

ment or his taste, who can attend such places, for the sake of instruction and edification.* While such a state of things continue, I consider our conduct to be consistent and just.

Lastly. *They are said to be generally men of unscriptural and disgraceful conduct ; this is considered as the fruit of their creed, and is thought to be its refutation.* To which I answer, 1. This is generally the last angry effort that is made to impugn the glorious doctrines of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. 2. If the charge can be supported, I will instantly yield the point of dispute to the objector. 3. That no religious creed can lay a sufficient check upon a natural man's evil propensities. 4. That a bad man would probably abuse the best creed that a general invitationist could put into his brains ; and that a good man would make a good use of a bad system. The best use and the worst use which are made of religious systems, answer to the moral condition of those who embrace them. It is grace reigning in the *heart*, and not ideas floating in the imagination, that will restrain a man from sinning against God, so as to disgrace his character and dishonour his religion. 5. It must be granted that good people fall into sin without the influence of a bad set of notions : take as examples David and Peter. 6. It is equally true, that there are in all denominations people, who sin with the depravity of those I have mentioned, but who never experience their remorse. Such persons will, without doubt, find an awful home with the apostates Judas, Julian, and others.

These things it is hoped will blunt the edge of the accusation, and I proceed without the fear of danger to wrench the blade from the assailant's grasp. And 1. I challenge the objector to produce more instances of disgraceful conduct among those who contend for restricted invitations, than there are among those who embrace all mankind with invitations, and at the same time shut the gates of bliss against the major part of them. Allow-

* Since the above was written, an excellent piece upon this subject has appeared in the New Baptist Miscellany, for December, 1828.

ing for the disproportion of numbers. 2. I affirm that there are not so many instances of improper conduct among those who are erroneously designated antinomians, as there are among those who contend for unlimited invitations. As far as my observations extend, the balance of iniquity is in the *broad* scale. And when I reflect upon the tendency, discriminating views of the gospel must ever produce, and the reproach most, or at least many of its professors must subject themselves to, I feel my persuasion to be confirmed. I am aware how local prejudices may vary with circumstances, but I conceive notwithstanding, that I have formed my calculations upon a safe scale.

Why then, it will be demanded, is such an opinion formed by men in general, respecting the bad conduct of those who embrace restricted sentiments? I answer, 1. Because men are generally ignorant of the nature and tendency of the sentiments they so dislike. 2. Because they hear many professors inveighing against them. 3. Because it is thought orthodoxy to revile antinomians. These things prepare their minds not only to believe any idle rumours, but to exaggerate them, and encrease their publicity. If cases were thoroughly scrutinized, there perhaps would not be found one out of twenty that could be proved. But directly any rumour is abroad, which involves a question of moral propriety in a person of high sentiments as he is probably termed, it is instantly credited, because it is thought his sentiments led him to it; and then of course the doctrines of the gospel are saddled, with all the iniquity which hypocrites, formalists, worldlings, and devils can scrape together. Whereas on the other hand, when any disgraceful conduct happen to general invitation men, but little notice is taken of it by the world, the congregation, or the church. The judgment receives a *charitable warp*, and a salvo, resembling the atonement is soon found—‘we all have our failings’—‘none of us are perfect.’ Why no, but few people imagine you are, and there is but little danger of mistake on this head. But why should this general sufficiency be limited in its design and application? Why,

I ask, is it not applied to those who differ from you in their views on the subject of general invitations, and on other subjects as well? Do they plead for sinless perfection in the flesh? Have they not the same nature with yourselves? the same principles of depravity in their hearts? the same tempting devil? and are they not subject to the same vicissitudes and the same backslidings? Then why not exercise the same charity towards them as others? The reason is as obvious, as it is impious. But perhaps a further demand may be made, why is not the odium removed? To this I reply, 1. Because human nature is just the same it ever was; the heart of man recoils at the humbling truths of the gospel. 2. Because none but God can remove that enmity. 3. Because people will not take the trouble to examine either the conduct or the creed of those they dislike. They are jealous for the traditions of their fathers; and their opinion of those who preach and believe in a restricted and finished salvation, is as old as the apostles of the new testament, and I suppose older too. It has been handed down by the father to the son from one generation to another, for near six thousand years. Cain seems to have been a deist, to have first broached the opinion, practised it upon his brother, and entailed it as a curse upon all his posterity. 4. Because the prince of darkness is as vigilant, subtle, and depraved as he ever was or ever will be.

It will be said, of what use can it be to spend much time and many words upon such a subject; for if offers of grace are wrong they cannot do much harm. To this I answer, the same plausible reasoning may be adopted by Wesleyans, universalists, &c. and yet those sentiments are repelled with warmth and even vehemence, by many who contend for unlimited invitations. I cannot feel reconciled to any sentiments which are broadly opposed to the perfections of God; which represent him as ignorant, weak, mutable, insincere, cruel. I cannot subject my mind to any system which impugns the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, such as the covenant of grace, sovereign election, total depravity, &c. I cannot believe in a creed which disparages, dis-

unites, and confuses the work of Christ. I feel a repugnancy to any system which destroys the proportion, harmony, and order of the plan of salvation. My mind recoils at those sentiments, which destroys the prerogative, and supercedes the agency and ministry of the Holy Ghost. Yet I submit that this is the case, with regard to the system of general invitations and offered grace. I do not say that such things are *affirmed* by persons of unrestricted sentiments, but I insist that they are *implied*. This I have proved by various reasonings, and could demonstrate by a new chain of arguments. It is with a view of counteracting in a limited degree, the influence of such dishonouring sentiments, that I have devoted my time and employed my pen. And should I be called upon to prosecute the subject further, I hope to be found willing to engage in the cause of God and truth, which is nearer to me than all earthly considerations; in which I ever hope to be found living to the praise and glory of him who hath called me out of darkness into marvellous light, and who hath counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, to whom be all honour and glory world without end.

Should any individual deem it either necessary or expedient, to attempt a refutation of the arguments which are exhibited in the course of this work, though he should meet with some arguments which are not so conclusive as the writer imagined them to be, he will recollect, that the inconclusiveness of one or more, will not affect the validity of others which are founded on different principles. It is hoped that no advantage will be taken of grammatical errors, as disadvantages have been connected with the progress of its execution, and as they have little to do with the substance of an argument. It will also further be expected, that the individual will meet the various arguments which I have offered, in their magnitude and force; and not attempt their refutation by polished sophisms or polite evasions. He will further observe, that all abuse of antinomians will be foreign to the point, and will be treated accordingly. In short, if a refutation is contemplated, let my arguments be met fairly, examined impartially, and if they can, refuted solidly.

And now, dear reader, what think you of the system of general invitations? Is it a God-glorifying system? Can you believe it to be supported by the bible? Is it agreeable with reason, the bible, or the perfections of God? Can you cordially embrace it? If you say *yes*, I say examine it again, and try if you can reconcile it with other subjects which are allowed to be right. If you are not satisfied on either sides, pursue your enquiries in the bible, and at the foot of the throne of that gracious being, who will give you instruction without upbraiding you for your ignorance. Call no man master, but Jesus Christ. Seek the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit, and he will guide your enquiries into the truth as it is in Jesus. Consider now what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. But if the reader is convinced of the absurdity of the general and fashionable scheme, I would say then, come out from among those who profess such things—unite with those who embrace the sentiments contained in these pages—stand by and support those who preach them. Consider, the doctrines of grace are the believer's crown and glory. What therefore you have received, *hold fast*—Let no man take your *crown*.

ERRATA.

- Page 16, l. 13, for much more, read much *less*.
 — 24, l. 29, expunge the particle *but*.
 — 29, l. 23, for instructions, read *constructions*.
 — 35, l. 24, for blessings on, read blessings *only* on, &c.
 — 37, l. 26, 27, for *this*, read *that*--for *that*, read *this*.
 — 104, l. 31, for reason, read *reasoning*.
 — 111, l. 32, 33, for as you examine the stately, read as you *would* examine a stately, &c.
 — 114, l. 17, Note, for which, read *what*.
 — 116, l. 6, for plugging, read *playing*.
 — 136, for New Bap. Mag. read *New Bap. Miscellany*.
 — 250, l. 19, place a comma after the word *only*.
 — 302, for baptised, read *baptized*.
 — 368, l. 35, for into, read *unto*.

There are several instances in which the rules of grammar are violated. The reader is requested to sustain with patience the interruptions they may occasion in his mind.