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A

# LETTER

TO THE

REV. ROBERT HAWKER, D. D.

VICAR OF CHARLES, PLYMOUTH:

WHEREIN IS SET FORTH

Some of the Sinful Practices,

AND

IRRECONCILEABLE CONTRADICTIONS,

OF HIS

PUBLIC MINISTRATIONS:

WITH ADMONITIONS, &c.

By JACOB BUTTER,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT THE PHILADELPHIA CHAPEL, PLYMOUTH.

- “ And the man said unto me, son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee, art thou brought hither; declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.” *Ezek. xl. 4.*
- “ For the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” *1 Peter iv. 17.*
- “ But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” *1 Cor. xi. 32.*

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1815.

AN  
**ADDRESS**  
TO THE  
**CHURCH OF GOD.**

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DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,

THROUGH the medium of the press, I have set before you the following epistle, from the fullest conviction that it is right so to do; as I have no other channel whereby to make it generally known, both to evangelical ministers of the Church of England, and their spiritual hearers. I do not hereby appeal to your judgment, to decide on what I have written, because I well know there will be a great diversity of opinions on this subject; and perhaps there will be more to condemn, than justify it: but I do it from a desire to correct the judgment of those who may be uninformed in these things. It has fallen to my lot, to minister among a people, who are interwoven with those who attend the ministry of Dr. HAWKER; therefore it is addressed to him, because his conduct tends to pervert the minds of the people. It is my heart's desire, and prayer to God, that he will accompany it with his blessing.

And am

Your servant, for Christ's sake,

J. B.

W/A

TO THE

**REV. R. HAWKER, D. D.**

DEAR SIR,

IT is now nearly two months since I delivered into your hands the letter, which I addressed to you, (a transcript of which I now publish,) concerning the evils of your public ministrations. Your having passed it by in silence, and continuing in the same course, seems to indicate a contemptuous rejection of it. This you may do with a spirit of apparent indifference, and thereby only act agreeably to those parts of your conduct described in my letter; yet I must assure you, that it is not a light thing with me, but on the contrary I am persuaded that it is of vast importance. Under this persuasion, and looking for the influence of the Spirit of God, I wrote the letter to you; and by His guidance I hope to proceed in bringing it before the church of God, leaving the event with that Lord who sitteth upon the throne judging right, who hath the government upon His shoulder;—He that hath the key of David;—He that openeth

and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.—My Lord has graciously given me direction for acting herein, both from His word, and by His Spirit; and I feel constrained to proceed, according to the light given, in exposing those things which are an injury to yourself, and to the church of Christ, and a dishonor to His holy name. You may now think hardly of me for writing against your adherence to corrupt ordinances; but it is possible that before your journey is ended in the wilderness, you may love me for it.—Lev. xix. 17.—Psal. cxli. 5.—Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

I remain,

Very respectfully,

Your's in Christ,

J. BUTTER.

*Gascoyne Place, Plymouth,*  
February 22, 1815.

THE  
**LETTER.**

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TO THE

*Rev. Robert Hawker, D. D.*

DEAR SIR,

**I** DO most sincerely love and esteem you, because many very worthy things are done of you, in your sphere, both in public and in private life; and this is a truth which must be acknowledged by every honest mind where those things are known. And there is much in your ministry which constrains me to esteem you very highly: herein it is that I discover so much of the image of Christ, which unites us in those bonds which issue from the heart of our Jesus, and extend to the binding together in Him, the souls of all them in whose heart he is formed the hope of glory. Nevertheless there are many injurious things contained in several parts of your public administrations; and my design in this letter is to point out some of those evils, which are to the dishonor of God, and pernicious to the church. Though in many words I may possibly err, yet I am persuaded that the general import of what I shall say, will be right in the sight

of God. Were I to consult my natural feelings, I should have nothing to do with this matter: neither do I enter on this subject, without some due sense of my own sinfulness and nothingness. Nor is it your infirmities as a man, that I am about to expose; for I rather desire to hide them with the mantle of charity. Did I not think highly of a great part of your pulpit labors, I should have nothing to do with any other part of your public ministrations; but it is, because I believe you to be a minister of Christ, whose labors He hath greatly owned and blessed, that I now address you; and it is with the hope, that He will more abundantly increase your usefulness, that the following things are written unto you. I might mention many strong and scriptural reasons for thus writing, as the Lord's command, Isa. lviii. 1. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Lev. xix. 17. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." Prov. xxvii. 5, 6. "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Prov. xxviii. 23. "He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favor than he that flattereth with his lips." Prov. xxix. 5. "A man that flattereth his neighbor, spreadeth a net for his feet."

Those who suppose that they are to leave their brethren to go on in evil without reproving:



them, do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor much of the power of godliness. But the prevailing conduct of this generation, is that sort of civility, which is nothing less than flattering each other in their evil ways; which shews, that the fear of man prevails more than the fear of God. The general tenor of the word is a plain directory for me in this engagement: and I am assuredly persuaded that it is the will of my God, that I should interfere with you in your corrupt ministerial proceedings. The knowledge of His will herein, and being fully assured thereof, is enough to bear up my mind, and to supersede every other argument on the subject. And I can with truth say, that the love of Christ constraineth me to do it; therefore every other consideration becomes secondary in the matter: though I might add, that I am persuaded it will be attended with good, by an increase of light to many in the church, I also hope that it will tend to accomplish one very principal and desirable event, namely, your emancipation from your present connections: and, with a view to this great object, I shall express myself in the most unequivocal language that I am able. I am well aware that much tumult may arise, and much odium be cast on my name in consequence thereof; but a bad name, even from the saints that attend your ministry, and to have my good evil spoken of, is nothing new with me. Paul saith, "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and

doctrine." Did you rule well, this would be your due; but because you deviate so widely therefrom, you are undeserving of that honor, and become subject to reproof. If, therefore, my language to you should border upon rebuke, I believe that the notorious evils set forth therein will become an apology for such language: were I to apologize according to the apparent harshness with which I shall be constrained to write, I should then have need to annex an apology to almost every sentence. I beseech you to attend with candor to the things I shall now lay before you, not considering who it is that writes, but what is written. Remember, it was a child that the Lord appointed to inform Eli of the judgments that should come upon his house for their iniquity.

It is not my design to treat on what appears to me to be the scriptural principles of gospel ordinances; neither can I attempt to controvert any point wherein we might differ, were you to act, as I believe, according to the dictates of your conscience; for it appears to me, that by continual violence you must have so much distorted your conscience, that it can hardly be known to yourself, consequently altogether unknown to me. Therefore what I propose is, to meet you in some of those practices wherein you have hitherto abounded in iniquity with impunity; and which I conceive may be very properly begun in that of *christening infants*, falsely so called.

How often have you put this awful question to poor carnal heedless sinners, "Dost thou in the name of this child, renounce the devil, and all his works?" &c. By their answer to this question in the affirmative, you draw forth a lie from their lips: then after certain other things, which are all of the same nature, you proceed to sprinkle water on its face, calling it *baptizing* the same, "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Then you pronounce the child to be regenerated, and grafted into the body of Christ's church. Yea, you mock God, by pretending to give Him thanks for doing that which you know He hath not done. Now, sir, have you any command from the Son of God for such practices? What a strange perversion of things is this! Is not that scripture applicable to such corruptions, Rom. ii. 22. "Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" In the pulpit you declare that regeneration, and being grafted into Christ, is as opposite to all those unmeaning and deceitful ceremonies, as light is to darkness. When you have occupied almost a whole sermon, to set forth the new birth, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and faith in Christ Jesus, whereby alone a sinner is risen to newness of life, and delivered from the dominion of sin; you, in the same hour, in the same house, and to the infants of the same people, administer this mock ordinance.\* You appear desirous that all

\* If you do not believe the principle to be wrong, yet I am verily persuaded that you are assured, that the *ritual* used by you,

should adhere to this pernicious practice of infant sprinkling: were it so, consequently all the congregation would then have been regenerated in their infancy, according to the form of words used in that rite. And then your sermon on regeneration must give the lie to what you say in your infant sprinkling, unless we are to believe that your sermon is addressed to those dissenters present, who were not *christened* in their infancy. The ritual of your church enjoins upon you to perform this ceremony to infants, in as public a manner, and before as many of the congregation as may be present. Suppose then, after such a sermon as I have here alluded to, you were to perform this ceremony before the same congregation to whom you have been thus preaching about regeneration, &c. how would every enlightened mind blush, and be confounded in consequence thereof. And how would it tend to increase the blindness, and harden the hearts of the unawakened sinners then present; to make them believe that God would look upon sin with impunity; seeing the man who calls him-

when sprinkling infants, is altogether unscriptural. Therein you join the names of God, to language conveying ideas which you do not believe. If this does not deserve the name of mockery in the presence of God, then I know not what does deserve that name. You labor to set at nought the baptism of believers, as administered by the apostles, and you follow a human ritual instead thereof; which ritual you cannot but believe to be erroneous: and I am persuaded you refrain from administering that ordinance in the way which you believe to be right. Such conduct is injurious and sinful indeed.

self, the minister of God, will so strangely prevaricate, as first to declare a thing to be true, and then, in the most obvious way, by infant sprinkling, to contradict what he had before affirmed. And thus one part of your ministrations reciprocally and continually contradict the other. May we not rank such proceedings as these among what the apostle calls spiritual wickedness in high places? which as far exceeds the common transgressions of flesh and blood, as the maturity of your body exceeds the imperfect state of the infants on whom you practise this abomination.

According to the tenor of your ministry, you must believe that many, very many, are now dead in sins, and others gone down to everlasting perdition, on whom you have practised this vile mockery: and that *all those infants were destitute of the smallest evidence of grace*, at the time of *your pronouncing them to be regenerate*. Is this holding fast the form of sound words? “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Matt. xii. 37.

The next part that I shall notice, will be that of your *administering the Lord's supper*. The form of words prescribed for the personal address to each communicant, is by no means to be rejected, but rather to be approved, when the individual to whom this address is made, is a partaker of the faith of God's elect. But to use these words indiscriminately to all sorts that may be disposed to attend; especially those whom you cannot but *know* to be

dead in trespasses and sins! and have neither part nor lot in the matter; this must be erroneous indeed. What are such proceedings, but wilfully profaning the holy name, and prostituting that blessed ordinance of the Son of God? I charge you to ask your own soul, as in the sight of God, and to answer the question—"By what authority doest thou these things? and who hath required it from your hands?" I know that you have attempted to answer this question, or rather done that which tends to dissemble and cloak the subject, and mislead the people by referring to that solitary and awful instance of Judas Iscariot, whose partaking of the Lord's supper, and afterwards betraying our Lord, was foretold in Psalm xli. 9. "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me." And for his monstrous transgressions herein, the Holy Ghost by the Psalmist invokes on him these dire imprecations, in Psalm cix. 6—19, "Set thou a wicked man over him: and let satan stand at his right hand; when he shall be judged let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin: let his days be few, and let another take his office: let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow: as he loved cursing, so let it come unto him," &c. Now, sir, if I understand rightly the meaning of your arguments, in one of your Saturday evening sermons you brought this subject forward as a precedent, by which to justify a heedless and indiscriminate ad-

ministration of the Lord's supper. May not an immediate inference be made from hence, that instead of warning the wicked to flee from the error of their ways, and from the wrath to come, that you do rather strengthen them in the practice of eating and drinking unworthily, and thereby eating and drinking damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body. Remember, sir, there was but one Judas, and he by divine appointment, as our Lord speaks of him. But it seems as though you were indifferent about how many there were, whose conduct bore a likeness to Judas.

There is nothing which more darkens and hardens the mind of man, than natural religion: and, under this influence, dead sinners come and receive from your fostering hand a kind of salvo for their sins. Does not the whole tenor of the revealed word of God teach us that the true worshippers should in these things, as much as in them lieth, be obedient to the word of the Lord? which saith, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." If the true followers of the Lamb of God are not, as much as in them lieth, a separate people, in administering and receiving of gospel ordinances; then wherein shall they be a separate people? For in their civil concerns they must needs be connected with the world, or else they

had need go out of the world. But such proceedings as your's, here referred to, are certainly contrary to the plain direction of the word, and nothing short of rebelling, and teaching rebellion, against the Lord; mixing the church and the world together; perverting the ordinances of God; deluding poor dark sinners; defiling and becoming an occasion of stumbling to the saints. And above all, profaning that holy name, which at all times ought to be had in reverence, and especially in public worship, by those who ought to teach the fear of the Lord. How many are there now in that place, where hope never cometh, who have been lulled in their sins, by continually receiving from your hands the memorials of the death of Christ, against whom you must know them to have been enemies all their days, and who will say unto them at the last day, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In these things, sir, you are neither faithful to God nor mammon.

So also in *the burial of the dead*, do you not always and invariably use that language to all, which, in the obvious meaning of words, expresses your belief that they are all fallen asleep in the Lord? by pronouncing on *all of them*, that you commit their bodies to the ground, "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working



whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Did the Holy Ghost ever teach you to apply these words promiscuously to all? Do you not in an address to God express your hope that they are all entered into rest? &c. Are not these things uniformly of a piece with those other enormities to which I have already alluded? Thus you deceive poor blind sinners, even from the cradle to the grave. *First.* By a mockery both of God and them about regeneration, &c. *Secondly.* At the table, by telling them they are partakers of redemption by the blood of the Lamb. *Thirdly.* You close this awful delusion, by declaring them to have died in sure and certain hope of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Many, no doubt, in the long course of your ministry, you have passed through these three stages totally in the dark. Is this denying yourself, and following Christ, and leaving the dead to bury their dead? Is it not rather, as much as in you lieth, a departure from Christ, and cleaving to dead works?

Again, how uncomely a sight is it, that whilst some of the spiritual part of the people are, on the Lord's-day morning, engaged at the school-room in prayer, and among other things for a blessing on their pastor, you are frequently at the same instant, in the adjoining ground, pronouncing on the dead, without distinction, that you have "a sure and certain hope of their resurrection to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Instead of being thus employed, were you and others

(who have been performing this service) in an adjoining room, playing at cards, or occupied in any other carnal amusement, every one would rightly exclaim shame against you. But whether the former or the latter would be the greater sin, I shall leave to be decided by any enlightened unbiassed mind. When assembled with the public congregation, you, the minister and leader in the worship, go through a long round of services, in which your spiritual people do generally dissent from you: and no sooner have you ascended the pulpit than you also strangely dissent from your preceding conduct. In the desk, you, the pastor, are for a long time engaged in a human ritual, whilst many of your spiritual people are absent, because they reject it; and many others, if present, will strenuously avoid the very semblance of joining with you; insomuch that they think it a reproach to look into the same book of rites, or to unite in that formulary which it enjoins. What a strange jumble of affairs is here presented to view! The pastor, who one may suppose to be the most enlightened in the congregation, is going a round of service, with the name of God united to almost every sentence, in which he is only joined by those whom he thinks to be almost, if not altogether, in the dark: whilst the spiritual people are, by their conduct, testifying to the evil of their pastor's deeds. If this sort of service is of divine appointment, then might we expect that in visiting the sick, in social prayer, in family worship, and

in the closet, the prayer book would be your companion and guide. But, on the contrary, if you cannot use these forms in private, because they are not congenial to the nature of simple, spiritual worship, then to use them in public, and beseech all present to join with you, must be a still greater evil, inasmuch as a public transgression must have a worse tendency than a private sin; because if I publicly offend, I not only do evil myself, but, by my example, influence and harden others likewise: "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Thus you continually take the lead in that service, which is approved and followed by those only who are strangers to spiritual worship. Your conduct herein is something like that of Aaron, who said, "Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief:" and he might have added, thou knowest me, that I have been so foolish as to lead them therein!

By such conduct you greatly increase that deadness and stupor, which do sadly pervade the minds of many saints. How entirely opposite are such proceedings to the apostolic direction, "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you," Titus ii. 7, 8. In the desk, at the font, in the chancel, and at the grave, you strangely depart from that soundness of speech, which cannot be

condemned. Have you, sir, any authority for thus perverting the right ways of the Lord? Have the long established laws of men, and the carnal systems of creatures, under the garb of corrupt religion, superseded the word of the Creator? Shall the customs and will of the flesh, though practised from generation to generation, pass with impunity in the sight of Jehovah? Will there not a period arrive, when our God shall reprove and punish his servants for an habitual, wilful corruption of his worship? Were these things always to continue, it would leave room for men to conclude that God was altogether such an one as themselves: but he hath promised to correct his people for their iniquity, and thereby prove himself to be both a righteous and merciful Lord.

Another important consideration is, that by your present proceedings you are a servant to carnal men, and they rule over you in those things where it becomes the exclusive prerogative of Jesus Christ to have the dominion by his word and Spirit. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Rom. vi. 16. Be it known unto you, sir, that it is the ordination of Jesus Christ, that his pastors and teachers should bear rule in the church; and that his church should be the seat of its government; and that to the church, and to it only, pertains the keeping of Christ's ordinances. His throne is in the midst

of his people. By your conduct you put both yourself, and the saints with you, under the yoke of natural men, to your great injury and loss, and to the dishonor of Jesus Christ. These things ought not to be: yet such government of the church does not in the least infringe on the prerogatives of the secular powers; to whom God has given the right of dominion in the civil concerns of this world.

I shall next examine the motives which must induce you to continue in such proceedings. I know some will quote such scriptures as that in 1 Cor. vii. 20. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he is called;" and thereby attempt to justify your conduct. Will this, or any similar scripture, apply to your case? Surely it would be needless to occupy much time in attempting to refute such an error. When Abraham was called in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans, (and Abraham's case shall suffice) he might have remained in that land, though called to the knowledge of God, and worshipped him there, had not the Lord commanded him to come out of that land. But no one can say in truth he would have been obedient to God, had he lived in the practice of idolatry, because he was called in the midst of idolaters; or had he aimed at a medley, like yourself, by partly conforming to the worship of the true God, and partly to idolatry: such conduct would have been a wide departure from what the Lord enjoined upon him, when he said, "I am the Al-

mighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect." Neither would the Lord then have given so honorable a testimony of him, had he adhered to heathenish customs, as to say, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the ways of the Lord." It cannot be any just argument to say, that you *must* remain in the established church, because you were first awakened there; for the very reverse is commonly the case. When called of God, it is made evident by the person called forsaking their evil ways, and following that which is good. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." We must take heed not to support our proceedings by wresting the scriptures, to give an echo to our voice. By such ways, we shall corrupt the word of God, to accommodate almost every false gloss in natural religion. Another motive commonly assigned for your continuance where you are, is the great usefulness that has arisen, and probably will yet arise therefrom: and that the success of your ministry has not been retarded by the evils connected with your station: such reasoning, at best, is but plausible and specious; and doing evil that good may come. However you may account of things, and conclude that your pulpit labors comprehend your ministry, and that the other parts are merely nugatory; such conclusions in your mind will not render it so in its effects, or in the minds of im-

partial observers; much less make it so in the sight of God. Most certainly each part is joined together, and comprises one whole. And you must perceive many and great evils in several parts of your ministrations; the habitual practice of which produces an injurious influence upon your mind, and prevents you from seeing them in their true light; though it is not such a darkness as to render you at all excusable. I need not inform you that God sheds abroad His love in the hearts of His people, because they are His people, and complete in Christ, and not because they are wholly delivered from sinful practices. The manifestation of His grace and mercy is the cause, and not the effect of our deliverance from evil. So He bestows gifts for the ministry, "even for the rebellious; that the Lord God might dwell among them." And He will bless the exercise of those gifts, though the persons who are the subjects of them, are in some things very fleshly. And in this way He blesses so much of the truth as is spoken from every mouth, and to every people: in this way He blesses you.

In your first awakenings, with the weeds of your rubricks wrapped about your head, we may suppose that you did not see much of the evil trammels of your office. But surely your light must have so far increased since your morning dawn, as to render you far more inexcusable in your present noonday conduct. If you are not increased in light, so as to see in a greater degree

the evils of your office, then we must conclude that the habitual practice of dead works, has had injurious and darkening influence upon your mind :\* and such effects must inevitably be produced to a great degree. Yet you certainly are increased in light, in some things, which is evidenced by your preaching : therefore your punishment will be the greater for a continuance in works of darkness. We are not to suppose that all the ways of a man please the Lord, because a part of his ministry is made a blessing in the church ; I say *a part* of his ministry ; for it is but a small part at best which falls to the lot of the church of Sardis, which is of such a nature as to admit of a blessing. Neither are we to think it strange that a man who is beloved of God, should be punished for his iniquity. The Lord has given testimony of David ; that he was a man after His own heart ; nevertheless, we have divine records to inform us that he was severely chastized for his abominations. And our Lord saith, in Rev. iii. 19. “ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous, therefore, and repent.” “ When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be con

\* I may be deemed impertinent in presuming to judge of your light, or in so speaking as to imply that you are in a great measure without understanding, in some parts of your conduct. But allow me to say, that if I did not think you (and all who walk in the same steps) to be greatly in the dark in some things, I should be constrained to conclude that you were a very uncommon sinner ; having for your motto, “ Let us do evil that good may come.”



demned with the world." 1 Cor. xi. 32. Without doubt there have been, and now are, natural men, whose ministry is in some things useful to the church. Yea, some have been inspired, like Balaam, to pronounce a blessing on the people of God; though they themselves shall not be spared from final condemnation. Take heed then lest He spare not you from sore chastisements: for "he that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Prov. xxix. 1. And God may work by such a contrariety of things, as to make your chastisements for your corruptions, as a minister, a ministerial blessing.

To say that it is needful for you to pursue your present path, in order that a blessing may come to the people in that connection, is saying nothing less than that it is necessary for God to connive at, and thereby countenance sinful practices in His ministers, to give them an opportunity of doing good. Such a way of arguing is nothing short of making God the minister of sin; and that God has rendered it necessary for His ministers to transgress His word, in order to accomplish His gracious purposes. This reasoning is perverse and sinful indeed; and very far from the apostle's meaning, when he said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Such was his zeal for purity and uprightness in

the things of God, that when Peter only dissembled in eating, he withstood him to the face at Antioch, and blamed him before them all.

Having examined the ground on which you stand, and the supposed motives for your continuance on such a quagmire; allow me, in the next place, to point out what seem to be the most obvious causes for your remaining thereon. And which are these three; interest, honor, and ease in the flesh,\* and these are so closely blended together, as to form such a threefold cord, as is not easily broken. "A gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous." Deut. xvi. 19. The manner of your support is that which is very congenial to the natural mind of man, who is fond of such an independence as will keep him above the common casualties of life. Through what medium your tythes may arise, I know not, therefore I cannot be a judge, whether the payment of them may, or may not,

\* Some may charge me with unbecoming freedom in thus addressing you. To which I answer, that you declare yourself to be a brother in that family where there is but one Lord, who is head over all things to the church: and who hath said, "Be ye not called rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Matt. xxiii. 8. Therefore all carnal distinctions must be laid aside when they come into contact with the more important things of God. But it is my desire to walk by the divine rule, which saith, "Honor all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the king." 1 Pet. ii. 17. And to behave with becoming deference to all men, according to their respective stations, either in the church, or in the world.

operate to oppress those by whom they are paid. But this I know, that the tythe laws are generally considered oppressive. As to your surplice fees, what can we say of the greater part of them, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary; but that they are the wages of iniquity. Though I must do you the justice, according to report, to say, that you do not exact beyond those privileges which the law allows you, but that you rather forego them. Nevertheless your support is not such as becomes a minister of Christ; though it be such as the law secures for the established ministers of the realm. From hence it appears to be a fleshly interest which ties you fast. Your honor also, as it relates to your personal conduct and family interests, arising from your office, is of a worldly kind; which may be proved in this way: the more you conform to the flesh, the more your reputation will keep good among that class of people from whom a good name is desirable to nature. But on the contrary, the more you are delivered from that carnal system, the more your carnal reputation will vanish away. Thus the ease arising from these sources is at best but treacherous, and tends to nourish a dependence on an arm of flesh, rather than trusting in the Lord. Were it possible for you to be entirely deprived of these three connatural bonds, and suffer the entire loss of them, but for a short period, without any expectations of their future revival, would not such

an occurrence so far bring you to your right senses, as to enable you more clearly to ascertain what these strong bonds are, which hold you so fast to your corrupt system?

I believe your sphere of preaching is almost, if not altogether, confined to the pulpit of your own parish. But were you unshackled from these strong holds of the flesh, you would, doubtless, have a larger field opened for your labors; and might then expect, according to your measure, to tread in the footsteps of Paul, who was an honest witness unto all men of the things of God, which he had seen and heard, and continued in the things which became sound doctrine; "giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry might not be blamed: but in all things approving himself as the minister of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses," &c. 2 Cor. vi. 3, &c.

You may say that the dispensation is changed, and that you are sheltered under the ecclesiastical laws. True, indeed, the dispensation is changed; but the change is chiefly in the ministers of this generation, who seem to consult with flesh and blood, at almost every step they take. Certain it is that the laws will no longer secure your support, than you are found conforming to their earthly principles. Separate from your present Lord's-day labors, all those parts which are merely a doing service to men, and pleasing those from

whom you have your wages ; do this, and your Lord's-day exercises will be comparatively moderate. If you still argue the necessity and expediency of remaining in your present station, then remain there, only to be a faithful witness to our Lord. Let honesty and integrity mark all your footsteps ; let the divine authority of the Son of God be stamped on every part of your ministrations. Be you jealous of his divine and three-fold prerogatives, as Prophet, Priest, and King. Be you a faithful witness, not only by omitting all that is unscriptural, but by publicly protesting according to your light, against unscriptural proceedings. Make his glory the supreme end in all. Then I presume that the powers that be would soon bring the whole to a final issue ; allowing you no time to halt between two opinions, but cast you out. Had you a single eye to Christ in every thing, you would be reckoned one of those that turn the world upside down, and would soon be expelled from your present station. But if you can do these things, and yet remain in your present premises, then shall my heart rejoice in such an event.

My next attempt shall be, to point out a few more of the injurious consequences of your present proceedings, both to your own soul, and to the people of God among whom you minister, as well as to the church in general. Wherein we walk after the

flesh, we must of necessity walk opposite to God, who is light itself; and every step opposite to Him, must be a conformity to the power of darkness. Hereby we must miss of a blessing, and gain that which is of a baneful tendency, instead thereof. Inasmuch as in practice there is a departure from the simplicity of the word, in doctrine and in ordinances; so much in proportion, does a corrupt leaven operate in every ministry upon earth. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened: for even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. The church in the wilderness is always what its ministers are: In proportion as corruption pervades their minds and conduct, so it extends its baneful influences on the people. This must be true of necessity. Think, then, how far that corrupt leaven which issues from you, must extend in the church of God. Inasmuch as you conform to this world, so you must be under the influence of a worldly spirit; and that spirit must be disseminated in every heart that adheres to you: and then from each of these that spirit is again communicated to all in their respective circles. Then how extensive must be the pernicious effects of your corrupt leaven!

But as you follow Him who is the light of the world, so will that light of life, promised to them that follow Him, shine in you, and on your path;

and by the Spirit's influence will cause others also to walk in that light. The true light is but gradually received into the minds of those who are taught of God. We ought therefore to be fervent in promoting every means for the edification of the church, and suppressing every evil which is growing up to choke the word. All erroneous proceedings in ministers, tend to hinder the entrance of light into the hearts of the people; like as an opaque body intervening between us and the sun, will deprive us of its rays. Every ordinance which our blessed Lord has instituted, when spiritually kept, is calculated to preach and teach Him, who is the way, the truth, and the life. And every step of that path in which we follow Him is marked with life, light, and peace, in him.

You cannot doubt but that Jesus Christ instituted and commanded the administration of water baptism. And I suppose you must perceive from the word, that every ordinance pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, can only belong to spiritual people, and be rightly received by those, whom we hope are by faith made partakers of the kingdom of heaven. The ordinances of Christ, to be administered by his ministers in the church, have a spiritual signification; therefore can only belong to spiritual people, or at least those to whom we hope the Spirit of God hath been imparted; and who walk in some degree as it becometh the gospel.

Were you to observe a right order in these things, (though but imperfectly, as will ever be the case with all) it would effect a mighty difference from what now prevails, and tend much towards separating the church from the world. But the corrupt system by which you are now guided, cannot but mix the church with the world, and as much as may be separate the form of godliness from the power thereof; which certainly ought to be closely united.

It is vain to plead that men have otherwise appointed; and therefore you must go on in your present evil ways. For "if the Lord be God, then follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." To my certain knowledge, the Lord has been for more than three years past speaking to you on this subject; by so many having been baptized from among the people where you minister. Sure I am that it is the Lord's doing, and He does hereby in a very especial manner speak to you, and render you the more inexcusable in your evil practices. I beseech you to ask of your own soul, and to ask of your God, if all these things have come to pass without His gracious appointment? Has it been a mere chance? Can you resist the positive declaration of many among the people, who certify that they have acted herein under the guidance of the Spirit? Have you from the scriptures convinced them that it is an error; or that your own conduct in infant sprinkling is right? For both cannot be right.



How many more there are who have resisted the Holy Ghost in the ordinance of baptism, I know not. Again, think you that the whole is a deception, or that it is a light matter for many, with you at their head, to labor to trample under foot this part of divine ordinances? You have, in sundry ways, been warned of your evil doings, and this feeble address from my hands, is certainly a voice from the Lord to you. May our all gracious and almighty Leader and Commander so work upon your mind, that you may yield obedience to Him, and by following Christ become an example and a teacher to your flock, and to all the churches which surround you; and let your light herein "so shine before men, that they beholding your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." May all your proceedings be marked in future with a holy zeal, not only in your preaching Christ, but also in all your ministering to "separate the precious from the vile, so shalt thou be as my mouth," saith the Lord. One effectual step towards the accomplishment of so great an object, is by first separating yourself, and not permitting those evils to cleave to you, and defile you any longer. Think you not that there will a time come, when our Lord shall both by his judgments and his Spirit put a stop to the present torrents of corruption (in which, as with a tide, you seem to swim, notwithstanding all your preaching) and turn to the people a pure language, pure

doctrines, and a right administration of ordinances, to their good, and to his glory? Is it not almost, if not altogether vain for you to inveigh against the errors of this age, whilst you habitually receive the wages of iniquity? Would you desire to end a long life of labor in the Lord's vineyard, without an attempt to eradicate from the true church, those corrupt weeds which you have hitherto, under the influence of carnal principles, been sadly cherishing? Come out, then, my dear sir, "come out from among them; (quit your post to make room for another, who is a churchman in principle) and be you separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing:" and your Lord will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and will bless you, and guide your future steps. Even so, Amen.

Let it not be supposed that I think myself faultless, because I thus reprove and admonish you—"I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." I hope, through grace, ever to have my ear open to every admonition and instruction which may be for my good. Neither are my imperfections to be any argument why I should not expose your injurious and God-dishonoring conduct: for if none but the perfect reprov'd, then all reproof must cease, till the church arrives at that state where the need of it will be for ever done away. I hope you will not think me your enemy because I have told you the

truth: for I am persuaded that I have acted herein from the best principles of friendship. And I am fully satisfied that our Lord will not let this imperfect epistle to you pass without manifesting in some measure His approbation thereof. Yea, before I began to write, and while I have been writing, He hath been pleased to confirm me in doing it. I resolved on writing to you immediately on hearing from your lips a blessed sermon, the second Thursday evening of your preaching, from John xiv. 20. at which time my heart was warmed with the love of God: and I then said with myself, surely the Lord will "work in you to will and to do that which is well pleasing in His sight."

It is possible that you may reject the whole of what I have written, by saying that it is a secondary subject, and beneath your attention; that you are sent to preach the gospel, and soar above all other things. True, indeed, you do preach the gospel, and did you leave every other ordinance alone, you would be far less blameable than you now are. But instead thereof, you join to your preaching of Christ the ordinances of men. Christ remained on earth forty days after his resurrection, speaking to His disciples of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. But the language of your conduct, and that of many other teachers, seems to indicate an indifference about some things which He then instituted and

commanded—"The curse causeless shall not come." If to continue in your present station is right, then all will end well: and time will declare it.

I hope to pray for you,

And remain,

Your sincere friend in the Lord,

J. BUTTER.

Dec. 24, 1814.

THE END.

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