriah Smith instantly fell and expired in town-meeting, on hearing it announced by the Moderator that he was chosen Town-Clerk for the ensuing year.§

The sudden effects of *grief* are still more frequent and imposing; one instance of which I shall record in this place.—The wife of the Hon. David Prentiss, belonging to Louisville, Ky. fell instantly dead, the last season, while reading a letter which contained the tidings of her husband's death, which melancholy event occurred a few days previous at Saratoga Springs, N. Y. The physicians on examining the body after her decease, found one of the larger blood vessels, contiguous

* Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Vol. I. p. 135. Part I. Sec. 2. Mem. 3. Subs. 2.

† Communicated by N. P. Atkinson, of Wheeling, Ohio.

‡ Communicated by Rev. David Sutherland, Bath, N. H. who then resided in the city.

§ Communicated by Rev. Moses Bradford of Francestown.

to the heart, ruptured to such extent as to produce instant dissolution.*

The passion of fear, also, has in many instances proved fatal. It is recorded by Burton, from Lodovicus Vives,† that a Jew in France came by chance in the dark, over a dangerous passage, or plank, that lay over a brook, without harm; the next day, perceiving what danger he was in, fell down dead.—He further records that at Basil, a child died through fright, occasioned by seeing a malefactor hung in gibbets; and that, in the same town, beyond the Rhine, another child died on seeing a carcass taken from a grave.‡

I am informed likewise, that in a neighbouring town in this county,§ a man fell down dead on being informed by a sheriff that he had a writ to serve on him.

Anger hath its victims also. I was myself called to officiate at the funeral solemnities of one who, as I was informed by the family physician, died through a fit of passion.—These several cases I mention, not as solitary instances to exhibit the effect of the passions on the human system when they are suddenly excited to excess, because the annual register of deaths and their causes in every considerable city in the world, will exhibit, perhaps, more or less instances of the like kind;

* Communicated by N. P. Atkinson.

† Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Vol. I. p. 137. Part. I. Sec. 2. Mem. 3. Subs. 2.

‡ Burton's Anatomy, Vol. I. p. 219. Part I. Sec. 2. Mem. 4. Subs. 3.

§ Warren.

but I record them because their evidence is on hand, and because I deem them sufficient for my present purpose. I shall attempt no other explanation of these effects than to record the one which is already given by a late distinguished physiologist.* “Anger,” he says, “accelerates the circulation, and increases, often in an incommensurable proportion, the effort of the heart; joy affects the circulation also, but without producing so sensible a change; fear acts in an inverse ratio; it is characterized by a feebleness in the whole vascular system, a feebleness which, preventing the arrival of the blood to the capillaries, produces that general paleness, which is observed in the body, and particularly in the face. Such indeed is the influence, which the passions exercise over the circulatory organs, that they sometimes, when the affections are very violent, operate so far as to stop the play of those organs.”

By what has already been exhibited, we perceive that the nerves may be greatly agitated by external objects, and that the effects on the human system are often great, and sometimes fatal to life. But does such a connexion subsist between the mind and the nerves, that feelings in and effects upon the human system may be produced, and often are produced by the operations of the mind solely upon the origin of the nerves within the brain, similar to those feelings and effects, which are produced by an external object operating on the extremity of the nerves without? [I would caution the reader against proceeding in this Essay until he

* *Physiological Researches upon life and death*, by X. A. V. Bichat. Article 6th. Sec. 2. pp. 45, 46.

has fully considered this question.] I think there can be no doubt of this fact, when we have attended to our own consciousness, and the various phenomena, exhibited by others. We have witnessed objects of distress among our fellow creatures, and they excited our pity, and created a desire in us to exert ourselves for their relief. We have gone away and recalled the same objects by our memory, and our imagination has depicted to us the scene which we witnessed. The effect on us, in the latter instance, was similar to what it was in the former. We pitied, and desired to relieve, as at first. There might be this difference—the impression from the imagination may have been in some degree less, than that received from sense, and the commiseration a little more feeble. In the same manner objects, that have created disgust on sight, have continued to produce the same feeling in their long absence. And objects, which were pleasing on sight, have been enjoyed in a similar manner, as often as the mind has exerted itself in representing them to us in their absence. These facts are undeniable. The rational method of explaining this is, that the mind, which holds a mysterious union with the origin of the nerves within the brain, after receiving an impression from an object without, acting upon the extremities, may cause a *reaction* of a similar kind from the origin of them, and that the reaction has a similar effect on the system, that the external object produced, while acting upon the extremity of the nerves. But whether this solution be the true explanation of the method in which the mind and body operate to produce the effects I have

described, or not, it will not impair the reality of these effects. These are supported by abundant testimony. A person who has often taken nauseating medicine will be nauseated by the thought of receiving it again; and a *thought* has often proved a powerful emetic. And not only has a thought proved an emetic, but the sight of a distasteful cathartic has for sometime operated the same, as when that medicine is actually received into the stomach, as testified by many experienced physicians, especially as related by Cornelius Agrippa (out of Gulielmus Parisiensis).*

Now in each case, a thought produces the same action upon the nerves, that the medicine has previously done when actually received, and as the muscles are influenced by the nerves, so the effect on the system is the same. Upon the same principle yawning, or gaping, is propagated among persons assembled. An individual yawns; it is seen; the thought produces an impression similar to the one which a desire to yawn has previously done, and this person yields to the influence and yawns; then a third, and a fourth. Laughing is often propagated in the same manner, as is squinting also, stammering, and winking with one eye; although there are, doubtless, cases of stammering and squinting which are original with the person; and Dr. Good tells us that he had been personally knowing to some cases, wherein the paroxysms of ob-

* Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Vol. I. p. 221. Part I. Sec. 2. Mem. 4. Subs. 3.

stinate sneezing were induced by hearing the sneezing of another person.*

We may attribute much of the ungovernable fury of mobs to this source. One is excited, and his fury, when seen, makes a deep impression upon his fellow, and as soon as the mind reacts, the second is influenced like the first; it is communicated to a third, and to the body collectively. On this same principle we may account for the panic, with which soldiers are sometimes taken in the hour of battle. An individual giving way to his fears will at times spread terror and distraction through all the ranks; even the best troops, and those who have braved the cannon's mouth again and again, without the least apparent trepidation, will lose all selfcommand; and they know not *why* or *how* it is so. On the other hand, in cases of wonderful bravery and heroism, the soldiers have an example before them, either real or imaginary, which makes an impression on the system that is favourable to self possession in that awful crisis; and they act conformably to their conceptions of greatness, worth, or consequences. And how easy it is for a soldier to recall those scenes of danger, through which he has passed, and make them present realities by his imagination, firing himself with the same ardour he experienced in the hour of conflict; exhibiting similar gestures and features, many of us have probably witnessed—

Sooth'd with the sound, the king grew vain;
Fought all his battles o'er again.

And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew the slain.—*Dryden.*

* Good's Study of Medicine, Vol. III. p. 267. Class 4. Order 3. Genus 2.

Nor is it necessary that a person should experience these scenes himself, in order to have his imagination produce these effects. He may acquire these ideas from reading, or from the relation of others, and his imagination will produce similar effects on his system. The truth is, the imagination creates, from the various impressions which the mind has received, a *new scene*; and for the time being, it represents it as a present reality, and the result on the system is similar to what the reality would be. If the imaginary scene is in itself pleasurable, the person in this state of mind is happy; if it is otherwise, he is unhappy, until in each case, these airy visions are dissipated, and the person sits in sober judgment upon what is real and what is visionary. In order to elucidate this subject still more clearly, I shall avail myself of some facts afforded me by Dr. Rees' Cyclopaedia, Vol. XIX. Part 2. Articles Imagination and Imitation.

Sometime previous to 1784, a gentleman in the city of Paris, by the name of Mesmer, pretended to have discovered a universal remedy for all diseases; and this remedy consisted in being *magnetized* under peculiar forms and circumstances. This *animal magnetism*, as he denominated it, he affirmed to be a fluid universally diffused, and filling all space, being the medium of a reciprocal influence between the celestial bodies, the earth, and living beings;—it insinuated itself into the substance of the nerves, upon which, therefore, it had a direct operation; it was capable of being communicated from one body to other bodies, both animated and inanimate, and that at a considera-

ble distance, without the assistance of any intermediate substance ;—and it exhibited in the human body some properties analogous to those of the loadstone, especially its two poles. M. Mesmer became so celebrated for this discovery, and he performed such extraordinary cures, attested by the most respectable authorities, that, in 1784, the French king appointed a Committee, consisting of four physicians, and five members of the Royal Academy of Sciences, to investigate this matter. Dr. Franklin, then the American Minister at Paris, was one of this committee. The committee, as soon as they had examined the whole apparatus employed in magnetizing, and taken cognizance of the mysterious manoeuvres of Mesmer and Deslon, the latter a pupil and colleague of the former, proceeded to notice the symptoms of the patients while under the influence of Magnetism. These were very various in different individuals. Some of them were calm and tranquil, and felt nothing ; others were affected with coughing and spitting, with pains, heats and perspirations ; and some were agitated and tortured with convulsions. These convulsions were extraordinary in their number, severity and duration. The commissioners saw them, in some instances, continue for three hours, when they were accompanied with expectoration of a viscid phlegm, which was ejected by violent efforts, and sometimes streaked with blood ; one young man often brought up blood copiously. They had involuntary motions of the limbs, of the whole body, and spasms of the throat ;—their eyes wandered in wild motions, they uttered piercing shrieks, wept,

laughed and hiccoughed. These symptoms were generally preceded or followed by languor, rambling, drowsiness, and even apparent insensibility. It was observed, however, that the least unexpected noise startled them, and increased their agitations and convulsions, and the patients appeared to be under the entire control of the Magnetizer. They sympathized in his voice and every gesture. These were the effects of Magnetism on those patients, as witnessed by the commissioners, and it was their office to investigate the true cause of these phenomena. The commissioners observed that the great majority of those thus affected were *females*, that they were not generally affected in this manner until they had been under the operation of magnetism one or two hours, and that when one became affected, the rest were soon seen in the same situation. In order to give the Magnetizer the fairest opportunity to exhibit the power of his magnetism, and at the same time, to obtain the most satisfactory evidence to the public, the commissioners all submitted to be operated upon themselves, and sat under the operation two hours and a half, but without the least effect upon them, except the fatigue of sitting in that position for so long a space of time. They were magnetized three days in succession, but without any sensible effect upon them. The magnetizing instruments were then removed to Dr. Franklin's house, away from public view, parade, and high expectation, and fourteen persons were magnetized, all invalids; nine of these experienced nothing; five appeared slightly affected, and the commissioners were surprised to

learn that, in every instance, the poor and ignorant alone were affected. Subsequently to this, eight men and two women were magnetized, but without the least effect. At length a female servant submitted to the same operation; and she affirmed that she felt a heat in every part where the magnetized finger was pointed at her; that she experienced a pain in her head, and during a continuance of the operation, she became faint and swooned. When she had fully recovered, they ordered her eyes bandaged, and the operator was removed at a distance, when they made her believe she was still under the operation, and the effects were the same, although no one operated, either near her, or at a distance. She could tell the very place wherein she was magnetized; she felt the same heat particularly in the back and loins, and the same pain in her eyes and ears. At the end of one quarter of an hour, a sign was made for her to be magnetized, but she felt nothing. On the following day, a man and a woman were magnetized in a similar manner, and the result was the same. It was found that to direct the imagination to those parts, where the sensations were to be felt, was all that was necessary to produce these wonderful effects. But *children* who had not arrived at sufficient maturity of age to be excited by these imposing forms, experienced nothing from the operation.

The gentlemen of the magnetizing power, Mesmer and Deslon, asserted that they could magnetize a tree, and every person approaching the tree in a given time would be magnetized, and either fall in a swoon,

or in convulsions, provided the Magnetizer was permitted to stand at a distance and direct his look and his cane towards the tree. Accordingly an Apricot tree was selected in Dr. Franklin's garden at Passy, for the experiment ; and M. Deslon came and magnetized the tree while the patient was retained in the house. The patient was then brought out with a bandage over his eyes and successively led to four trees, which were not magnetized, and was directed to embrace each tree two minutes, while M. Deslon at a distance, stood pointing his cane to the tree actually magnetized. At the first tree, which stood about twenty-seven feet from the magnetized tree, the patient sweat profusely, coughed, expectorated, and said he felt a pain in his head. At the second tree, now thirty feet from the magnetized tree, he found himself giddy, attended with head-ache as before. At the third tree, his giddiness and head-ache were much increased, and he said he believed he was approaching the magnetized tree, although he was still twenty-eight feet from it. At length, when brought to the fourth tree, *not magnetized*, and at the distance of twenty-four feet from that which was, the young man fell down in a state of perfect insensibility ; his limbs became rigid, and he was carried to a grass-plot, where M. Deslon went to his assistance and recovered him ; and yet, in no instance, had he approached within a less distance than twenty-four feet of the magnetized tree.

A similar experiment was soon afterward made on two poor females at Dr. Franklin's house. These wo-

men were separated; three of the commissioners remained with one of them in one chamber; and two of them with the other, in an adjoining chamber. The first had a bandage over her eyes, and was then made to believe, that M. Deslon came in and commenced magnetizing her, although he never entered the room. In three minutes the woman began to shiver; she felt, in succession, a pain in her head, and in her arms, and a pricking in her hands; she became stiff, struck her hands together, got up and stamped, etc. but nothing had been done to her. The woman in the adjoining chamber was requested to take her seat by the door which was shut, with her sight at liberty, and was then made to believe that M. Deslon would magnetize the door on the opposite side, while the commissioners would wait to witness the result. She had scarcely been seated a minute before she began to shiver, her breathing soon became hurried; she stretched out her arms behind her back, writhing them strongly, and bending her body forwards; a general tremor of the whole body came on; the chattering of her teeth was so loud as to be heard out of the room; and she bit her hand so as to leave the marks of her teeth in it; but M. Deslon was not near the door, nor in either chamber; nor was either of the women touched, not even their pulse examined.

Dr. Sigault, an eminent physician of Paris, communicated to the commissioners some effect he witnessed upon his mere pretence of his being an adept in the art of Mesmer. Being at a great house one day, he caused it to be announced that he could magnetize.

The voice and serious air he assumed, had a very sensible effect on a lady present, although she endeavoured at first to conceal the fact. But having carried his hand to the region of the heart, he found it palpitating. She soon experienced difficulty in respiration; the muscles of her face were affected with convulsive twitches, her eyes rolled; she shortly fell down in a fainting fit; vomited her dinner, purged several times, and experienced incredible weakness and languor. He further adds, that having met a celebrated artist one day on the Pont-Royal, and being informed by him that he had been afflicted several days with a severe head-ache, the Doctor persuaded him that he was instructed in the mysteries of Mesmer, and by means of a few gestures, he almost immediately removed his pain to the astonishment of the artist.

These facts go far to corroborate what is recorded by another distinguished writer. "Men, if they see but another man tremble, giddy, or sick of some fearful disease, their apprehension and fear are so strong in this kind, that they will have the same disease. Or if by some soothsayer, wise-man, fortune-teller, or physician, they be told they shall have such a disease, they will so seriously apprehend it, that they will instantly labour of it—a thing familiar in China (saith Riccius the jesuit). If it be told them that they shall be sick on such a day, when that day comes, they will surely be sick, and will be so terribly afflicted, that sometimes they die upon it."*

* Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, Vol. I. p. 136. Part I. Sec. 2. Mem. 3. Subs. 2.

I have recently noticed an article on the character of the New-Zealanders, as given by Mr. White, and published by the Wesleyan Society, which goes far to corroborate what is recorded by Burton. He says—“There is a class of people in New-Zealand, called by the natives “*Areekee*,” and whom we very improperly called *Priests*. These men pretend to have intercourse with departed spirits, by which they are able to kill, by incantation, any person on whom their anger may fall ; and it is a fact, that numbers fall a prey to their confidence in the efficacy of the curses of these men, and pine under the influence of despair, and die.”*

Now I have selected these several cases, found among the many contained in the commissioners' report to the king, with a view to illustrate the influence of the imagination on the human system through the medium of the nerves. Every person will see, that imagination was the sole cause of these effects. They were not *feigned*, but in the peculiar state of mind of these persons, they were involuntary and irresistible. They believed they should be affected in this manner ; the idea was formed in their imaginations, and the nerves were acted upon precisely as though what they conceived was real, and the muscular effects followed. And as the patients themselves, could not explain the cause of these effects, they very naturally attributed the whole to Magnetism. This was further proved to be wholly imagination ; for upon the explanation of

* Missionary Herald, Vol. XXIII. p. 314.

the commissioners, Magnetism lost all power to produce these wonderful effects. The minds of persons were enlightened upon the subject; they no longer expected to be influenced in this manner, and accordingly they were not.

These facts show the truth and importance of the sentiments of a modern and celebrated author, on a subject somewhat analogous to the one under consideration. Speaking of *religious fanaticism*, he says—“The cure of these diseases belongs rather to colleges of general instruction, than of medicine. Individual cases of enthusiasm and fanaticism have existed, and will probably continue to exist, in all ages; but when the general mind is well informed, and the social feelings and virtues, are duly estimated and widely cultivated, the wild-fire will burn in vain, and meet with little or no fuel to support its rage.”*

Now in view of what has been adduced to show the astonishing influence of the imagination over the human system, let us suppose that Mesmer and Deslon had been ecclesiastics; that they had inculcated the idea on this class of persons, that religion, in a high degree, produced similar effects on the human body; and that without religion they must be damned;—suppose they had endeavoured by all possible means to excite their apprehensions, to raise their animal feelings, and by hurried, boisterous, and long addresses, they had kept their minds strained intensely for hours in succession, yea, whole days and nights;—and have

* Good's Study of Medicine, Vol. III. p. 99. Class 4th, Order 1. Genus 3. Specification 1.

we not reason to believe, that similar effects would have followed? and when one had exhibited these symptoms, another, and another, would do the same? Such a result would be as natural, as in the case of animal magnetism; especially, if when one arose from the paroxysm, he was taught by those whom he considered his superiors, to believe that he emerged from a state of endless condemnation to a state of justification, life, and peace; should hear his conversion proclaimed by a multitude of voices, and should join his own, also, to the quire in a song of praise for his deliverance. And as these affections would be involuntary and real effects, the subjects of them would ascribe them to the supernatural influence of the spirit of God, and the deception might be fatal.

But I shall say more in illustration of the power of the imagination over the human system, in cases which cannot be controverted. Notwithstanding the complete triumph of science and sound philosophy over all pretensions of Mesmer and his coadjutors in regard to magnetism, there was originated in America, by a Mr. Perkins, a cause of delusion, of precisely the same nature with the magnetism of Mesmer. And notwithstanding it arose into notice in less than eighteen years from the fall of Mesmer, this imposition prevailed in all the United States, in Great Britain, Scotland, and Ireland; and, I believe, to considerable extent upon the continent of Europe. Mr. Perkins prepared two small pieces of different kinds of metal, drew them to a point and polished them. These *metallic Tractors*, as they were denominated, were pretended to have, in

their joint operation, great power over the electric fluid; and by moving these points gently over the surface of an inflamed part, the heat was extracted, the swelling subsided, and in a short time, the patient was relieved. In a very little time, thousands and tens of thousands were ready to certify to the happy influence of these *Tractors*. Mr. Perkins went to England and obtained the Royal letters patent for the purpose of securing to him the advantages of his discovery; and it is asserted, by the best authority, that he returned from England possessed of ten thousand pounds sterling, which he received for the use of his *Tractors*.

But Dr. Haygarth, an eminent physician and philosopher, recollecting the developement of Animal Magnetism at Paris, wrote to Dr. Falconer, Surgeon of the general Hospital at Bath, (Eng.) and stated his suspicions concerning the *Tractors*; that their efficacy depended wholly on the imagination of the patient, and recommended the experiment of *wooden Tractors* in place of the *metallic*.

Accordingly, five persons were selected for the experiment, who were labouring under chronic rheumatism in the ankle, knee, wrist, and hip. *Wooden Tractors* were prepared and painted in such a manner that the patients could not discover but that they were metal; and on the 7th of January, 1799, these *wooden Tractors* were employed for the first time. All the five patients, except one, were relieved. Three were very much benefitted. One felt his knee warmer, and he could walk much better, as he exhibited with much satisfaction to the physicians and surgeons present.

One was easier for nine hours till he went to bed, and then his pain returned. Another had a tingling sensation for two hours. The next day, January 8th, the metallic Tractors were employed with the same effect as that of the preceding day. This led to further experiments of a similar kind; and they were continued, until the physicians became fully satisfied, that the wooden Tractors were of the same utility with the metallic, provided the patients *supposed* them metallic. Similar experiments were shortly made at Edinburgh, and the result was the same.—A servant girl, afflicted with a most acute head-ache, which had rendered her nights altogether restless for nearly a fortnight, readily submitted to be pointed at with these *wooden* Tractors. The operators moved them round her head, but never *touch- ed her*. In four minutes she felt a chilliness in the head; in a minute or two more, she felt as though cold water was running down the temples, and the pain was diminished; in ten minutes more she declared that the head-ache was entirely gone; and the next day she returned to express her thanks to her benefactors for the good sleep she enjoyed through the night. By similar experiments, the intelligent physicians in America soon found the true cause of the deception, and when these facts came to be developed, the Tractors lost all their influence on the human system; and for twenty years this subject has been spoken of only in derision. Here, again, we witness the astonishing power of the imagination over the human system, and see it triumphing for a time over reason, science, and experience.

Upon the same principle that Magnetism and Trac-

torism were propagated, was the belief in the efficacy of the *royal touch* for Scrofula, maintained in England for a period of almost seven hundred years. This power was assumed first by Edward III. king of England, who ascended the throne A. D. 1041, and his successors pretended to derive the same healing virtue, as a hereditary prerogative of the crown, *until it was dropped*, says Mr. Hume, *by the present royal family; who observed, that it could no longer give amazement even to the populace, and was attended with ridicule in the eyes of all men of understanding.*

The doctrine was this; that a *touch* from the hand of the king would prove a cure to the scrofula, or what has since been denominated the *king's evil*. And for centuries, this belief was so prevalent, that one, who should call it in question, would have been considered no less than an infidel, and an enemy to his king and country. And so great was the demand for the *king's touch* from invalids, that one day in seven in every week, was set apart for the king to administer healing mercy to his subjects; and vast numbers flocked to him from Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and many parts of the Continent. An exact register was kept of the number of persons, who came to Charles II. for relief, from 1660 to 1664, a period of five years, and they amounted to 23,601. From May 1667 to 1684, the number of persons *touched* amounted to 68,506;—total 92,107.*

Now, notwithstanding this belief and practice are totally abandoned in England, so far as it relates to the

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal for 1807, Vol. III. page 183.

crowns, yet, with some individuals, a belief prevails that certain persons are endowed with healing power. In 1807, a farmer in Devonshire, Eng. who was the ninth son of a ninth son, officiated in the cure of the *king's evil*, and multitudes believed that they received healing from his *touch*. In this country a *seventh* son of a seventh son has officiated in similar cases, and performed incredible cures, as we are told by those who think they have received signal blessings through their instrumentality.

In the years 1808, 9, and 10, a Mr. Austin, living in the town of Colchester, Vt. gave out that he was a gifted person in the art of healing; and whoever would describe to him by word of mouth or by letter, the true symptoms of his malady, he would receive healing at his word, if indeed, his *disease was curable!* In a very little time, the obscure retreat of Austin was thronged with invalids, coming from almost every section of the country; and Colchester was scarcely less in fame than Saratoga or Ballstown. The mail carriers groaned under the burden of maladies described; bar-rooms at public inns, on roads leading to Colchester, were decorated with letters directed to the "Prophet of Colchester;" and vagrants were found travelling the country, collecting of invalids their "evil symptoms," to be truly and faithfully delivered over to the Prophet in a given time, at the moderate price of fifty cents per letter. We were soon referred to cases wherein the most inveterate deafness was removed; the blind saw; dropsies and consumptions, in the last stage of them, were cured; and the patients, we are told, in some in-

stances, would tell the day and the hour when these "swift-winged messengers" arrived at the inspection of the Prophet, although they might be one hundred miles distant from their deliverer ; because, at such an hour, they *began to amend* ! The Prophet, however, did not survive these years of celebrity with him, a great length of time : but he lived, I believe, to see his house deserted of invalids ; and he was permitted to enjoy that retirement, which comported with his early education and manner of life.

The history of Valentine Greatraks, the son of an Irish gentleman who lived in the time of Cromwell, is very similar to what I have already written of the Prophet of Colchester. This man became impressed with the idea that God had conferred on him the power of curing the *king's evil* ; and, in the year 1662, he commenced touching for this disease ; and within the space of three years, his curative powers were enlarged, and he healed multitudes who were visited with the ague, by simply laying his hands upon them. At length his *touch* had a surprising effect upon persons who were subjects of epilepsy and paralytic disorders, and so great was the multitude, who resorted to him, that he devoted three whole days in every week to the benevolent employment of laying his hands on those persons who were afflicted with these disorders, and who resorted to him for a remedy. And he tells us, that even the touch of his *glove* had driven many kinds of pain away, and removed strange fits in women.

About the same time Francisco Bagnone, a Capuchin friar, was famous in Italy for the same gift of heal-

ing, by the touch of his hands only ; and multitudes of sick people attended him wherever he went, to obtain healing mercy. And here we find the true principle on which all the impositions of Popery have been maintained for centuries among those ignorant and degraded religionists. It cannot be a matter of surprise, that, if men, of more information than they, can be made to believe that they are delivered from disease by magnetism, tractors, or a single touch from a fellow creature, these should believe that they are healed by visiting the tombs of saints ; by standing before their statues ; being touched by nails from their coffins, rings from their fingers, or by the bones of the fingers themselves. And we are by no means authorized to say, that none of these persons were relieved of pains and diseases, by seeking relief in this way. So great is the influence of the imagination on the nervous, vascular, and muscular systems, as has been already shown, that it would be no more than probable, that obstructions, causing pain and sickness, should in some instances be removed, and lay a foundation for recovery ; and that in a still greater number of instances, the power of the imagination on the origin of the nerves within the brain, should counteract the motion to the brain by disease acting upon the extremities of the nerves ; and thus the patient for a season might experience relief from pain, and even feel pleasure, as we have witnessed in the case of the artist upon the Pont Royal, mentioned by Dr. Sigault ; and in the gambols of the rheumatic patient, as mentioned by Dr. Haygarth. But in all these cases, experiment and illustration, like those of the

commissioners at Paris, and like that of Dr. Haygarth in England, would disclose to these patients the real ground of these effects; they would no longer attribute them to a supernatural influence, and would learn why in most cases the relief, supposed to be obtained, was only momentary, and all those gifted persons, both in Europe and America, have had no more than an ephemeral celebrity, and have in most instances, lived to see themselves neglected, and their pretensions become the subject of just satire.

But as I have alluded to the influence of example, or imitation, on persons whose imaginations are easily excited to an excess, as in the case of animal magnetism, it may be consistent and important for me to illustrate this by some facts.

In a poor house at Haerlem, under the inspection of the learned Dr. Boerhaave, a girl, under an impression of terror, fell into a convulsive disease, which returned in regular paroxysms. An interested by-stander witnessing her, was seized with a similar fit, which also recurred at intervals. On the day following another was attacked; then a third, and a fourth; and finally, nearly the whole of the children, both girls and boys, came to be affected in the same manner. No sooner was one seized, than the paroxysms pervaded nearly all the company. Every remedy was prescribed by attending physicians which their skill could suggest, but all in vain. They then applied to Dr. Boerhaave to come and examine the nature of this complaint, and to prescribe a remedy if possible. The learned doctor immediately observed that the disease

was communicated from one to another by *sight*; and he inferred that it was the effect of the imagination solely, and that he must apply his means to the minds of these children, rather than to their bodies. He resolved, therefore, on the experiment of diverting their minds from those paroxysms by rendering a fit extremely hazardous. Having apprized the magistrates of his design, he ordered, in the presence of all the children, that several portable furnaces should be placed in different parts of the chamber, containing burning coals, and that irons, bent to a certain form, should be placed in the furnaces. He then gave these further commands:—that all medicines would be totally useless, and the only remedy with which he was acquainted, was, that the first which should be seized with a fit, whether boy or girl, must be burnt in the arm, to the very bone, by a red-hot iron. He spoke this with uncommon dignity and gravity, and it was completely successful. The idea of burning in case of a fit, was enough to enable them to counteract the tendency of their minds to fits, or these spasmodic affections, and the complaint occurred not again.*

Through the politeness of a learned and experienced physician in this country, I am furnished with some facts very similar to those which have been recorded of Haerlem. The Doctor † assures me that a man in Chelmsford (Mass.) had six children, one of whom was afflicted with chorea, or St. Vitus' dance.

* Dr. Rees' Cyclopaedia, Vol. XIX. Part 2. article Imitation.

† M. Spaulding, M. D. Amherst, N. H.

The others amused themselves with imitating his odd gestures until they were irresistibly affected in the same way. The family was in great affliction by reason of this visitation, until the father, a man of singular humour, brought in a block and an axe, and solemnly threatened to take off the head of the first child, who should exhibit any more of these gestures, except the child originally diseased. The spell was immediately broken. The block and axe had all the effect in this case, that the red-hot curved irons had in the poor house at Haerlem, and the family enjoyed peace.

More striking exhibitions of the power of the imagination over the human body can scarcely be conceived than are given in the two cases already described.

Dr. Haygarth gives an account of a similar affection that was propagated in the year 1796, among the tenants of the Earl of Uxbridge and Holland Griffith, Esq. in the Island of Anglesey. It commenced with one female, and extended to twenty three others of her particular acquaintance, all females except one, a boy of seventeen years of age, and all between the age of ten and twenty five.

Dr. Whytt noticed the frequency of these convulsions in Zetland, and with what extreme facility they were propagated among the young women of the Island.

The Rev. William Archibald, parochial clergyman of Unst, the most northerly of the Shetlands, describes a similar muscular affection as prevailing in his parish among young women. He says, At first, this distemper obtained in a private way with one female, but she being

seized in a public way at church, the disease was communicated to others ; but whether by the influence of *fear*, or *sympathy*, is not easy to determine. However this was, our public assemblies, especially at church, became greatly disturbed with their outcries. This distemper always prevails most violently during the summer time, in which season, for many years, we are hardly one Sabbath free. One thing remarkable in this distemper is, that as soon as the fit is over, the persons affected with it are generally as lively and brisk as before.—In another of the northern parishes, (Delting,) the disease was very prevalent. The patient is first seized with something like fainting ; and immediately after, utters wild cries and shrieks, the sound of which, at whatever distance, immediately puts all who are subject to the disorder in the same situation. On a sacramental occasion fifty or sixty are sometimes carried out of the church, and laid in the church-yard, where they struggle and roar with all their strength for five or ten minutes, and then rise up without recollecting a single circumstance that happened to them. A cure of this disease in Northmaven was effected by a rough fellow of a kirk-officer, who tossed a woman in that state, with whom he had been frequently troubled, into a ditch of water. She was never known to have the disease afterwards, and others dreaded the like treatment, and, it seems, were alike relieved.*

Here again we see the principle of cure was per-

* Edin. Med. and Sur. Journal, 1807, Vol. III. pp. 438, 439. Dr. Rees' Cyclopaedia, article Imitation.

fectly analogous to that resorted to by Dr. Boerhaave, and by the man of Chelmsford. The remedy was applied to the mind and not to the body of all those except the single female thrown into the ditch.

In this connexion I add an instance of cure in a like case, as given by the Rev. Charles Wesley, in his own words ;--“ To day one came who was pleased to fall into a fit for my entertainment. He beat himself heartily. I thought it a pity to hinder him ; so instead of singing over him as had often been done, we left him to recover at his leisure. A girl, as she began her cry, I ordered to be carried out. Her convulsions were so violent as to take away the use of her limbs, till they laid her without at the door and left her ; then she immediately found her legs and walked off. Some very unstill sisters, who always took care to stand near me and tried who could cry loudest, since I have had them removed out of my sight, have been as quiet as lambs. The first night I preached here, half my words were lost through the noise of their outcries ; last night, before I began, I gave public notice, that whosoever cried so as to drown my voice, should without any man’s hurting them, or judging them, be gently carried to the furthest corner of the room ; but my porter had no employ the whole night.”*

This cure was certainly addressed to the mind and not to the body, and it was as effectual in the presence of Mr. Charles Wesley, as the red-hot irons were effectual in the presence of Dr. Boerhaave. The reason was, doubtless, that the imagination of these persons was un-

* Southey’s life of Wesley, Vol I. pp. 148, 149.

der restraint, and it did not produce the effects, which it can produce, when an unbounded license is given to it.

I have another instance of great and general muscular affection to notice in this connexion. It is that which was exhibited in the states of Tennessee and Kentucky, during the years 1800, 1, 2, and 3, and was denominated the *Kentucky revival*. These affections prevailed without distinction of sect or denomination, and for a season, at least, were cherished by all descriptions of character. The following information is derived from an Inaugural Essay on Chorea Sancti Viti, before the Faculty in Philadelphia, by Felix Robertson of Tennessee, 1805, and republished in Edinburgh 1807.*—This gentleman was an eye-witness to many of the facts, which he has noted. I can give but a few extracts from this Essay.—“The churches in these States at that period,” he says, “were small and uncomfortable, and the people from necessity assembled in the open field at extraordinary meetings. These meetings lasted from three to five days. They remained upon the spot day and night, and worshipped their Maker almost incessantly. The outward expression of their worship consisted chiefly in alternate crying, laughing, singing, and shouting; and at the same time, performing that great variety of gesticulation, which the muscular system is capable of producing. It was under these circumstances that some found themselves unable, by voluntary efforts, to suppress the contraction of their muscles; and to their own astonishment, and the

* Edin. Med. and Surgical Journal, Vol. III. p. 446.

diversion of many of the spectators, they continued to act from necessity, the curious character, which they had commenced from choice. The disease no sooner appeared, than it spread with rapidity through the medium of imitation. Thus it was not uncommon, for an affected person to communicate it to a greater part of a crowd, who from curiosity or other motives, had collected around him. It attacks both sexes, and every constitution; but evidently, more readily those who are enthusiasts in religion. The contractions are sudden and violent, such as are denominated convulsive; being sometimes so powerful, when in the muscles of the back, that the patient is thrown on the ground, where for some time, his motions more resemble those of a live fish, when thrown on land, than any thing else to which I can compare them. During the intermission, a paroxysm is often excited at the sight of a person affected, but more frequently by the common salute of shaking hands. The sensations of the patient in a paroxysm are generally agreeable, which the enthusiastic class often endeavour to express by laughing, shouting, dancing, &c. Fatigue is almost always complained of after violent paroxysms; and sometimes a general soreness is experienced. It has not proved mortal in a single instance within my knowledge, but becomes lighter by degrees, and finally disappears." The author adds by a subjoined note—"Some who took the disease in 1803, have not yet (1805) entirely got rid of it; but these instances of its long continuance, are very few."

I shall connect with this a brief account of that

work, given by one who professes to have been a favoured person during the commotions in those States. "At first appearance," he says, "those meetings exhibited nothing to the spectator, but a scene of confusion, that could scarce be put into human language. They were generally opened with a sermon; near the close of which, there would be an unusual out-cry; some bursting forth into loud ejaculations of prayer or thanksgiving for the truth; others breaking out in emphatical sentences of exhortation; others flying to their careless friends, with tears of compassion, beseeching them to turn to the Lord. Some struck with terror, and hastening through the crowd to make their escape, or pulling away their relations;—others trembling, weeping, and crying out for the Lord Jesus to have mercy upon them, fainting and swooning away, till every appearance of life was gone, and the extremities of the body assumed the coldness of a dead corpse. Others surrounding them with melodious songs, or fervent prayers for their happy resurrection in the love of Christ."*

This author proceeds to describe a meeting held at Cabin Creek, which continued four days and three nights. Falling, crying out, praying, exhorting, singing and shouting, characterized this meeting. No circumstance at this meeting appeared more striking, than the great numbers that fell on the third night; and, to prevent their being trodden under foot by the multitude, they were collected together and laid out in order, on two squares of the meeting house; which like so ma-

* M'Nemar, p. 23.

ny dead corpses, covered a considerable part of the floor.* And on page 32, we are told of a young woman at Caneridge, who rose transfigured, after lying nine days and nights in a trance without eating or drinking, or having any connexion with this world all this time.

The Rev. Archibald Alexander, President of Hamden Sidney College in Virginia, in a letter to Dr. Nathan Strong of Hartford, (Con.) communicates an account of those affections, which agrees in all its general out-lines to what has already been stated. Not less than one thousand fell at one meeting.† It was common to see them shed tears plentifully about an hour before they fell; immediately before they fell, they were siezed with a general tremor; and sometimes, though not frequently, in the moment of falling, they uttered one or two piercing shrieks. And it was witnessed that a few shrieks of this nature would instantly arouse a languid assembly, and persons would fall in all directions. And, he adds, "these phenomena of falling are common to all ages and sexes, and to all sorts of characters."‡

We have, also, an account of several species of exercises, which prevailed with many near the close of this moral commotion; and, as they were somewhat peculiar, I will give a brief description of them, as recorded by eye-witnesses. The most extraordinary of these were denominated the *rolling exercise*, the *jerks*,

* M'Nemar, p. 24.

† M'Nemar states not less than 3000.

‡ See Con. Evang. Mag. Vol. II. p. 354.

and the *barks*. The *rolling exercise* consisted in being cast down in a violent manner, doubled with the head and feet together, and rolled over and over like a wheel, or, stretched in a prostrate manner turned swiftly over and over like a dog. They were sometimes driven in this manner through the mud, and were sullied from head to foot. Nothing in nature could better represent the *jerks*, than for one to goad another alternately on every side with a piece of red-hot iron. The exercise commonly began in the head, which would fly backward and forward, and from side to side, with a quick jolt, which the person would naturally labour to suppress, but in vain. He must necessarily go as he was stimulated, whether with a violent dash on the ground, and bounce from place to place like a foot-ball, or hop round, with head, limbs and trunk twitching and jolting in every direction, as if they must inevitably fly asunder. Sometimes the head would be twitched right and left to a half round, with such velocity, that not a feature could be discovered, but the face appear as much behind as before. Head-dresses were of little account among the female jerkers. Even handkerchiefs bound tight round the head, would be flirited off almost with the first twitch, and the hair put into the utmost confusion; this was a great inconvenience, to redress which the generality were shorn, though directly contrary to their confession of faith. The *barks* consisted in being compelled to imitate the *canine* animal; and persons thus affected moved about on all fours, growling and snapping the teeth, and barking in so personating a manner, as to set the eyes and ears of

the spectator at variance.—These persons, however, were the most gifted in prophecies, in trances, dreams, visions, fragrant smells, and delightful singing in the breast. Some were favoured with an interview with their departed friends, and learned their different allotments in the invisible world; some saw the holy city, and heard the songs of the angelic hosts; others in their visions were employed in crossing rivers, climbing mountains, finding treasures, fighting serpents; or more delightfully employed in eating the fruits of the tree of life, bathing in clear water, casting off old garments, and putting on new.*

It appears from the statement of Lorenzo Dow, that these phenomena were not confined to any one sect or denomination in these States at that time. He tells us that he preached in the court-house at Knoxville, (Ten.) in 1805, the Governor being present, and about one hundred and fifty were exercised with the *jerks*. He held an evening meeting eighteen miles from Knoxville, where about a dozen Quakers had the *jerks*. “I have seen,” says he, “all denominations of religion exercised with the *jerks*, gentleman and lady, black and white, young and old, without exception. I passed a meeting house, where I observed the undergrowth had been cut away for a camp meeting, and from fifty to a hundred saplins were left, breast-high, on purpose for the people, who were *jerked* to hold by.—I observed where they had held on, they had kicked up the earth, as a horse stamping flies. A Presbyteri-

* M'Nemar, pp. 61—67.

an minister told me, while he was preaching the day before, some had the *jerks*.—I believe it does not affect those naturalists, who wish and try to get it to philosophize upon it;—and rarely those who are the most pious; but the luke-warm, lazy professor, is subject to it. The wicked fear it and are subject to it, but the persecutors are more subject to it than any; and they sometimes have cursed and swore, and damned it, while jerking.”*

I have thus been sufficiently particular, perhaps, in describing the progress and the characteristics of those spasmodic affections in Kentucky and Tennessee. And notwithstanding they were at the time they existed, and have since been, considered by all denominations as wholly unaccountable, except upon the ground of a supernatural agency, some ascribing it to a good, and some to an evil cause, yet do we see any thing in these phenomena, which is any more unaccountable, than we witness in the effects of Magnetism; in the paupers of Haerlem; in the female convulsions in Anglesey; in Delting; and in the Chelmsford family? It is true the Kentucky affections were *strongly* marked; they were more general and extensive; but to me they appear of the same species. They were alike spasmodic, they were ordinarily experienced on seeing or hearing these things in others, and they were common to the serious and irreligious. They were the most prevalent after the system, in a natural course of things, must have been nearly exhausted through whole days and nights

* See *Methodist Error*, by a Wesleyan, pp. 157, 158, 159. This is a valuable work, printed at Trenton, N. J. 1819.

of intense thought, and vigorous action in worship. And if the imagination solely could produce fits, swoonings, and every muscular gesticulation in Paris, why not in America? And if *witnessing* spasmodic affections in Haerlem, and in Chelmsford, could propagate these affections, why not in Kentucky and Tennessee? I would by no means insinuate, that no seriousness and no true religion existed in that great commotion in Kentucky; for we may hope and believe there were these; but I perceive no necessity for attributing these muscular affections either to religion, or to a supernatural agency. And had the power of the imagination over the human system, and the strong tendency of our natures to imitation, been generally known at that time in those states, we may suppose that it had shortly arrested, in a great degree, the progress of those phenomena. I am strengthened in this supposition by the fact communicated by Mr. Dow, that naturalists who tried to get it to philosophize upon it, could not be affected in that manner; although other sinners were, even opposers and blasphemers, and *all* but the most pious. Now we should remember that the nine Commissioners at Paris could not be affected by Magnetism, although they tried for it, while they saw hundreds prostrated by it.

But I shall say more of the effects of the imagination under great religious excitements.

The first commotion of this kind, of any considerable magnitude, appeared in Germany during the reformation under Luther and Melancthon. In Saxony a numerous sect arose, denominated Anabaptists, and in 1525, Thomas Munster appeared among them as their

leader and most distinguished Prophet. It seems that this deluded people conceived the idea, that they were the peculiar favourites of heaven; that they were no longer subject to human laws; and that they were God's chosen instruments to effect the millennial reign of Christ on earth. The prophetic powers of Munster and several others, soon kindled such a flame of fanaticism in the minds of the peasants, that nothing short of the civil and military powers could suppress it, and preserve others from their violence. They contended that they were positively commissioned of God; that they had familiar conferences with God; that they could foretell future events; and that they were on an equal footing with Prophets and Apostles. And so extraordinary were their pretensions and appearances, that even Melancthon was at a loss to know whether they were actuated by the Spirit of God, or by Satanic power; but admitted that it was something more than a mere human spirit.* We ought to be reminded, however, for the honour of the present denomination of *particular* Baptists, that the former bore no resemblance to the latter, except in *name*, and in regard to the *subjects* and *mode* of baptism.

About the middle of the 17th century, the society denominated *Quakers*, had their origin. One George Fox, born at Drayton in Leicestershire, (Eng.) in 1624, a shoemaker, was the founder of this sect. After secluding himself from the world for a season, and

* Milner, Vol. V. pp. 175—177. Also Russell's M. Europe, Vol. II. part I. pp. 161, 162 163.

having given himself exclusively to meditation and devotion, he appeared to inculcate those peculiarities, which he designed should characterize his followers. He soon found himself surrounded with proselytes of both sexes, equally gifted in prophetic impulses with himself. They ran through towns and villages, declaiming against every fixed form of worship, and interrupting the clergy in the very exercises of their religious functions. Females performed a distinguished part in these excesses, and one convert went into Whitehall chapel, during the public service, in a state of perfect *nudity*, where Cromwell was present, being moved as she said, by the Spirit, to appear *as a sign to the people*. Fox and his disciples, when influenced by prophetic impulses, were as violently agitated as the priestesses of the Delphic oracle; and these muscular affections served to confirm them and others in the belief, that they were actuated by a divine agency. But these transports soon subsided, and the Quakers became, as at present, a decent and orderly society.*

During the persecutions of Louis XIV. of France, the Huguenots were driven to the highest pitch of religious excitement, and the very same excesses were exhibited by them, which we have witnessed in all the instances already alluded to. The *French Prophets*, as they were denominated, appeared first in Dauphiny and Vivarais. In the year 1688, five or six hundred Protestants of both sexes, gave themselves out to be prophets, and inspired of the Holy Ghost. They soon

* Russell's Modern Europe, Vol. III. part. 2. pp. 417, 418, 419.

became so numerous, that there were many thousands of them inspired. They were people of all ages and sexes without distinction, though the greatest part of them were boys and girls from six or seven to twenty five years of age. They had strange fits which came upon them with tremblings and faintings as in a swoon, which made them stretch out their arms and legs, and stagger several times before they dropped down. They struck themselves with their hands, they fell on their backs, shut their eyes, and heaved with their breasts. They remained awhile in trances, and coming out of them with twitchings, uttered all which came into their mouths. They said they saw the heavens open, the angels, paradise, and hell. Those who were just on the point of receiving the spirit of prophesy, dropped down, not only in the assemblies, crying out *mercy*, but in the fields, and in their own houses. When the prophets had been for a while under agitations of body, they began to prophesy. The burden of their prophecies was, *Amend your lives ; repent ye ; the end of all things draws nigh*. The hills resounded with their loud cries for mercy, and their imprecations against the priests, the church, the pope, and against the anti-christian dominion, with predictions of the approaching fall of popery. All they said at these times, was heard and received with reverence and awe.—In the year 1706, three or four of these prophets went over into England, and carried their prophetic spirit along with them, which discovered itself in the same way and manner, by ecstacies, agitations and inspirations, as it had done in France ; and they propagated the like spirit to oth-

ers, so that before the year came about, there were two or three hundred of these prophets in and about London of both sexes, of all ages, men, women and children; and they had delivered under inspiration, four or five hundred prophetic warnings. They professed to possess the gift of languages, of discerning the secrets of the heart, the gift of ministration of the same spirit to others by laying on of the hands, and the gift of healing. To prove they were inspired by the Holy Ghost they alleged the complete joy and satisfaction they experienced; the spirit of prayer which was poured forth upon them; and the answer of their prayer by God. The burden of their prophesies consisted in their being God's chosen heralds to proclaim to Jews and Gentiles the acceptable year of the Lord; that God would confirm their mission by signs and wonders from heaven; by a deluge of judgments upon the wicked throughout the world; and that the *new heaven* and the *new earth*, the *kingdom of the Messiah*, the *marriage of the Lamb*, the *first resurrection*, or the *new Jerusalem descending from above*, would all be manifested over the whole earth within the term of three years.*

Now it is not to be conceived, that all those who were distinguished among the Anabaptists, the Quakers, and the French Prophets, on account of their prophetic impulses, their visions, trances and muscular affections, were designedly practising impositions upon

* Buck's Theological Dictionary, article French Prophets. Southey's life of Wesley, Vol. I. pp. 136, 137. Also Vol. II. p. 238.

their fellow-creatures. The lives of some and the extreme youth of others forbid us to judge of them so uncharitably. The great majority among them verily believed they were thus gifted; those visionary scenes streamed along their mental horizon, and their proof of the reality of these things consisted in a great measure, in those muscular affections, which were unaccountable to themselves and to most others who beheld them. But at this period, it is enough to inquire, what has become of those prophecies? Where is the fulfilment? And how did the same spirit dictate things directly opposed to each other; as for instance, the prophecies of the Anabaptists run directly counter to the prophecies of the Quakers, and the Quakers counter to the French Prophets? The truth is, I conceive, we are under no necessity of attributing these effects, either to the immediate agency of God, or of Satan. The imagination has the power to produce these effects, when restraint is removed; and means are employed to extend its influence over the human system, as I have already shown. Nor would I disguise my full conviction of the fact, that the strong delusion which took possession of the minds of the people of New England, during those religious commotions in the mother country, had its origin from the very same cause. I allude to the subject of witchcraft; which from 1645, to near the close of the century, spread a gloom over the colonies, and clad very many in habiliments of mourning. If we examine the characteristic features of witchcraft,* except

* Mather's *Magnalia*, Vol. II. pp. 383--416. Hutchinson's *Hist. Mass.* Vol. II. pp. 22--63.

those which credulity itself would now blush to own as such, and those which were subsequently confessed to be impositions, we shall find a striking analogy between them and those effects of magnetism at Paris, those of sympathy at Haerlem, and those religious affections in the Western States, in Europe and in England. The symptoms were similar in many respects, but they were attributed to a different cause. The truth seems to be, that spasmodic affections, astonishing feats of activity, and fits, produced on seeing the supposed witch, or by a strong apprehension of witches being present, were the strongest proofs required by the courts to convict the accused of guilt. And since these effects were wholly inexplicable by the judges but upon the ground of a supernatural influence, and taking Parliamentary acts and the decisions of the highest courts in England in similar cases as precedents, persons were condemned and executed, because children were convulsed at the presence of one whom they accused of being their tormentor. That these distresses were the consequence of a disordered imagination, may be seen from the two considerations, that as soon as men began to suspect a deception in the case, and the accused were no longer liable to suffer, the afflicted were no longer tormented; and of those who had confessed themselves guilty of the sin of witchcraft, some said, *they remembered nothing of what they had said*, others that *they had belied themselves and others*. Thus terminated in a great measure this scourge of New England.

I shall now conclude my illustrations of the power of the imagination under great excitement, by introdu-

cing some accounts given us of religious exercises by Rev. John Wesley, and some of his brethren in the ministry.

He speaks of John Haydon's conviction and conversion. He says, he "found him on his floor, beating himself and screaming terribly 'O thou Devil, thou cursed Devil, yea, thou legion of Devils! thou canst not stay! Christ will cast thee out! I know his work is begun! Tear me to pieces if thou wilt, but thou canst not hurt me!' He then beat himself against the ground again, his breast heaving at the same time as in the pangs of death, and great drops of sweat trickled down his face. We all betook ourselves to prayer. His pangs ceased, and both his body and soul were set at liberty."*

In another place he says, "while I was earnestly inviting all men *to enter into the holiest by this new and living way*, many of those that heard, began to call upon God with strong cries and tears; some sunk down, and there remained no strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies; and that so violently, that often four or five persons could not hold one of them."† Prayer was resorted to as in the preceding case with great success.

Again he relates, that he was called to see a young woman of nineteen or twenty years of age, who could neither read nor write. He found her on a bed, two

* Southey's life of Wesley, Vol. I. p. 124.

† Ibid. Vol. I. p. 134.

or three persons holding her. "She screamed out as words could find their way," he says, 'I am damned, damned; lost forever! Six days ago you might have helped me, but it has past; I am the Devil's now; I have given myself to him; his I am, him I must serve, with him, I must go to hell. I will be his, I will serve him, I will go with him to hell. I cannot be saved, I will not be saved. I must, I will, I will be damned.' She then began praying to the Devil. We began, 'Arm of the Lord, awake, awake.'" Their prayers calmed her; but as soon as they ceased, she broke out again in inexpressible vehemence. A part of her language is as follows; 'There he is! ay, there he is! Come, good Devil, come! Take me away! you said you would dash my brains out! come, do it quickly! I am yours. I will be yours. Take me away.' Another young woman then began to roar as loud as she had done; but Mr. Wesley and his brother continued at prayer till past eleven o'clock, and both these females found peace.*

We have an account of a revival in their school at Kingswood. The children were shown a corpse and exhorted to repentance. A number of them immediately covenanted that they would not sleep until they had found peace. They prayed all night and the next day and for several successive days until all felt their justification. Mr. Wesley adds, "In the evening all the maids and many of the boys, not having been used to so long and violent speaking, (for this had lasted

* Southey's life of Wesley, Vol. I. pp. 146, 147.

from Tuesday till Saturday) were worn out as to bodily strength, and so hoarse, that they were scarce able to speak; but they were strong in the Spirit; full of love, and of joy and peace in believing." Most of these were admitted to the Lord's Supper the next day for the first time; four or five of these were not above seven or eight years of age. Twelve months afterwards Mr. Wesley wrote in his journal the following—"I spent an hour with our children at Kingswood. It is strange! How long shall we be constrained to weave Penelope's web! What has become of the wonderful work of grace, which God wrought in them last September? It is gone! It is lost! It is vanished away! There is scarce any trace of it remaining!"* I will add but one quotation more. It is Mr. Cennick's letter to Mr. Wesley, describing a meeting at Kingswood. Mr. Cennick was a convert under Mr. Wesley.

"On Monday evening, I was preaching at the school on the forgiveness of sins, when two persons, who the night before, had laughed at others, cried out with a loud and bitter cry. So did many more in a little time. Indeed, it seemed that the Devil and much of the powers of darkness, were come among us. My mouth was stopped, and my ears heard scarcely any thing, but such terrifying cries, as would have made any one's knees tremble! Only judge; it was pitch dark, it rained much, and the wind blew vehemently. Large flashes of lightning, and loud claps of thunder,

* Southey's life of Wesley, Vol. 2. p. 230.

mixed with the screams of frightened parents, and the exclamations of nine distressed souls ! The hurry and confusion caused hereby cannot be expressed. The whole place seemed to me to resemble nothing but the habitation of apostate spirits. Many raving up and down, crying, the Devil will have me ! I am his servant ! I am damned ! My sins can never be pardoned ; I am gone, gone forever ! A young man (in such horrors, that even seven or eight men could not hold him) still roared like a dragon, Ten thousand devils, millions, millions of devils, are about me ! This continued three hours. One cried out, That fearful thunder is raised by the Devil ; in this storm he will bear me to hell ! O what a power reigned amongst us ! Some cried out with a hollow voice, Mr. Cennick ! Bring Mr. Cennick ! I came to all that desired me. They then spurned with all their strength, grinding their teeth, and expressing all the fury that heart can conceive. Indeed, their staring eyes and swelled faces, so amazed others, that they cried out almost as loud as they who were tormented. I have visited several since, who told me their senses were taken away ; but when I drew near, they said, they felt fresh rage, longing to tear me to pieces ! I never saw the like, nor even the shadow of it before.”*

Now these several relations are all from the pen of Mr. Wesley, or from his disciple Mr. Cennick, and they were witnesses of what they describe. We have

* Southey's life of Wesley, Vol. I. p. 226. Notes and illustrations.

therefore, the truth, doubtless, concerning them. And I would inquire with seriousness, whether we do not perceive a striking analogy between these affections of body and mind, and those described as prevailing in Delting, where fifty or sixty were sometimes carried out of the church and laid in the church-yard, where they struggled and roared with all their might for five or ten minutes, and then rose up without recollecting a single circumstance which had happened to them? Is there not an impressive similarity between them and those exhibited in the states of Kentucky and Tennessee, and between them and the primitive Quakers and French Prophets? None will doubt, that the imaginations of these persons were greatly excited, even to distraction with some, as it appears by their own confession, and we have strong reason to apprehend that these affections were propagated in a considerable degree by sympathy, or *imitation*; since the truth of it appears upon the face of those descriptions. In this respect they compare with the effects of magnetism, with the results of sympathy in the poor-house at Haerlem, with the female convulsions in Anglesey, and in Zetland, and with what is recorded of the Chelmsford family. And it is not a little wonderful, that Mr. John Wesley should be so much inclined to attribute these affections among his followers to a supernatural agency, when he did not appear to consider the Quakers, or the French Prophets, in any favourable light on account of them; and when his brother, the Rev. Charles Wesley, said all in his power to convince him of his error. It seems, however, that toward the close of life,

Mr. Wesley became fully sensible of the danger of enthusiasm, and a heated imagination. He says in his Tract on Christian perfection—"Beware of that daughter of pride, *enthusiasm!* O keep at the utmost distance from it : give no place to an heated imagination. Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, or revelations, to be from God. They may be from him ; they may be from nature ; they may be from the devil. Therefore, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God.—I say, yet again, *beware of enthusiasm!* Such is, the imagining you have the gift of prophesying or of discerning spirits ; which I do not believe one of you has ; no, nor ever had yet."*

It is not my design, however, in any thing which I have brought to view in this Essay, or in what I shall further say on this subject, to show that religion may not exist cotemporaneously with those muscular affections, trances, visions, and prophetic impulses ; or that religion might not affect the body : but that these things may and often do exist without religion, and that they are not to be relied upon as the slightest evidence of religion. And I shall now proceed to state some reasons, which induce me to believe that these effects are no evidence of genuine piety.

1. Because we have no example in the Scriptures to show us that religion produces the phenomena which I have described. We have reason to believe, I think, that true religion is of the same nature in all ages, in

* Wesleyan Methodist, N. J. pp. 169--171.

all nations, and under all dispensations. To this effect the Apostle writes, Eph. 4: 4, 5, 6, *There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Might we not, then, look for the features of true religion to be delineated in the space of four thousand years, especially, by those who were the honoured instruments of writing the scriptures? It would seem so; and yet I am unable to find a single instance among all the Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles, of muscular affections, which bears the least analogy to those which have been described. What do we see of this in the life of Noah? Do we ever see Abraham, the constituted Father of believers, so convulsed through the operation of the Spirit of God, that he was incapable of performing the immediate duties of religion? Verily not. He never exhibits any of the phenomena delineated in this Essay, and yet he was adopted by God for a son and heir, and was constituted Father of all them that believe. We see nothing of these things in Isaac, or Jacob, or Joseph. The Apostle to the Hebrews tells us that Moses *feared and quaked* at Sinai; but he does not tell us that it was on account of his possessing so much of the spirit of religion, but because *so terrible was the sight* of God's exhibitions there; and we are told, Exodus 19: 16, that all the people that was in the camp trembled likewise. We witness nothing of these symptoms in Joshua, in Samuel, or in David. David leaped and danced before the Ark on its return to his city from a long cap-

tivity ; but all his gestures were voluntary, and he appears to be in full possession of his mental powers. Elijah and Elisha never exhibit any loss of consciousness in their devotions, or any spasmodic affections. Ezra and Nehemiah appear to be equally uniform in their views and deportment. Ezra, on one occasion, prostrated himself before the temple of the Lord while supplicating for mercy and grace to be shown his people, but his mind was clear, and his bodily powers were in no sense impaired. The Jews, after their return from the captivity at the laying of the foundation of the second temple, by Zerubbabel, wept or rejoiced aloud, according as they had, or had not, seen the splendour of the first temple ; but here were no trances, no visions, no spasmodic affections, nor any prophetic impulses, but they expressed their feelings by strong outward tokens, as was their custom on all occasions of joy or grief, and as *was* and *is* the custom still among Asiatic nations ; and which, indeed, prevails in a greater or less degree with all barbarous and semi-barbarous nations. Neither this transaction, nor the dedication of the wall of the city under Nehemiah, bears any analogy to the phenomena, which I have described. We see nothing of them in the life of Job, or Daniel. Isaiah, in the year of king Uzziah's death, had a remarkable vision ;* heaven was revealed to him in as sublime a manner, probably, as it ever was to one in the body, and he thought he should die ; but it destroyed not his consciousness, nor did it produce any mus-

* Isaiah 6: 1--4.

cular affection. God communicated to Ezekiel at great length in visions ; but he was always rational, and capable of serving the Lord. Nor do I know a single instance among all the ancient prophets wherein they exhibited the characteristics of the French Prophets, the Quakers, the worshippers at Kingswood, or the inhabitants of the Western States at the time alluded to. And where shall we find an example of this under the Gospel dispensation ? Suppose we commence with John the Baptist ; do we ever see him convulsed, or in a swoon, or violently thrust down by the power of religion ?* Do his *disciples* on any occasion exhibit any of these symptoms ? It is presumed no one will pretend that this was the case. And yet “ among those born of women, there was not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.”† There were occasions too, under his ministration, that would naturally have called forth these exercises, had they existed among his followers : for “ there went out unto him, all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan confessing their sins.”‡ And where do we find any thing in the life and ministry of the Saviour, which bears any analogy to the phenomena which have characterised some great modern excitements ? The spirit of the Lord was upon him of a truth, but he did neither strive nor cry, nor caused any man to hear his voice in the streets.|| Nor do we learn

* M'Nemar, p. 61.

† Luke 7: 28.

‡ Mark 1: 5.

|| Matt. 12: 19.

that his preaching or his miracles, ever had this effect either upon the twelve, or the multitudes which followed him. Says a candid and judicious writer—"Indeed, in all his preaching and miracles, they appear always to have acted only as hearers and observers."* It is repeatedly said that the multitude, on witnessing the miracles of Jesus Christ, *glorified God*; but this implies no more than that they ascribed these acts to the power and mercy of God. When Jesus entered into Jerusalem for the last time, sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass, multitudes before and behind, cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest," spreading their garments in the way at the same time, and cutting down branches from the trees, and strewing them in the way. This scene is recorded in Matt. xxi. Mark xi. Luke xix. John xii. and in very similar language. This act of the people the Saviour approbated, and said, Luke 19: 40, "I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Now Matthew and John tell us why it was necessary that Christ should be received in this manner at Jerusalem;—it was fulfil to some predictions of the prophets, especially Psalms 8: 2. Zech. 9: 9; and Christ came to fulfil every jot and tittle of the prophesies respecting him. And there are

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 81. This work I would cordially recommend to all who would see an elaborate exposition of those passages of Scripture which have been adduced to authorize violent outward exercises in devotion. The author is a Wesleyan Methodist, and writes to correct what he conceives an error in practice and not in sentiment.

several things to be considered in relation to this triumphant entrance of the Saviour into Jerusalem. Those who gave him this reception were the populace, and not his chosen disciples; there were *multitudes* before and behind him; and the Pharisees said, *behold, the world is gone after him*; those, we have reason to believe, who in a very short time cried *crucify him, crucify him, away with such a fellow from the earth*. They had no more design of fulfilling the predictions of the prophets by this act, than his murderers had when they crucified him. That these were not the acts of his real disciples is evident from John 12: 16. "These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." We learn also the reasons which influenced the Jews to give Christ this reception. They had been long waiting for the coming of their Messiah, a great temporal Prince, who would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and restore them to their ancient privileges, and they hailed him in that capacity. This is seen in their very words, *Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest!* Many were influenced to do this, we are told, John 12: 17, 18, because he had raised Lazarus from the dead. This, then, "was the *passing* act of a marching populace; and could not have been religious devotion, other than as they regarded him as a gift from God."* And I do not perceive any de-

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 82.

sign in this transaction among the Jews to offer religious worship, any more than the people of these States designed religious worship when they went out of their cities to welcome the approach of Washington, strewing his path with flowers, and carpets, bestowing on him their panegyrics, and professing to thank God for this special gift to the nation. But suppose it was religious devotion, does it bear the least analogy to what I have described as characterizing some great religious excitements? Nothing of this. All was self-possession, and all was rational.

Here is nothing, then, in all this to authorize the phenomena exhibited in our days and the days of our fathers. There were other occasions under the ministry of the Saviour, which would have tended very much to produce these strong symptoms of religion, had they characterized religion, in that day. I mention the Sermon on the Mount, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the repeated instances of the Saviour's appearing to his disciples after his resurrection; but in no instance do we witness a loss of consciousness, or any bodily affections which were involuntary.

I shall now examine the most prominent features of religion under the ministration of the Apostles.

The first I shall notice is the exhibition of mercy and grace on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts II. The disciples, we are told, were all with one accord in one place. A sudden descent of the Holy Ghost filled all the house where they were sitting, and it *filled* the disciples likewise, and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

They were enabled to address every man in his own language ; and persons were present from sixteen different nations, who acknowledged that they heard them speak in the language which was peculiar to their nation respectively, and the hearers were *amazed*. Some, who did not understand foreign languages, supposed, that while the Apostles were addressing foreigners in their native tongue, they were making pretensions to that which they did not possess ; and as it appeared to them a mere jargon, they said the Apostles were full of new wine ; but Peter, standing up, refuted the charge, and preached the Gospel to a vast collection of people. Now, was there any wild and unnatural excitement with the Apostles on this occasion ? Not a particle of it ; or any thing which bore the least analogy to it. And yet these disciples were *filled* with the Holy Ghost. And what was the effect of Peter's preaching on the minds of the *multitude* ? Many, very many, on hearing, *were pricked in their heart*, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? Peter directed them to do as his gospel dictated ; and three thousand souls were converted, baptized, and added to the church. Did convulsions or swoons characterize this great ingathering ? Nothing of them appears in the history. Acts III. Peter and John healed a man who had been lame from his birth, and the man who was healed, leaped up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God. Now, why did he *stand, walk, and leap* ? Was it because he possessed more of the spirit of God than the

Apostles did on the day of Pentecost, when they were *filled* with the Spirit? or because he possessed more than the three thousand who had been converted a day or two previous to that? The circumstances explain the cause. He was exercising the new bodily power, which had been conferred on him; and he wished to exhibit to all the spectators, that it was a real miracle. And he *praised God*, because he was grateful for the blessing bestowed upon him, and he did it *understandingly*. Acts 4: 31. The disciples were together, "and when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." The place was *shaken*--they were *filled* with the Holy Ghost, and what was the effect? No shrieks, no roaring, no swoons, but they spake the word of God with boldness. Acts 7: 55, 56. "But he," (Stephen) "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, behold, I see the heavens opened, and the son of man, standing on the right hand of God." Here is one who is *full* of the Holy Ghost, and heaven is opened to his ravished eyes, and yet he is calm and rational. Acts ix, we have the account of Saul's conversion. He was smitten to the earth by an *actual view* of the exalted and glorified Saviour. His natural sight was injured by the excessive brightness of the Saviour's person, but he was rational, and he said, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" The visible and glorious presence of the Saviour had a still greater effect upon the

Apostle John in the Isle of Patmos, as we learn in the first chapter of the Revelation ; but nothing of those extravagant emotions is witnessed in him which have been the subject of this Essay. He still retained his consciousness, and wrote the scenes which passed before him, for the benefit of the Church and the world.

I have thus considered the most prominent characters both in the Old and New Testament, and have taken cognizance of their deportment while they were passing through the most impressive scenes of their lives, as they are recorded in the Scriptures ; but I have not been able to discover in any instance, a single affection of theirs, which bore the least analogy to those phenomena, which have characterized great excitement in later times. And I trust that the reader will be convinced of the same fact, if he will examine the lives of these persons for himself ; and he will find, moreover, that in no instance, did the preaching of Patriarchs, Prophets, the Saviour, or his Apostles, produce these effects on the minds and bodies of their hearers.

I am aware that some have argued, and even President Edwards contended, if I rightly apprehend him, that we could not judge of the character of present religious appearances by comparing them with the exhibitions of true religion in former ages ; because God has not signified his purpose to pursue the same method in calling his people, which he has hitherto chosen. This, however, appears to me, to be a position of dangerous tendency. God has nowhere said, that he would always render it necessary for men to eat and

drink to subsist ; but would any of us, regardless of the method God has so long adopted for sustaining men in the present life, abstain from food on the assertion of others, that food was no longer necessary to support life ? I think not. We should adhere to the old system until the new one was authenticated by such vouchers as our senses would judge of, or we might purchase wisdom at too dear a rate. So in respect to religion, it would be desperate rashness for us to confide in any new method, until it was attested by divine authority, and such authority as we can judge of. And it would be extremely difficult for us to divest ourselves of impressions previously received from the uniformity of God's dispensations. Now without those vouchers in the case under consideration, and with the impressions received from God's hitherto established method of calling in his people, I adhere to the old system, and believe whatever is peculiar to modern exhibitions of religion is not to be relied upon as the slightest evidence of piety.

But it may be said that the *language* of scripture, and especially the requisitions of God in the Old Testament, demand those strong bodily affections in our devotions. In answering this, I would preface my remark in the language of another—"It is the practice of the scriptures to speak in the characteristic language of the people to whom they were first delivered ; and as they were first delivered to the people of the East, who to this day abound in extravagant metaphors, in our sense of judging ; they are therefore extremely figurative, sometimes to obscurity, and abound with

constant reference to familiar objects of sense, for their comparisons and illustrations.”* Now the truth of these remarks will appear, as soon as we have recurrence to the scriptures. They call on the hills and the floods to clap their hands, the isles to be glad, the trees to rejoice, the little hills to skip, and men to praise the Lord in the dance. At another time, the earth is commanded to keep silence, because the Lord is in his holy Temple. A prophet is commanded to sigh with the *breaking of his loins* ; he must *howl* ; never hold his peace, day or night ; let *tears* run down like a river, day and night ; pour out his heart like water, and *smite* with his hand and *stamp* with his foot, and say, “ Alas, for all the evil abominations of Israel !” But who cannot see that these and a multiplicity of other texts in the Ancient Scriptures, were no other than high wrought metaphors, and were never designed to be taken literally ? Yet they are precisely of the same character with those impassioned phrases, “ O clap your hands, all ye people !” “ Cry out and shout, for great is the Holy One ;” “ let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.” The evident design of these and all similar passages, is to awaken devotional exercises in the hearts of men, and to lead them on to a faithful discharge of those duties, which were enjoined in the law contained in two tables, given at Sinai, and which the Saviour defines as comprehending the whole duty of man.

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 46.

I am aware, that great importance has been attached to God's command to Ezekiel to *smite* with his hand and to *stamp* with his foot in delivering his message to his people ;* since, as it is supposed, this authorizes violent outward exercises in devotion. But this appears to me to be an unfortunate selection for those who would find scripture authority for clapping hands, stamping with the feet, and other violent gestures in worship. Ezekiel was now by the river Chebar in Chaldea, and was holden in captivity. His prophecy was against the land of his nativity, Judea and Jerusalem, as will be seen, and he never would return to that place to deliver his prophecy to his people who were at Jerusalem, and they would never see that prophecy unless it was written by Ezekiel and sent to them, until after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the remnant of the Jews were carried into captivity ; so that there is not one particle of evidence to show that Ezekiel ever made these signs before the house of Judah, nor is there the least probability of it. But if he wrote to the house of Judah and described what he had received in vision, it would prefigure with what indignation the Lord would judge his rebellious people ; and he had then executed the commission assigned him, and in the only way he could execute it. I shall only remark, in regard to those Scriptures of the Prophets, that if they were designed to be interpreted literally, then the Saviour and his Apostles came all short of fulfilling them ; for so did they *not* worship.

* Ezekiel 6: 11.

And is not the example of Christ and his Apostles the best comment on all those passages of the Old Testament, which we can have, and all we can reasonably require? But there is one passage in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, 14: 25, which I shall notice in this connexion. It has been supposed to favour the practice of modern falling in convulsions, in swoons, and in other violent emotions of body. It reads thus—
“And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.”

It appears that great disorders had been introduced into the Church at Corinth. Many of the members had attached more importance to the gift of tongues, than to those qualifications, which would enable them to preach to the conviction of sinners, and to the edification of saints. The whole body of the church seems to have been striving for preeminence one above another. All had something to say whereby to distinguish themselves; one had a psalm, another a doctrine, a third a tongue, a fourth a revelation, and a fifth an interpretation. This introduced the practice of several speaking at the same time, and *women* took it upon them to hold forth in their public assemblies. The Apostle in this chapter writes to correct those abuses. He commands, that the women keep silence in the churches, and that but one speak at a time; and this they could do, for *the spirits of the Prophets were subject to the Prophets*; and in regard to different tongues, he would enjoin it on them to give decided preference to prophesying, or speaking to edification in the church;

for he had rather speak *five* words with his understanding, that by his voice he might teach others, than *ten thousand* words in an unknown tongue. He then contrasts the different effects resulting from speaking in an unknown tongue, and one that is understood. If the church all spoke with tongues; if those came in who were unlearned, or unbelievers, they would say they were mad; but if the members of the church spoke to edification, and one unlearned, or an unbeliever, came in, he would be convinced of all, and judged of all, and so falling down on his face, he would worship God, and report that God was in them of a truth. Now, some have inferred that this *falling* would be an involuntary occurrence; and that it was a prediction of the effects of the Spirit in convincing men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and that we see its fulfilment in those muscular affections and swoons, which have been exhibited in these last days. But who does not know that prostration in worship was a voluntary act among the Jews, as much as standing or kneeling? That it was practised by the Asiatics generally, as well as by the Jews; and that it was then, as well as now, the custom of approaching superiors and those in authority, when favour was to be sought by prostration? It would seem, that every person who has read his bible attentively would be possessed of this truth. Moses prostrated himself before the Lord, Deut. 9: 18. Ezra did so likewise, Ezra 10: 1. Esther prostrated herself at the feet of King Ahasuerus, observing the custom of the Persian court, Esther 8: 3. Job worshipped in this position, Job 1: 20. Job was an inhab-

itant of Uz in Mesopotamia, or a little at the West. All nations and languages in Chaldea prostrated themselves before the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar set up, Dan. 3: 7. The wise men of the East prostrated themselves before the infant Jesus, Matt. 2: 11. A woman healed of an obstinate infirmity prostrated herself before the Saviour, Mark 5: 33. Peter prostrated himself at Jesus' feet, Luke 5: 8. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, did the same, John 11: 32. Cornelius fell at the feet of Peter and worshipped, which act Peter refused to receive, Acts 10: 25. Now, is it not evident, that prostration was one *voluntary* mode of worship among the Jews, and among neighbouring nations? If it was, and no one instance of spasmodic affection or swooning, in religion, can be found in the scriptures, how conclusive is the evidence, that the Apostle intended, in the verse quoted, to show merely, that persons convicted and converted by the means he had described, would unite with those in worship, who had been the instruments of his release from sin and condemnation! And so far is the Apostle from encouraging noisy and tumultuous assemblies for worship, that they cannot be maintained, I conceive, without a violation of his most solemn, and authoritative commands in this chapter. He removes all pretensions for the necessity of them. *The spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets.* They could speak or not speak; they could act or not act; and the spirit of God never destroyed their free agency, or accountability. He then adds v. 32, "for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches

of the saints." v. 40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." Now, were the meetings under the ministration of George Fox orderly and *decent*? Was the spirit of the French Prophets subject to them? Were the meetings at Kingswood in England, and in Kentucky, peace, or confusion? If they were neither orderly nor decent; if they were not peace, but confusion; and if the spirits were not subject to them, then what was the nature of those phenomena? Was it scriptural? such a spirit as the Apostle inculcates upon the Corinthians? or was it just such a spirit as he would instantly censure? This is a fair, and a momentous question; for we shall perceive, that if it was not such a spirit as the Apostle would approve, it was not of God; I mean all that was disorder, indecent, confusion, and all that was not *subject* to the persons exercised thereby, for we can say that "God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all churches of the saints;" and that he commands all things to be done in decency and in order. And in view of these things, why should I, or why should any man, consider these phenomena as affording any evidence of genuine religion in the subjects of them? They may give evidence of piety, and I know those that certainly do, but it is derived from other sources than bodily affections, or tumultuous assemblies.

2. Another consideration which invalidates the supposition of these phenomena being the effects of true religion, is this—they are not common to all pious people. Says the New Jersey Reformer, "We see no such affections in other churches; and although we

think we may assume, that we have in general more of the Spirit with us; yet that every other church has individuals among them as holy as any of ours, we must grant, or be most arrant bigots. But none of these know any thing of religion in this way! How is it then? The time was too, even among ourselves, when it was not seen or known. It began in Virginia, and as I have heard among the blacks."* And is it not a fair conclusion, that if these affections are the fruits of religion, persons of different denominations, of equal piety, would exhibit them? To me it appears so. But look at facts. At the time when the Anabaptists in Saxony exhibited these affections, the great reformers, Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, who withstood the armies and warded off the thunder-bolts of the Pope, experienced nothing of them; and Luther, especially, denounced them, either as the impositions of pretenders, or the works of the Adversary.† When the Quakers arose in England and appeared a *sign to the people*, no other denomination was affected in this manner. The French Prophets considered themselves as peculiarly favoured of God, because no other protestants had such powers conferred on them as they exhibited. While the scenes, described by Mr. Wesley and his companions in labour, were exhibited in England, thousands in that nation, were at that moment wrestling with God in prayer for blessings to descend upon themselves, their families, their nation, the church

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 26. Note.

† Milner, Vol. II. pp. 178, 179.

general, and upon their fellow-sinners throughout the world ; but they experienced nothing of those affections, which are described by Mr. Cennick as existing at Kingswood. At the very time when those phenomena were exhibited in Kentucky and Tennessee, there were powerful revivals of religion in New England ; but the latter did not assume those extraordinary features which characterized the excitement in Kentucky. And this same distinction continues to exist between the pious of different denominations, and even between pious members of the same family, sitting in the same revival shower, unless the same means are resorted to, to awaken these emotions, and bodily affections ! Now if these strong outward affections are to be relied upon as evidence of religion, where is that uniformity of character, which is given us of religion in the Scriptures ? How shall we judge of men by their fruits, when their fruits are so essentially different ? It will be seen that christian character must be judged of from other evidence than muscular affections, swoons, visions, or trances ; and that the Saviour did not contemplate them when he said, *by their fruits ye shall know them*. And it is a remark, that is due to those who consider these affections as indubitable evidence of the Spirit's operations, that they do not consider the absence of them in relation to an individual, as evidence of impenitency, provided his walk in other respects is christian. I should not, therefore, take these affections at all into the account when judging of christian character. I should not feel it necessary to ascribe them to the immediate agency of God, or of Satan ; but I should gen-

erally attribute them to a principle, in our constitution already illustrated, which, when evoked by appropriate means and circumstances, will uniformly result in those phenomena.

3. Another consideration, which destroys my confidence in these outward signs as being evidence of religion, is the fact, that they are by no means limited to the pious ; nor are they to the serious. Mr. Robertson in his Inaugural Essay before the Medical Faculty at Philadelphia, says, " It attacks both sexes, and every constitution ; but evidently more readily those who are enthusiasts in religion." The Rev. Archibald Alexander, President of Hamden Sidney College, in his letter to Dr. Strong of Hartford, (Con.) writes—" These phenomena of falling are common to all ages and sexes, and to all sorts of characters." Lorenzo Dow says—" The wicked fear it and are subject to it ; but the persecutors are more subject to it than any ; and they have sometimes cursed and swore, and damned it while jerking." I once had an interview with a gentleman, who was in that country at the time this moral commotion existed, and he assured me, that he and a brother of his, were both violently convulsed on hearing an individual relate what he had that day witnessed at a meeting, while neither of them was under any special awakening, nor did any special seriousness follow. Now, if these phenomena are witnessed in those who possess no religion, and who have no anxious concern for their souls, why should I attribute them to the Spirit of God, or look upon them as evidence of piety in any persons ?

4. Another consideration is, these affections are often restrained or modified by outward circumstances. Mr. Charles Wesley has given us an account of his success in arresting them by giving information, at the opening of the meeting, that whoever should cry so loud as to drown his voice, should be gently carried to the furthest corner of the room ; but his porters had no employ the whole night. In Northmaven a female was never known to exhibit these phenomena after having been thrown into a ditch of water by a kirk-officer.

It has been a general remark, that persons who are subject to those affections at home, I mean in their own society, and especially, on occasions of more than an ordinary gathering together, do seldom, if ever, exhibit them in other churches, even on occasions the most solemn and affecting ; and it is remarked by one, “ that a woman is restrained from those agitations from a sense of approaching *maternity* ; or by the presence of an infant on the arms ;” “ that many single females who are in the habit of exhibiting these phenomena on seasons of worship prior to their marriage, desist altogether after marriage ;” and that “ men who are under the necessity of using a crutch, or who are lame, are rarely influenced in this manner ;” “ that discourses upon the strict holiness of our *duties* retains them silent hearers,” &c.* And in this connexion I shall subjoin a note from the same author, which will show both his unreserved faithfulness and his ardent desire for a reform in this particular among his people. “ That our

* See Wesleyan Methodist, pp. 26, 27.

society do often virtually on other occasions, freely venture to restrain and check the avowed operations of the Spirit, when it best suits their convenience, is manifest from several facts. Our Conference, for instance, feels no scruple to decline the use of any man's ministry who comes to them, on the motion of the *Holy Ghost*, if expediency is not also in his favour. In love feasts, it is very common, to check those who seem moved to speak too long, and finally the meeting is ended while there are yet several who think they have motions to speak. But a yet stronger case is within the writer's knowledge. At the *black* Bethel church in Philadelphia, it has been common to check the immediate noise of the people, when the preacher has been hindered in his discourse. 'The Rev. R. S——, when stationed in Philadelphia, after preaching through much acclamation, came down to the altar, saying, he had something special to communicate. He thus hushed them :—after proceeding a little, a rising murmur began to drown his voice, and he would appease them again and again in this way—' Stop, stop my honies, not now ! bye and bye !' then they would bridle in, and so he and they alternately drew in and let out, till he showed the sign of ending, by waving his handkerchief with the word, *now !* Then the whole church was in an instant uproar, jumping and shouting, till ' they made the welkin ring.' A minister who preached there, and believed that such religion was greatly mechanical, said, he could raise or lower their spiritual efflata, at his pleasure, and that he had actually made the experiment :—to paint the joys of religion was sure to raise them ; and to

speaking of the practical holiness of their duties was as sure to silence them. Yet even this minister, though well-meaning, dared not to teach such people the errors of their fancies. They have now parted from us and we are not sorry. Some well meaning Methodists, will be, I am persuaded, shocked to see me on several occasions, adduce such facts of illustration; and they will be ready to think, I am acting the part of an enemy. They will think I betray my cause by these exposures. But I only relate facts which have been displayed before thousands. The whole population of Philadelphia, who pass and repass such exercises, (and more than has been here told) may have witnessed, and been prejudiced against us by these things. But some will say these things do not prevail in *our church!* This is no palliation; if our ministers any where suffer religion to run wild under their administration, we are all as one body, disparaged thereby; and for many of us, who are known to be hostile to excesses,* to hope to escape just reproach because we may shun the knowledge of public opinion and report, is as idle as the stupid ostrich, who when pursued, thinks himself safe, if he can only lose sight of his pursuers by concealing his own head. This is like shutting our eyes and ears, and fancying others as unobserving as ourselves."†

Now, if these are facts, shall we say that they were

* I am told this is a growing sentiment with the most enlightened and pious of his denomination, especially to the South and West.

† Wesleyan Methodist, pp. 22—24, commencing with the seventh line in the note.

the motions of the divine Spirit? And that they were facts, we cannot doubt. They were published in the immediate vicinity where they were witnessed, and by one whose sympathies were strong with those in his connexion, as we shall all be convinced, if we read his writings. His sole object in writing appears to be a *reform* in this particular. He virtually appeals to the thousands of Philadelphia for the truth of what he publishes; and if it was not true, the Society of which he speaks was bound by every consideration to correct this statement; but they have not done it, as we can learn, and it is now eight years since this communication was made to the public, and the work has sustained an honorable review in one of our literary publications.* I therefore ask again, if screaming, jumping, clapping of hands, and swooning, were the necessary consequences of religion, would the disapprobation of Mr. Charles Wesley, of a kirk-officer, or of any man, arrest them? Would any condition or habit of body suppress them? would they be in a great measure, peculiar to one place of worship? And would they be at the command of a single speaker so that he could hush the tumult, or excite one, by a single word? or by changing the nature of his subject while speaking in the same discourse, allowing each to be a *gospel* subject? This is not my apprehension. Yet I am not disposed to think that these in general, are *feigned* exhibitions, but real effects resulting from an entirely different cause from the one to which these persons at-

* The Christian Spectator.

tribute them ; to the surprising influence of the imagination on the human system when license is given to it and means are used to excite it.

5. There is another consideration, which serves to invalidate the evidence of these affections in favour of religion, or of their being the necessary result of *personal* religion. The general impression, with those who look upon these phenomena as the effects of the Spirit of God, is, that they result from a high degree of grace ; that these are *pentecostal* seasons with their souls. Now we are authorized by the word of God to believe that the time will come, and we hope it is not far distant, when religion will be far more prevalent than it now is ; when *the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* ; when men in general, will enjoy religion in a much higher degree than at present, and the enjoyment will be uniform.* But if religion in a high degree, produces these extraordinary muscular affections, which have been exhibited in this Essay, what will be the consequences of religion during the Millennial reign of righteousness on earth ? Unless the nature of religion should change, or God should miraculously support men under its influences, this earth must become one immense theatre of distraction, to the view of the holy angels ! Swoonings, convulsions, and hideous roarings must characterize that day. This would be a state of things which the religious community have not anticipated ; and it is so different from the one I have

* Hab. 2: 14. Zech. 14: 7—9, 20, 21. Rev. 11: 15.

conceived *would* be, that I am impressed with the belief that religion does not consist in these things, and that it seldom, if ever, produces them. That a full view of the impenitent man's situation as a sinner, might produce prostration of body, loss of consciousness, and even of life, I have no disposition to deny; nor am I disposed to think that a full exhibition of celestial glory might not destroy the believer's life; but I do not see evidence to prove that God adopts this method, either to call sinners to repentance, or to qualify saints for his kingdom. I here repeat, that there is not an instance recorded in the scriptures wherein it appears, that a person ever lost his consciousness, or swooned from a sense of sin simply, or that a saint was ever affected thus by the simple operations of grace in the soul.

6. The visions, trances, and prophetic impulses, which so frequently accompany these spasmodic affections, and which in some minds, give importance to the latter, do not incline me at all to believe them to be the effects of true religion. What evidence have I that a man has been to heaven or to hell, and held converse with departed spirits, because he *tells* me this? How am I to know what he alone is conscious of? He may tell me of a falsehood, as a deceiver; since we are taught to expect that "there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch, that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."* But suppose him to be a man of strict veracity in his general character, yet how do I

* Matt. 24: 24.

know but that it is an illusion of his own fancy? Am I to believe him upon his single testimony? We are told "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."* There must be two or three witnesses testifying to the same fact; or such circumstantial evidence as shall amount to an equal degree of testimony, or a thing is not proved. It may be true, but it is not *proved*.† The Saviour did not request his hearers to believe in him upon his own simple word. He says "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true;"‡ that is, it was not full evidence according to their law.|| And if his testimony to his Messiahship stood alone, it would not be true, because the true Messiah should be supported with other testimony. He then proceeded to state the evidence he had with his own word, that he was the Messiah—John the Baptist was his witness; his own miracles; and his Father had borne witness to him on the banks of Jordan, proclaiming that he was his beloved Son.¶ And since his character and office were thus proved, his word was *authority*, and ought to be so received as he afterwards states.** And we ought to bear in mind, that the Saviour did not transmit his history to future ages upon the authority of *one* disciple, but of *four*, all of whom had proved their commissions by

* Matt. 18: 16.

† See Leslie on Deism, p. 6. as published with Erskine on internal evidence—Andover, 1826.

‡ John 5: 31.

¶ Matt. 3: 17.

|| Deut. 17: 6.

** John 8: 14.

miracles wrought in his name. Nor do we know of a single instance, wherein a Prophet or an Apostle was called to prophesy or to preach without those divine vouchers, which would enable others to judge of the verity of their mission. And we shall perceive at once, that if God had left this point unguarded, it had been an open door for every degree of imposition to enter into the church. If one man's simple word was sufficient proof of his prophetic, or apostolic character, another's word must be received as entitled to the same consideration, until he exhibited something in his life contrary thereto, or his predictions had failed of their fulfilment. And this must have kept the church forever on trial, ever going after those, who should say *lo, here is Christ, or lo, there*, when the Saviour had expressly forbidden it—*believe it not*.* It was upon this ground that the venerable Reformer, Luther, proposed to arrest the progress of impositions propagated by the Anabaptists. Writing to Melancthon he says—It is my particular wish that you would examine whether they can produce any PROOF of having a divine commission. For God never sent any prophet, who was not either called by proper persons, or authorized by special miracles; no, not even his own Son. Their bare assertion of a divine *afflatus*, is not a sufficient ground for your receiving them; since God did not even choose to speak to Samuel, but with the sanction of Eli's authority."† I am not authorized, therefore, in view of these facts, to believe any man, who should

* Matt. 24: 23.

† Milner, Vol. II. p. 178.

tell me that he was inspired of God to discern the hearts of others, to reveal future events, or that he was empowered to work miracles, until he exhibits such evidence of his *high calling*, as I can judge of, for my own conviction of the truth of what he asserts. And what is so perfectly consonant with the whole tenor of the scriptures, is impressed upon us as a lesson of the utmost importance by the result of those prophetic spirits, which have sparkled, and dazzled, and expired in both hemispheres since the Reformation. The Anabaptists, it seems, were miraculously called and authorized to found a *new* and *pure* church on earth, and to become the honoured instruments of introducing the Millennial day. In order to this they were furnished with those prophetic and miraculous powers, which God had seen fit to bestow. But the reign of holiness and happiness not having come, and the divine afflatus having departed from the Anabaptists, the Quakers arose, and with all the authority of Munster and his associates, these claimed the prerogative of effecting, under God, this great moral revolution on earth, which never belonged to the Anabaptists, but was reserved for themselves; and they had received all the miraculous gifts necessary to so great an event. In about thirty years from the origin of Quakerism, when the effervescence of their minds had in a measure subsided, and the kingdom of God, not having come, as they had predicted, the French-prophets succeeded them, and if possible, exceeded them and all who had been before them in visions, trances, and prophetic impulses. Not

the Anabaptists, not the Quakers, but *themselves* were the gifted personages, who were to found the *new* church, restore the Jew to his ancient inheritance, and enlighten the Gentiles. In about forty years from the acme of prophetic influence on the continent, the society of Methodists was founded in England; and although the founders of this society did not pretend to possess the spiritual afflatus, yet very many of their disciples did, and looked upon their rise and growth as a distinguished era in the history of the church. The French-prophets were conducted on to the back ground. In about ten years from the rise of Methodism, Emmanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish nobleman, born at Stockholm, professed to be called by revelations made to him, to found the New Jerusalem Church. In the doctrines and duties, which were revealed to him he differed in many things essentially from all those who had preceded him, and was more distinguished than they all, in holding converse with spirits belonging to the invisible world. His departed friends were permitted to visit him daily, and angels too, and they sometimes took seats with him at his table of earthly fare. The revelations to this gentlemen contradicted those in most respects, which had been made to all the other sects, which I have mentioned, and stamped insignificance upon them.—But Swedenborgianism was soon to be superseded by fresh communications, made to Anne Lee of England, in whom, as she affirmed, Christ made his *second appearing*. Just about the same time, Jemima Wilkinson appeared in Ameri-

ca, clothed with greater powers than they all. In 1770, we are told, she was taken sick and died, and her soul went to heaven, where it continued. But soon after her body was reanimated with the Spirit and power of Christ, and she had an immediate revelation for all she taught, and her revelations contradicted all who had preceded her. But in 1804, Joanna Southcot appeared in the south of England, as a distinguished prophetess, and she has since been printing and circulating, not only among her followers, but far and wide, her revelations, which in no sense compare with any of those delivered by her prophetic predecessors. I might continue this history to much greater length, but I forbear. Now with that solemnity which this affecting exhibition is calculated to produce, I would ask the reader, what I am to believe among this prophetic jargon? All assert with equal assurance that they are moved to speak as they do speak; all have great intimacy with the world of Spirits; all in favour with God, are gifted personages, are appointed to some great office under God, have visions and trances, and most of them convulsions! Am I to suppose that, while these persons are so filled with the Spirit of God as that they are overpowered by it, they are taught to utter things directly contrary to one another? Did the Holy Ghost inspire the thousand predictions these persons have made, which have long since failed altogether? No person dares assert it. It would be blasphemy. Must we say, then, that all these persons were mere pretenders and deceivers? I do not believe it.

I would not take it upon me to say there were not some mere pretenders. But in regard to the multitude, I think the error originated in the *imagination*. Such indulgence was afforded, and such means were employed to excite it, that it produced, even in the pious, perhaps, an almost entire prostration of the human system ; and while the functions of the body were nearly suspended, and the senses were locked up as in sleep, the mind was at liberty to rove among those objects which were the subjects of intense thought prior to syncope ; and upon reanimation, these impressions were so strong and vivid, (as dreams are often more impressive than our waking thoughts,) the subjects of them received them as realities, and conceived that they had been absent from the body ; “ had visited heaven or hell ; conversed with departed friends ; heard unspeakable words ; crossed rivers, climbed mountains, found treasures, fought with serpents, or received communications to be made known on earth.” Cases like these occur in every age, and are more familiar to our medical colleges, perhaps, than to any other class of men.

7. I am strengthened in my belief that those outward affections ought not to be relied upon as evidence of personal religion, or as being the effects of the Spirit of God, from the deference which I would pay to the opinion of my seniors, superiors, and enlightened and pious brethren in Europe and in America. I believe my opinion in this respect corresponds with the sentiments in general of the clergy of the church of England, and with those of Calvinistic *dissenting* minis-

ters in England. The ministers of the kirk of Scotland entertain similar views, as well as Calvinistic and Lutheran divines on the Continent. My opinion coincides with all, or nearly all, Calvinistic divines in America, whether they are of Episcopal, Congregational, or Presbyterian government. The Calvinistic Baptists at this time, are all, so far as I have knowledge, of the same opinion, as well as all seceders. The Friends or Quakers, I believe, do not exhibit or cherish those outward affections, which characterized their origin; nor would I be thought to have mentioned their early excesses, or those of the Anabaptists, with the least intention of undervaluing their present orderly and christian character. I would further add, that but few members of churches, in those several connexions, place any dependence on those bodily affections as affording evidence of piety in the subjects of them. And gentlemen of the medical faculty in all denominations in the civilized world do almost universally agree with me in attributing these phenomena to natural causes; and I certainly respect their judgment in the case, for they possess a more extensive and accurate knowledge of the functions of the human body, and know more of the mutual influence subsisting between the mind and body, than any other class of men in the world. And although some may jeer at a reference to the opinion of any body of *natural* men, yet I would say, they are capable of judging whether these effects *might* result from natural causes, and that I have never heard of an enlightened man in this profession, that changed his views in this respect upon his becoming a *renewed* man

in a scripture sense. And I feel that it is expedient to subjoin in this place, the opinions of several men of considerable eminence in different denominations, in regard to this subject.

Dr. Adam Clarke's views. The following is taken from the journal of Lorenzo Dow while in England. "The English connexion in general, are determined to prevent *noise*, as appears both from their conduct, and from their publications in the Magazine. I saw Adam Clarke at the conference in July 1806 ;—he told me (when speaking of the nature of *revivals* at American camp-meetings, about which he appeared well informed, but not friendly to) that he was at first in the spirit of the *great revival* in Cornwall, and felt opposed to some of those who then spoke of *impropriety and wild fire*, but now he *saw better*. His mind seemed fixed to the old system, ORDER. When I heard him pray in public, he grew somewhat fervent, and there began a move among the people ; he then seemed to lower, as if to ward off the move, to prevent a noise."*

The sentiments expressed in this note correspond with what he conveys in his advice to preachers.† Now, if Dr. Adam Clarke believed that those strong outward signs in worship were the result of the Spirit of God, how could he talk in this manner, and conduct in this way ? He, doubtless, told the truth, that he once thought favourably of them, but now *saw better*.

Sentiments of John Wesley. It is well known that

* Wesleyan Methodist, pp. 40, 41, note.

† Idem. pp. 131—136.

Mr. John Wesley entertained a more favourable opinion of those outward affections in religious worship, than his brother Charles Wesley did, especially in the early part of his life ; and that he was greatly inclined to attribute all appearances which he could not explain to a supernatural influence, either good or bad ; but it seems that he in some degree profited by experience. Speaking of the Welch, he says ;—“ Some give out a verse, which they sing over and over again, with all their might, thirty or forty times ; mean while, some are violently agitated, and they leap up and down in all manner of postures, frequently for hours.” He adds, “ I think there needs no great penetration to understand this. They are honest, upright men, who *really* feel the love of God in their hearts ; but they have little experience, either of the ways of God, or the devices of Satan. So he serves himself of their simplicity, in order to wear them out and to bring a discredit on the work of God.”*

Again, “ John Wesley in his fifth volume of Journal, speaking of the people near Chapel-in-le-Frith, near Macclesfield, says, many have been awakened, justified, and soon after perfected in love ; but even while *full* of love, Satan strives to push many of them to extravagance. This appears in several instances ; 1st, frequently three or four, yea, ten or twelve pray aloud all together. 2d, Some of them, perhaps many, *scream* all together, as loud as they possibly can. 3d, Several *drop down* as dead, and are *as stiff* as a corpse ; but

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 122.

in a while, they start up, and cry *glory ! glory !* perhaps twenty times together. Just so, (he adds) do the French prophets, and very lately the *jumpers* in Wales, bringing the *real* work into contempt.”*

Now it does not devolve on me as a duty, to reconcile all Mr. Wesley’s sentiments and practices, nor to decide how he knew when these outward signs were to be ascribed to God, and when to Satan ; but it is enough for my present purpose to show, that the phenomena, which he describes, were considered by *him*, as no part of religion, but the works of the Devil, to bring “the *real* work into contempt.” The works which he considered as originating with Satan, we are to remember, were three fold—many praying aloud together—many *screaming* aloud together—and several dropping down as dead, becoming as stiff as a corpse, and then starting up, and crying *glory ! glory !* twenty times together.†

The sentiments of Mr. Charles Wesley have already been introduced into this Essay. They correspon-

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 124. The author whom *I* quote says, that the *quotations* which will be found in his work, although faithful as to *substance*, are not always in the precise method or order of the original. His aim was to give the *sense* in the *fewest* words. And I have found him faithful in all cases, so far as I have obtained access to his authorities. I have not been able to avail myself of Mr. Wesley’s original Journal.

† The New Jersey Reformer interprets Mr. Wesley’s remarks as applying *exclusively* to believers ; implying that sinners *might* be thus affected through the Spirit of God ; and this is *his* opinion. But do the Scriptures give us any example of this difference?
Author.

ded to what his brother John Wesley expressed, except Mr. Charles Wesley seems more inclined to attribute these phenomena to natural causes than to the Devil.

Sentiments of the Rev. John Fletcher in a letter to Mr. Charles Wesley, dated Nov. 22, 1762. "I have heard the melancholy news of many of our brethren overshooting sober and steady christianity in London. O! that I could stand in the gap, and by sacrificing *myself*, shut this immense abyss of enthusiasm. The corruption of the best things, is always *the worst of corruptions*. Going into an extreme of this nature, or only winking at it, will give an *eternal sanction* to the vile aspersions, cast on all sides, on the purest doctrines of Christianity; and we shall sadly overthrow, overthrow in the worst manner, what we have endeavoured to build for many years. Allowing that but half of the report is true, the rest shows, that spiritual pride, presumption, arrogance, stubbornness, party-spirit, uncharitableness, prophetic mistakes, in short, every sinew of enthusiasm, is now at work in many of that body. Insist, first, in love, afterwards with authority, that they either *stand* to the *sober* rule of Christianity, or *depart from us*."* What would Mr. Fletcher have said of more modern exhibitions, especially, those in Kentucky, and all of a similar nature?

Sentiments of Mr. John Locke, in his Essay on the Human Understanding, Book IV. Chap. 19th, Sect. 3. --"Upon this occasion I shall take the liberty to con-

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 123.

sider a third ground of assent, which with some men has the same authority, and is as confidently relied on as either *faith*, or *reason*; I mean *enthusiasm*: which laying by reason, would set up revelation without it. Whereby in effect it takes away both reason and revelation, and substitutes in the room of it the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain, and assumes them for a foundation both of opinion and conduct."

Sect. 5th.—“Immediate *revelation* being a much easier way for men to establish their opinions, and regulate their conduct, than the tedious and not always successful labour of strict reasoning, it is no wonder that some have been very apt to pretend to revelation, and to persuade themselves that they are under the peculiar guidance of Heaven in their actions and opinions, especially in those of them which they cannot account for by the ordinary methods of knowledge, and principles of reason.”

Sect. 8th.—“Though the odd opinions and extravagant actions *enthusiasm* has run men into, were enough to warn them against this wrong principle, so apt to misguide them both in their belief and conduct; yet the love of something extraordinary, the ease and glory it is to be inspired, and be above the common and natural ways of knowledge, so flatters many men's laziness, ignorance, and vanity, that when once they are got into this way of immediate revelation, of illumination without search, and of certainty without proof, and without examination, it is a hard matter to get them out of it. Reason is lost upon them, they are above it; they see the light infused into their understandings,

and cannot be mistaken ; it is clear and visible there, like the light of bright sunshine : shows itself and needs no other proof but its own evidence, they feel the hand of God moving them within, and the impulses of the spirit, and cannot be mistaken in what they feel."

Sect. 9th.—“ They are sure because they are sure ; and their persuasions are right, only because they are strong in them.”

Rev. George Whitefield's confession. “ I came soon into the world ; I have carried *high* sail, whilst running through a torrent of popularity and contempt ; and by this means, have sometimes been in danger of upsetting. I know I am a man of like passions with others, and consequently may have mistaken nature for grace, imagination for revelation, and the fire of my own temper, for the pure and sacred flame of holy zeal,—which cometh from God's altar. Alas ! alas ! in how many things have I acted *wrong* ! I have been too rash and hasty in giving characters, both of persons and places :—I have too often made impressions *without* the written word, as my rule of action. Being fond of scriptural language, I have often been too bitter in my zeal : *wildfire* has been mixed with it : and I find I have frequently written and spoken in my *own* spirit, when I *thought* I was writing and speaking entirely with the assistance of the Spirit of God.”*

President Edwards, as I have already hinted, was for a season, at least, upon the breaking out of the Reformation in New England, disposed to think more fa-

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 171.

vourably of those bodily affections than many of his brethren in the ministry ; and he gives us some account of individuals within his personal knowledge, whose bodies were affected by religious considerations and exercises, but in no instance does he rely upon these phenomena as evidence of piety, or of genuine conviction ; he even then endeavoured to discriminate between true and false affections, true and false zeal, nervous influence and religious influence, the work of God and the work of Satan ; and concluded, philosophically, that Religion might affect the body.* His view of this subject may be gained by one or two quotations.—He says, Vol. IV. p. 52,—“ Great effects on the body certainly are no sure evidences that affections are spiritual ; for we see that such effects oftentimes arise from great affections about temporal things, and when religion is no way concerned in them. And if great affections about secular things, that are purely natural, may have these effects, I know not by what rule we should determine that high affections about religious things, which

* This is not a point contested in this Essay. The object is to show that these phenomena may be accounted for upon natural principles, and to assist us, from a comprehensive view of facts, to decide how far they are to influence us in judging of christian character.

President Edward's opinion in regard to this subject, as exhibited in his Treatise on Religious Affections, can hardly be too highly valued, or too often consulted by the christian. And there is but a feeble analogy discoverable, as will be seen, between those affections recorded by him, and those exhibited in this Essay either as to their general character, or the circumstances under which they were produced.

arise in like manner from nature, cannot have the like effect."

Again, Vol. IV. p. 185,—“The affections of hypocrites are very often after this manner; they are first much affected with some impression on their imagination, or some impulse which they take to be an immediate suggestion or testimony from God, of his love and their happiness, and high privileges in some respect, either with or without a text of scripture; they are mightily taken with this as a great discovery, and hence arise high affections. And when their affections are raised, then they view those high affections, and call them great and wonderful experiences; and they have a notion that God is greatly pleased with those affections; and this affects them more, and so they are affected with their affections. And thus their affections rise higher and higher, until they sometimes are perfectly swallowed up; and self-conceit, and a fierce zeal rises withal; and all is built like a castle in the air, on no other foundation but imagination, self-love and pride.”

I have thus shown that I stand not alone, when I attribute these phenomena to other causes than to the immediate influence of the Spirit of God. And although I would not call any man *Father*, on earth, in this respect, being friendly to independent investigation of all subjects whether natural or moral, yet the united opinions of such bodies of men as I have mentioned, and especially, of those distinguished individuals, whose testimony I have adduced, ought to be considered as entitled to some consideration. And it may

be of some importance to mention in this place, that not one conversion among those individuals to whom I have referred, unless it should be that of Mr. Locke, or Mr. Clarke, the particulars of whose conversion I do not recollect to have seen, was characterised by any outward excitement, or unusual impulses of mind. Charles Wesley and Mr. Fletcher, were converted at their bed sides, and alone ;—Mr. John Wesley, while sitting in a church, hearing the reading of Luther's preface to the Romans ; and Dr. Coke, in his pulpit, while preaching to others. Both Charles Wesley and Fletcher say,—“they felt no great emotions of joy.” Dr. Coke and John Wesley, though in the church, were so tranquil, that none but themselves were then knowing to the change wrought in them.*

Mr. Whitefield's convictions of sin were more pungent, and his emotions of joy more sensible, but produced no outward agitations.†

Mr. Edwards says,—“The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words 1 Tim. 1: 17. *Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen.* As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the divine Being ; a new sense, quite different from any thing I

* See Wesleyan Methodist, pp. 136—139.

† Memoirs of Whitefield, 4th edition, p. 21.

ever experienced before.”* This sense, more or less operative and joyous, was the characteristic of his religious experience.

8. Another reason why I do not consider these phenomena as evidence of piety in the subjects is, the too general apostasy of those who exhibit them. Where is the spiritual afflatus of the Anabaptists, the primitive Quakers, or the French Prophets? What has become of their muscular affections, dreams, visions, and trances? To say nothing of the individual characters of those who exhibited these wonderful affections, there has been a great falling away from that standard of high excitement, which they set for those who should follow them in their peculiar tenets and forms of worship; and yet who dares say that there is not as much piety exhibited in the lives of those, who now constitute those several connexions which took their rise from them, as there was in the founders themselves? No one. So far as men can judge, their descendants possess all their excellencies, and few of their frailties. And yet, if these phenomena were the effects of the Spirit of God, God has withdrawn his special gifts from the holier characters; just the reverse of his dispensations with the apostles, and believers in primitive ages. God bestowed his special gifts on the holier characters, and these were the founders of the Gospel dispensation. Perhaps no man ever beheld apostasies with more heart felt sorrow, than Mr. John Wesley beheld those which were multiplied among his converts.

* Edwards' Works, Vol. I. p. 34.

I have already recorded his lamentation over the entire apostasy of his school at Kingswood, in twelve months from the period of their supposed conversion. His concluding exclamations are, "it is gone ! it is lost ! it is vanished away ! there is scarce any trace of it remaining !" Speaking of the people of Norwich he says—"I find no people so eminently *unstable as water* as these :—out of two hundred, which I left last year, sixty nine are now gone !" Then he adds—"What a blessing is knowledge, when it is sanctified ? What stability can be expected without it ? For let their affections be ever so lively, for the present, yet what hold can you have upon a people, who neither know books, nor men ; neither themselves, nor the Bible, neither natural, nor spiritual things."*

We have the reasons for seventy six persons withdrawing from one of Mr. Wesley's societies in the north of England, in the course of three months.† Fourteen left, because their ministers would not give them the sacrament. Nine, because their husbands or wives, were unwilling they should stay in the Society. Twelve, because their parents were not willing. Five, because their master or mistress would not let them come. Seven, because their acquaintance persuaded them to leave. Five, because people said bad things of the society. Nine, because they would not be laughed at. Three, because they would not lose the poor's allowance. Three, because they could not spare time.

* Wesleyan Methodist, pp. 143, 144, quoted from the 4th Vol. of Wesley's Journal.

† Southy's life of Wesley, Vol. II. p. 34.

Two, because it was too far off. One, because afraid of falling into fits. One, because people were so rude in the streets. Two, because *Thomas Naisbit* was in the society. One, because he would not turn his back on his baptism. One, because they were *mere* Church of England men. And one, because it was time enough to serve God yet.

In the same time, the following number had been expelled from the society.—Two, for cursing and swearing. Two, for habitual sabbath breaking. Seventeen, for drunkenness. Two, for retailing spirituous liquors. Three, for quarrelling and brawling. One, for beating his wife. Three, for habitual, wilful lying. Four, for railing and evil speaking. One, for idleness and laziness; and twenty nine, for lightness and carelessness:—total 64, who were excommunicated in three months, and 76 withdrew.—Total, 140.

In view of these facts we have Mr. Wesley's lamentations over his converts near the close of his life.* I do not know that Mr. Wesley's biographer means to quote the author's words *verbatim*, but certainly to convey his sentiments. After stating how raised had been his expectations in the early part of his ministry, when he saw them warm in their first love, magnifying the Lord, and rejoicing in God their Saviour he says,—“But instead of this, it brought forth error in ten thousand shapes. It brought forth enthusiasm, imaginary inspiration, ascribing to the all-wise God, all the wild, absurd, self-inconsistent dreams of a heated imagina-

* Southy's life of Wesley, Vol. II. pp. 237, 238.

tion. It brought forth prejudice, evil-surmising, censoriousness, judging and condemning one another, all totally subversive of that brotherly love, which is the very badge of the christian profession; without which, whosoever liveth, is dead before God. It brought forth anger, hatred, malice, revenge, and every evil word and work; all direful fruits, not of the Holy Spirit, but of the bottomless pit. It brought forth such base, grovelling affections, such deep earthly-mindedness as that of the poor heathens, which occasioned the lamentation of their own poet over them,

O curvae in terras animae et coelestium inanes,

O souls bowed down to earth, and void of God.

And he repeated from the pulpit a remark, which had been made upon his people by one whom he calls a holy man, that never was there before a people in the christian church, who had so much of the power of God among them, with so little self denial." These sentiments correspond to those I have already quoted of him and Mr. Fletcher from the New Jersey Reformer, and such as may be found in many parts of that work quoted from Mr. Wesley's Journal. Now if the reader should perceive any inconsistency in the two propositions, that his converts were *possessed of much of the power of God*, and still *exercised very little self-denial*, he will attribute it to the fact, that Mr. Wesley knew not how to attribute so much fervour and outward expression of love as he had witnessed for a time, to any other cause than to the Spirit of God, notwithstanding his brother, Mr. Charles Wesley, had said all he could say, to convince him to the contrary. The doctrine of *falling from grace*, could do but little to re-

lieve him from this inconsistency, for the question would return, how his disciples should so far exceed others in falling away? I mean others brought to hope under less excitement of the passions.

But the apostasies in this connexion did not exceed nor equal those in Kentucky and Tennessee, who were thus agitated, who had visions, trances, and prophetic impulses. Mr. Robertson, in his Inaugural Essay, says in a subjoined note,—“Some who took the disease in 1803, have not yet, (1805,) entirely got rid of it; but these instances of its long continuance, are very rare.” There were few instances, then, in which the subjects of these affections exhibited religion in this way for the space of two years. M'Nemar admits that there was a great falling away, and indeed, in his opinion, all returned to the world and went into bondage, except the few, who advanced on to Shakerism; and his explanation of the nature of that work is as philosophical and as *scriptural*, too, as the opinions of many others on the same subject. His views seem to be, that these phenomena were the result of God's power falling on the subjects externally, thus indicating his desire to enter into their hearts by *shaking* them, but as they proved obstinate, all except those who adopted the *voluntary* shake, and became Shakers, the spirit deserted.* The statement of these authors concurs with the statements made by our Education, Bible, and Missionary Societies, in representing the states of Kentucky and Tennessee, as sustaining no more eligible situation in point of morals and religious means, than their sister

* M'Nemar, pp. 59, 60.

States at the South and West. There is a great lack of Bibles, of Ministers qualified to teach, of pious people, and of religious knowledge. But what has become of the thousands, and tens of thousands of converts, who were shaken and brought in during that great commotion? We should remember, that these phenomena were not confined to a few individuals in a few towns in these two States, like revivals at this day; but they were more properly considered *State* revivals. The influence extended very generally through these States. Not less than 20,000 persons were present at some meetings, and from one to three thousand would be prostrated during a single meeting, and the greater number be more or less shaken. Mr. Robertson says, "It travelled like electricity, with astonishing velocity, and was felt, almost instantaneously, in every part of the states of Tennessee and Kentucky." I would by no means insinuate by this inquiry that there were no instances of genuine conviction and conversion during these exhibitions of extraordinary excitement; but it seems to be conceded on all hands, that but few, compared with the number who were convulsed, who fell and remained for some time like corpses, who had visions and trances, and prophetic impulses, have exhibited religion in their lives. The cloud went up from the camp, and the congregation was still a stiff-necked and a rebellious people, of whatever denomination they were. And how far this result differs from those of similar affections upon a less scale at this day, in different parts of our country, those will judge who have a knowledge of facts.

I have now stated my reasons why I do not consider any of these outward *signs*, or internal revelations, as evidence of piety in the subjects. They may not be sufficient to carry this conviction to other minds, nor do I apprehend they will, to those who, in the words of Mr. Locke, *are sure, because they are sure*, but I think I can say from the heart in regard to all, *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*, making the word of God his only standard of true religion, and seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit to enlighten him more and more into the knowledge of God's will, to assist him to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, and finally, *to make him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light*.

Before I conclude this Essay, it may be important for me to remark on several things:—1. To specify some of the prominent evils, resulting from cultivating those extravagancies which I have exhibited. 2. To state what I consider to be true religion; and, 3. To specify what I consider the scriptural means of promoting true religion.

I. Some of the prominent evils resulting from those great religious extravagancies.

1. They practically ascribe contradiction to God. God has said that he was not the author of confusion in religious worship, but of peace in all Churches of the saints. But to ascribe these bodily excitements to God, is in my view, virtually saying that God is the author of confusion. Although some may contend that *screaming, rolling, jerking, dancing, barking, swooning*, or *several praying or speaking aloud at the same moment*,

are not confusion, yet the Apostle to the Corinthians* is sufficiently explicit on this point to refute this assertion. It was certainly so considered by both the Wesleys, by Mr. Fletcher, and is so considered by Dr. Clarke. If it is an evil, then, to contradict God, and to ascribe to him what he says is not his, this is one evil of cultivating those excitements as the immediate effects of God's Spirit.

2. Another evil resulting from this practice is, the occasion which it affords for bringing the cause of God into contempt. Some will say that they afford no *just* occasion for this. But if this is the cause of God, they certainly do. If it was the Spirit of God which impelled the female Quakeress to enter a Chapel in the hour of worship in a state of perfect *nudity*, did not this act give just occasion of reproach to the cause of God? Hear Mr. John Wesley in an extract from his *sermon on knowing Christ after the flesh*. "But some may say, *refraining* from these warm expressions, checks the fervour of devotion. It is very possible it may! Such fervour as has passed for devotion! It may prevent loud shouting, horrid, unnatural screaming, repeating the same words twenty or thirty times, jumping two or three feet high, throwing about the arms or legs, both of men and women, in a manner shocking, not only to religion, but to common decency! But it will never check, much less prevent, true scriptural devotion."† If these things existed, were they not a just cause of reproach? Another says—"I have

* 1 Cor. xiv. chap.

† Wesleyan Methodist, pp. 121, 122.

myself actually witnessed an entire unconsciousness of the most indelicate female attitudes, even in the house of God! One of our *lapsed* ministers, (Mr. F-x) says he fell into sin, by the influence of such a spectacle."* Was not this reproachful to the cause of religion? If it was, this is one of the evils incident to those excitements.

3. Another evil of these extravagancies is, that they tend to promote infidelity. The natural progress of the unregenerate mind, when once deceived in respect to what religion is, and when the deception comes to be detected, is to result in the conclusion, that all experimental religion is equally visionary and deceptive; and it cannot be denied, that the instances are numerous, wherein youths have for a season been greatly affected in the manner described in this essay, and have possessed great confidence in their good estate; but time having allayed the fervour of their animal feelings and taught them their error, they have become extremely skeptical in regard to all experimental religion; and in the end, have swelled the ranks of infidels and open opposers to religion. And not only this, but the cool and systematic unbelievers in our holy religion, not being able or willing to distinguish between Evangelical faith and its fruits, and those effects of a heated imagination, have seized on these extravagancies with avidity, to turn the whole into an argument against experimental religion; and owing to an unaccountable reluctance on the part of the friends of vital piety to come to an explanation on this subject, to relinquish what is

* Wesleyan Methodist, p. 25.

untenable, and to defend what is tenable, the adversaries of revivals, and of experimental and practical godliness, have too long enjoyed the advantages accruing to them from the apathy or silence of those on whom it devolves to defend the cause of Christ. It is not enough, I apprehend, for the friends of religion and of genuine *revivals* of religion, to say that *this*, or *that*, is right or wrong. The time has come when they must show scriptural and rational reasons for these things, or the progress of error and infidelity is not confronted with any adequate effort on the part of Zion's friends. And should ministers and churches still sleep over this subject for an indefinite time, while multitudes on the one hand, are stretching onward into greater and greater extravagancies; and on the other, infidels are reaping advantages against the cause of Christ from indefensible things, we are left to conjecture what must be the result of a few years in our American Israel. I adopt the language of the Apostle,—*It is high time to awake out of sleep.*

But I mention 4thly, that another evil of these excitements is, the creating false hopes in religion, deceiving the subjects of them in respect to the nature of true religion, and thus affording peace and confidence in their good estate, when they know only the joy of natural excitement. If they have once conceived that this was the peace which God bestows in religion, they may always think they enjoy religion, when they feel the same; and in all their after seeking, they will look for the same kind of peace; and *pray* for the same, and even for more in degree; but no other in *kind*, be-

cause they believe it is the religion of God, that this will carry them to heaven, and upon this ground they may live and die. And it is not so difficult, I conceive, for a person under great excitement, or upon rising from a state of unconsciousness, to obtain such a hope, as some imagine. When nature revives from pain or exhaustion, there is often an agreeable sensation pervading the animal system. The arterial system itself in resuming its wonted functions, has an agreeable effect upon the nerves, and when this is accompanied with the idea of an exemption from evil, of any kind, the spirits are immediately exhilarated, and the person becomes joyful.* The fact is perfectly familiar to every Surgeon and Physician, that if the animal functions are not too much exhausted, during a severe operation, to resume their accustomed office immediately, the patient exhibits an unusual degree of pleasurable sensations. It is witnessed almost in every instance upon the extraction of a defective tooth. Nor is it uncommon to witness an unusual share of animal life and pleasantry in labourers at the termination of an arduous service; they break forth into singing, their motions are rapid, their language is facetious, and for a time they are unusually animated, but the next day, they complain of weariness and exhaustion. How perfectly natural it would be for persons recovering from swoons, and convulsions, occasioned by religious excitement, to feel this, and to attribute it to the love of God, especially if the person expected to be converted in this way, and he was told by those in whom he confided, that it

* St. John, 16: 21.

was religion, and he should hear the voice of praise for his conversion as he rose into consciousness. We might expect great joy on such occasions, to hear strong resolutions in religion, and to witness great boldness ; but the time would come in the natural course of things, for these impulses to subside, and then we should witness just what I have described in my remarks on apostasy. And that this practice has been resorted to in like cases in Europe, is certified by Mr. Charles Wesley. In regard to the man who he says fell into a fit for his entertainment, he remarks ;—“ So instead of *singing* over him as *had often been done*, we left him to recover at his leisure.” A striking example of a similar kind is given by the Rev. Dr. Meik in his account of a great religious excitement in the Parish of Cambuslang, in Lanerkshire (Scotland) in 1742, under the ministry of Mr. M'Culloch. Nearly all the phenomena appeared in this place, which have been exhibited in this Essay. Persons often fell during the service, and there were two men, (More and Bowman) who had been converted in a similar manner, and they were always at hand when one was affected during divine service, to afford assistance. One day when a woman, who had fainted began to revive, Bowman says to her, “ Christ is just a coming ; He is on the way ; He will not tarry ;” and a little after, More added—“ Do you hear the sound of his chariot wheels ?” Upon which the woman got up, in a transport of joy, crying—“ He is come ! I have got him, and will not let him go.”*

* Edin. Medical and Surgical Journal, 1807. Vol. III. p. 445.

Now I only add, if any are deceived by these excitements and practices—all will acknowledge that the evil is great. Other evils arising to the minds of those who cherish these affections, and the tendency of their prophetic impulses to undervalue the word of God, we have already seen in the sentiments of Mr. John Wesley, Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Locke, and Mr. Edwards.

II. I proceed to state what I consider to be true religion, or in what it consists. I speak of experimental religion principally, and its practical duties in a comprehensive sense. I do not feel it necessary for me in this place to offer an elaborate exposition of what true religion is, as it is not the primary object of this essay, and as the subject is so generally understood, as explained by Orthodox divines in this country and in Europe; but it may be consistent for me to say—that religion, I conceive, consists in the true apprehension of the being, attributes, and government of God, with supreme love to him, and the loving our neighbour as ourselves.* A holy love, created by the gracious power of God in the heart of fallen man, is what I consider to be the essence of all experimental religion on earth;—*love is the fulfilling of the law.*† The practical duties of religion consist in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.‡ And it is my full conviction that in every case, where this power of God's special grace is not exerted in renewing the will of man, there is no moral fitness in man for the kingdom of heaven, and that without this he will not be

* Matt. 22: 37—40.

† Rom. 13: 10. 1 Cor. XIII.

‡ Micah 6: 8.

saved.* And it seems to be a fact admitted by all, that God has appointed a system of means for the promotion of religion on earth, not only for the purpose of calling men unto repentance, but, also, for the edification of saints.

III. Now, to specify the main things, which constitute this system of means, is the *third* object proposed for remark. The scriptures containing injunctions and examples relative to this important point, must be our all sufficient guide.

1. The scriptures themselves are appointed by God to be the only sufficient source of moral and religious instruction among men. These are the foundation, and all other means rest upon them. *To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*†—*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day stars arise in your hearts.*‡ These texts alone are enough to show that God has set forth the scriptures, as the only sufficient source of moral and religious instruction in his system of means, in his work of redemption.

2. God has appointed a succession of ministers to continue to the end of the world, whose office is to enlighten men in the truths of the scriptures, inculcating their doctrines, and holding forth the example of Christ, and of his Prophets and Apostles. These truths are sufficiently revealed in the Saviour's command to his disciples;—*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, bap-*

* John 3: 5, 6, 19.

† Isaiah 8: 20.

‡ 2 Pet. 1: 19.

*tizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**

3. The sacraments, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, are included in this system of means.†

4. Prayer is also an appointed means in the dispensation of grace with men.‡

5. Exhortation is also enjoined.§

6. The church collectively, or the lives of saints, exhibiting godliness in their daily walk and conversation, are means appointed by God to promote the work of redemption on earth.||

These include all the principal means, I believe, which were appointed by Christ, and his apostles. Preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments, are enjoined upon none but the ministers of Christ; prayer, exhortation, and light reflected by a holy life, seem to be duties enjoined on all believers. Now, if we consider these several means, we shall perceive, that they are all designed to convey moral and religious instruction, unless it be *prayer*, which is calling on God for his mercy and grace to accompany, and to bless the means he has appointed for the redemption of men, and, that he would enlighten, sanctify, and save them.

* Matt. 28: 19, 20.

† Matt. 28: 19. 26: 26—30. 1 Cor. 11: 23—26.

‡ Luke 18: 1. 1 Thess. 5: 17. 1 Tim. 2: 8.

§ 1 Tim. 6: 2. Titus 1: 9. Heb. 3: 13.

|| Matt. 5: 14—16.

Ministers are commanded to *teach* men to observe all things whatsoever Christ had taught his disciples ; and this was to be the design of exhortation, as we may see Titus 1: 9, *Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.* Now this seems to be the system of means, which God has chosen for the purpose of exhibiting his grace in the redemption of men, as really as he has chosen natural means in the production of natural objects, or in the support of natural life ; and men have no more authority to depart from the one system than the other. If God should see fit to make an exception to his established means, this would not give his ministers or saints the right to depart from their instructions. And we have in the ministry of Christ and his Apostles the *manner* in which God would have his gospel preached to others. They, indeed, wrought miracles for the confirmation of the truth of that gospel, which they were to promulgate ; but their ordinary teaching was the example for all ministers, when the gospel was established, and the scriptures were written. And what was the manner in which these primitive teachers delivered their message ? They cherished an abiding sense of the reality and importance of the truths, which they were commissioned to preach to a lost world. They exercised love towards God, and a most enlarged benevolence towards men. They were persons of daily prayer, and exercised strong faith in God. They cherished a strong and an habitual love for the brethren, and were made all things to all men, that by all means they might save some. And when they

preached to others, whether to Jew or Gentile, they *taught*; they taught the doctrines they were commanded to teach, and kept back nothing, whether men would hear, or whether they would forbear. *Knowing the terrors of the Lord*, they with great feeling and solemnity, set before their hearers life and death, blessing and cursing, and by the love of God, by the sufferings of Christ, and by the preciousness of their souls, they entreated men to *be reconciled unto God*. This was their invariable practice,—first, to gain the conviction of their hearers upon some important gospel doctrine, or doctrines, then to win, under God, the heart to a lively acceptance of those truths, and following with the impressive injunction, for them to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*. This was the example of the apostles, and they copied from their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. And those who were not converted through the instrumentality of such means, were not converted at all; *but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.**

But those means *were* successful to a wonderful degree. It pleased God to render them irresistible; they subdued the hearts of multitudes, broke up, and cast down, with the power and rapidity of *lightning*, the strong holds of Satan, and his captives were brought out into gospel light and liberty to the praise of the glory of God.

But suppose the Apostles had departed from their instructions, and the example of Jesus Christ; and in-

* Acts 13: 46.

stead of *teaching* their hearers, they had endeavoured to excite feeling without conviction of gospel truths? And to this end, they had substituted *noise* for instruction; leaping, shouting, clapping of hands, muscular affections, and swooning, for that deep and inward feeling, which is the consequence of a clear perception of one's guilt and danger as a sinner; what had been the consequence? They would, no doubt, have caused no *small stir* among the people, and they would have come nearer than they did, to *turning the world upside down*; but would they have pleased Christ? Would they have extended *really* the triumphs of his cross? It appears to me as absurd to suppose this, as it would be to suppose that *screaming* and *shouting*, instead of cultivating the ground, would cause the corn to grow, or that men would subsist better on *air* simply, than they do upon the fruits of the earth. There is no reason to suppose either of these things; because they are not the means which God has chosen to effect his purposes. And I can hardly avoid instituting the inquiry in this place, whether it is a fact at the present day, that among those who would be numbered with the friends of *order*, there are not many, who are substituting their own peculiarities for the means which Christ has appointed? And whether they do not depend very much on their eccentricities and the novelties they intend to exhibit, for an awakening among the people? The *old method* they find does not succeed. There is not sufficient engagedness in religion, and they will try and see what novelty will do. They will supply the place of deep religious feeling, genuine hu-

mility, real contrition for sin, and fervour in devotion, by outward activity, and as they often succeed in this, they seem conscious of their power to produce an excitement. They speak of "getting up a revival among the people;" "of their having a revival when they please," &c. Now I would not write a word to the detriment of these brethren for the world, nor would I have them abate their exertions in the least to awaken churches and congregations to a deep sense of divine things, and to the practice of every christian duty. I believe there is great guilt resting with luke warm and lazy ministers and professors of religion; the blood of souls, will, doubtless, be found in their skirts. I would to God, there were a thousand sons of thunder to the comparatively few, which are; and that Churches and Pastors were universally, and habitually, more faithful and spiritual, and were indeed, greater *lights* in the world, as they are called to be; but I would have every revival truly spiritual, resulting, under God, from a distinct perception of divine truth; from a knowledge of God and themselves; from contrition of heart; from true submission to the will of God, and unfeigned love to, and faith in, the Lord Jesus Christ. Many such revivals, to a good degree, there have been and still are, I believe, in our land, and in many parts of the world. It is emphatically a day of grace; and the writer has, more than once, experienced the blessedness of those seasons, when God has made bare his arm for the enlargement and joy of the flock over which he is called to preside; when the cedars of Lebanon did bow themselves, and the oaks of Bashan

did tremble for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his Majesty. Then multitudes came to the solemn feasts, where the breathless silence, the fixed attention, the solemn countenance, and the silent tear, all seemed to say,—*How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.* It was here the christian drank at the fountain of his love, and experienced peculiar enlargement in his devotions; and here the convicted sinner lost his burden of guilt, his eyes were opened to see the wonders of redeeming mercy, and his soul was prepared by grace to taste the sweets of divine consolations. In remembrance of these things I would say, *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.* For revivals like these essentially, let Ministers and Christians of all denominations labour and pray more abundantly, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon us. Then, indeed, will our churches receive strength and beauty from such acquisitions, and not be rent asunder or brought into the severest afflictions by so frequent apostasies. Then the enemy himself will be constrained to admit that God is in us *of a truth*; our city will become the city of joy, and *every man have praise of God.*

I shall conclude this Essay with an extract from an Essay on Regeneration, by Rev. Asa Burton, D. D.*

“Within the course of my ministry, which is now forty three years, I have been particularly acquainted

* Burton's Essays, pp. 345, 346.

with a number of revivals among my own people, and also in towns adjacent; and have frequently noticed two kinds of converts, whose first experiences have been different. One class is composed of those, who have manifested a great and sudden alteration in their feelings. They have suddenly experienced great joy, and entire relief of their burden, and manifested much warmth of affection, great zeal in the cause of Christ, and almost a full and sure confidence of a saving change, free from doubts and fears. The other class have manifested a lively sense of the great depravity and sinfulness of their hearts; after a season, their burden, as they call it, has left them. They have felt a pleasedness with the character of God, inward satisfaction in his sovereignty, a willingness to be in his hand and at his disposal; but, on account of the great sinfulness of their hearts, cannot for a considerable time, persuade themselves, that they are new creatures. They begin at last to entertain a hope, with fear and trembling; yet at no time have they been much elated with joy.* This class of converts have generally persevered in the christian course, and given increasing evidence of real, and genuine piety, shining with greater light from year to year; and it is seldom, that one of them finally proves to be a hypocrite. While numbers of the other class, after a few days, begin to decline, grow cold, and finally, like stony ground hearers, under trials fall away, and embrace dangerous errors of some kind, or return to their former course of

* Mark the similarity between this description and the experiences of the Wesleys, Dr. Coke, and Mr. Fletcher.

life ; many of them give decided proofs of hypocrisy. And those of this class, who do persevere and support a christian life, after a few days or weeks from the time of their change, manifest but little of the joy they first felt, lose their confidence, and begin to doubt, whether all they have experienced is not a delusion. They begin to become more and more acquainted with their remaining corruptions, and complain of their depravity, coldness, and stupidity ; and then with humility and trembling, they persevere in working out their salvation. Hence converts, who are elated with joy at first, and on this account have great confidence and assurance, who are warm, forward, and full of zeal, are not very promising, and there is much reason to fear they will prove no better than stony ground hearers. But those, who have a deep sense of their depravity, and obtain a hope by slow degrees, and with many fears ; who show great tenderness of heart, lest they should wound the cause, and many fears that they are deceived ; these are persons, who shine brightest on their journey to the heavenly land. And with this representation, it is believed, ministers, who have been much acquainted with revivals, will agree. Let us, then, learn not to consider great and sudden joy, confidence, and boldness, so great evidences of piety, as many seem to do, and especially those, who are less acquainted with the operations of the Holy Spirit."

END.

