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S E R M O N S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.



# S E R M O N S

O N

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---

By the late Rev.

Mr. J O H N D O W N E S,

Formerly Rector of St. MICHAEL, WOOD-STREET,

And Lecturer of St. MARY-LE-BOW.

---

V O L. I.

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C O N T E N T S.

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# *Methodism* Examined:

Being the Substance of

## Four DISCOURSES,

*From* ACTS xx. 28, 29, 30.

First published in the Year One Thousand  
Seven Hundred and Fifty-nine.

**S**T. *Paul* being now upon his journey to *Jerusalem*, from whence he was apprehensive he should never return, and his time not permitting him to call at *Ephesus*, appointed the Elders of that Church to meet him at *Miletus* upon the road, where, as he was about to transfer his sacred and important trust to them, he left with them the pastoral charge of which the text is a part.

But though it was immediately and occasionally directed to them, yet surely it concerns the ministers and pastors of all Christian Churches whatsoever.

We at least, as many as have any office or administration in this of ours, as many

more especially as are intrusted with the cure of souls, may fitly apply them to ourselves. For, to speak with the Apostle in the figure, long, very long, hath our church been infested with those grievous wolves he dreaded, which tho' no more than two, when they first entered in among us, (and they so young they might rather be called wolflings) have yet been so prolific, as to spread their ravenous kind through every part of this kingdom: where, what havock they have made amongst our sheep, how many they have torn, and how many scattered, how many fleeced, and how many frightened, I need not say. None can be ignorant, that they have made very great devastations, and are still prowling about our folds, and watching every opportunity, and employing every artifice for surprizing and catching their prey. —Or, to follow my text in the plain and simple letter of it, *Of our own selves have men arose, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

Applying therefore this Scripture to our national Church, I design

*First,* To give some account of those grievous wolves which have entered in among us, or false teachers who have arose from

us;

us; who and what they are; when it was they made their first appearance; and whence their principles are derived.

*Secondly*, To shew that they make use of those means of seduction mentioned in the text, *speaking perverse things, &c.*

*Thirdly*, I shall consider with what force and energy the Apostle's caution to the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus* comes home to the Clergy of the Church of *England*; *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, &c.*

*First* then, I am to give you some account of those *grievous wolves, which entered in among us*, or false teachers, who have arose from us; who, and what they are; when it was they made their first appearance; and whence their principles are derived.

It is about twenty-five years ago, that two bold, though beardless divines, or (to speak in *St. Paul's* language) *novices in divinity*, being lifted up with spiritual pride, were presumptuous enough, in the very noviciate of their ministry, to become founders of the sect called *Methodists*; new in name, but in principles as old as many which were of the produce of three first centuries.

But now though I have dated its origin only about twenty-five years backwards, yet it is proper to observe, that as *those* sects or heresies with which the church was anciently infested: when seeming extinct in one form, from time to time revived in another, so hath it fared with *this*. And methodical principles have, ever since the reformation, been avowed and propagated, only under different titles. Thus it was particularly the last century, as the late Bishop of London remarked in one of his \* Pastoral Letters. In which, speaking of the slanders thrown upon our Church and Clergy, by this very sect, he says, “ It is now an  
 “ hundred years since the like clamours  
 “ were raised and spread throughout the  
 “ nation, against the established clergy, as  
 “ a body lazy and inactive in the work of  
 “ religion, and whose defects in the discharge of their duty did greatly need to  
 “ be supplied by itinerant Preachers. And  
 “ these preachers, under the notion of greater  
 “ zeal and sanctity, and by pretences to  
 “ more than ordinary measures of the spirit,  
 “ drew after them confused multitudes of  
 “ the lower rank, and did all that was in  
 their

\* Pastoral Charge, begun 1741, and finished 1742.



“ their power to lay waste the bounds of  
 “ parochial communion, and to bring the  
 “ established service into disgrace.” These,  
 doubtless, though not *nominally*, were *really*  
 Methodists.

It is also necessary to be observed, that  
 henceforth whenever I speak of *Methodists*,  
 I mean not only the persons who at first  
 assumed, or went under that denomination,  
 but also others, who, though perhaps not  
 agreeing with them in all their notions, (for  
 such an agreement doth not subsist even  
 among themselves) yet accord with them so  
 far as to have deservedly acquired their name  
 and character; especially the *Hutchinsonians*,  
 who seem, both by their preaching and  
 practices, to be incorporated with them;  
 vending the same sort of wares in the *Church*,  
 which the others do in the *Tabernacle*, and  
 using the same methods of subverting, if pos-  
 sible, our ecclesiastical establishment.

If the Methodists are considered in this  
 light, it may be said of them as it was of  
 the first *Anabaptists*, who started up about  
 two hundred and twenty-four years ago, that  
 all ancient heresies have in a manner con-  
 centered in *them*; or at least that they have

borrowed something from almost every one of them,

For the putting this matter beyond all doubt, a review of the principles of a few of those early Heretics may be proper and necessary. In which passing over such of their foolish and impious doctrines as concern not my present purpose, I shall take notice of such only as bear some similitude to those of the Methodists.

The *Simonians* (of whose diabolical author we have an account in the \* *Acts* of the Apostles) were the first sect that vexed and disturbed the peace, and corrupted the purity of the Christian church. They taught their people, that to press the necessity of good works, was inconsistent with the *gospel liberty*, and that believing the *sorcerer Simon*, and his wicked associate *Helen*, they might be saved by *grace alone*.—The *Methodists* teach *theirs*, that to insist upon the necessity of good works, is derogatory from the *merits of Christ*; and that confiding in the truth of their new scheme of divinity, they may be saved by *faith alone*. Thus in the main there is a perfect harmony betwixt them; they both alike deny the necessity of *good works* :  
in

\* Acts viii. 9.

in this only they differ; the one would not infringe on the *gospel liberty*; the other upon the *merits of Christ*: the one would have their followers saved by *grace* alone; the other by *faith* alone. These are trifling differences. But there is one other very essential point, in which again they perfectly harmonize; and that is, a blind and implicit trust in their guides, is on both sides required. For as the *Simonians* would not allow *them* to have *grace* who could not swallow down all their absurd and monstrous fables, upon the bare authority of those who propagated them; so neither will the Methodists allow *them* to have *faith*, who refuse to believe things equally ridiculous, upon the strength and credit of their word and assurance. And whether this is preaching up faith in *Christ*, or in *themselves*, let any man judge.

The *Gnostics* pretended, that they were the only persons who were favoured with the true knowledge of Christianity; and that all other Christians were ignorant and barbarous; explaining the sacred writings in a too low, literal, and unedifying sense.—The name of *Gnostic* was not peculiar to *one*, but assigned to *various* sects, who, though (like

our Methodists) not the same in all points yet agreed in some common principles. Each had his particular system, but they were *all* no more than so many different refinements upon *one*, which *they* derived from *Simon Magus*, and *he* from the *Pagan* poets and philosophers. To these, it is generally supposed, the Apostle alludes, where he reminds \* *Timothy*, to charge some not to give heed to fables, and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith. This, however, answers the character of the *Gnostics*; the principal part of whose religion consisted in composing combinations and genealogies of *Æons*, or attributes and operations of the Deity: to which *Æons*, or to the Angels produced by them, they attributed the creation and government of the world, and not to the supreme *God*. They alledged, that although their doctrines were not *expressly* contained in holy writ, yet they were *implicitly* revealed by *Christ* in his parables, to as many as were acquainted with the mystical sense of them.

This extraordinary light or knowledge of the *Gnostics*, seems now to have been transferred to the *Methodists*; who make their  
boast,

\* 1 Tim. i. 4.

boast, at least, that they now are the only persons blessed with true Christian science, or who *know the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus*: and that all others are unenlightened, and uninformed, interpreting the scriptures according to the *letter which killeth*, but ignorant of the *spirit which giveth life*. They have not, indeed, like the *Gnostics*, puzzled and perplexed their system with *endless genealogies*; but they have darkened it with many other fancies equally ridiculous in themselves, and not less injurious to Christianity; tending no less to confound the head, than to corrupt the heart. They have not, like the others, built upon the foundation of heathen philosophers and poets, for they abhor all *philosophy and such vain deceit*; but they have built upon a worse, their own vainer imaginations, which have deceived them more grossly than all the poets and philosophers in the world could do. *They* endeavour to support *their* weak and wild notions in the same manner *the others* did *theirs*, that is, by the abuse and perversion of scripture. And that their fancy may have a freer scope, and a larger field to rove in, they suppose that every scripture word hath a *spiritual*, as well as a *literal* sense, and that every true believer hath the

infallible

infallible interpretation of it in his own breast. Building that whimsical conceit upon those words of our blessed Saviour, *It is written in the Prophets, they shall be all taught of God.* From which single instance it appears, what a wretched use they make of his holy word, notwithstanding their inward and infallible interpreter.

The *Valentinians* (a particular sect of the *Gnostic* crew, as Dr. \* *Cave* styles them,) arrogated to themselves the title of *spiritual men*; insisting that they could not lose their spirituality. They pretended that they were entitled, not by *merit*, but by *nature*, to eternal life; and that whatever they did, they could not miss of it: that if good works were necessary to salvation, it was to *animal* men only; that is, to all who were not of their clan: and that, though sin might *damn others*, yet it could not *hurt them*. In consequence of which principle (saith *Irenæus*, a father of the second century) they lived in all lust and impurity, and wallowed in the most horrible and unheard-of bestialities.

The *Methodists* distinguish much after the same manner. They look upon themselves as *spiritual*, upon others as *carnal*: they claim  
from

\* *Cave's Lives of the Primitive Fathers.*

from *grace*, what the *Valentinians* claimed from *nature* : and as *these* maintained that it was impossible for *them* to lose their *spirituality*, so *those* with equal confidence assert, that it is impossible for *them* to fall from *grace*. Which is the same thing as saying with the other, that they are sure to be saved.

The *Donatists* boasted, that the *Catholic* church was no where to be found, but in that little corner of *Afric*, where they lived : that in the true church is no spot or wrinkle ; which was the case of *theirs*. Hence they considered themselves as the *Lord's* people, each of their members as a chosen vessel, and the happy possessor of perfect righteousness.

The *Methodists* talk as proudly of their being the only true preachers of the gospel ; esteem themselves in contradistinction to others, as the regenerate, the elect, the children of *God*, and as having arrived at sinless perfection.

The *Predestinarians* held, that such as were fore-appointed to salvation, could not be *damned*, however *vicious* their behaviour : and that such as were fore-appointed to damnation, could not be *saved*, however *virtuous* theirs.

theirs. That is, as that from all eternity every man's doom was irreversibly fixed by the supreme Being, according to his absolute power, and arbitrary will and pleasure.

Amongst the Methodists, it is very well known there are those, who hold and propagate the same shocking doctrine.

The *Antinomians* must not be forgot. For though their name cannot pretend to the same antiquity with those of the sects before-mentioned, being only of the same date with the *Anabaptists*, yet their errors are coeval with those of the *Simonians* and *Valentinians*, and plainly discover their base original.—They taught, that neither were *good works* conducive, neither *evil works* dangerous to salvation: that the regenerate were as pure as *Christ* himself; and therefore for them to pray for pardon of sin would be criminal: that *God* never punisheth his children for sin:—that even the greater crimes are no crimes in the saints:—that no man's conscience ought to trouble him, for the commission of any sin:—that no Christian believeth, or worketh any good, but *Christ* only believeth, and worketh:—that *God* doth not love man for his holiness; and that *sanctification* is no evidence of a man's *justification*.

Which



Which impious and blasphemous notions are at this day, to the great disgrace of Christianity in general, and no less to the reproach of our national church in particular, publicly avowed and inculcated amongst us, by one party of the people called Methodists.

I shall only mention one sect more, and that is the *Montanists*, on which I shall dwell a little more particularly, because in this you may behold, as in a true mirror, the bold lineaments and bloated countenance of the Methodist.—*Montanus*, the founder of that sect, (as we learn from *Eusebius*, and other early ecclesiastical historians) a little after he had embraced Christianity, which was towards the close of the second century, thirsting after episcopal dignities, thought the shortest way of coming at his point, was to pretend to immediate inspiration, new revelations, and the gift of prophecy. He began his imposture in *Phrygia*, his native country, at a little town called *Pepusa*; which, with another neighbouring village called *Tymium*, he new-named *Jerusalem*, that he might the more plausibly invite simple and unwary *proselytes* to flock thither. For their easier deception, he used to throw himself into enthusiastic fits and ecstatic raptures, during  
which,

which, in a furious and frantic manner, he uttered abundance of strange unintelligible jargon, which the ignorant and vulgar greedily swallowed down for prophecy. Amongst the rest of his disciples were two women, more especially remarkable, *Prisca* and *Maximilla*; who, filled with the same delusive spirit, left their husbands, joined themselves to *Montanus*, and set about prophesying: being soon followed by many others of both sexes, who boasted the same supernatural gifts and vouchsafements. He instructed his people to reproach the whole Christian church for refusing to acknowledge and reverence his pseudo-prophetic spirit: pronouncing those blessed who became his converts, and swelling them with mighty promises and ravishing expectations. He laid his scheme with all imaginable subtilty; agreeing with the *Catholic* church in most of her fundamental principles; founding his wicked pretensions upon scripture; and suggesting the necessity of his receiving the gifts of the *Holy Ghost* especially conferred upon him. He made a singular shew of some unusual rigours and severities in religion, and put on a very grave and formal appearance of sanctity. Nevertheless he used every art of extorting

torting money from his infatuated votaries especially under the notion of gifts and offerings: appointing collectors to receive the oblations brought in; with which he maintained under officers, and paid salaries to such as propagated his doctrines up and down the world.

In short, the impostor had, by hypocritical cunning, wrought such strong delusion in the minds of his foolish followers, that they believed him to be the very comforter promised by our *Saviour*.

Now I will not say, that the two founders of our new sect had, like the other, their eyes and their hearts fixed upon episcopal dignities; but they have given us reason enough to suspect, that they aspired after still higher honours: that they were ambitious of being accounted ministers of greater eminence and authority than either bishops or archbishops; missionaries immediately delegated by heaven to correct *their* errors, and reform *their* abuses; to instruct the clergy, of whatever denomination, in the true nature of Christianity; and to caution the laity not to venture their souls in any such unhallowed hands, as refused to be initiated into all the mysteries of Methodism.——Neither do I  
say,

say, that, like *Montanus*, they pretended to the gift of prophecy. The ill success *be met with* in that part of his project, notwithstanding the favourable circumstance of the time when he set up such pretensions, (which was before that gift was entirely withdrawn from the church,) was sufficient to discourage them from the like imposture; but as to other extraordinary gifts, influences, and operations of the *Holy Ghost*, no man who hath but once dipped into their journals, and other ostentatious trash of the same kind, can doubt their looking upon themselves, as not coming one whit behind the greatest of the Apostles.

And the same jargon which with the ignorant and credulous in the one case passed for *prophecy*, in the other passed for *inspiration*.——They likewise had a numerous crowd of followers both male and female, all alike spiritually gifted, and blessed with special divine communications. Men who being converted themselves, were inwardly called from the lowest and meanest employments to convert their brethren: and *women*, not a few, had *their* inward call too; some to *leave* all that they had and follow their new apostles, and some to *sell* all that they had

had, and lay it *at their feet*.——They were as industrious as the other in training up their disciples in a thorough contempt of such of the clergy as disapproved of their proud pretences: infomuch, that (as a late celebrated writer observed of a certain set of people in his day, of the same complexion) “ every  
 “ boy, who was acquainted with their no-  
 “ tions, learnt to despise his teachers, as if  
 “ they knew nothing of *Christ*, and of the  
 “ mystery of the gospel.”—Then again, for external sanctity, and severity of discipline, they outstripped, if possible, their great original. They condemned all regard for *temporal* concerns as a vicious love of the world, and the most innocent amusements of life as sinful pleasures. They encouraged their bigotted devotees to have their conversation so much in *heaven*, as to take no thought for any one thing upon *earth*. The consequence of which frequently was a total neglect of their affairs, and impoverishment of their families. But yet they themselves, with all their heavenly-mindedness, could not help casting a sheep’s eye at the unrighteous mammon any more than *Montanus*; nor did they pay their court to it with less cunning and success than he.——Again, as he had his

hirelings or vassals for the more easy and effectual execution of his iniquitous scheme, so had they; as he, under the specious appearance of gifts and offerings, raised contributions from every quarter for the payment of salaries, &c. so did they. In short, his tax could not be more universal, nor more artful than theirs; and besides the weekly and other little pensions squeezed out of the poorer and lower part of their community, they were favoured with very large and liberal oblations from persons of better figure and fortune, and especially from many *believing* wives, who had learned to practise their pious frauds upon their *unbelieving* husbands, that they might thereby win them to *Christ*. —And lastly, the *Montanists*, extravagantly as they conceived of *their* master, could not shew him greater reverence than the *Methodists*, ever did and continue to do to *theirs*. For they seem to look upon every place on which they tread, as holy ground; they superstitiously seek, and strive to touch, if it is but the hem of their garments; they are comforted and refreshed with their very shadows passing over them; they follow in crowds, wherever it is noised about that they are to vociferate; and when the throng is so  
 great,

great, that *there is no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door*, they climb into the windows, and would be glad, if permitted, to ascend up higher, and even to uncover the roof, so as they might be let down thence into the house, to feed and feast upon the most delicious repast there prepared for them.

If any respect paid to *Montanus* by his followers can come nearer to idolatry than this, I am greatly mistaken. And yet this is as proudly received on the one hand, as it is superstitiously paid on the other: which shews as much the want of common decency in the priest, as common sense in the people.

Thus have I given you a brief account of the sect called Methodists; which hath for about the space of five-and-twenty years been insulting our established church, despising dominions, speaking evil of dignities, and trampling all rule and authority under its feet. I have shewed you its rise and its pedigree; by whom it was founded, and from what family it sprung. That its authors were a couple of young, raw, aspiring twigs of the ministry, (twin brothers at first, but now it seems twin rivals) who dreamed, or pretended to have dreamed, of a special and su-

pernatural call to it; of having been endued with an extraordinary power from on high, to restore corrupt and degenerate Christianity to its primitive purity and perfection. I have shewed you that their doctrines or notions square or coincide with many of the oldest and rankest heresies that ever defiled the purity, and disturbed the peace of the Christian church from its first institution; particularly those of the *Simonians*, the *Gnostics*, the *Valentinians*, the *Donatists*, the *Predestinarians*, the *Montanists*, and of another, whose principles are as old, though its name is more modern than the rest, the *Antinomians*; whose errors shew that they descended from *them*, as *they* from that arch-heretic and impostor *Simon Magus*. From whence it appears, that the clergy of our national church are in the same, or worse circumstances, than those of the church of *Ephesus*, to whom *St. Paul's* pastoral charge was immediately directed; those *grievous wolves*, which he foresaw *would* enter in *among them*, have entered in *among us*, and carried off numbers of our flocks: If therefore we can preserve those that are left, it will be well: if we can recover those that are lost, it will be better. And certainly both should be attempted by  
every



every pastor who would be able to say with the Apostle, *I am pure from the blood of all men.*—As this hath been the end and aim of several of my late discourses, so the present hath the same view; for I have always thought, and am still willing to hope, that were our respective congregations well acquainted with the true nature of Methodism, we should have no occasion for either the secular or spiritual arm to restrain its progress; but that a thorough knowledge of its principles would be a sufficient antidote against its poison, and work in every rightly disposed mind, an abhorrence of those doctrines, which directly tend to distract the head and to debauch the heart, by turning faith into frenzy, and *the grace of God into wantonness.*



## P A R T II.

I AM now to shew, secondly, that they, the Methodist Preachers, make use of the same means of seduction mentioned or implied in the text, *speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

Perverse things, strictly signify, things contrary to truth or rectitude; but in a looser sense, things not only untrue, but also spiteful, peevish, malicious, invidious, mischievous, wicked, are comprehended in that phrase. In which latitude the term *perverse* may very well be taken or understood in this place; as denoting the false doctrines and opinions, by which the impostors and deceivers, the Apostle had in his eye, whose coming he foretold, would corrupt the truth and purity of the gospel; and the foul insinuations and pretences, by which they would labour to support those doctrines.

In both these respects, I hope I shall be able to make it appear, that the Apostle's words are fairly applicable to the Methodists, and that they may be justly charged with

*speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

*First* then, for their doctrines and opinions.

—I mean not here to enter into a full and particular examination of them, that being an undertaking not so proper for a single sermon as for a volume; I shall therefore content myself, at present, with a few general hints or remarks upon them.

Now either *their* doctrines are false and erroneous, or the *scriptures* must be so: for these two are not less contrary to one another than light and darkness, as a short parallel betwixt them will abundantly shew.

The Methodists treat Christianity as a wild enthusiastical scheme, which will bear no examination: the scriptures, as a sober and rational system, which the more it is examined, the better it is approved.

The Methodists suppose every one's final doom entirely to depend upon *God's* sovereign will and pleasure: the scriptures, upon his own conduct and behaviour.

The Methodists will have it, that we may be saved by faith in *Christ*, without any other requisite, on our part: the scriptures make a gospel obedience and holy life, a necessary condition.

The

The Methodists consider man as a mere machine; and as such, unable to do any thing for himself, or towards his own salvation: the scriptures throughout consider him as a free agent; and as such, set good and evil, life and death before him; bidding him choose the one and refuse the other; persuade him to strive to enter in at the strait gate; to use all diligence to make his *calling and election sure*; and afford him the greatest encouragements to excite and stimulate his endeavours.

The Methodists represent *faith*, as a principle supernaturally infused into the heart, altogether precluding the judgment and understanding, and discerned by those who have it, by some internal, mysterious signs and operations: the scriptures, as a firm persuasion of mind, founded upon the evidence of reason, and discernable only by a conformity of life and manners to such persuasion.

The Methodists speak of *Grace* as they do of *Faith*, that it is communicated to them by the Holy Spirit, and is as perceptible to their hearts, as sensible objects are to their senses: the Scriptures also speak of *Grace* as proceeding from the same divine fountain, but intimate at the same time, that it is conveyed  
to

to us secretly and imperceptibly: and that the only way to be satisfied whether or no, and in what degree we are possessed of it, is to appeal not to our *inward feelings*, but to our *outward actions*.

The Methodists talk of regeneration in every Christian, as if it was as sudden and miraculous a conversion, as that of St. *Paul* and the first converts to Christianity; and as if the signs of it were frightful tremors of the body, and convulsive agonies of mind, arising from a sense of original sin, and the corruption of human nature: the Scriptures set it forth as a work graciously begun and gradually carried on by the blessed Spirit, in conjunction with our own rational powers and faculties; and the signs of it to be a sincere and univereal obedience to the law and precepts of the gospel.

The Methodists amuse their followers with a notion, that after having gone through such and such stages in the divine life, and arrived at such a pitch of perfection, they may be absolutely certain of their salvation: the scriptures teach us a different lesson; discountenance such vain confidence and bold presumption: exhort us not to be *high-minded*, but diffident and modest; admonish  
those

*those who think they stand, to take heed lest they fall; represent Christianity as a continual warfare; assure us indeed that he who holdeth out to the end shall be saved, but give no man absolute certainty of his perseverance.*

In short, the Methodists encourage men not to think of doing any thing for *themselves*, but to leave all to *Christ*: the Scriptures, to do all they can for *themselves*, and humbly to rely upon *him* for the rest.

It would be easy in pursuing the parallel to multiply instances; but these few may suffice, to shew how strangely the Methodists and the Scriptures are at variance.

And yet what may seem more strange, they pretend to build all their doctrines or notions, upon scripture authority: but then it is by wresting and straining those sacred books, putting texts to the torture, and racking them till they will speak to their purpose, dealing arbitrarily with them, and taking them literally, or metaphorically, as best suits their scheme; and, to say all at once, practising every means, or method of perversion.

A late

A late learned and reverend Author \* one of whose remarks I gave you before, upon some new-fangled preachers of the last age, much resembling those we have now in contemplation, furnisheth me with a few more observations, so pertinent to the point in hand, that it would be a fault not to transcribe them,— “ There are no men, “ that so abound in scripture proofs, to confirm what they say: if you consult their “ writings, you shall find their books stuffed “ with scripture; or, if you talk with them, “ their whole discourse is little else but scripture phrase, all which they accommodate “ to their own dreams and fancies.—The “ wildest and most extravagant opinions “ that were ever yet vented under the name “ of Religion, have pretended the authority of scripture for their patronage; “ though any unprejudiced man would “ wonder how the reading such places of “ scripture should suggest such notions to “ them: but this is no wonder, when we “ consider, that men first contrive their religion, and possess their fancies strongly

\* The late Dr. Sherlock in his Discourse concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, &c. chap. iii. sect. iv. second edition.

“ with



“ with their own private opinions, and then  
 “ read the scripture with no other design,  
 “ than to find something there, to stamp  
 “ divinity on their own conceits; for it is  
 “ easy to pervert the plainest sense, and by  
 “ the help of a strong imagination, to make  
 “ any thing of any thing. Such men doat  
 “ upon words and phrases, metaphors and  
 “ allusions, as best fitted for their purpose.  
 “ They found their religion on obscure  
 “ texts, or mystical interpretations of plain  
 “ ones; and by the aid of some arbitrary  
 “ distinctions and limitations, glosses and  
 “ paraphrases, by curtailing of texts, or trans-  
 “ placing words, or commas, or separating  
 “ a single word from the body of the  
 “ discourse, make the scriptures speak their  
 “ sense, as plainly, as the bells ring what  
 “ every boy will have them. And at this  
 “ rate, we may find the Bible in the Alco-  
 “ ran, as well as make so many books, so  
 “ different and contrary to each other,  
 “ from the various composition of twenty-  
 “ four letters.”

Were we not acquainted with the Au-  
 thor, and the time when he wrote, we must  
 have supposed him to be here pointing at  
 our Methodists; for thus it is, that they play  
 tricks

tricks with the scriptures, to make them countenance their errors, and to deceive the ignorant and unwary: who yet would not be deceived, did not their own passions and prejudices join in the deception.

But the case is this; the notions instilled, or rather drove into their *Ears* by their Preachers, are such, as in their *Hearts* they wish to be true.—They would gladly be saved; and who would not?— They would be absolutely assured of their salvation; and so would every one, if that could possibly be.—But that, if possible, would not satisfy them; they want to get to Heaven, not only the *safest*, but also the *shortest* way, and with the least trouble. All which privileges are by their new guides annexed to a fiducial reliance upon the person, and merits of *Christ*, and a disclaiming of good works; which are terms so easy that the meanest libertine, or infidel, could not have a face to ask for easier. The obligation to good works, is generally the chief ground of that opposition and contempt which Christianity meets with from both; remove that obstacle, or stone of stumbling, the one may probably become a pious christian, and the other a sound believer; persuade them that they  
 may

may be sure of being saved by the righteousness of *Christ*, without any holiness of their own, and the business is half done; and this comfortable persuasion the Methodist Preachers kindly and zealously labour to graft in their people: nay, more than this, for their further comfort and encouragement, represent good works as not only unnecessary, but also dangerous; and censure such of the Clergy, as make use of those low and lifeless expressions of *being virtuous and becoming good, reforming, and amending the life, &c.* with the ambiguous phrases of *good resolutions and sincere endeavours, &c.* as thereby puffing up the pride of man's nature.

Is it therefore any wonder that those preachers, whose doctrines are so well adapted to the soothing and flattering the passions and prejudices of men, should be so mightily followed; or that their followers should, without examination, embrace and hug close to their hearts that sense of scripture, however forced and strained, which seems most favourable to such doctrines? Or, may we not rather stand amazed, that they, who are ever lamenting over corrupt nature, and teaching that *it is the first work of the spirit,*

to make men duly and deeply sensible of it, should yet be so fond of a scheme of divinity, of all others the most civil and indulgent to its corruptions? And it cannot be doubted, but this indulgence hath gained them great numbers of *profelytes*; who must be transported with joy and extacy to think, that since *strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto life*, they shall find a safer and smoother passage, by divesting themselves of the incumbrances of *moral duties*. Marvel not, that they should be so delighted with those expressions of coming to *Christ*, closing with *Christ*, resting in *Christ*, being united to *Christ*, with various others of the same kind, since after that, there is nothing more for them to do, but to sleep in his arms, as secure and tranquil as *Lazarus* in *Abraham's* bosom. Neither be surpris'd, that they should love, reverence, and almost adore the gracious ministers of such sweet consolation; who in this respect, have carried our *Saviour's* generosity and compassion farther than he did himself; in taking quite away that *yoke and burthen*, which he had only made *light and easy*. Neither think it strange, that after having been so far imposed upon, they should readily suck in all the rest of their mysteries; for

for unless they swallow down these, they must disgorge that, which yields them such unspeakable peace and satisfaction. But, there is great reason for us to be astonished at the boldness, (I had almost said blasphemy) of those preachers, who proudly triumphing in their numerous train of credulous and crazy followers, (the weak and spurious issue of their insidious craft and cunning,) publickly ascribe the glorious event to the efficacy of the Divine Grace, accompanying their preaching; praising *God* for the success of their deception, by them arrogantly called *the Seal of their Ministry*; and solemnly, in almost every page of their paltry, but pathetic harangues, invoking the Blessed Spirit still to go along with them in their pious and soul-awakening work; that is, to continue to assist them, in deceiving and seducing the simple and unwary, by the abuse and perversion of those very Scriptures, which were given by his holy inspiration.

Thus having, I hope, made it appear that the Methodist Preachers are guilty of *speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*; taking the term *perverse* to denote the false doctrines and opinions, by which the impostors and deceivers, the Apostle had

in his eye, and whose coming he foretold, would corrupt the truth and purity of the Gospel; I shall now endeavour to make good the same charge, taking that term to denote also the foul insinuations and pretences of those deceivers, by which to support their doctrines.

One would think indeed, that since the doctrines themselves are, (as hath been shewed,) in their own nature so captivating and ensnaring, they would stand in need of no wiles, or artifices, for making disciples, except that which hath been already mentioned, as constantly practised by them, the perverting and prostituting the Scriptures, in support of them. But now, lest this fraud, which is the spring, or wheel, that governs their whole system, should be found out, it is necessary that it be well guarded, and that they have recourse to other tricks, to prevent a discovery. And no trick is more likely to prevent it, than the invidious misrepresentation of the sound and orthodox Clergy, thereby to bring them into contempt; without which, their *Craft* would be in great danger, and the *Craftsmen* soon set at nought. Were their deluded followers to consult their own lawful and proper pas-

tors,

tors, about the true sense and meaning of those texts, or passages of scripture, which their new guides, sometimes by strength, and sometimes by slight, bend to the square of their own foolish, but favourite notions; their eyes would be opened, and they would see the fallacy. And whom should they consult, but those who are set over them by authority; whose peculiar province it is to explain the scriptures to them, and who can have no interest in deceiving them? For which reason the Methodistical Factory is very industrious to keep them as much as they can at a distance, to dissolve or break off that spiritual intercourse, which the relation in which they stand to each other requires should be preserved betwixt them; and to raise in the minds of the people, the most groundless jealousies and distrusts of their ministers, thereby to withdraw their attention from them. They represent them as destitute of that inward call to the ministry, which is necessary to the rendering their preaching effectual;—as strangers to grace and experience;—as altogether unacquainted with the naughtiness and depravity of human nature themselves, and therefore unqualified to teach it others;—as preaching another

Gospel, and joining with *Deists, Arians, Socinians*, and the rest of the opposers of Christianity;—as denying the doctrine of original sin, and the necessity of regeneration, and making the Christian Religion little more than a refined system of Moral Philosophy;—as being very bad practical moralists, however zealously they inculcate the duties of morality;—as negligent of their charge, attached to the world, fond of its pleasures, hunting after its honours and promotions, and making a trade of their spiritual function, striving for pre-eminence in the church, and looking big under swelling titles.—But this, tho' calumnious and scurrilous enough, is modest when compared to many other their abuses and invectives, which both from the Pulpit and the Press they pour forth like a torrent against us; and which, that the same may work more strongly, they mix and impregnate with the operative waters of the holy Scriptures.—

The Author before quoted (as you may remember) speaking of their predecessors of the last century, observed, *that both their writings and their discourses were little else than Scripture phrase.* But now these men dress up and convey their very slanders and reproaches



reproaches in this sacred file. In this they tell the world, that we are *carnally-minded, puffed up with fleshly wisdom, having not Christ in our hearts by faith, are ministers of the Letter, not of the Spirit, and preach ourselves, instead of Christ Jesus.* In this they liberally bestow upon us the titles of *false prophets, blind guides, wolves in sheep's cloathing, shepherds not caring for the sheep, physicians of no value, dumb dogs who cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber;* with almost every hard name they can pick out of those divine records, which they seem piously and painfully to have traversed, the better to qualify them to rail in scripture language.—This is that *milk with which they feed their babes:* who naturally suck in slander with greediness, (one of the effects of original sin, of which they are not very ready to inform them) and who by their great facility and forwardness like parrots to prate against us in the same terms, plainly shew that such scriptural railing is their catechism, or first rudiments, and how well they are grounded in them.—The *stronger meats* which they administer to those of riper age, are, that “However we pretend to “ orthodoxy, our doctrines are repugnant to

“ the true principles of Christianity ; that  
 “ our sermons contradict the Articles, Ho-  
 “ milies and Liturgy, of our own Church ;  
 “ yea, that we contradict ourselves, saying  
 “ one thing in the desk, and another in the  
 “ pulpit.”——These suggestions were first  
 hatched and propagated by the twin-found-  
 ders of the *Methodistical* Sect, of whom I  
 took notice before, but have been since  
 adopted and urged with greater vehemence  
 and virulance, if possible, by one of the prin-  
 cipal Leaders of the *Hutchinsonian* Party ;  
 which is a proof, amongst many others, that  
 I had good reason for speaking of them as  
 united, or incorporated Societies. “ Some  
 “ years ago, saith an ingenious Writer †,  
 “ we saw the *Westleys* and the *Whitfields*  
 “ declaiming in the pulpits of this metro-  
 “ polis, and boasting that they were the only  
 “ part of the Church of *England*, who had  
 “ not deviated from the Articles and Sub-  
 “ scriptions. But they soon threw off the  
 “ mask, and now enjoy under a sanction  
 “ from *Hicks’s-Hall*, that privilege, which  
 “ Episcopal Jurisdiction might have de-  
 “ prived them of, and finding the Church

† Author of an Apology for the Clergy, &c. printed  
 for S. Bladon in Pater-noster-row, 1755.

“ no sanctuary, they made their retreat  
 “ to the Tabernacle. The Hutchinsonian  
 “ Preachers of this day tread in the steps of  
 “ their predecessors the Methodists. For if  
 “ the *former* still continue to profess them-  
 “ selves members of that Church, which  
 “ the *latter* have deserted, we may pro-  
 “ nounce, without any spirit of divination,  
 “ that they bend with large strides towards  
 “ a separation.”—And I must confess for  
 my own part, I cannot help wishing that  
 their strides were larger, unless we had more  
 hopes of their being reclaimed; since I am  
 sure they do greater mischief *in* the Church  
 than they could do *out of* it.

But what I was going to remark is, that one\*  
 of the chiefs of this rude and refractory tribe,  
 who will neither separate *from* us, nor live  
 peaceably *with* us, hath an effrontery scarcely to  
 be parallel'd, publish'd to the world, not only  
 with the *Westleys* and the *Whitfields*, that we  
 have departed from the doctrines of our articles  
 and homilies, to which we have subscribed,  
 but also that we still keep up our subscriptions  
 to them; that is, that we subscribe and re-  
 nounce, and subscribe again, as best suits our

\* See the Preface to the Reverend Mr. Romaine's  
 Commentary on the 107th Psalm.

conveniency : or (as he afterwards insinuates in stronger terms) that we make no conscience of our Oaths and Subscriptions ; daring to risk our eternal salvation, for the sake of some present honour or preferment.— This infamous Libel, (like many others equally base and groundless) is propagated from every pulpit into which he and his colleagues can by any means thrust their heads, and circulated through every parish by them and their Emiffaries. Inasmuch that hardly any proverbial speech is more common in the mouths of the whole herd of Methodists, than that we the Clergy, all of us except such as are for their turn, have in our preaching (tho' not in our oaths and subscriptions) deviated from the doctrines of our Articles and Homilies. This is the very burden of their song. This every Cully can chant, and every child can chatter. But this I call an infamous and groundless Libel : and very justly, since he hath not offered the least shadow of proof or argument, by which to make good the charge. He says, indeed, *it is a truth too evident to be denied.* And what is easier than for a confident asserter who hath no proof, to pretend there *wants* none ? yet this pretence, however by all persons of  
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the least discernment it will be taken for a shrewd sign of its being (as it really is) *a notorious falsehood*, will pass for sufficient evidence of its being true, with those weak and credulous people, who believe every thing upon the bare affirmation of their great *Gamaliel*, whose authority they will not, or dare not dispute ; and whose very calumnies they reverence, as the infallible dictates of the Spirit of truth. And the same may be said of all the Methodist Preachers, in whom their blind and bigotted disciples trust as implicitly, as the Papists in their Pope, Councils or Church.

Since therefore these are the arts and devices, by which they seek to make Profelytes ; since such are the doctrines and principles, and such their manner of propagating and supporting them ; since the whole strength of their Cause lies in the perversion of the Scripture, and the abuse of the Clergy, as many as disapprove of their extravagant and enthusiastical notions ; since by the most peevish and spiteful invectives, the most rude and rankerous revilings, the most invidious calumnies, they study and strive to poison the minds of our people, to raise doubts and jealousies in them, and by these  
and

and many other foul and insidious practices, to seduce them from their true and rightful Pastors ; I think we may justly charge them in the words and in the intencion of my Text, with *speaking perverse things to draw away Disciples after them.*

And now from what has been said, it is very easy, and, I hope not impertinent, to give you a succinct, yet full view of the methodistical Scheme, and of the policy, or subtilty of its Founders.

They set out with forming and fashioning a fair and tempting draught, or model of religion, so flattering to the frailties and follies of degenerate Man, that it could not fail to catch the ear, and gain the hearts of multitudes, especially of the loose and vicious, the lazy and indolent, the melancholy and timorous, or of such as are under the dominion of any strong passions, or prejudices, or labour under any inability, or weakness of mind. And in this they shewed, what they are apt to boast of, a thorough insight into original sin ; a feeling and experimental knowledge of the naughtiness and depravity of human nature ; and also a kind and generous desire to favour and befriend it, by suiting duty to inclination, and by persuading  
the

the guilty, that they had nothing more to do than *to believe in Christ, and accept of pardon, because in the crucified Jesus is fulness of grace, and all-sufficiency to save.*

Their next step is to accommodate the pure, but severe morals of Christianity, to this their beautiful and charming scheme of religion, or to make the one consistent with the other.

To which end, it was necessary they should talk with the scriptures, and by some means or other bring *them* over to their side. And these they managed with great dexterity and address. They attentively listened to the sound, and watched the looks of every phrase, word and syllable; and wherever they discovered the least clink, or appearance of favour, they searched no further, for fear of finding a change of countenance, and the sound contradicted by the sense, but immediately counted them as friends, content with the civilities they had shewn them. Such texts as seemed tractable and coming, they treated a little modestly; with these a gentle wresting, or bending was sufficient; but for such as were stubborn and inflexible, they had racks and tortures to force their compliance. Whence some that were inclined

clined to speak literally, they made to speak metaphorically; and others that were disposed to speak metaphorically, they constrained to speak literally; and others again that were mute, and unwilling to speak at all, for their contempt they turned into allegory.

Then the church of *Rome* (to which on many accounts they were much obliged, and as gratefully returned the obligation) had taught them to put an arbitrary sense upon scripture, and to set up for infallible interpreters, with this difference: that the one derive their infallibility from the holy Apostle *St. Peter*, the other from the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost.—When by these arts and assistances they had brought over the scriptures to their interest, there was only one thing wanting to complete their design; and that was, to find out an expedient for preventing the imposition being detected, and the impostors exposed.—This, tho' it hath the appearance of a great difficulty, was, with our spiritual politicians, the easiest thing in the world. For as such detection was the most likely to come from the clergy, they had nothing more to do than to keep the people from their pastors, by giving them  
hard



hard names, recommended by scripture language, enforced with an apostolic energy, and by dressing them up in such odious colours, as were enough to fright the one from coming near the other. Besides which, they soon by their craft and cunning gained such an ascendancy over their weak and ignorant followers, that their command, or even exhortation, not to hear any preachers, or read any books, or attend to any arguments, in opposition to their new divinity, was sufficient to discourage, and deter them from it.— By these artifices they held them in darkness, and suffered not the least glimmering or ray of light to beam upon them, except that secret and supernatural illumination, which the spirit, thro' *their* preaching, conveyed into them.

This I conceive to be a true and faithful account of the original *Methodistical* scheme. In which, if I am mistaken, I shall always be ready, and desirous to retract my error.

But here it is proper and necessary to be observed, that this scheme hath received great helps and improvements from the junction or alliance of the *Hutchinsonian* sect.

Whose

Whose author, \* the late inspired Mr. *Hutchinson*, hath done singular service to the Methodist Preachers. For besides his joining with them in their loud and terrible outcry against human learning and natural religion, he hath by his critical skill and acumen in the *Hebrew* language (which *he learnt underground*, as he used to say for himself, *the dark bowels of the earth being his school, and the inspired light his master*, as some of his admirers say for him,) found out, as is pretended, the best key for explaining the mediatorial scheme, and the doctrines of Christianity; hath from the Old Testament struck out for them a new Revelation; hath opened to them mysteries in abundance, which lay deeper than the subterraneous apartment, in which he studied and explored them; mysteries which *they* would never have conceived,

\* See a Treatise, intituled, *The Use of Reason asserted in Matters of Religion: or, Natural Religion the Foundation of Revealed:* by Ralph Heathcote, A. M. Preacher Assistant at Lincoln's-Inn. Second Edition. London, printed for Thomas Payne, corner of Duke's-court, Castle-street, near the Mews-gate, 1756. In which the ingenious Author, towards the close of his discourse, beginning at page 85, hath by extracts from Mr. Hutchinson's own Writings, obliged the world with such a view of his principles, as one would think could not fail to beget in the mind of every serious Christian, or even sober and honest man, an utter detestation or abhorrence of them.

or dreamt of; and hath put them in a way how to supply themselves with as many more as they please, and that upon very cheap and easy terms.

They need not, like their great principal and patron, *make the dark bowels of the earth their school*, nor *Hebrew* roots their diet; a little smattering of that sacred language, joined with a piercing wit, and lively imagination, is sufficient. By the help of which, and having the same *inspired Light* that he had for their master, some of the most illiterate of our new stile Preachers (who triumph, and with great reason if they knew it, in their foolishness of preaching) are all at once become acute and penetrating *Hebrew* etymologists, critically skilful in scripture hieroglyphics, adepts in typical and allegorical learning, and as dextrous at amusing and confounding the weak and wondering crowd, as the first *Rabbi* of their tribe; or, to say all in fewer and better words, which I will take the liberty of borrowing from one of the ingenious and spirited writers before quoted, at their will and pleasure, *every thing is made a type, every text is wrested into allegory, every fact hath a double meaning, and even names, like so many abracadabras*

of

*of magicians, contain mysteries, and can work wonders.*

And now you have the full portrait of that frightful monster called *Methodism*: made far more monstrous than it was in itself, by the adjunct, or accession of *Hutchinsonian* conceit and arrogance. Very ugly and deformed it was before, but then it appeared plain and simple in its deformity; whereas now you behold it trick'd up and decorated with borrowed ornaments, and strutting in oriental buskins, fitted to it by the labour and ingenuity of that indefatigable man, and exquisite genius, the unparallel'd Mr. *Hutchinson* †

From which draught, and what hath been said in the former part of my discourse, it is very evident with what force and energy the

† If this should seem inconsistent with the true character of the Methodists, who are known to despise human learning, let it be remembered, that so did Mr. *Hutchinson*, notwithstanding his wonderful proficiency in it. Besides, in whom do the Methodists despise it? Not in themselves, but in others. One of their own writers hath told you, that tho' it is of great use, and a great blessing, when in a sanctified and renewed minister, yet in a carnal and unregenerate one, it is the greatest enemy to truth; and who (in his opinion) is the sanctified, and who the carnal minister, I need not say.

Apostle's

Apostle's caution to the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, comes home to the hearts and consciences of the Clergy, or Pastors of the Church of *England*, *Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flocks over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, &c.*



## P A R T III.

SOME may be apt to think, the first part of the Apostle's caution, *Take heed unto yourselves*, to have been needless.—But why? Doth our Church lay any claim to infallibility? Or are the Clergy particularly exempt from all possibility or danger of delusion? We claim no such privilege.

Our blessed *Saviour*, when warning his disciples to beware of those false prophets, which he foresaw would arise to vex and disturb his church, intimated, that their subtilty would be great enough to *deceive, if possible, the very elect*. Which prediction was sadly verified, during the three first centuries. Several of the pious and venerable fathers having been a little warped in their Christian Principles, by such cunning corrupters of the true faith: especially *Tertulian*, who was unhappily drawn into certain errors of the *Montanists*, as some of our own clergy have lately been into those of the *Methodists*. Whence it is plain, that the caution in the text, *take heed unto yourselves*,

was *then* not unnecessary, but is *now* also very seasonable.

The second part of the same caution, *and to all the flock; &c.* will I suppose, want no apology. These, it will be on all hands allowed, are very subject to be seduced, and that it is the duty of shepherds to watch over them, and guard them against seduction. But the misfortune is, that many who allow this to be our duty, and are ready on all occasions to remind us of it, and to urge to us very freely the Apostle's argument on which it is grounded, viz. That we are *appointed by the Holy Ghost* to that sacred office, yet are displeas'd with our faithful performance of it: and when, with true simplicity, and a becoming zeal, we forewarn, and endeavour to forearm them against those seducers, the Methodist-Preachers, they foolishly call it, *preaching Christ of contention*: whence we may reasonably suspect that they are tainted, and consequently stand more in need of our advice and applications. However that be, certain it is that to *take heed unto ourselves and to our flocks*, that neither *we* nor *they* be led away by those deceitful workers, is indispensably required of us. And therefore, without consulting who  
will



will be angry, or who will be pleased, but studious only how *all* may be profited; I shall now consider wherein our care consists, in both respects.

1st. then, with respect to ourselves.

Our first care should be, candidly and fairly to examine their doctrines. For, as to censure them *unexamined*, would be unjust, so to do the same, without a *fair and impartial* examination, would be ungenerous. We ought therefore to enquire into their nature and tendency—their truth or falsehood.—In the *former* of which enquiries, *Reason* is to be our guide; of *her* we must ask, whether they are agreeable to our natural notions of the Supreme Being? whether they are worthy of *God*, and tend to the happiness of *Man*?

In the *latter*, our only Rule is the *Scriptures*.—But since these, like all other writings, are capable of *various* constructions, therefore to the finding out the *true*, many other rules are necessary to be observed.—For instance, we ought to compare scripture with scripture; and see how one agrees with another, and every part with the scope and tenor of the whole, and with the main drift, or design of Christianity:—To

interpret obscure and ambiguous texts or passages, by others that are clear and certain :—To keep close to the *Letter*, where it may be done without absurdity or impropriety; and, where *metaphors* are unavoidable, to be chaste and modest in the use and application of them :—To consult the ablest and best critics and commentators, especially those of the purest and most primitive antiquity: and above all, the sentiments of the Catholic, or Universal Church, not only in the first, but in all after-ages, excepting that unhappy period, during which it was overspread with the thick clouds of Popish ignorance and superstition.—These are a few of those laws, which should be observed in the interpretation of scripture: which otherwise would be a very blind guide, or rather a *Lesbian* rule, that would bend to the humour of every one who used it.

So that since the Methodist-Preachers pretend to build themselves upon scripture-authority, after having first enquired into the nature and tendency of their doctrines; our next enquiry should be, how they interpret those scriptures, on which they would found them. And if, upon such a scrutiny, we should discover that their doctrines are consistent

sistent with reason, with our natural notions of the Deity, with the honour of GOD, and the happiness of Man; and that in the interpretation of the scriptures, by which they seek to establish them, they have conformed to the laws, or rules, I have been mentioning, we should be both uncharitable and unjust; in stigmatizing them by the name of *false teachers*. But, if on the other hand, we should find that their doctrines are in themselves unreasonable and ridiculous, clash with our natural ideas of the Divine Attributes and Perfections, with the end and design of all Religion, with the honour of GOD, the interest of society, and man's both present and future happiness; if we should find that their method of interpreting the scriptures, cited by them, is contrary to all the right and just rules of interpretation, and that their sense of them is repugnant to that of the most pious and learned Christian Writers, to the judgment of the wisest and holiest Fathers and Martyrs, and to the consent of the Universal Church, in its earliest and purest state; if we should find, that sometimes they stick close to the *Letter*, where reason and common sense require a *Metaphor*, and at other times ramble

into unnecessary metaphors, craftily to serve their own turn; if we should find, that they explain what is dark by something more obscure, and make what is plain and easy, mysterious and unintelligible, taking away that light they never bring; if we should find that they confound the scriptures, setting one text at variance with another, and both with a third, and destroy not only the order and harmony, but also the end and intention of all, which was not to make men conceited and enthusiastical, but virtuous and good; in short, if we should find, that in the interpretation of those inspired writings, they are governed by no law, but that of their own proud, perverse, positive will or humour; that they despise all helps and assistances for their understanding them aright, except what they pretend to receive immediately from the Holy Ghost; that from this vain imagination of their being *taught of God*, they presume to fix the most unreasonable, unnatural, and even monstrous sense upon them; and to crown all, that they place such their vile perversion and prostitution of them to the account of the Blessed Spirit; if, I say, we should find this to be the case, then I hope we may, without the least

least breach of either justice or charity, pronounce them not only *false teachers*, but also, in the language of St. Jude, *filthy dreamers*, turning faith into fancy, and the gospel into farce, and thereby adding blasphemy to enthusiasm.

Thus it is that we (I speak of my own order) should *take heed unto ourselves*, if we would not be deceived by those false teachers: we should, in the first place, carefully and candidly examine their doctrines, and the true sense of the scriptures, which they would force to patronize and support them: And after this, should we fall into their errors, I cannot think it is the *Methodists*, but *our own hearts* that must be the deceivers.

And therefore our next business is, to guard these against a temptation, which that conceited Sect, hath accidentally thrown in our way; I mean a favourable opportunity of indulging certain corrupt and disorderly passions and affections, to which we are subject like other men. I am fully persuaded, (tho' very sorry to say it) that this Bait hath catched those few of the Clergy, who have adopted the false notions of the Methodists, or gone into their foolish way of preaching. It can hardly be supposed, that Persons of a liberal

beral education, regular train'd up for the Ministry, and whose conversation, from the very nature of their profession, ought to be chiefly with the Scriptures, and the ablest and best Writers upon them, should so egregiously play the fool upon *Principle*; but that they are led into it by worse views or motives. And though it would be a little too bold positively to say what their inducements are, yet we may reasonably suspect Spiritual Pride, Vain-Glory, Resentment, Envy, the love of Applause, or Popularity, any, or all of these, to lie at the root. For instance; *one* probably may imagine, that in the rational way of discoursing, he is too much limited or confined, or hath not room enough to display the Orator: A *second* may be stung with the fancied neglect of his conspicuous merit: A *third* may be mortified to behold that Mitre upon another head, which (in his opinion) would sit so much more graciously upon his own: A *fourth* may think the Preacher happy, who is followed from Church to Church, and where-ever he goes is sure to draw a crowd after him; and, observing by what method some have arrived at that happiness, may thence be tempted to become an adventurer upon the same bottom:

Which

Which last, as it is the least criminal, I am willing to hope is the most general motive; especially amongst the younger Brethren, who are apt to esteem that popularity as an honour, which the more experienced look upon as the reverse. But the truth is, if we would *all* be safe and secure from the delusion of those false Teachers, I have all along had in view, *this*, and every other the like evil, or irregular affection, must be conquered, or kept under, for they are the most dangerous auxiliaries in the cheat.

So much for *taking heed to ourselves*.—It is next to be considered, how we are to *take heed to our Flocks*, that they be not deluded and decoyed from us. For since we have already been dispoiled of many, it is fit we should look more circumspectly and carefully to the rest.

First then, we ought to give them notice of their perilous situation.—And for this we have the example of the great Apostle, in the verse immediately following; my text, *therefore watch and remember, that for the space of three years I have warn'd you Night and Day with tears*, which words have reference not only to the Elders, but also to the whole Church, and afford us a fine proof or instance

instance of his extraordinary care and vigilance in protecting it from those impostors or deceivers he was aware of, and at the same time an excellent Lesson how to behave on the like occasion. By this we are taught, that in warning our people of the prevailing errors and influence of the Methodist-Preachers, we ought to persevere in our cautions; not to think a short and casual hint now and then from the Pulpit, joined with a few ebullitions of wit, or strokes of satire sufficient; (such spouts or stings alone are harmless to our *Foes*, and <sup>useless</sup> to our *Flocks*); but by sober and solid arguments, frequently and zealously urged and inculcated, to set before them their danger; and having endeavoured to awake them into a due sense of it, our next step should be;

Secondly, to put them in a proper posture of defence, and to fortify them against it, in the best manner we are able; and what that is, the example of the same Apostle hath again instructed us. *I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you and taught you publickly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith*  
*towards*



*towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*—ACTS xx. 20.  
 21. Here it is proper to be observed, that St. Paul considers *Repentance* and *Faith* in their most comprehensive sense, as including all *other* Christian Doctrines deducible from them, and connected with them which doubtless in his preaching he inculcated as well as *these*. The same is incumbent upon *us*; for tho' a thorough knowledge of *these* alone is sufficient to as many as are able of themselves to make such deductions, or discover such connection, yet to others it is not. The condition of our people in general, requires us to be more explicit; to deduce those several derivative Doctrines *for* them, to shew them how they are connected; and to illustrate and explain to them each Doctrine, particularly and distinctly, and with all the perspicuity we can; especially such as have been corrupted or vitiated, clogged or incumbered by the Methodist-Preachers. In these we ought more assiduously and earnestly to instruct them; to make them perfectly acquainted with the scriptures from which we draw them, and with those also by which such Preachers change and pervert them; and to set *our* interpretations and *theirs*, with the authorities by which they are on both sides supported or defended,

in a fair and opposite view; that so by comparing the *one* with the *other*, the humblest capacity, joined with an honest Heart, may easily determine whether of them is right. Was this done in the constant course of our preaching, it could not but have a very good effect. For sure I am, there are many who are inclined to think more favourably of the errors of the Methodists, or rather not to think them in any error at all, purely for want of better information.——Be that as it will, our doing this, is so necessary to our taking heed to our flocks, that it would be in vain to pretend to justify ourselves in the neglect or omission of it. For it was from a consciousness of his having faithfully performed this, that the Apostle makes this solemn appeal to the church of *Ephesus* for his integrity. *Wherefore I take you to record, says he, this day, that I am free from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* Acts xx. 26, 27.

Thirdly, the care of our flocks requires us to press home to them the duty of a constant attendance *upon*, and conscientious adherence to their own particular churches: which, besides many incomparable privileges and advantages that attend it, is at *all* times

one strong barrier against error and seduction, and at *this* more especially, when the Methodist-Preachers are no longer confined to tabernacles, and other the like haunts peculiar to themselves; but have found the way into our churches, intruding into as many as they possibly can, for the wider spreading of their new and strange divinity: So that men cannot now strole from church to church, as heretofore, (a custom much to be lamented) without greater hazard of being corrupted or ensnared. On which account, we ought to labour more abundantly, to keep our flocks within our own folds, and to restore, as far as lies in us, the primitive, but long-neglected, practice of parochial communion; by setting forth the excellency of the institution; how much more conducive it is to decency and order, to the peace and unity of the Christian church, to the better edification (in the right sense of that word) of private Christians, and (which is most to my present purpose) to the keeping them stedfast in the true faith of Christ, and to the preserving them from false, or unsettled principles; than ranging, or running about, from one church to another, as fancy, or as humour leads them.—

It must be confessed, such wanton rambling may plead prescription, and besides long use and custom, hath also on its side an infirmity, natural to man, called by *Solomon*, *the wandering of the desire*, and by *St. Paul* (more directly to the point) *itching ears*: How then? Are not all evil propensities and wrong habits to be opposed? And why not *this* as well as the rest?—It must also be allowed, that men have found out various other pleas and pretences in justification of *this*: But such pleas and pretences are weak and trifling; and were we not sometimes to shew them that they are so, we should, by that neglect, furnish them with one plea worth them all, and one we could not answer, which is, that we did not instruct them better.—Well, but hath not this been a thousand times done? How many sermons have been preached, and how many treatises published, for the refuting and reforming this error, and yet how much do we see the matter mended? How much it is *mended*, I shall not take upon me to say; but this I will venture to affirm, that had it not been for such opposition, we should have found it *much worse*, which is reason sufficient for our continuing to oppose it.—And tho' we  
 must

must never hope totally to remove an evil so rooted in nature, and confirmed by habit, or prevail with all we are concerned with to keep strictly, in their public worship, within the bounds of their own parish Churches; yet possibly we may, by our seasonable advice and admonitions, be able to check its growth, and to restrain some, if not altogether from hunting after *New-Teachers*; at least, from following those of the *Methodists*, and from mixing with any Assembly or Congregation, where their ears may be poisoned by the enthusiastical and intoxicating doctrines of such vain Declaimers. So far our hopes may be indulged. But should we be therein disappointed, the next means I shall mention of taking heed to our Flocks, promiseth better success.—

And that is, Fourthly, If we cannot keep our people from such *Preachers*, to use our utmost efforts and endeavours, to keep such *Preachers* from our *Pulpits*.

But this being a nice and tender point, which requires some time and delicacy to treat it in such a manner, as that it may be useful to all, without giving just cause of offence to any, I shall respite the considera-

tion of it till the next opportunity, when I shall put an end to this subject.—

Yet before I dismiss you, permit me to obviate an objection which naturally enough may offer itself to my whole Discourse upon it.

It may perhaps be said, that I seem to have mistaken my Audience ; and have been long preaching to the *people*, what is only proper for an *Assembly of Divines*, and consequently have in a manner been preaching to myself.

It is very true, I have been setting forth a duty peculiar to the Clergy. But then pray remember, that it is a duty which (as I hinted before) we rarely discharge without disgusting our hearers: who are apt, if some of our instructions happen to be less palatable than wholesome, to serve *us*, as our Master's Disciples did *him*, that is, to *turn their backs, and walk no more with us* ; nay, what is still worse, to give us hard words at parting, and to keep up their resentment till it hath pretty well spent itself in Clamour and Invective. And this more particularly hath been our misfortune, when we have been affectionately advising them, to beware of  
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the Leaven of those modern Pharisees, the Methodists.

Hence ye may perceive, that the Laity are more interested or concerned in my present subject, than you might at first imagine. And that as the duty of the *Preacher* is expressly contained *in* it, so the duty of the *Hearer* plainly results *from* it. For if (as hath been shewed, and as the Text imports) every Pastor is under the most strict and solemn obligation, to *take heed to his Flock*, as at all times, so especially when he apprehends them to be in more immediate danger, it follows that they are also equally obliged to hear his voice: or however they may be more taken with the voice of *strangers*, still to hear *his* with patience, if not with pleasure.

In short, as we are often thought over-officious and troublesome, when we are only doing what the nature of our office requires, it is very proper that the *Laity* as well as *Clergy* should be put in mind of that Office. For nothing is more likely to reconcile our people to our seasonable Admonitions, than shewing them that it is no other than a Trust vested in us for their Welfare: and that whatever they may think, it is not their

*Opinion*, but our own *Consciences* alone, that can acquit us at that awful Tribunal, where we must one Day be accountable for our Stewardship.

This Reflection, one would imagine, should be sufficient to drive all prejudice from the *Heart*, and to entitle us to an obedient Ear. Upon this however it was that the Apostle founded his Injunction, with which I shall conclude,

*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give an account.*



## P A R T IV.

**W**ITHO U T either Preface or Re-  
capitulation, I shall now proceed  
where I last left off; and shew, that if we  
cannot, by all fair arguments and dissuatives,  
keep our *People* from the *Methodist-Preachers*,  
we ought to use our utmost endeavours to  
keep such *Preachers* from our *Pulpits*.

In this piece of care, I doubt we have hi-  
therto been greatly wanting, and that instead  
of *driving* 'em *thence*, have sometimes rather  
*invited* 'em *thither*; which is acting a worse  
part than the Hireling Shepherd, in our Sa-  
viour's Parable: he *carelessly fled* when he  
saw the Wolf coming, but we *courteously*  
*open the Door*, and let him in.

Instances of this sort, I hope, are but few.  
But it is a truth neither to be denied nor  
dissembled that Methodist-Preachers, well  
known to be such, having distinguished  
themselves, both by their Preaching and  
Writing, do frequently gain admittance into  
the Pulpits of this Metropolis, by the permis-  
sion of those, who, in obedience to the Apost-

tle's precept, should be the first to oppose it; and without whose consent, or connivance, that Nufance could not be.

*Why* they permit it, we neither know, nor is it worth our while to enquire. For either they *do* believe the persons to whom they are so indulgent, to be *false Teachers*, or they do *not*. If the *latter*, no other reason is wanted; if the *former*, none will bear the mentioning: nor in that case, I presume, would any one, whatever reasons he might have, think proper to communicate them, but keep them to himself. For, since as *Shepherds*, we are bound to take heed unto our *Flocks*, what reasons could we have, that we should not be shy to own, for letting the *Wolf* into our *Folds*?

It would look like a reflection upon many worthy Incumbents of this City and Suburbs, who appear to consent *to* or connive *at* the nufance I am speaking of, to doubt their disapprobation of Methodistical *Principles*, at the same time that they allow the use of their Pulpits to the Methodist-*Preachers*. And yet it seems impossible to reconcile the one to the other, or to conceive how they can disapprove of Principles in their *Heart*, to  
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the Propagation of which they lend their helping *Hand*.

This is a Myſtery, and ſo I muſt leave it, without attempting a ſolution of which to me it appears incapable. I ſhall only add, that I cannot ſuſpect them of being well-wiſhers to the cauſe of Methodiſm, or of intending the leaſt injury, or diſhonour to the eſtabliſh'd Church.

But however we are inclined both to think and ſpeak tenderly of their intention, nothing can be more evident than that our Church ſuffers greatly by ſuch a conduct. For is it not behaving injuriouſly and diſhonourably to her, to ſhew any countenance to thoſe her ungracious and ungrateful Sons, who have perfidiouſly ſet up a Scheme for undermining her Doctrines, laying waſte her Diſcipline, and getting her Authority into their own Hands; and who are perpetually practiſing every art for drawing the reſt of her children into the Confederacy? Or can we afford them greater countenance, than that of favouring them with our Pulpits? That ſuch Preachers are not ſilenced, is an extraordinary inſtance of *Lenity*; that they are not more oppoſed, may be thought a proper Token of contempt; but this is ſuch a mark

of esteem as one cannot reflect upon without astonishment and concern. For is not this to take part with those turbulent and treacherous Men? Is it not to assist their cause, to abet their faction, to encourage their abuses, and to contribute to delude those, whom it is our duty to guard against delusion? I am fully persuaded that some, who have I know not how, been led into that error, *meant* none of these bad consequences; but the consequences are the same, whatever was their *meaning*. And I can only stand amazed, that they who would not upon any account receive into their *Houses* a known Traitor to the *State*, should yet be prevailed upon to admit into their *Pulpits* a known Traitor to the *Church*. I hope I do not exceed the just bounds of *Moderation*, I am sure not of *Truth*, when I consider those under that character, who at the same time that they eat *of* her Bread, are eating *out* her Bowels; or which is the same thing, are preying upon her vitals, and destroying her constitution: the case of all those new Gospel Preachers, who have not yet separated themselves from us; but who, after the example of their subtle Predecessors, seem only to continue in the Bosom of the *Church*, till  
they

they can secure a safer retreat, and warmer Bed in that of the *Tabernacle*. And ought we then to second this Scheme, by giving them opportunities of extending their influence, of multiplying Disciples, and of gathering Congregations out of ours ?

That any lover of our Ecclesiastical Establishment should be capable of falling into such a mistake, we should think it hardly *possible*, did not our own experience convince us it is *true*.

But here I must observe (tho' at first it may seem a little inconsistent with what hath gone before) that this error for the most part hath so generous and amiable an Origin, or proceeds from so good a cause, that one cannot help being sorry that it should be productive of so bad an effect. The cause I mean is *charity*, and that of a most excellent kind, the support of Schools instituted for the education of poor Children: than which a better institution can scarcely be conceived, nor any place found, where it is most remarkably encouraged, than in this opulent and charitable City. But the misfortune is, that the Zeal of the Governors, or Managers of those pious foundations, is too apt sometimes to hurry them into improper measures

measures for promoting their interest, as particularly in the case of their Charity Sermons. From which, in order to raise the largest contributions, they are very subject to appoint a *Methodistical* Orator. Whence it is that our Pulpits of late years have been so infested with those popular Declaimers. Tho' I hope this Disease is at present not so predominant as it hath been, and therefore as it hath remitted, might be the more easily cured, would those worthy Governors only take these few things into consideration.

1st. That the best *end* is vitiated when pursued by wrong or injurious *means*.—2dly, That to have recourse to any unbecoming arts, or irregular methods, for the better support of their Schools, reflects a dishonour upon their laudable undertaking, and argues a distrust of providence.—3dly, That to provide for the poor Children by improper, or indirect Ways, is a bad example to them, and may have an unhappy influence upon their behaviour during the whole course of their lives.—4thly, That as the principal end, or design of Charity Schools, is the training up and grounding such Children in the true principles of the Church of *England*, therefore to appoint Preachers on the occasions mentioned,

mentioned who inculcate quite contrary Doctrines, or Notions, and whose Master-Craft is that of an easy manner of insinuating themselves into the Hearts of the young and simple, the weak and credulous is inconsistent and absurd.

The great desire of seeing their Schools flourish is certainly a commendable ambition, in those who have the care and superintendency over them ; and when they prosecute that end by direct and ingenuous means, the more they increase their Funds, the greater thanks they deserve both of the Poor and of the Public, for that work and labour of love.

It must also be confessed that a Methodist-Preacher generally produces them the most copious Collections. But why ? Because he is sure to draw a numerous crowd of enthusiastical followers after him, who are willing to give liberally, (and many of them doubtless beyond their abilities) for *his* credit, and for the good of faction ; that it may appear to the ignorant or superstitious, as if the rich harvest produced was solely owing to the efficacy of his preaching, or to the power of the Holy Ghost accompanying it, and in an extraordinary manner opening the Hearts of  
his

his hearers; and that thence his Fame may be trumpeted thro' every *Parish*, and pave the way for him into every *Pulpit*. So that the retaining such Preachers on such occasions, tho' it may be a private, pecuniary Benefit, is nevertheless a public and pestifential Injury, if the spreading of *Methodism* be so, which none but a *Methodist* can doubt: since it is the unhappy means of introducing those false Brethren, or Heads of that Sect into many of our Churches, into which probably they might otherwise never have found an entrance, nor, I hope, ever would again, did they who have hitherto inadvertently given them that encouragement, seriously consider the pernicious consequences arising from it.

But now tho' Charity Schools, or rather Charity Sermons, are frequently (as hath been observed) the cause of the error I have been animadverting upon, yet are they not the necessary cause, nor are the Governors, or Trustees of those Schools so much Principals, as Accessories in it. They are indeed the first Movers; they take one single step, and that a false one, but they can proceed no further. They do appoint the Preacher, but it is in the power of the Rector, or Incumbent



bent of every Parish, either to confirm, or annul such appointment. And if we find that their Zeal hath misled them in their choice, it becomes us to check its impetuosity, and to endeavour to bring it back into its right course. And when this hath been done with due temper, fair remonstrances, and kind expostulations, they cannot take it amiss, if at their importunity, we should not think proper to prostitute our Pulpits.

But it is not enough that we endeavour to keep these clear from such only whom we know to be Methodist-Preachers, who by their Writings have given public proof of their Principles, but we should shut out those also who bear that general Character, tho' they may not have exhibited to the World the same Evidence of their deserving it. For tho' common Fame is not a sufficient Plea for our *Censure* it is for our *Caution*. And if upon that ground only we refuse any one our Pulpits, he hath no just reason to complain. If the Imputation is *deserved*, there can be no pretence for his complaint; if *undeserved*, no difficulty in his removing it. Besides, it is possible *he* might not be aware of his lying under such an Imputation; and then he must  
count

count<sup>us</sup> his Friends, if by our refusing him the Pulpit, he becomes sensible *of* it, which is the first step towards his freeing himself *from it*.

I am not ignorant upon what weak and slender grounds a suspicion of that sort is apt to be founded.—Sometimes a Preacher unhappily incurs it by his voice, manner, gestures, pronunciation, nay, even by his very countenance.—Sometimes by the pathos of his stile, and the vehemency of his address. Sometimes by his being misunderstood by his less attentive, or distinguishing hearers: In all such cases, the suspicion is trifling and groundless, and brought upon him by the envy, or ignorance of others.

But then sometimes again, he brings it upon himself; as by heaping scripture upon scripture, either foreign to his subject, or unconnected with his matter; by a studied and more frequent repetition, or hackneyed use of the adorable name of Jesus, than is either prudent, or decent; by being fond of rapturous expressions, and high flights of piety, soaring quite beyond the regions of reason and common sense; and especially by adopting and making use of those quaint and affected terms and phrases, which are peculiar

liar to the Methodist-Preachers: Here then our apprehension of his being one himself, hath no bad foundation.

It is remarked in the preface of an \* occasional discourse lately published, that “ there is a sort of people, who think it “ sufficient to decry a good man, or a good “ work, if they brand it with the name of “ *Methodist*.” I am not acquainted with this sort of people; but if there be any such, I do agree with the author, that they therein behave injudiciously and absurdly; nay, I should think them worthy of a much sharper and severer reprimand; and yet was I to hear a Preacher describing the pity and compassion of our blessed Saviour, by the † *yearnings of Immanuel’s bowels*, or inviting and entreating the guilty *to accept of pardon*; I must own I should, from such conceited expressions, be induced to believe him a *Methodist*, unless I had very strong reasons to the contrary: and this not with an inclination to decry a *good man*, but to discourage a *bad thing*. Or again, was I to hear another

\* A sermon lately preached by the Reverend Mr. Dodd, at St. Lawrence Jewry.

† See a weak and scurrilous pamphlet, intituled, Plain Queries, humbly offer’d to the Clergy, p. 34.

magnifying the power of Christ in the destruction of sin and Satan, by giving him the quaint title of the *immortal bruiser*; I should form the same judgment of *him* likewise. But should I find the same person afterwards suggesting, that † Methodism is a *weak, wild, and blasphemous scheme*; and that *they who lead men to hope for pardon without penitence, and to depend on an enthusiastic faith without fruits, or a righteousness without work*; lead men to depend on that which hath no existence, and to deceive themselves with a delusion, which is of all others the most dangerous, I should then be ready and glad to change my opinion of him, and to conclude, that if ever he *was* a Methodist, he is not one *now*, but that this amounts to a full and proper recantation.

Which satisfaction we ought to require of all reputed Methodists, before we trust that they are not so; we should be satisfied, either that they never belonged to that fraternity, or that they have renounced it.—We are not to look upon it as sufficient, that they disclaim the imputation, for that is what they all do; disavow the *name*, at the same time

† See preface and sermon mentioned before.

that they adhere to the *thing*; in like manner as § one of the most popular Preachers amongst them, sneers at those who suspect him of being enthusiastical, in a discourse, which from one end to the other is stuffed with enthusiasm.—Neither is it sufficient that they do not invariably preach the same weak, wild, and blasphemous doctrines; that all their discourses do not carry in their foreheads the same deep marks of Methodism; or that some of them, upon occasion, are decent and orderly, or at least, stripp'd of every thing offensive, or obnoxious; for the *false* as well as the *true* Apostle knows how to *become all things to all men, or, being crafty to catch them with guile*.—But we ought to be well assured, that the tenor of their Preaching hath been sound and right, or free from the errors of the Methodists; or if they had been unhappily drawn into them, we should have some public testimony of their having forsaken them, (for which that a little before-mentioned is a very good precedent) before we oblige them with the use of our pulpits.

§ The Reverend Mr. Romaine, in his discourse, intituled, the Parable of the Dry Bones, &c.

From which (I must but barely hint) it is requisite, as a further caution, that we exclude all strangers, except such as are recommended by those we can depend upon, both for the lawfulness of their ordination, and the soundness of their principles. Without this guard, they would be liable to be annoyed, not only by heterodox Preachers, but also by others, who have no authority to preach at all: Of the *latter* have been many scandalous instances; of the *former* we may now reasonably expect a great many more, if we neglect to use our utmost care and circumspection, in order to prevent it.

There is one other case which belongs to that branch of my discourse, now under consideration, and which is as worthy our particular attention, as any that hath yet employed it.

Have we not, it may be asked, several Methodist-Preachers among us, who are authorized, or licensed by the higher powers; how therefore are we to keep *such* out of our Pulpits? I answer, of these, alas! we have too many. *Some*, who disguised, or concealed their principles, at the time when they obtained their licence; and *others*, who have changed them since. But then the privilege

vilege thence derived, is a very short and limited one, reaches not beyond those particular churches to which they are nominated or appointed; and therefore it lies upon us not to permit them to scatter their poison in any other, but to confine them strictly within their own bounds. So far the remedy for this fore evil is in our own hands.

It is an expression of our duty and obedience to our ecclesiastical rulers, not to oppose the power they have given them, but to sit down content till they, in their wisdom, shall judge it proper to revoke, or supersede it themselves: But methinks it is an argument of our weakness, or of something for which that venerable bench will scarcely thank us to extend that power further than they themselves have done. And tho' (doubtless for good and wise reasons) they have not as yet interposed *their* authority for silencing such Preachers; yet I am persuaded they would not be offended, if we exerted *ours*, for keeping them out of our Pulpits. However, this the care of our flocks requires of us.

Fifthly and lastly, It is also requisite, that in our weekly discourses, as occasion serves, we endeavour to place the wild and whimsical

cal notions of those new Gospel-Preachers, in a true and proper light:—That we expote the many pious frauds and artifices, by which they incessantly labour to seduce the ignorant and unwary, and to beguile unstable souls:—That we point out the pernicious tendency of their errors, both to church and state:—That we shew that the abettors of them are close friends to the *Church of Rome*, by harmonizing or agreeing with her in almost every thing, except the doctrine of merit:—That they are no less kind to the cause of *infidelity*, by making the Christian Religion a mere creature of the imagination; a light and airy phantom, which one single breath of the most illiterate free-thinker can easily demolish:—That they cut up *Christianity* by the roots, by insinuating, that a good life is not necessary to justification; and under a pretence of setting a higher value upon Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, frustrating and disappointing, as far as in them lies, the very end for which he died; which was, that by faith in him, and living up to his holy rules and precepts, we might become meet to be partakers of his everlasting kingdom:—That they are enemies, not only to the *Christian*, but also to every religion whatsoever,



whatsoever, in which reason or common sense hath any share, by labouring to subvert, or overturn the whole system of morality, by speaking contemptuously of all the relative or reciprocal duties of social life, and by erecting a proud and enthusiastic faith upon the ruins of practical holiness and virtue : —And consequently that they must be enemies to society, by thus seeking to dissolve those bands, or ligaments, by which it is united and knit together.

Such are the means, which to me seem proper and necessary to be used by every vigilant and careful Shepherd, for preserving his Flock from the perils, which at this time more immediately threaten them.

And now, as a further testimony how much this is our duty, I will give you a quotation from a favourite author of the Methodists, tho' not so much their friend as they imagine. “ If Satan destroy men's souls,  
 “ he shall answer for them as a murderer  
 “ only, not as an officer intrusted with the  
 “ care of them; but if the watchman doth  
 “ not warn, if the Shepherd doth not feed,  
 “ if the Prophet doth not instruct, if the  
 “ Steward doth not provide, he shall answer  
 “ not only for the souls that have miscarried,  
 “ but

“ but also for an office neglected, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully administered.” Under whichever of these characters we are considered, I do not see how we can be acquitted, if we do not employ all our skill, and exert all our power, for stopping the spreading infection of that religious enthusiasm, which now prevails amongst us, and will, it is to be feared, be more and more prevalent, if not opposed, at least, from the Pulpit, the place from whence it chiefly springs.

Here, methinks, we might learn from our adversaries to lift up our voices and spare not, and to sound the Gospel-trumpet (to borrow one of their phrases) oftener and louder than we generally do. Which tho’ from *our* mouths might not perhaps give so *shrill*, would I’m sure (as the Apostle speaks) give a more *certain* or intelligible sound than it doth from *theirs*.——As to mere *sound*, with all its marvellous operations, we are not ashamed to own their great superiority. By *this* alone they are able to perform such exploits as we justly stand amazed at. By *this* alone they can raise a tempest in that breast, in which we cannot rouse a sigh,  
and

and make those eyes flow over, from which we cannot draw a tear.

But tho' we submit to them in the magical force and influence of sound, and many other the like wonderful gifts and endowments, yet one advantage we have over them, (a very contemptible one, it's true, in their eyes) and that is *reason*, For want, therefore, of *other* and superior powers, we should make the best use we can of *this*; and as we have no pretensions to *art*, try what we can do by *argument*: hoping for that blessing upon our weak endeavours, whilst we are applying to the judgment and understanding of *our* hearers, which they boldly presume upon, when only courting the blind passions and prejudices of *theirs*.

Reason, indeed, cannot be supposed to do much with an enthusiast, whose first principle it is to have nothing to do with reason, but to resolve all his religious opinions, or notions, however erroneous and extravagant, into immediate inspiration. But with others it will, more or less, have its effect.——

However, be our *success* what it will, *endeavours* are our duty; which we cannot neglect, without disobeying the Apostle's injunction,

junction, to take heed unto our Flocks, that they be not scattered by those grievous Wolves which have entered in among u, or seduced by these false Brethren, who have arose from us, speaking perverse things, to draw away Disciples after them.



*Christ*, are here put in opposition to each other, is plain and obvious: the question is wherein that opposition lies: a question highly proper and necessary to be well weighed and considered; since, for want of such due inquiry or reflection, many have been apt to invert the true difference that is between them: Or to suppose some to preach themselves, who really preach Christ Jesus; and others again to preach Christ Jesus, who really preach Themselves.—My design, therefore, in the following discourse, is to examine, particularly and distinctly, the nature and meaning of the opposite propositions in my text, and shew

*First*, What it is to preach ourselves.

*Secondly*, What it is to preach Christ Jesus.

Now to preach ourselves is to inculcate and put off our own private notions or opinions unwarranted by the word of God: or in the Apostle's language, *to speak things which do not become sound doctrine*; that is, such doctrine as is contained in, or may be proved by, the scriptures: or, in other words, such as is therein fully and clearly express'd, or may be there from fairly and rationally infer'd: according to the sense in which the  
 same

fame were understood, by all the churches of the first and purest ages of christianity, and which being nearest to that of the Apostles, may be presumed to be the best interpreters of scripture.

Agreeable to this is St. Paul's charge to Timothy: *Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard from me.* From whence, (saith a very able and judicious writer) it is plain, we have a form of sound words delivered to us by the catholic church, which contains the true catholic faith; and therefore ought to be so far a rule to us, in expounding scripture, as that we should never contradict any thing contained in that form, for that is to contradict the faith of the catholic church.

Again, We may be said to preach ourselves, when we make the sole, or main end of our preaching, to center or terminate in ourselves: or when we are more studious of our own glory, or interest, or any other selfish passion, than of the glory of God, or the edification of our hearers.

But this is dealing too much in generals.

It will be doing you more service (and if I know my own heart, I have no worse, or other intention) to illustrate what I mean by

this manner of self-preaching, by a few particular examples.—For instance then,—A preacher is ambitious of being distinguished for his learning, or for his eloquence, or for his reasoning, or for his invention, or for any other (no matter what) perfection or excellency. And doubtless a desire to excel, in all these, and the like qualifications, (however of late invidiously or injudiciously exploded and decryed) is both innocent and laudable: Nor did St. Paul mean to forbid, or even to discredit the use of such natural gifts or endowments, when he told the Corinthians, that his *speech and his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom*; as some, from the misconstruction of this, and other texts of the same nature and import, are apt to imagine:---But, though such gifts are desirable, and the attainment thereof ought to be pursued, yet, it should be remembered, on what account, or for what purpose; for the service of the church, and not for soothing the pride, or vanity of the minister. If therefore any of that sacred character, is more sollicitous and industrious to acquit himself, as a learned and ingenious, than as an useful and edifying preacher, of him we may



may, without the least reserve or scruple, pronounce, that he preacheth himself.

And the same may be said of him who spurr'd on, by the prospect of worldly interest, as the other of vain-glory, adapts his discourses not to the improvement, but to the palates of his auditors; consults not how he may do the best for them, but how he may be able to make the most of them; and therefore cautiously avoids every doctrine and every expression, however necessary or seasonable, by which he might possibly hazard their favour.—How contrary is such a mean and mercenary practice to the conduct of our great Apostle, whose words are the best comment upon the first part of my text, with which I am at present engaged: *Our exhortation, saith he, is not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts. Neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; nor of men sought we glory.*

I confess the same Apostle tells them elsewhere, that *he became all things unto all men:* But upon what motive? *That by all means he*

*might save some.* This was not a subtle and self-seeking compliance, but a generous and charitable condescension, which breath'd the true spirit of Christianity. *He sought not theirs, but them,* as he a little after expresseth it:---wanted not their friendship, but their conversion:---not to win them to himself, but to Christ. To which end he yieldingly and courteously accommodated his behaviour to their different tempers, prejudices, and circumstances, as far as he could consistently with his integrity, or without betraying, or injuring, the important trust committed to him.—This trust, every minister of the gospel is charged with. And therefore, if he doth not execute it faithfully and conscientiously:---if, forgetting that the intent of public instruction is the good of souls, his chief care and study be to make his preaching subservient or instrumental to his ambition, or avarice, or any other private view or design of his own, he may justly and properly be called a self-preacher.

Enough hath been said to the first point of inquiry--what it is to preach ourselves.

I shall therefore proceed to the second, and endeavour to shew you---what it is to preach Jesus Christ.

First

First then, it is with all simplicity and good conscience to preach in his name, for his glory, and for the common salvation, whatever he hath declared of himself, or the scriptures hath taught us concerning him, as the author and founder of our most holy religion. Thus Philip is said to have preached Christ to the Samaritans, when *he preached to them the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.* [Acts viii. 5, 12.]

Thus also, when, at the desire of the Eunuch he explained the meaning of that prophecy of Isaiah which testified of our Saviour; *he was led, as a sheep to the slaughter, &c.* it is said, *then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at the same scripture, preached unto him Jesus.* [v. 35.] So we, in like manner, when we discourse of him, either historically; as of his nativity, circumcision, baptism, temptation, passion, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension:---or theologically; as of his divinity, humanity, the union of his two natures, his merits, and satisfaction:---or polemically; as, when we assert and maintain the authority, the genuineness, and true sense of his gospel, against those, who dispute the one, and pervert the other:---or morally; as, when we  
recom-

recommend and enforce those pure and holy and divine rules and precepts, he hath left us, for the regulation or conduct of our lives and manners:---or, when we set before men his example, which alone is the most powerful and persuasive recommendation: In all these cases, we may truly be said to *preach Jesus Christ*.

Secondly, We do this in a higher and worthier sense, when we preach him, under that most benevolent and most interesting character of a Saviour and Redeemer. For in this character he first visited our earth, clothed himself with our flesh, dwelt amongst us, and in all things (sin only excepted) became like unto us. Hear his own most gracious and endearing words, *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*: Again, *the Son of Man came not to be ministred unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*. Hear also what St. Paul saith, *this is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*. The wonderful mercy and mystery of our redemption is the very essence of christianity; is that which distinguisheth it from all other religions whatsoever: 'tis the end and perfection of the gospel:

gel: yea, 'tis the gospel itself. For what is the gospel but the glad tidings of peace betwixt heaven and earth? What is it, but the joyful news of God's eternal purpose to be reconcil'd to man, and to restore him to the same place in his favour, which he had there before his fall? What is it, but the publication of that most merciful covenant established betwixt the Father and the Son, 'ere the heavens and the earth were made, for the salvation of mankind; the which covenant the man Christ Jesus hath since sealed and confirm'd with his own precious blood.— In setting forth, therefore, the mediatorial scheme, or instructing our christian brethren in any thing which relates to the great work and oeconomy of our redemption, we may be said more eminently and emphatically to preach Jesus Christ.—But now tho' Christ hath purchased eternal redemption for us, yet we are to understand that such purchase is not absolute, but conditional. Something is required on our part to intitle us to the benefits of it; which, if we neglect, 'tis impossible we should be the better for it. And therefore

Thirdly, We then preach Jesus Christ in the worthiest and most acceptable manner,

when we put men in mind of those duties and qualifications, on which their interest in that eternal covenant, that inestimable purchase depends: when we shew them the terms and conditions necessary to be performed for securing their title. That is, when we tell them that they can have no just grounds for expecting redemption through Christ, without the practice of that moral righteousness of which he himself was both the preacher and the pattern,—that they must hope for no share in the gospel promises, without a gospel obedience,—without a due conformity to it's laws, or having their conversation agreeable to those who profess it; without *doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God*:—without living *sobberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*. In short, without universal holiness and purity of life. This, I say, is preaching Jesus Christ in the properest and worthiest manner, as it best answers the design of his coming into the world, which was to amend and reform it,—*to destroy the works of the Devil*; that is, all vice and wickedness,—to inspire us with love of true religion and virtue, and by purifying our affections, to qualify us for that happiness, which by the  
sacrifice

sacrifice of himself he hath obtained for us. As it is the likeliest means of rendering that atonement effectual to the most gracious purpose for which it was intended; which cannot be without a holy life, or practical piety.

As it is most agreeable to the end and intention of preaching, which was to call men off from their sins, and to awaken them to virtue.

And lastly, as it may tend to correct the false notions of those who trust, or affect so entirely to trust, in the merits of Christ, as to hope to be justified and saved by *his* righteousness, without any righteousness of *their own*. This is a doctrine much preached, and the preachers of it much followed, and no wonder, since it is very flattering to flesh and blood; seems to release men from the severities or strictnesses of religion, and to point out to them the shortest and easiest way to Heaven. According to this pleasing doctrine, there never can be any occasion for *cutting off an hand*, or *plucking out an Eye*, or for any conflict or struggle betwixt *the spirit and the flesh*, betwixt grace and nature: A strong fancy, under the specious and plausible denomination of faith is sufficient for the purpose. It is a pleasant doctrine (says

a very able and sound divine) and the worst of Christians are glad to hear, that they may be justified by Christ only, for believing in him, without any works of righteousness or self-denial of their own. And upon that account (presuming verily that they do believe) they are confident that they are *justified*, tho' they are *unsanctified*. But those especially are in great danger of deceiving their own souls, by building their confidence upon this doctrine, who, together with this belief, have more of the form of godliness than the other have, and are found much more in the use and exercise of the external, devotional part of religion, and are zealous for this or that opinion or sect, tho' they be destitute of love to God, and of humility, charity, justice, fidelity, peaceableness, sobriety, temperance, meekness, modesty, and of that renew'd frame of soul which would make them like Christ Jesus, wherein the power of christianity doth consist. And therefore, says he, there is great need for those, who are spiritual guides to the people, to insist much upon the necessity of repentance, reformation, and a holy life; as well as faith, in order to their being justified and saved by Jesus Christ.

And now having dispatch'd the two points  
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comprehended in my text, it may not be improper to take notice of the common exclamation, or outcry of the followers of an old sect distinguished only by a new name, against the Church of England' Clergy, for preaching themselves, and not Christ Jesus. And how is this charge or censure founded? Why it seems we leave the mention of Jesus Christ out of our discourses, of the generality of which may be said, what St. Austin observed touching Cicero's works, "That they are not sweet, because the name of Jesus is not in them." And it must be confess'd that we do not make altogether so frequent and hackney'd use of that great and adorable name, as those preachers do, whom these weak enthusiasts so much admire and esteem. We are not quite so fond, as they are, of those free and familiar phrases of coming to Christ,---closing with Christ,---leaning, and resting, and lolling, upon Christ for salvation: nor of so often repeating or reiterating the name of Christ, in our discourses, as if we thought the omission of it in any one page, or paragraph, was the mark or sign of reprobation. But yet (if my stating of that point hath been right) nevertheless we preach Jesus Christ, in preaching the truths of the  
 christian

christian religion, whether historical, theological, or moral;---whether we treat of his acts, or nature, or offices, or doctrines of whatever kind, all our lectures or instructions, meet in him as their common center. And therefore, we as truly and properly preach Christ, as if that sacred name was ever so affectedly mouth'd, and vociferously sounded in every period, or even line of our sermons: Notwithstanding their learned quotation from St. Austin, which I shall shew, by and by, they either ignorantly or wilfully mistake.—But we are charged with the omission, not only of the *name*, but also the *merits* of Christ: That, while we acknowledge Jesus to be a teacher sent from God, we speak not a word of his merits and redemption thro' his blood: except for form sake, (as it were) and at the end of a discourse:—And here again it must be allowed, that we do not 'in every discourse make justification, or salvation thro' the merits of Christ our topic, nor declaim upon it as frequently and strenuously, as if we were proselyting a people, who were strangers to the name of Christ, and to the nature, end, and design of christianity. It is not to be supposed, that, in our religious assemblies there  
are

are any so ignorant, as not to know Jesus is their Saviour, and that they cannot hope to be justified, or sav'd, but by his merits and mediation. A truth of which, not only the close of our discourses, but almost every prayer and collect in our liturgy, so conveniently reminds them. And yet, besides the daily repetition of it from the desk, we are not wanting to inculcate it from the pulpit, tho' not to the neglect of other points equally necessary. It is far easier to persuade men to trust in the merits of Christ, than to practice the duties which he hath enjoined.

And therefore by no means neglecting that, we make these our ordinary or most usual subjects. In which we imitate our blessed Lord himself, who did not only preach the necessity of faith in him and his gospel: but also apprehensive of the great danger of men's failing in practical duties, insisted chiefly upon doctrines of a practical nature: telling his disciples and auditors, that, in the day of recompence or retribution, every man shall be rewarded, not according to his belief, but according to his works: *And not every one, who had faith to prophecy in his name; or in his name to cast out devils; or in his name to do many wonderful works;*

*works; shall then enter into the kingdom of heaven, but such, and such only, as had done the will of his father, who is in heaven. That is, such as had lived a good and virtuous and holy life, upon christian principles.*

So Christ taught, and so we teach. We endeavour to instruct our hearers in the whole compass of their duty;—to ground and confirm them, in all christian virtues and graces;—and to make them such, as the gospel would have them to be. But, at the same time, we caution them, whatever perfection they may arrive at, not to trust in their own righteousness, for salvation; but in the sacrifice, and satisfaction of the lamb, slain from the beginning of the world. We admonish them, not to flatter themselves that they may be saved without a good life; nor even by the best life, without the merits of that propitiatory sacrifice. With what truth, therefore, is it said, that whilst we only acknowledge Jesus a teacher sent from God, we speak not a word of his merits and redemption through his blood?

It is still further objected to us, that instead of Jesus Christ, we preach mere heathen morality.—What would these men be at? I have shewed you, that 'tis such  
mora-

morality, as Jesus himself preached: And was that heathen morality? This they dare not say. How then? Why, I suppose, what was christian morality in him, is heathen morality in his ministers.

This, in effect, they do say, when they tell us that we preach the morality of the Gospel on natural, (that is, on heathen) principles.

But how so? The heathen moralists, it's true, recommended and enforced, the love and practice of virtue and morality, and so do we. The difference lies here, they by arguments drawn from reason and nature only: which arguments, as they must have very little influence compar'd with those deriv'd, or borrow'd from revelation; therefore it was, that St. *Austin* observ'd of *Cicero's* philosophy, "That it was not sweet, because "the name of Jesus was not in it:" By which he only meant, that it could not afford the same comfort and satisfaction to the mind, as if it had been founded on the *better hope*, and *more precious promises* of the Gospel. But now this is the foundation of our christian philosophy. All our moral lectures are built upon that hope and these promises. With these all our discourses are,

at least in the intention of them, inseparably connected. By these, we excite men to a virtuous and religious behaviour: assuring them, that they are not to expect redemption, with the happiness included in it, upon any other terms. And if this be preaching the morality of the Gospel, upon heathen principles, then indeed we are guilty of the imputation. But if on the contrary, it is preaching *Gospel-precepts* on *Gospel-principles*, then this, like the former, is a groundless objection: A mere calumny, obtruded upon the ignorant and credulous, by the cant and conceit of those, who proudly and arrogantly, affecting to be the only true Preachers of Christ, are subverting the very end and purpose of Christianity, which was to make us *holy*, in order to be *happy*. For saith St. Paul, *The Grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men: teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world: looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

Beware

Beware therefore, brethren, of such false teachers and deceivers; who, in the place of zeal and true piety, would substitute an airy fantastical faith, and carry you up to heaven on the wings of a wild imagination. Be not moved, or discouraged, by their rude clamours and bitter invectives, from trusting in your own guides, who seek to lead you thither, in *the good old paths*, which so many blessed Saints and Martyrs, have trod before you: But call to mind the Apostle's warning to the elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, *I know this, that grievous wolves will enter in amongst you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember.*





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# S E R M O N II.

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2 COR. iv. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus  
the Lord.—*

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## P A R T II.

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**F**ROM the first establishment of the Christian Church, in almost every age, have sprang up some pragmatical teachers, who intoxicated with spiritual pride, have arrogantly assum'd this character to themselves, in exclusion of all others. — Thus the *Gnosticks* of old, pretended to be the only persons who had the true knowledge of Christianity; esteeming all other Christians as ignorant, and unenlightened: and as explaining the sacred writings in a low, literal, and unedifying sense or signification.

Thus the *Puritans* of the last century call'd themselves, the only true Gospel-Preachers; reproaching and exclaiming a-

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gainst

gainst all those, whose preaching was not like their's, as mere legal, moral declaimers, who preached up the necessity of holiness and a good life; but left out Christ, and the Grace of God. And thus again it is, that our zealous preachers after the new method, affect to be distinguished from the rest of their order: whom they stigmatize by the opprobrious names of heathen moralists, unscriptural teachers, ministers of the letter, but unacquainted with the life and spirit of the Gospel; prophets who are destitute of the inward call to the work of the ministry, who are unexperienced in the internal power of christianity upon their own souls; and who therefore preach *themselves*, instead of *Jesus Christ*, and so *cause the people to err*. But, as for themselves, they are the true Christian Preachers,—the only illumin'd and experienced ministers,—the only ministers of grace,—the only sent,—the only taught of God: and consequently the only ministers, who can say with the Apostle, *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*.

I endeavour'd to explain and illustrate, in my last discourse, what is here meant by preaching ourselves: and what by preaching Jesus Christ.

I. I insisted, that to preach ourselves is to inculcate and put off our own private notions or opinions, unwarranted by the word of God; or in *St Paul's* language, *to speak things which do not become sound doctrine*; that is, such things, as are not agreeable to the Scripture, according to the sense in which the same were understood by the Universal Church, in the first and purest ages of Christianity.—Or again, that it is to make the sole or main end of our preaching to terminate in ourselves: or, to be more studious of our own applause, or interest, or any other sinister view or design of our own, than of the honour of God, and the edification of our hearers.

II. That to preach Jesus Christ, is, with all simplicity and sincerity to preach in his name, for his glory, and for the common salvation, whatever he hath declared of himself, or the scriptures have taught us concerning him; as the author, and founder of our most holy Religion.—And especially, that when we speak of him, as our Redeemer; or set forth the Mediatorial Scheme, or any thing, which relates to the great work and œconomy of Man's Redemption,

tion, we then may be said more eminently and emphatically to *preach Christ Jesus*.

I likewise, at that time, briefly hinted at the rude clamours of the canting zealots, but just now mentioned, against the Church of *England* clergy in general, for not preaching Christ:—For leaving the name of Jesus out of our polite discourses:—For dispensing with his merits, as well as his name, and not speaking a word of redemption thro' his blood:—And for preaching mere Heathen Morality, or Christian Morality on Heathen Principles, for which, give me leave to add, we are accused of preaching another Gospel; of laying another foundation than that which is laid, viz. *Jesus Christ*; of *handling the Word of God deceitfully*;— of *making it of none effect*: nay of joining with *Deists, Arians, Socinians*, and the rest of the opposers of christianity; and of setting Jesus at naught. Such are the foul and false reproaches of one of them, who styles himself a layman: Whether he is, or no, is not in the least material, since clericks and layicks of that tribe, deal both alike in the same common-place abuse and scurrility.

How painfully hath this warm and weak devotee traversed the sacred volumes, that  
he

he might the more piously rail in the language of Scripture? And again how piously at the same time doth he in the same language disclaim the charge? For tho' his whole book is loaded with rancour and virulence, yet, with the sanctity of a Pharisee, he wipes his mouth, declaring that he hath *brought no railing accusation*, nor even unkind invective; nor particularly address'd himself to any one, with *thou art the Man*. No, no, the whole body of the clergy was a better or more pleasing mark. Not so neither; for he appeals to the Searcher of Hearts, that he bears the greatest reverence and esteem for every faithful clergyman of the Church of *England*. But who are they? Why doubtless the great Apostles of the United Societies of **METHODISTS** and **HUTCHINSONIANS**, with a few of their crazy converts and vain-glorious imitators. These to be sure are the faithful Ministers that zealous and inoffensive libeller had in view; these he highly reverences and esteems; these flighty and fantastical Preachers he stiles the much honour'd Servants of God: These he hails and congratulates, as nurses *to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers*: These he applauds as  
sparing

sparing neither time, nor trouble, but *thro' evil report, and good report*, endeavouring to win souls to Christ; as weeping over the dead in trespasses and sins, as Jesus wept over Lazarus; as crying aloud, like the true ministers, and giving the alarming sound, *Awake thou that sleepest*; and as forming Christ in their people's hearts by the instrumentality of their word:—But now for others who preach Christ with truth and soberness: His character of these is, that they are alive to things that cannot profit, but dead to the things of God;—that they care not to speak, in the name of Jesus, and to sound the Gospel trumpet;—that they seem determined to *know any-thing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*;—that their preaching is not attended with the power of God unto the salvation of sinners;—that their examples are such as, he would not dare to wish, nor they themselves he thinks, desire their flocks to follow;—and therefore rather than mention, he would throw a veil of love over them. Poor man! how pious and compassionate But see; his mad zeal bursts out again, and triumphs over his pharisaical piety. “ O ye false Prophets, “ hear ye the word of the Lord: can ye  
“ hear

“ hear the many woes and threatnings de-  
 “ nounced againſt you, and yet harden your  
 “ hearts againſt all conviction? Know ye  
 “ not that the Prince of Peace hath himſelf  
 “ denounced woe unto you, ye blind guides?  
 “ If you will not know yourſelves, yet ye  
 “ are known to the Lord, whoſe children  
 “ you are, whoſe works ye will do. Nay  
 “ do not men alſo know ye by your fruits?  
 “ Tho’ ye ſay ye are Meſſengers of the Lord,  
 “ yet ye do not deliver your embaſſy faith-  
 “ fully; for ye pervert the right way of the  
 “ Lord, and put darkneſs for light, and light  
 “ for darkneſs, and call the way of death  
 “ the way of life. How long? Till ye are  
 “ given up, not only to believe, but preach  
 “ a lie; ſo that others alſo periſh in their  
 “ iniquity; but their blood will the Lord  
 “ require at your hands.”——What a foul  
 torrent of falſehood and infamy is here con-  
 veyed to the world, thro’ the pure channel  
 of the Holy Scriptures? How are the clear  
 ſtreams of theſe corrupted and defiled by  
 ſuch dirty dabblers in them? We have  
 no occaſion to aſk, in what ſchool, this very  
 ſimple, but withall very flanderous writer,  
 hath been taught both how to explain, and  
 how to apply, the ſacred pages: nor need we  
 wonder,

wonder, that we are no better treated by the laity, when the Gamaliel, or High Priest of the Sect, hath publickly and arrogantly declared, in the preface of one of his doughty performances, delivered from this place, speaking to the clergy (such as have not fallen in with his new fangled, and dangerous and mischievous scheme) that he finds himself in the best company, by leaving theirs.

Now tho' we have *better learned Christ*, (however little, as it is pretended, we preach him) than to seek for vengeance upon our adversary; yet christian charity allows, and christian prudence calls upon us, to vindicate ourselves; lest by our silence our cause should appear incapable of vindication.—When such vile and clamorous reflections are bellow'd from every pulpit, into which the new-stile Preachers can by any means thrust their heads: tho' the men may, and ought to be despised, yet the matter grows too serious to be slighted.

It is scarcely to be conceiv'd, what an unhappy influence calumny, set off in scripture phrase, and urg'd with an apostolic energy, (arts in which these men are particularly skilful) must always have upon the  
weak



weak minds of the credulous and undiscerning crowd, or (as St. *Paul* better expresseth it) upon *the hearts of the simple*. It is therefore a duty incumbent upon every true and conscientious Pastor, to be as industrious in spreading the antidote, as the others are in scattering the poison;—to cure, if possible, the infected part of his flock (if any such there be) and to prevent the rest from catching the contagion. In which were we to be negligent or remiss, they might so far, with some reason, pronounce us *Physicians of no value*. We should have no great cause to complain of their vilifying us, out of the mouth of the Prophet *Isaiab*, (whose words they frequently apply to us) *His watchmen are blind, they are dumb dogs, they cannot bark; lying down, loving to slumber*. Yea our blessed Lord himself would seem to countenance their sarcaistical sneer, that *we care not for the sheep*, except to fleece them, if seeing the wolf coming we are not upon our guard; or scattering them, we use not the best means for their protection. And no better means am I acquainted with in the present case, than of constantly warning them, that these are the *Wolves* foretold by our Saviour, and stripping them of their sheep's-cloathing  
for

for their conviction. This I must own appears to me, to be the indispensable duty of every vigilant and careful Shepherd. To this purpose a quotation which the scriptural Layman before-mentioned, borrowed from Mr. *Burkitt*, is very applicable. “ If Satan  
 “ destroy men’s souls, he shall answer for  
 “ them as a murderer only, not as an  
 “ officer intrusted with the care of them;  
 “ but if the watchman doth not warn,—if  
 “ the shepherd doth not feed,—if the prophet  
 “ doth not instruct,—if the steward doth  
 “ not provide, he shall answer not only for  
 “ the souls that have miscarried, but for an  
 “ office neglected,—for a talent hidden,—  
 “ and for a stewardship unfaithfully adm-  
 “ nistred.” Under whichsoever of the cha-  
 racters we are considered, I do not see how  
 we can be acquitted, if we do not exert all  
 our might against the spreading infection of  
 that religious enthusiasm, which now pre-  
 vails amongst us, and which, ’tis to be fear’d,  
 will be more and more prevalent for want  
 of opposition, if not from either civil, or  
 ecclesiastical authority, at least from the  
 pulpit, the place from whence it chiefly  
 springs. Here, methinks, we might learn  
 of our adversaries to *lift up our voices and*  
*spare*

*spare not*, to sound the gospel-trumpet more than we generally do: which tho' from our mouths might not perhaps give so shrill, would I am sure (as the Apostle speaks) give a more *certain*, or intelligible sound, than it doth from theirs. As to meer sound with all it's marvellous powers, we are not ashamed to own their great superiority. By this alone we acknowledge they can perform such exploits, as we stand amaz'd at. By this alone they can raise a tempest in that breast, in which we cannot rouse a sigh, and make those eyes flow over, from which we cannot draw a tear. These things are wonderful: and yet whoever has heard one of these popular declaimers, hath seen greater things than these.

But now, tho' we fall far short of them in sound, and many other the like external gifts and endowments (for which neither do we envy them) yet one advantage we have over them (a very contemptible one, it's true, in their eye) and that is reason. For want therefore of other powers, we should make the best use of this; and as we have no pretensions to art, try what we can do with argument: hoping for that blessing upon our weak endeavours, whilst we are

applying to the judgment and understanding of our hearers, which they boldly presume upon, when only addressing to the blind passions and prejudices of theirs. Reason indeed cannot be supposed to do much with an enthusiast, whose first principle it is to have nothing to do with reason; but to resolve all his religious opinions or notions, however erroneous and extravagant, into immediate inspiration. But with others it will more or less, have it's effect.—And, I am verily persuaded, that would all we of the Clergy exercise our reasoning faculties duly upon this head; would we in our weekly discourses, as occasion serves, set the doctrines of the *Methodist* Preachers, of whatever tribe, in a true and proper light; explain to the people the natural and genuine sense of those texts of Scripture, on which they are unfairly and absurdly grafted; expose the many pious frauds and artifices by which they incessantly labour to seduce the ignorant and unwary, and to beguile unstable souls; point out the pernicious tendency of their errors both to church and state; shew that the abettors of them are close friends to the cause of infidelity, by making the Christian Religion a mere creature of the imagination

nation, a light and airy phantom, which one single breath of the most illiterate Free-thinker can easily demolish; and lastly, that they cut up Christianity by the root, by insinuating that a good life is not necessary to Justification, and under a pretence of setting a higher value upon Christ's propitiatory sacrifice, frustrating and disappointing (as far as in them lies) the very end for which he died; which was, that by faith in him, and living up to his holy rules and precepts, we might be meet to be partakers of his everlasting kingdom: would, I say, all we of the Clergy in general take this course; would we with the zeal and perseverance of those deceitful workers, urge and inculcate such arguments with all their weight upon the minds of the people, I am verily persuaded, we might behold the good effects of them; if not to the recovering those that are lost, at least to the preserving the rest of our flocks, from being decoyed from us.



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# S E R M O N III.

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2 COR. iv. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus  
the Lord.—*

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## P A R T III.

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**A**MONGST the many evil propensities to which human nature is subject, in consequence of *Adam's* disobedience, none is more conspicuous than that partiality, that wrong bias upon the mind; which hath more or less, influenced and drawn aside from the truth, every one who hath since been born into the world. But in none doth this leaven of the *Old Adam* work more strongly and fourly, than in those who pretend to the greatest change of heart and affections, in virtue of the New Birth, and together with that to the greatest measure of the divine grace and its spirit, Why else do the *Methodist* Preachers (styled by an inge-

nious writer, “The spurious children of the ‘Reformation’) take those liberties with others they will not allow against themselves? Railing in them is true Christian *zeal* and *ardour*, but reasoning in others, is *rage* and *rancor*. If they say of us, by which I mean the whole body of the Clergy, that we are mere heathen moralists, unscriptural teachers, uncommissioned, ignorant, unexperienced ministers; nay, if they call us false prophets, blind guides, apostates, or any thing (if they can think of any thing) more ignominious, or reproachful, they lug in the wise *Solomon* to patronize, or justify the abuse, *faithful are the wounds of a friend*; and lest his alone should not be sufficient, they back it with the authority of the great Apostle, in whose words they tell us, that *the love of Christ constrains them*, to apply to us, in such plainness of speech, and gospel-simplicity. But if we say of them, that they are visionaries, or enthusiasts, they immediately fly to the same Apostle to curb and chastise us; and to admonish us, *to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice*. These are licences only becoming saints;—privileges, in which the elect alone  
are



are to be tolerated, others have no right to such extraordinary indulgences. It is a notable distinction of that Lay-author, of whose pious zeal I lately gave you a short specimen or sample: "That though human learning, in a sanctified and renewed Minister, is a great blessing, yet in a carnal unregenerate one, it may prove the greatest enemy to the truth:" By the same rule, I suppose, clamour and evil-speaking may be laudable, and useful, in the one; though detestable and mischievous, in the other. But whether his sanctified and renew'd Ministers claim it as a privilege, or no, to be clamorous and abusive, 'tis certain that both they and he exercise the power of abuse very freely upon us, poor, carnal, and unregenerate ones, as was abundantly set forth in my last discourse.

Amongst many other rude and outrageous invectives, I shew'd you that they accuse us of preaching another Gospel; of laying another foundation than that which is laid, viz. Jesus Christ; of handling the word of God deceitfully; of making the cross of Christ of none effect; nay, of joining with *Deists*, *Arians*, *Socinians*, and the rest of the opposers of Christianity, and of setting Jesus at

nought. From whence it would seem, that we ought to think them very modest, when they only assert, that quite contrary to the example in my text, instead of *Christ Jesus*, we preach *ourselves*.

I shew'd you in two discourses what is meant by preaching Christ, and what by preaching ourselves. And that we do truly preach Christ in the proper sense of that expression.

My design at present is to shew that we do not preach ourselves.

For 1st, we neither inculcate or put off our own unscriptural notions or opinions, or in St. *Paul's* language, *speake things which do not become sound doctrine*: Neither, 2dly, do we make the sole or main end of our preaching to terminate in ourselves, by being more studious of our own applause or interest, or any other selfish view or design, than the glory of God, and the good of souls. In which, as you may remember, I made the preaching of ourselves to consist.

As to the first of these, we keep close to the word of God, we expound and enforce the doctrines therein contained in the sense in which the same was understood by the Catholick, or Universal Church, in it's purest ages,

ages, in the ages next to that of the Apostles, which were the best interpreters of Scripture.

The very popular author indeed of the Commentary upon the 107th Psalm, in his Preface to that work, asserts the quite contrary: Informs the world, “That it is a  
 “ truth too evident to be denied, that we  
 “ are departed from the Doctrines of the  
 “ Reformation,—from the Doctrines of the  
 “ Articles and Homilies then established,—  
 “ and from the Doctrines of the Fall of  
 “ Mankind in *Adam*, and of their Recovery  
 “ in *Jesus Christ*: on which such Articles  
 “ and Homilies are founded.”

This, notwithstanding it is a most invidious and notorious falsehood, yet to be consistent with himself, he treats as if it was really a self-evident truth, since he attempts not to produce one single allegation or argument by which to support the charge; as he would not failed to have done, was fair and honest proof as easy to him as confident and groundless assertions. Let us take care to understand him right.

When this false and insolent accuser of his brethren says, it is a truth too evident to be denied, that we have departed from the Doctrines of the Reformation, &c. of whom  
 doth

doth he speak? Not of himself and his party to be sure, the only Gospel Preachers. It must therefore be of the rest of the Clergy, on whom in return for their suspecting him of beginning to lean towards Enthusiasm, he bestows the sneering title of Court Divines and Ministerial Clergy.—When he speaks of man's fall and recovery, as the Doctrines of the Reformation (though he doth not express himself so clearly as might be expected from such a peculiarly enlighten'd instructor) he means doubtless the state and explanation of these doctrines at that time, for the doctrines themselves are coeval with Christianity.

And again, when he affirms that we (the Ministerial Clergy) are departed from them, he means from that sense, a construction of them, in which the same were set forth in the Articles and Homilies.

Now if we have departed from the doctrines of man's fall and recovery, then I am afraid all the Church of *England* Clergy, up to the Reformation, are involv'd in the same error; since upon comparing notes, it will appear beyond all doubt, that their preaching and ours upon those important and fundamental points exactly correspond. From  
whence

whence it would seem, that the Church either at the first is ignorantly mistook in the true meaning of her own Articles and Homilies, by which those points were explained; or studiously preach'd them in a different sense for some purpose impenetrable to us, and which might puzzle even our great *Oedipus* in mystery to discover.

Thus you see his bold and arrogant censure is not confined to us, but in the consequence of it, extends to all who have gone before us, to all the venerable Prelates and Divines of our Church ever since the Reformation; our very Reformers themselves not excepted. All alike fall under the same accusation of having departed from the Doctrines of the Articles and Homilies of our pure and reformed Church. And why? For a reason, modest as the man, because they have, and as we still do continue, to preach them, in a sense in which he either doth not, or will not understand them.

And certainly after this it can be doing him no wrong to suppose him leaning to Enthusiasm, since the best apology that can be made for such almost unparalleled assurance, is to pronounce him altogether an Enthusiast.

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This charge of our contradicting our Articles and Homilies, with respect to man's fall and recovery, and the various doctrines therewith connected, such as Free Grace, Justification, imputative Merits, the New Birth, the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, &c. is in the Mouth of every *Methodist*, and by them generally believed to be true, without the least examination. Such is the blind and implicit trust that these infatuated people place in their teachers; whose very calumnies they reverence, as the infallible dictates of the Spirit of Truth. And that this is a mere calumny no man can have the least reasonable doubt, who hath but a tolerable acquaintance with these Articles and Homilies from which we are said to have departed, and which few of our revilers can be supposed to have read, or to be even capable of reading.

We readily and gladly acknowledge that we do not preach Free Grace, Justification, with the rest of the Doctrines before-mentioned, in the same sense or manner in which they are used to be treated by their admired, and almost ador'd *Diotrephes*, who thus *prateth against us, and teacheth them also to prate against us with malicious words.* But  
if

if we preach them in a sense agreeable to the analogy of holy writ, (call'd by St. *Paul the proportion of Faith*) as interpreted by the common consent and judgment of the Primitive Fathers, to the constant usage of our Church from the time of the Reformation, and to the true and genuine sense of the Articles and Homilies then instituted and appointed, (and we desire nothing more than that all our discourses from the pulpit, upon those, or whatever other subjects, may be fairly tried by those authorities) if this, I say, is our manner of preaching, then we may truly assert that we preach not ourselves, as far as concerns our doctrine: which was the first point to be proved.

The next is, that we are equally undeserving of that imputation, with respect to our motive: or that we do not so preach ourselves, as to make our preaching center, or terminate in ourselves, or subservient to our own ambition or secular interest, rather than the glory of God, and the good of our souls.

This I am now to speak to.—

And first, I shall endeavour to shew that ambition is not the end of our preaching; but that we may venture to say with St. *Paul, Neither of Men seek we glory.*— By  
which

which I do not mean that we seek not their approbation and regard, nor was this the Apostle's meaning; but that we do not court their esteem merely for our own sakes; or calculate our discourses for catching their applause, or provoking their acclamations.— When I told you that ambition is not the end of our preaching, I consider'd it, as it is generally considered by Ethick Writers, in the bad sense of the word; as signifying pride and vain glory: But I ought to observe, that it hath also a good sense, in which it signifies that noble and generous principle in human nature, by which we are stimulated to the worthiest actions, and without which virtue would want one of it's most powerful incentives.—There is no affection more useful to Society, than ambition under the government and controul of modesty, and prudence. Within these limits we are, and ought to be ambitious: That is, we are desirous of being approved ourselves, but more studious of the improvement of our hearers, the one in order to the other. Ambition, in this good sense of the word, hath the countenance of the great Apostle before quoted. *Let the Elders, saith he, that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially*



*pecially they who labour in the Word and Doctrine.* He would never have proposed such a reward, if it had not been both lawful and laudable to seek and strive for it. This therefore we all do, though not with equal success, and yet sure I am we might all succeed much better than we can boast, did they who come to hear us, bring with them proper and suitable affections, or were they as well disposed to be *profited* as *entertained*: In which if they are wanting the fault is not in us, but in themselves.

The Lectures only are ours; their ears and hearts are their own. Yet those we labour to open, and these influence, beseeching the Almighty to bless our weak, but well-meant endeavours: Not indeed prefacing or ushering in every new topick, or head of discourse, with a solemn and rapturous invocation upon his Holy Spirit (as the manner of some is) which seems to favour more of *Affectation* than *Faith*, of *Puritanism* than *Piety*, but invoking it sufficiently to shew that we depend upon the Divine Grace, for rendring our preaching effectual to the end intended by it, and that we verily believe with *St. Paul*, that *neither is he that planteth, any thing, neither is he that watereth,*  
*but*

*but God, that giveth the increase.*—But now, tho' as in duty bound, we aim at *Reputation*, yet not at *Popularity* Was this the object in view; we should steer a different course than what we do in pursuit of it. If it was our ambition to become the idols of the undistinguishing croud, we should interest ourselves in their passions, and impose upon their ignorance and credulity:—We should open our Mouths in dark parables, and bring new and strange things to their ears:—We should be ever and anon looking out for a fresh assortment of types and allegories; and over the plainest truths throw the pleasing veil of mystery, by which to gain their admiration, and work their astonishment. And to induce them to believe that such our discoveries are the effect of some secret and special revelation:—We should tell them that we had laid down all our learning at the feet of Jesus, and vainly triumph, though with seeming great humility, in this foolishness of preaching. These, with various others of the same kind, are the arts we should study and practice, if we sought only to draw the weak and wondring Populace after us. Instead of which we treat men as reasonable creatures; apply to  
their

their rational powers and faculties, and use the best means we can, not to *amuse* their *heads*, but to *amend* their *hearts*.—We set before them the saving truths of the Gospel in the most simple and artless dress, in which we can possibly cloath them, not darkning our instructions by *words without knowledge*, nor by obscure and ambiguous terms and phrases making things appear mysterious, which in their own nature are far otherwise, but expressing our thoughts in the easiest and most intelligible language; choosing rather to be understood, than admired, or to *satisfy* rather than *surprise*. In short, it is our care to help their faith without hurting their reason, and to stir up their passions, without prostituting either the dignity or decency of the pulpit. And as this is, at least, in these our days, of all others, the most unpopular way of preaching, it evidently follows that the end of ours cannot be ambition, or vain-glory.

Secondly, Let it be enquired whether secular interest or avarice, be our principal motive. And I hope there will be no difficulty in shewing, that we are equally clear of this imputation, and may again say with the  
 same

same Apostle, *neither use we flattering words for a cloke of covetousness.*

We are indeed accused, (yea of our own selves hath one such accuser arose) of having apostatiz'd from those doctrines, to the truth of which we had both swore and subscribed, and still continue to keep up the same oaths and subscriptions, as occasion requires, or honour or preferment calls. Which most acrimonious and arrogant accusation hath only this to support it, that we do not (as you have been told before) understand and preach such doctrines in the same sense in which he doth. Alas! if too much (I must not say *learning*, for I lately hinted at whose feet he hath deposited that treasure, but too much) *pride* had not made him mad, he could not but have been aware with what greater justice this his own censure might be retorted upon himself, for not understanding and preaching them in the same sense that we do; following (as I have said) the analogy of Scripture, as interpreted by the purest and most primitive antiquity. Surely it is the kindest and most charitable thing, that can be thought of him, that he must have drank deep of the very dregs of Enthusiasm, who after differing himself from

fo great authority, dared to charge fo many of his brethren the Clergy, with prostitution, as presume to differ from him. There cannot well be a stronger proof either that he is craz'd enough to imagine himself favour'd with some secret and extraordinary communion with the Divine Spirit, or crafty enough to seek, that his silly and superstitious followers should entertain that high opinion of him.

But perhaps his meaning is not that we disbelieve the Doctrines, to which we have sworn and subscribed, but that we have abjured or renounced them by inculcating contrary Doctrines. And indeed, tho' he hath not expressly *said*, he hath plainly *insinuated*, that our sentiments of the Doctrines of the Reformation (as he styles them) are the same with his, and our preaching would be so too, if we, like him, would make a conscience of our oaths and subscriptions, and not risk our eternal salvation for any present honour or preferment. So that the only difference betwixt us at last is this, that he hath a scrupulous conscience; we no conscience at all; But accommodate our preaching to our conveniency, or worldly interest.

If this be really the case, I am afraid we

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understand our interest as little as our duty and are not worse *Priests* than *Politicians*. For sure I am, the doctrines we preach carry us far out of the road to *Interest*, as I have shewed you they do to *Popularity*. We must be quite strangers to the world, if we think of making men our friends by constantly opposing their passions, and crossing their inclinations.

The Gospel, upon it's first publication, would have made a more speedy and amazing progress than it did, had it not been for the purity and severity of it's precepts; and can we hope, by pressing home the same precepts to men's hearts, instead of opposition, to meet with favour? *Am I become your enemy, saith the Apostle to the Galatians, because I tell you the truth?* intimating their being displeas'd, at his dealing freely and ingenuously with them, in admonishing them of their error and their danger; and can we suppose others will be better pleas'd with us for using the same freedom? Will the unrighteous be our friend, for telling him that *without Holiness no man shall see God?* The unjust, there is a Being *who beholdeth the wrong, and will severely recompence the wrong doer?* The oppressor, that  
God

*God will defend the cause of the oppressed, and spoil the soul of him that spoileth them? The Proud, that pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction? The Voluptuary, that the objects of his delight lead to the chambers of death, and that he who liveth in pleasure, is dead even whilst he liveth? The Intemperate, that he must put a knife to his throat: The Slothful, that he must go to the ant to learn wisdom: And the Malicious and Revengeful, that he must forgive, if he expects forgiveness at the hands of God?—Is this the way to gain friends? But this is the course we pursue. We preach up the necessity of righteousness and holiness of life; of justice and charity; of temperance and humility, and all other branches of Christian Morality. We preach up the necessity of mortification and self-denial; assuring our auditors, that if they would rise with Christ, they must crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. These are hard sayings, and who can bear them. We preach up the necessity of true repentance and universal obedience. These are harder duties, and who can perform them? But then we inform or remind them, for their encouragement, that our sufficiency is not of our-*

*selves, but of God*; who freely vouchsafeth the assistance of his Holy Spirit to them who with faith and fervency pray for it.—In short, the doctrines we preach are quite against the grain of corrupt nature; are at perpetual enmity with the vices and follies of mankind: And therefore, if this is the craft, by which we propose to get either *wealth*, or *worship*, however little we may have of *conscience*, it is certain we have less of *cunning* about us.

And yet we are not so ignorant (as will appear from my next Discourse) as not to know that there is a method of preaching extremely well adapted to the purpose, as well of interest, as vain-glory: A method how effectual to both these ends every day's experience may convince us: A method, which procures for those who give into it, reverence nearly approaching to idolatry, and rewards hardly to be equalled: A method which levies large contributions upon the weak and credulous, of whatsoever age, sex, or quality; and is the greatest tax upon ignorance and superstition that this kingdom perhaps ever knew.

How is it then, that being so well acquainted with the honours and profits attend-



attending this method, we do not close with it at once? It begins to look as if we had some honesty left, And as if the charge of making no conscience of oaths and subscriptions, belongs not to us; but to those, who disappointed of the preferment due to their supposed merit, or impatient to wait for it, in the old and regular way, chose to try their fortune, in hopes of better success, by embarking on this new and more promising bottom.

And now having shew'd that we preach not our own unscriptural conceits or opinions. — That by our preaching we seek neither our own glory, nor interest, and consequently, That we do not preach ourselves.

It would be necessary that I should proceed to shew, that we do preach Christ Jesus, had I not therein anticipated myself by my first discourse. In which I endeavoured to answer the objections of our adversaries, who affirm we do not, pretending that in our discourses, we dispense with the name of Jesus, neither make mention of his merits, except for form sake at the end of them; and that we preach only Heathen Morality, or at the best, Christian Morality upon Heathen Principles. Which

filly and groundless pretences were then considered more seriously and respectfully than they deserved.—To what was at that time offered, I shall now add a few words of an ingenious writer, very applicable to my purpose; and with which for the present I shall conclude.

“ Let not all the sneering contempt  
 “ with which the conceited Enthusiast  
 “ treats morality, induce any one to think  
 “ that when the obligations of righteousness  
 “ and temperance, and the certainty of a  
 “ judgment to come, that is the obligations  
 “ of virtue enforced with Gospel sanctions,  
 “ are preached up to him, and reasoned  
 “ upon by his teacher, that this is not to  
 “ preach Christ. Those who were once,  
 “ and those who are now the Ornaments  
 “ of our Church, have rais’d to themselves a  
 “ reputation, founded on the firmest ground,  
 “ and their labours will ever, in the judg-  
 “ ment of sober piety and solid learning,  
 “ be esteemed as proper models for other  
 “ Preachers to form themselves by; while  
 “ the wild rants of a fanatic *Methodist*, and  
 “ and the whimsical dreams of a fanciful  
 “ *Hutchinsonian*, meet with that contempt  
 “ which they deserve.”

S E R-

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# S E R M O N IV.

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2 COR. iv. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus  
the Lord.—*

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## P A R T IV.

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I Should not wonder, was I immediately answered in the words of the same Apostle, *Some preach Christ of strife and envy.* But then neither should I be concerned; since the same inspired writer would as quickly furnish me with a reply; *and some also of good will.* And sure I am, if my own heart doth not strangely deceive me, that I bear no *ill-will* to any one person upon earth.

I have, it must be confessed, in three Discourses earnestly contended against the people called *Methodists*: But that only *defensively*; in setting forth and exposing their gross misrepresentation and abuse of  
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the whole body of the Church of *England* Clergy, except a few infected members, who perfidiously join with them in their groundless clamours and invectives. And for this I have again the same apostolical authority. *For* (saith St. Paul to Titus) *there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped; who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake: Wherefore rebuke them sharply.* What rebuke then can be too sharp for the unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, with whom I am engaged? Who besides teaching things which they ought not, are mighty angry with us, that we will not do so too; who let loose the whole strength of their boisterous and brutish rage upon us, because we will not suffer them to prescribe to us new articles of faith, and a new method of preaching; who speak the bitterest words, and pour out the terriblest woes against us, because we will not, contrary to the tenor of scriptures, to the consent of Fathers, to sound Reason, and to Common Sense, adopt their ridiculous Conceits, and extravagant Errors.

If they would be pleased to point out any method of recommending and enforcing the  
prin-

principles and precepts of Christianity, so as these might have a greater influence upon the hearts and lives of it's Professors, or so as to make them better Men and better Christians, the only revenge I would take of them for all their insults and injuries, would be at once to become their Convert, and gladly fall into that method, whatever it was: And I may safely answer for my Brethren, the rest of the Clergy, who have been unfortunate enough to have incurr'd their merciless censure, that they would do the same thing. But as we are very well assured, not upon enthusiastical, but rational grounds, that the new way in which these men so much glory, hath a natural tendency to vitiate, instead of reforming the world; to poison the minds, and prejudice the lives of Christians; to make them careless of their morals, and yet confident of their salvation; (as I doubt not to prove in the sequel of this Discourse;) we therefore not only condemn it, but also think it our duty to caution our people not to be ensnared by it. 'Tis not, that we envy them the discovery of a safer and shorter way to Heaven than ever we were able to find out ourselves, but that we are convinced, that the way they  
may

may have dream'd to be so, is very deceitful and dangerous; and that in steadily pursuing the good old paths, and treading in the steps of the best and wisest of their Christian Brethren, both dead and living, none can possibly miscarry, if the fault is not their own.

The *Methodists* allow that those good old paths are fairly chalked out in the Gospel; but then they will have it that *they*, not *we*, are the true Gospel Preachers. That *we* only preach ourselves, but *they* Christ Jesus the Lord.—I have in my former Discourses set before you *our* manner of Preaching; and now, as bound by promise, shall proceed to give you some account of *theirs*. That so you may be able to determine the point between us.

And here I must once more beg leave to remind you, that to preach ourselves, is either, 1st, to inculcate and put off our own unscriptural notions or opinions: Or 2dly, to make the sole or main end of our preaching to center in ourselves: That is, in our own ambition, or interest, or any selfish view. Of this I endeavoured to shew that we ought reasonably to be acquitted.— That to preach Jesus Christ, is sincerely and conscientiously to preach in his name, for his  
glory,

glory, and for the common falvation, whatever he hath declared of himfelf, or the Scriptures have taught us concerning him. Of the neglect of which, I hope, I proved we cannot juftly be accufed.

By the fame Rules therefore, by which we have tryed *our own*, let us examine *the new way* of Preaching; and fee how far they, who are devoted to it, are to be juftified, or condemned, in both or either of thofe refpects.

The firft ftep then is to enquire whether or no they inculcate and put off their own unfcriptural notions or opinions.—By unfcriptural I mean (as was obferved in my firft Difcourfe) fuch as are not in the Scriptures fully and clearly exprefs'd; or may not therefrom be rationally and fairly inferred.—But becaufe the Scriptures are capable of various fenfes or interpretations, therefore I muft add (as I did then) according to the fenfe in which the fame were underftood by the univerfal Church in the moft pure and primitive ages of Chriftianity, which muft be prefumed to have been the beft interpreters of them.—So that the queftion is, whether our Preachers after the new ftile advance no doctrine, or opinions

nions (or more properly I should have said, whimsies or conceits) which have no foundation either in Scripture, or Reason, or Common Sense. I will not say which have been spun out of their own wild, or over-heated imagination; for they are not so much the *Inventors*, as the *Revivers* of them. Most of the strange notions which they propagate being no other than old errors new vamp'd; but yet not so altered or disguised, but that any one who is acquainted with the History of the Heresies that have infested the Christian Church from the time of its first institution, may easily discover their original.

To convince you that I do not charge them falsely or rashly, in affirming, that in the place of Scripture they are very apt to substitute their own whimsies and conceits, I will give you a specimen of their preaching from a Discourse published by the very *Prince*, or *President* of the *Hutchinsonian Methodists*, by him intituled *The Parable of the dry Bones*. But which ought more properly to be called *The Vision of Ezekiel*, portending the deliverance of the *Jews* from their captivity. If you look into the 37th chapter of his Prophecy, you will find that  
such



such Vision was at once prophetic and typical, and cannot help seeing how naturally their own hopeless state is represented by the dry bones, and how justly their recovery is prefigured by the revival of them. And thus indeed it was explained to the Prophet by the Holy Spirit himself. *Son of man, these Bones are the whole House of Israel. Behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: Therefore prophecy and say unto them, thus saith the Lord God, behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the Land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.*

Our Author allows (how is it possible he should do otherwise) that in this sense the Prophecy was to be understood, and accordingly hath been fulfilled. But yet he will have it, that this is not its full sense; that we are to understand more by it: and that we are by no means to rest here.

One would think we might here rest very well satisfied, since this is the sense, nay the explanatory sense of the Spirit of God: But it seems besides an *outward and literal*, it hath an *inward and spiritual sense*; and as the Spirit hath only vouchsafed us the one,  
*be*

*he* is communicative enough to reveal to us the other. “ We have (he tells us) in the “ spiritual sense of this Parable, a description “ of man in his natural state, as dead in “ trespasses and sins.—In his awakened state, “ as unable to do any thing to raise himself “ from the death of sin to newness of life. “ —And in his justified state: as raised to “ spiritual and divine life by Christ, who is “ the life of the world, and by the effectual “ working of his good Spirit.”

But how knows he that *this* is it's spiritual sense? Whence had he his intelligence? who informed him that any spiritual sense at all was here intended? The Spirit himself in explaining it gave not the least hint of any such intention: By what authority therefore doth that confident man dare to improve and refine upon the explanation of that infallible interpreter? I'm sure he ought to have (whether he hath or no) some extraordinary light, or special direction from Heaven, to warrant such apparent presumption.

But it seems rather to me, upon the most careful perusal of this Discourse, that the Author having in the first place determined to treat on man in his three different states  
just

just now mentioned, viz. his natural, his awakened, and his justified state, did not make choice of his *Text* till he had in his own mind pretty well formed and prepared his *Matter*; to which he afterwards found *Ezekiel's* Vision of the dry bones, might, with good management be happily accommodated; as being most favourable to the flights and vagaries of that dissolute, or unbridled fancy which runs riot through the whole performance. This I only offer as my own private opinion; in which, if I should be mistaken, he ought for once to excuse me, when he considers how many airy castles himself hath built upon worse grounded conjectures. Be that however as it will, whether it was his design to suit the text to the matter, or the matter to the text, the lot fell upon the dry bones.

As the *literal* sense of the Prophecy would not serve his turn, he therefore hath recourse to what he calls the *spiritual*. And now behold him (as a very ingenious Writer expresseth it) “lifting up his hearers into  
 “ the clouds of Allegory, or losing them in  
 “ the wilds of Mysticism.”— “By the valley which was full of bones (he tells  
 “ them) they are further to understand the  
 valley

“ valley of the shadow of death.—By the  
 “ *dry bones, Souls dead in trespasses and sins.*  
 “ —By prophesying upon the *one*, preach-  
 “ ing to the *other*.—By the *shaking of the*  
 “ *dry bones*, when after *Ezekiel's* prophecy-  
 “ ing, they came together, bone to his bone,  
 “ is further meant as *great a shaking in the*  
 “ *soul of the sinner*, when he is awakened,  
 “ and convinced of Sin.—By the *sinews and*  
 “ *flesh* that came upon them, and the *skin*  
 “ that covered them, the *externals of Religion*,  
 “ good works, ordinances, &c.—And by  
 “ the *Breath* which came into them, the  
 “ *Influence of the Holy Spirit*, by which poor  
 “ dead Sinners are born again unto Righ-  
 “ teousness, and assured of their Justifica-  
 “ tion to Life.”

Presuming that these mysteries lie veiled  
 under the *Letter* of the Prophecy, observe  
 how he puts his own words into the mouths  
 both of the Spirit and the Prophet, by way  
 of further illustration.

The Prophet saith, *The Hand of the Lord*  
*was upon me, and carried me in the Spirit of*  
*the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the*  
*valley, which was full of bones.* The  
 Preacher adds, “ Even in the midst of the  
 “ valley of the shadow of death, where I  
 “ saw

“ saw sin and corruption reigning, and  
 “ where I beheld the souls of men as dead  
 “ in trespasses and sins, as dead to God,  
 “ and to the things of *spiritual* and divine  
 “ life, as dry and dead bones are to the  
 “ offices of *animal* life.—The Prophet saith,  
*and he* (the Spirit) *caused me to pass by them*  
 (the dry bones) *round about, and behold there*  
*were very many, upon the face of the valley,*  
*and lo, they were very dry.* The Preacher  
 saith, “ Under the death of the outward  
 “ man, the Prophet was made to see the  
 “ death of the inward man. The Spirit of  
 “ the Lord gave him a full view of those  
 “ souls dead in sin, and their number was  
 “ very great, and their condition was very  
 “ dead; they had so long, so entirely lost  
 “ all spiritual life, that the bones of dead  
 “ men, from which the flesh is worn quite  
 “ off, and which are become exceedingly  
 “ dry, were not farther removed from life,  
 “ than the souls thus dead in trespasses and  
 “ sins.—The Spirit saith to Ezekiel, *Son*  
*of man can these bones live?* The Preacher,  
 “ Is there any power that is able to quicken  
 “ them (that is, those dead souls) to new-  
 “ nefs of life?—The Prophet answereth  
 for himself, *O Lord God thou knowest.* The

Preacher puts in a further answer for him,  
 “Thou only knowest, what power is re-  
 quifite to raife a foul dead in fin. All the  
 powers in nature, I am certain, cannot  
 do it”.—Such shocking liberties doth  
 this vain, presumptuous man take with  
 the Divine Spirit and his Holy Prophet,  
 in his strange paraphrafe (as he calls it)  
 upon their words.

Dr. *Goodman* in his excellent difcourse  
 intituled, “The Penitent pardoned,” (than  
 which I don’t know a better antidote againft  
 the spreading infection of modern Enthufiafm)  
 fpeaks of fome, “Who having taken  
 their rife from the letter of a text, have  
 foar’d fo aloft in a ftain of allegory, that  
 they have gone a pitch beyond all fober  
 fenfe, and ftain’d a metaphor fo far, that  
 they have broken it all in pieces. Of  
 others, who have forced fimilitudes to run  
 on all four, have made fome obfcure and  
 far-fetch’d refemblance to countenance  
 their own dreams and fancies, and repre-  
 fented the Holy Spirit of God as inti-  
 mating what he never intended. I remem-  
 ber alfo, fays he, what an acute perfon of  
 the laft age pronounced, (meaning the  
 learned and judicious Lord *Bacon*) that  
 it

“ it was not to be called an *Exposition*, but  
 “ a *Divination*, which departed from the  
 “ Letter, and that he who used such licence  
 “ was rather a *Law-Maker*, than an *Inter-*  
 “ *preter of Laws*, and might at this rate  
 “ dictate whatsoever he pleased.” — These  
 are all very bold and daring Expositors, but  
 yet fall far short of our inimitable Para-  
 phrast; who soars upon the wings of allegory  
 not only beyond all sober sense, but even  
 to the highest pitch of frenzy: Who not  
 only by forc'd similitudes, and obscure and  
 far-fetch'd resemblances, the better to recom-  
 mend his own dreams and fancies, represents  
 the Holy Spirit of God as intimating what  
 he never intended, but also opposeth his  
 express intimation and intention. Who not  
 only *divines* where he should *expound*, but  
 also expounds the scriptures in a sense differ-  
 ent from that which is declared to be the  
 true sense, by that all-wise, and all-gracious  
 Instructor, by whose inspiration they were  
 written. For I have already shew'd you  
 that the Spirit hath expressly inform'd us that  
 by the dry Bones is meant the whole house  
 of *Israel*, and by the revival of them their  
 return to the Land of *Israel* from the  
*Babylonish* captivity; whereas on the con-

trary our sagacious and penetrating Commentator assures us, that by the one is mystically signified dead souls, and by the other, their being quickened to newness of life.

But now, besides the arrogance of this paraphrase, I must not part with it, without taking some notice of it's absurdity.

*Ezekiel* (speaking of the dry bones) saith *He*, (the Spirit) *caused me to pass by them round about*, which our Author (as you may remember) thus further explains, "the Spirit of the Lord gave him a full view of those souls dead in sin." A full view of *Souls*, whether dead, or living, it must be confess'd, is a very amazing spectacle; but we are to consider who it was that saw it, for this was not the *Prophet's* vision, but *his own*.

Again, having as I before observed put this question into the mouth of the Spirit, "Son of man, is there any power that is able to quicken these dead souls to newness of life?" And likewise this answer into the mouth of *Ezekiel*, "O Lord God, thou only knowest what power is requisite to raise a soul dead in sin. All the powers in nature, I am certain, cannot do it. They can no more give life to a dead soul, than



“ than they can raise the Bones of a dead  
 “ Man to life.” He proceeds and says,  
 “ This was the Prophet’s opinion.” I doubt  
 not but *this* would have been the *Prophet’s*  
*opinion*, had *that* been the *Spirit’s question*,  
 but the misfortune is, the *Question* and the  
*Answer* are both the *Preacher’s*. The ques-  
 tion of the *Spirit* was no more than this,  
*Son of man can these bones live?* The answer  
 of the *Prophet* only this, *O Lord God thou*  
*knowest*. All the rest is just what the spiri-  
 tual painter pleaseth. However, altho’,  
 says he, this was the Prophet’s opinion, yet  
*the Lord said unto him, prophesy upon*  
*these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones,*  
*hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the*  
*Lord God, behold I will lay sinews upon you,*  
*and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover*  
*you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye*  
*shall live, and ye shall know that I am the*  
*Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded.*  
 And now vain philosophy look well to thy  
 self, or all thy fair fabrick will be demolished  
 at once. “ He did not (saith our marvel-  
 “ lous Annotator) consult carnal reason,  
 “ which would have shew’d him the absur-  
 “ dity of doing what God commanded,  
 “ but he instantly obeyed, and began preach-

“ ing to the dry bones, and calling upon  
 “ them to hear the word of the Lord.  
 Adding in great triumph, “ Would not some  
 “ of you, my brethren, have taken him to  
 “ be quite difordered in his head, if you  
 “ had feen him preaching in a Church-  
 “ yard, to a great number of dead, dry  
 “ bones? Would not you have thought  
 “ *Ezekiel* as mad as any of our modern  
 “ Enthusiafts? For men reproach and ridi-  
 “ cule the Minifters of the Gospel for doing  
 “ the very fame thing that he did. We are  
 “ reckoned vifionaries and madmen, and  
 “ what not, becaufe after his example we  
 “ preach the Word of the Lord to the  
 “ dead.”

That is very cruel indeed.—But here  
 pleafe to obferve, that fond as our fublime  
 Author and Orator is of vifions, yet for a  
 good purpofe he can be content to realize  
 them, or cloath them with fubftance. It  
 hath been always fuppofed that *Ezekiel's*  
*prophecying upon*, or (as this learned Critick  
 choofeth to render it) *preaching to* the dry  
 bones, with all that follows, had been no  
 other than an imaginary fcene or represen-  
 tation, by which to imprint more ftrongly  
 upon his mind God's merciful defign of  
 bring-

bringing back the *Jews* from their captive state, and at the same time to make a deeper impression upon the hearts of that people to whom he was sent. But it seems all this was not scenical, but real, and that the Prophet did truly and literally preach to the dry bones. Our most surprising Preacher hath given us his text, and taken it for his own. *O ye dry bones bear the Word of the Lord.* 'Tis pity but he had favoured us with his sermon too, which doubtless would have been as curious as the old Hermit's to the Fishes. But whatever was the sermon, I must frankly acknowledge, that had I myself seen *Ezekiel* preaching in a Church-Yard to a congregation of dry Bones, I should have been apt to suspect him as not altogether right in his head: And I more than suspect that our modern Declaimers in pretending after his example to do the same thing (allowing them to be sincere in such pretensions) are altogether mad.—I must not forget to observe, that our exquisite Paraphrast, with respect to the reality of *Ezekiel's* preaching to the dry bones, seems to have a very short memory. For in the first words of his Commentary he speaks of that Prophecy, or Parable, or the Trans-

action

actions therein represented or specified, as figurative and visionary. “ The Prophet  
 “ begins, saith he, with informing us, that  
 “ it was the Eternal Spirit, who shewed  
 “ him this *Visison.*” And yet here he speaks  
 of the Prophet’s preaching to the dry bones  
 as of a *true and literal fact.* How is this  
 to be accounted for, except by supposing  
 that, having forgot himself, he makes it  
 either the one, or the other, as best suits his  
 conveniency. But if he will maintain that  
 he and his Associates, after the Prophet’s  
 example, preach the word of the Lord *to*  
*the dead,* then consequently he must stick to  
 his latter assertion, that the Prophet did really  
 and truly preach *to the dry bones.*—This  
 ridiculous fact he either believes, or at least  
 is desirous that his poor deluded followers  
 should believe it. Upon the credit of this  
 whim the ingenuity of his so moving and  
 awakening discourse mainly depends. With-  
 out this there would be no room for his  
 saying “ He (the Prophet) preached as he  
 “ was commanded, and so do we. The  
 “ blessed Jesus sends us to preach the word  
 “ to dry bones, and we obey. Without  
 “ this there would be no room for boasting,  
 “ Thanks be to God for setting his seal to  
 “ the

“ the truth of our words, by awakening  
 “ the dead through our weak ministry”.  
 Without this there would be no room for ap-  
 plying to himself and his party these Words  
 of *Ezekiel*, *So I prophesied as the Lord com-*  
*manded me, and the breath came into them,*  
*(that is into the dry bones) and they lived,*  
*and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great*  
*army.* Hear the Preacher’s ostentatious ap-  
 plication, “ Glory be to God for daily ful-  
 “ filling this part of the Parable. His good  
 “ Spirit daily awakens poor dead sinners,  
 “ and puts the breath of the Divine Life  
 “ into them, and this he does by the weak-  
 “ est means, even by the foolishness of  
 “ preaching. He sends us out to preach;  
 “ bids us call to the dead: We do as we  
 “ are commanded; but we know that we  
 “ could no more raise a dead soul from the  
 “ grave of sin, than we could raise a dead  
 “ body from the grave of corruption. We  
 “ speak our Lord’s words, and he blesteth  
 “ them, He sends his Grace along with  
 “ them, and the dead hear his voice; they  
 “ awake.”

From hence it is very evident, that either  
 he is firmly persuaded himself that the Pro-  
 phet *Ezekiel* actually preached to the dry  
 bones,

bones, and then he can have no reason to complain that he is deemed an Enthusiast; or else that he seeks to impose upon the blindness and stupidity of others, and then he justly deserves a much severer and more ignominious title.

Whether-soever of these characters he may choose, I hope it appears plainly from the specimen I have given you, that the *Hutchinsonian* and *Methodist* Preachers, (who now seem to be incorporated into one body) are very apt to substitute their own whimsies and conceits into the place of scripture; or which is the same thing, to countenance and set off the one, by straining and racking the other. You cannot but see clearly from the wild and arbitrary manner in which their chief Oracle or Leader presumes to interpret those sacred Records, that though they deal much in scripture, they are nevertheless very unscriptural Preachers, and that they exactly copy after those antient Hereticks who turned all the scriptures into allegory, and those others of later date, who held that the Spiritual Understanding is the Word of God. And I think I may now be excused for saying of his Discourse or Commentary upon *Ezekiel's* Vision of the  
 Dry

Dry Bones, that no bones in a Church-yard were ever more indecently and rudely treated or tortured by the wanton school-boy, than those in that Parable (as he styles it) by the sportive imagination of this Mystic Preacher.

But, my Brethren, though the extracts already made from that performance, have been sufficient to expose the presumption and absurdity of such his interpretations, it is also proper that I continue my animadversions upon it, by which to shew you the dangerous tendency and design of it, and the pernicious notions or doctrines which slyly and insidiously lurk beneath it, and which few are aware of till after their being initiated into his mysteries. I must therefore beg you will dispense with my engagement to bring my subject at this time to it's full period. And must trust also in your patience so long as the further prosecution of it shall seem to be necessary.

I shall conclude at present with two or three sentences of scripture, which the *Methodists* are very ready to apply to, *us*, but which I doubt not you will at once discern are far more justly applicable to *themselves*.

*Ye that prophesy out of your own hearts,  
hear*

*hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God. Woe unto the foolish Prophets that follow their own Spirit, and have seen nothing. Behold I am against you, saith the Lord, and mine hand shall be upon the Prophets that see vanity, and divine lies.---Hearken not unto the words of the Prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision out of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.*



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# S E R M O N V.

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2 COR. iv. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.—*

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## P A R T V.

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**T**HIS is the character which the *Methodist* Preachers claim to *themselves*, and liberally bestow the reverse of it upon *us*. The Question therefore is whether of us hath the best right to the one: and whether of us most justly and deservedly falls under the imputation of the other.

That ye may be the better able to judge of this Question, I have shewed you, first, What is meant by preaching ourselves. secondly, What by preaching Christ Jesus.

• I told you (and I hope I was not mistaken) that to preach ourselves, is either to inculcate and put off our own private notions or opinions, unwarranted by the Word of God

God

God, when rightly interpreted: Or to make the sole or main end of our preaching to center or terminate in our selves, that is in our own vain-glory, or interest, or any other selfish view, or design.

That to preach Christ Jesus, is with all simplicity and sincerity to preach in his name, for his glory, and for the good of souls, whatever he hath declared of himself, or the scriptures have taught us concerning him, as the author and founder of our most holy Religion; and more especially as our Saviour and Redeemer.

By these Rules I have tried our manner of preaching; from which, I trust, it appeared, that we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus.

In my last Discourse, I entered upon the examination of the method of the Preachers, after the new stile. And, according to the same rules, my first enquiry was, whether they do, or do not, in their preaching advance any private and unscriptural notions or opinions.—And to prove that they do, I instanced, in that remarkable Sermon published by the very *Gamaliel* of the Sect, intituled by him, *The Parable of the Dry Bones*; but which, (as I then observed)

ought

ought more properly to be called, *The Vision of Ezekiel*, portending the deliverance of the *Jews* from the *Babylonish* captivity.

In this Sermon I pointed out various whimsies and conceits of the Author, which have no foundation in Scripture, or Reason, or Common Sense.

I shewed you both the arrogance and absurdity of his interpretation of that prophetic type or vision.

I observed, that tho' the Holy Spirit himself had vouchsafed to interpret it in *one* sense, yet he has presumed to give it us in *another*. And that, the better to countenance his own, he had, in his vain and arbitrary paraphrase, ventured to put words into the mouth as well of the Spirit, as of the Prophet.

I insisted that *Ezekiel's* *prophecy* upon (which our inspired Critick chooseth to render *preaching unto*) the dry bones, with all that appertains to it, hath ever been taken for an imaginary scene, or representation, by which to imprint the more strongly upon his understanding, God's merciful purpose of bringing back the children of *Israel* from their captive state; and, at the same time thereby to make a deeper impression upon  
the

the hearts of that people, to whom he was sent: But that our Commentator understands it, or at least would have his blind and deluded followers understand it, not as *visionary*, but real, or as if the Prophet did *truly and literally* preach to the dry bones, forgetting that he himself, in the very beginning of his Commentary had called it a Vision. But 'tis usual for men thus to *betray themselves*, when they are seeking to *impose upon others*. And therefore he should be advised for the future, amidst that variety of ejaculatory invocations and petitions, with which his harangues from the pulpit are so engagingly interlarded, not to forget to throw in one, for a better memory.

It can hardly be conceived, that he should be so altogether delirious, as to believe *that* prophesying, or preaching of *Ezekiel*, to have been a real fact: And ye t(as I then observed) he treats of it as if he did. And indeed not only *that*, but likewise the rest of the circumstances accompanying it: Such as the shaking of the bones, when they came together, bone to his bone.—The sinews and the flesh coming upon them.—The skin covering them:—And the breath coming into them:—All these things, I say, he  
speaks

ſpeaks of, as if they were really and actually done. And all the ingenuity of this ſo moving and awakening Diſcourſe depends upon the reality of them.

But, beſides the preſumption and ſtupidity, of his interpretation of that prophetic and typical Viſion, I further intimated to you, that it hath a dangerous deſign and tendency; and that many falſe and pernicious doctrines lurk beneath it, which probably few are aware of, till after their being initiated into his myſteries.

This point, therefore, I ſhall now endeavour to evince or make good.

It muſt appear to every one, who hath read and conſidered the Diſcourſe in contemplation, that the reaſon why the Author was willing to treat the ſubject of it, rather as a Parable, than a Prophecy, was, becauſe in that way he could more commodiouſly adapt the particulars, or circumſtances of which it conſiſts, to thoſe wild notions of Original Sin, the New Birth, the Grace of God, the Inſpiration of the Spirit, Juſtification by Faith alone in the Merits of Chriſt, &c. which the *Methodiſt* Preachers conſtantly and uniformly inculcate, and which

are industriously and infidiously conveyed throughout this whole performance.

It is likewise very evident that had he been pleas'd to have handled his Subject in the most rational and plain and useful manner, he would have taken occasion from it to set forth the hard and hopeless state or condition of the *Jews* at the time, when the Prophecy was delivered to them; with the veracity and goodness of God, display'd in the Completion of it: And thence to have recommended and enforced the great Duty of **Trust** in the divine Providence, in the worst of times and under the severest Trials.—These with many other the like reflections or considerations would naturally have arose from the passage of Scripture he had to do with, and would have tended much more to the improvement and true edification of his Hearers, than those, which he most unnaturally extorted or forc'd from it.—Or as he is a very great Admirer and curious Decypherer of Types, he might with sobriety and modesty enough have suppos'd the revival of the dry Bones in his Text to have been typical of the general Resurrection.

He did indeed take notice when that God brought the *Jews* from their Graves the literal

ral sense of the Prophecy was fulfill'd. He plac'd them in their own Land and restor'd the Life of their civil and ecclesiastical Policy. He perform'd what he had spoken, and they knew, that he was the Lord their God.—“ But is this (says he) the full sense  
 “ of this Parable? Are we to understand  
 “ nothing more by it than this outward com-  
 “ pletion Are we to rest here? By no means.”—

No certainly. For had he rested here, what should we have done for his ingenious Paraphrase and beautiful Allegory? Had this been all the good that was to be got out of the dry Bones, he would never have wasted his chymical skill upon them. Had he made no further use of them than this, we had lost all those pretty allusions and lively images which their violent shaking, even as it were an Earthquake among them; the Sinews and Flesh that came upon them; the Skin that cover'd them, the Breath that came into them, and their standing up upon their Feet, an exceeding great Army furnish'd out to his Imagination: All the charming similitudes arising from these various circumstances we had entirely lost, had he rested in the literal sense of the parable. But what would

have been *our* Loss, compar'd to that of the hungry disappointed Sheep that followed him? How would they have been mortified and have murmur'd, had he fed them only with dry Bones ungarnish'd with Invocations Ejaculations, or other pious arts of spiritual Cookery, in which he is so well practis'd, and with which he knows how to give favour and quickness to matter as dull and dry and insipid as them? And yet all these mischiefs wou'd have been the consequence of his resting in the outward and literal sense of the prophecy, or parable. To avoid which he wisely betook himself to the inward and spiritual sense of it; where he had a large and open field to range in, and in which his own wandring fancy might be freely indulg'd, and the weakness and folly of his people as freely entertain'd; where under an allegorical mask he might slyly broach and propogate such notions, as are not only contrary to sound doctrine, but to the very nature, end and design of Christianity itself.

In proof of this, I shall proceed to cite a few Passages from his own application of his discourse. “ For (says he) I cannot leave  
 “ the subject without making some short  
 “ practical Remarks, and may the Al-  
 “ mighty



“ mighty Spirit apply them to the necessities  
 “ of those who are concern'd in them.”

*To the necessities of those?* Doubtless he thought it an universal concern, why therefore did he limit his Petition? but to let such improprieties pass, which in flighty writers may easily be excus'd, he goes on.

“ And first I have a word to the dry Bones,  
 “ to the dead in Sin: We are all in this  
 “ State by Nature—dead in Trespasses and  
 “ Sins—dead to God, and the things of  
 “ God. If you believe the Scriptures you  
 “ cannot deny this. They describe your  
 “ Souls to be as incapable of performing any  
 “ of the offices of spiritual life, as the dry  
 “ Bones of a dead Body are of performing  
 “ the offices of Animal Life. If God and  
 “ his Word be true, this is the condition of  
 “ every one of us by nature, and it is the first  
 “ Work of Grace to convince us of it.  
 “ When the holy Spirit begins to move in  
 “ the Sinners Heart, he convinces him of  
 “ his lost and helpless State, and he sees and  
 “ finds that without Christ he can do nothing.  
 “ And can every one of you say from' his  
 “ own experience, I have had this Con-  
 “ viction? If you had, then one step is ta-  
 “ ken. May he who hath begun carry on

“ the Work, until he make you living Mem-  
 “ bers of Christ’s myſtical Body. But if you  
 “ were never yet convinc’d of your being by  
 “ nature dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, then  
 “ you are ſtill alienated from the Life of  
 “ God: For you will not ſeek Life from  
 “ him, until you be convinc’d of your want of  
 “ it.”

That you may the better underſtand what  
 is that Conviction and Experience of which  
 he here ſpeaks, “ behold, (ſays he in another  
 paragraph,) “ a matter worthy the cloſeſt at-  
 tention; there was a great ſhaking among the  
 “ dry Bones, even as it were an Earthquake  
 “ among them: For the word render’d ſha-  
 “ king is the Scripture Term for an Earth-  
 “ quake. And behold there is as great a ſha-  
 “ king in the Soul of the Sinner, when he is  
 “ awaken’d and convinc’d of Sin. He that  
 “ had been dead in Sin helpleſs and loſt for  
 “ ever in himſelf, then begins to quake and  
 “ tremble. He ſees the Corruption of his  
 “ Nature,——odious and abominable alto-  
 “ gether.—He ſees his life was one continued  
 “ ſcene of open injury to God and diſhonour  
 “ to his Law.—Looking back he beholds  
 “ nothing but Guilt; looking forward he  
 “ beholds nothing but everlaſting Deſtruc-  
 “ tion

“ tion ; upon which, Fear and a horrible  
 “ Dread overwhelm him. The holy Spirit  
 “ sets home these Convictions upon his Con-  
 “ science. He gives it such a sight of the  
 “ guilt and danger of Sin, that the Sinner  
 “ sees he cannot save himself.”

Now here I must observe that to be dead in Trespases and Sins is a metaphorical Expression, signifying the corruption of our nature in consequence of the Fall of our first Parents. Whence the Scriptures describe us, as born in Sin, and the Children of Wrath, that is, subject to the Wrath of God. So far we are agreed. But surely he puts that natural and universal Corruption in a false or unscriptural Light, when he pronounceth of every Man, that his Life hath been one continued Scene of open injury to God and dishonour to his Law.—It's very true, *that all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God, and that the whole World lyeth in Wickedness :* Yet notwithstanding this general Depravity of Nature, without doubt there are some, who may be called, though not absolutely, comparatively good; the Tenor of whose Lives, abating for human infirmities and imperfections, have been conformable to the Will and Laws of God ; and who in the enjoyment of

a good Conscience, can look both backward and forward with complacency and satisfaction. And therefore to fix upon all without distinction a character becoming the worst of Sinners is not only contradicting the plain and constant Language of Scripture, but also doing an open injury and dishonour to Christianity.

But what can he mean by saying, “ it is  
 “ the first Work of Grace to convince us of  
 “ Sin ?” Or (as he afterwards expresseth it)  
 “ of our being by nature dead in Trespasses  
 “ and Sins ?” He cannot be ignorant that  
 the Heathens were convinced of this. “ The  
 “ heathen Philosophers (saith A. B. Tillot.)  
 “ from the light of nature and their own ex-  
 “ perience and observation of themselves and  
 “ others, were very sensible that human na-  
 “ ture was very much declin’d from it’s pri-  
 “ mitive rectitude, and sunk into a weak and  
 “ drooping and sickly State, which they  
 “ called the moulting of the Wings of  
 “ the Soul.” And I am fully persuaded  
 that our Author, notwithstanding (as I here-  
 tofore hinted) his having laid down his Lear-  
 ning at the Feet of Jesus, retains enough of  
 it in memory, to confirm the truth of that  
 great and good Man’s Assertion. Why then  
 would

would he say so contrary to his own knowledge, that “ it is the first Work of Grace to convince us of our sinful or vitiated Nature? He knew very well that those E-thick Writers were satisfied that it was corrupted and alter’d, though they were strangers both to the *Cause* and to the *Cure*.—If reason was sufficient to convince *them* of that Truth, how is it that Grace is become necessary to convince *us*? *Grace* indeed we have great need of to persuade us to embrace the *Remedy*, but not to inform us of the *Disease*.—But by Grace I suppose he understands something more than is usually understood by it, otherwise he would never have thus expostulated with his Auditors, “ can every one of you say from his own experience. I have had this Conviction? That is did you quake and tremble, and was there a great shaking in your Soul as it were an Earthquake upon your being awaken’d and convinc’d of Sin? By Grace therefore he must here mean, not that ordinary Assistance of the Spirit, which is mercifully vouchsaf’d to all Christians, but, some extraordinary Operation of that divine Agent; as appears more evidently from his saying immediately afterwards, “ when “ the holy Spirit begins to move in the Sin-

"ners Heart, he convinces him of his loft  
 "and helpless State, and he sees and finds  
 "that without Christ he can do nothing."  
 But what puts it out of all doubt, that this  
 was his meaning, is that solemn and fervent  
 Petition with which he concludes this Para-  
 graph, and first Head of his pious Applicati-  
 on. "O Almighty Saviour, if there be any  
 "Persons here present in this State, that is,  
 "who are not convinc'd of their corrupt and  
 "sinful Nature, and who have not experienc'd  
 "such quaking and trembling and Convul-  
 "sions of Soul in token of their conviction,  
 "speak to the dry Bones. They can hear  
 "no Voice but thine. O let the all revi-  
 "ving Sound which Lazarus's dead Body  
 "heard, now be heard in every dead Heart.  
 "Now Lord Jesus prove thyself to be the Re-  
 "surrection and the Life. Call to every un-  
 "awaken'd Soul in this Congregation, and  
 "say *awake thou that sleepest and arise from the*  
 "*dead.* O Almighty Saviour send these  
 "Words home to every dead Sinner, that  
 "he may awake and be concern'd for his  
 "Salvation."——Amazing Confidence!  
 Observe with what freedom and familiarity  
 he calls upon our blessed Saviour for a Sign,  
 "Now Lord Jesus, prove thyself to be the  
 "Resurrection

“ Resurrection and the Life,” by reviving all the dead Souls in this Congregation, as thou didst the dead Body of Lazarus. If any thing can be more astonishing than this bold and presumptuous Invocation and Petition, it is the greedy Ears into which they are receiv’d; and foolish Hearts, which instead of trembling at ’em, are transported with them. But waving all further remarks upon them, which the bare mentioning of them renders needless, from hence it is plain even to Demonstration, that when he instructs his People, that the first work of Grace is to convince them of Sin, or (as he explains himself) “ of their corrupt and sinful nature,” he means not that ordinary measure of Grace which *Is given to every Man to profit withal*, but the extraordinary and miraculous Influence of the blessed Spirit.

But there is another Prayer in the same Paragraph which must not pass unnoticed. For after having told his hearers that if from their own experience they could say they were convinced of sin, he adds, (as was before cited) “ May he who hath begun, carry on the good work until he make you *living* Members of Christ’s mystical Body.” — Why living Members?

Ye

Ye are all very sensible that the mystical Body of Christ is also a metaphorical manner of speech, signifying the Church; into which whosoever is admitted by Baptism, consequently becomes, in the same figurative sense, a Member of Christ. When therefore he speaks emphatically of *living* Members he distinguishes, where there is no difference. For certainly every baptized person, is a living Member of Christs mystical Body, so long as he is a Member of that visible Church or Society of Christians, which Christ hath gathered and established upon earth. And yet the Author had a meaning in that distinction, or a reason for so distinguishing, which shall be considered in the further prosecution of my remarks upon him.

The Discourse, my Brethren, which hath already led me on so far, and which I must beg leave to follow a little farther, (and a little more will bring us to the end of it) is the performance not of an illiterate and ignorant (as is the case in general of that party, of which our Author is one of the principal Leaders) but of a learned and artful Preacher, who seems to have a peculiar gift of dressing up the most pestilent doctrines in the most  
pleasing



pleasing form: Pleasing only to those who want the skill to strip them of their disguise. Such doctrines are strongly yet subtilly insinuated in this favourite Discourse. Which therefore I hope will be a sufficient apology for my dwelling so long upon it.

My whole design in which is, not to shew the confirm'd *Methodist* his error, and to bring him back into the way of truth, (for no man who hath not lost his reason would attempt to convert or convince an Enthusiast) but to give others a proper sense of that preaching, which, ridiculous as it is, affects to be call'd the only true *Gospel-Preaching*; and to warn them, that henceforth they *be not like children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*



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# S E R M O N VI.

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2 COR. iv. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus  
the Lord.*—

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## P A R T VI.

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**W**ITHOUT any preface or recapitulation, I shall now proceed in my Remarks upon that notable Discourse intituled, *The Parable of the Dry Bones*, preached and published by one of the most learned amongst our new-fangled Pulpit Orators, who arrogantly set themselves up as the only Gospel Preachers.

“ While the Prophet (says he) was  
“ preaching, the voice of God spake to the  
“ heart, while he spake to the outward  
“ ears, and behold there was a great shak-  
“ ing. The sinner shook and trembled  
“ for fear.”

Now

Now here it is to be noted, that under the title or denomination of *Sinner* he comprehends the whole race of mankind, and that the same term preserves the same sense, throughout every part of his Discourse. One principal design of which is to set forth man in his natural state, or the degeneracy and depravity of Human Nature. For he tells us, “ We have in the spiritual sense of the  
 “ Parable a description of man in his  
 “ natural state, as dead in trespasses and  
 “ sins.”——This being premised, let us go on.

“ The Lord, (says he,) shewed him his  
 “ former dead state, and his present danger,  
 “ and at the sight of both a horrible dread  
 “ overwhelmed him.”——That is, the Lord shewed him what a terrible breach the Fall of Adam had made in our nature. But one would think, he would have favour'd him with such a comfortable view of the kind and compassionate repairer of that breach, as might have prevented his being overwhelmed with dread and horror, either from the sight of his former dead state, or his present danger. One would think indeed, that every one who names the name of Jesus must be satisfied without the assistance of  
 any

any immediate or particular Inspiration, that he is that *Sun of Righteousness*, who came with healing in his Wings, to bind up the wounds, and repair the bruises, which the Fall had made.

“ He beheld the Holiness, and Truth, and Justice of God, arm'd with almighty Power, and ready to destroy him.”—— But did he not behold at the same time the omnipotent arm of the righteous and merciful Jesus, generously interposed to save him? Why did not our Author set one prospect against the other?

“ Conscience witnessed against him, and haunted him with its horrors night and day,”——How is that? Conscience could not witness against him, as having had any share in Man's first Disobedience, or as having been any way accessory to that depraved state, or condition, in which he came into the World. Such depravity was not his *Fault*, but his *Misfortune*, if that may be called a *Misfortune* by which he was so great a *Gainer*; for what he lost by the *first* was infinitely overpaid him by the *second*, or *last* Adam. How absurd therefore is it, to talk of Conscience witnessing against him, and haunting him with it's horrors night and

day, for an offence committed before he was born, and consequently to which he himself could neither be party nor privy. It looks as if the Preacher still retained not only the *Learning*, but also the *Principles* of those Heathen Philosophers, who apprehended these our corrupt and earthly bodies to be no other than the prisons of our souls, in which they were to be chastised for faults committed in a former state, and their obedience once more put to the trial.—Again,

“ He found that Hell was his desert, and  
“ he saw no way open to escape it.”

’Tis impossible, he should find that Hell was his desert purely for *Adam’s* transgression, simply or in its self considered, for the reason just before assigned: But waving that point till I shall have an opportunity of discoursing particularly upon the nature and effects of *Original Sin*, (which is my purpose at some other time) Why is it here said, “ He saw no way to escape it?” I’m sure, I cannot see how the way should escape him. But we shall hear more of this by and by, till when I will reserve my Observations.—The Author proceeds.

“ However harden’d and obdurate he had  
“ been before, yet all these circumstances  
“ put

“ put together set him a shaking and trem-  
 “ bling. Had he been in an earthquake,  
 “ when the ground heaved and tossed with  
 “ such violent shocks that he could not  
 “ stand upon it; and had he seen it open  
 “ ing it’s mouth in many a hideous crack,  
 “ and swallowing up multitudes all around  
 “ him, he could not have shaken and  
 “ trembled more.”

Would you not think, he was describing  
 the state and condition of an actual and  
 obstinate sinner? Of an abandoned profligate,  
 grown grey in a long and habitual course of  
 vice and impiety? And the consternation  
 and confusion he was in upon his Conscience  
 being first awakened, and his eyes opened?  
 Had it been so, there would have been room  
 enough for his tragical fancy to have call’d  
 up the frightful images of “Heaving and  
 “ tossing, and trembling ground,—of vio-  
 “ lent shocks, and hideous cracks,—and  
 “ multitudes swallowed up.” His descrip-  
 tion in this case would so far have been right,  
 that tho’ the paint was rude and roughly  
 laid on, yet the colouring would not, *could*  
 not have been too high.—But to represent  
 the condition of every sinner, or of every  
 one who is sensible of his infected or viti-

ated nature, in the same manner, and to dress up his consciousness of such infection in the like grim and grisly form, is not to *awake* men by the *Gospel Trumpet*, but to *affright* them, by a *false and groundless alarm*.

I would not be understood to speak lightly of *Original Sin*, or of our natural corruption in consequence of it. We cannot duly and properly consider it, without being seriously affected with it. But to endeavour to persuade men that they ought to be stung with the same bitter remorse for the sin of *Adam*, as if it had really been their *own*; or, that the sense of it should work them up into convulsive pangs and tremors, as our Author describes, is as *ridiculous*, as it is *cruel*.

Besides whatever part we had in the transgression of our first Parents, or however we might be involved in their guilt and punishment, yet are we not mercifully delivered from both, by the meritorious sacrifice and satisfaction of that *Lamb of God, which was slain from the Beginning of the World*? Have not the Scriptures revealed this to us for our Comfort? Are not these the glad Tidings the Gospel brought us? Why then should we  
be



be so dismay'd at the thoughts of the *Disease* in sight of the *Remedy*? Why tremble under the *Curse* when in possession of the *Cure*? As the *one* should inspire us with *Humility*, so the *other* with *Gratitude*. From *that*, we should learn to entertain the lowest opinion of *ourselves* from *this* the highest and worthiest conceptions of *God*. When we reflect upon *Adam's* Fall, we should at the same time think of that impotency and weakness which he thereby entail'd upon us his Posterity, and the strange and sad disorder his Apostacy wrought in our nature; and thence with a holy Jealousy keep a strict watch over ourselves, and cautiously guard against our corrupt Appetites, and evil Inclinations. When we contemplate, on the other hand, the infinite mercy and goodness of *God*, who, foreseeing that *Man* would fall, provided so tenderly and wonderfully for his Recovery; kindly and compassionately restor'd him to favour; and the better to secure him against a future Lapse,—vouchsaf'd him a new principle of *Grace* and *Holiness*, for supplying the Defects, and purifying the defilements, of his weak and sinful nature; when we view the Scene thus happily chang'd, how then ought we to be affected? What Reward should

we offer unto the Lord for such inestimable Benefits? Surely our Hearts should run over with joy and gladness: Surely we should enter into his Presence *with Thanksgiving and into his Courts with Praise*; and not come before him with Minds overspread with a melancholy Gloom, or overwhelm'd with superstitious Horror.—And yet these last are the affections or Passions, which our Author labours abundantly to stir up in his Hearers, as at all times, so especially when he is treating on original Sin.—

Attend to his Words.—“ Am I now  
 “ speaking to any of you, who says—I am  
 “ acquainted with these Terrors,—I have  
 “ been made to see my Sinfulness and my  
 “ Danger, and I find my helpless lost  
 “ Condition.—Dangers so surround me on  
 “ every side, that I know not whither to  
 “ turn myself.—Is this, (says he) the Lan-  
 “ guage of thy Heart?”—With whom is he  
 here expostulating? of whom doth he ask this  
 question? Is it not a christian? It is. However  
 therefore this might, or might not be the  
 Language of his Heart, I'm certain it was a  
 Language highly unbecoming a Disciple of  
 Christ who hath himself declared, that he is  
*the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; and that  
 the

the End and Intention of his coming into the World, was *to seek and to save that which was lost*. How ill then do such querulous despairing Accents suit with that good and gracious Design? Or why would he suppose the poor Man to complain of his helpless, and lost Condition, or that he knew not which way to turn himself? What had he never heard that Jesus was his Saviour till the Preacher now inform'd him? That can hardly be imagin'd; though it must be confess'd, that no Preacher had ever more ignorant Followers; and this perhaps might be one of the most stupid of them. Wherefore in great Pity he thus adviseth him.

“ Then turn thyself to the blessed Jesus.  
 “ He is a Saviour for thee. Such as thou  
 “ art he came to save: Such poor, lost and  
 “ ruin'd Sinners. Wait on him. Be found  
 “ in the Ways of his Ordinances; and he  
 “ will supply all thy Wants.”

Undoubtedly. In this he hath no Adversary in me; nor, I hope, in any christian Minister. I wish we were as well agreed in every other Point. But why do I talk of every other, since I foresee that even in this, alas! our Agreement is not like to hold. For he immediately adds,

H 4

“ But

“ But methinks I hear some afflicted Soul  
 “ reply,—I have been waiting upon the Lord  
 “ Jesus long, but have found no Comfort.  
 To which he rejoins, “ it may be so. But  
 “ who is to blame? May you not have  
 “ sought Comfort in a wrong manner, by  
 “ placing Religion in the Form instead of the  
 “ Power, according to what is described in  
 “ the third part of the Parable: Where we  
 “ have all the Parts of the human Body, but  
 “ for want of Breath there was no Life in  
 “ them; and this was written to shew, that  
 “ you are not to stop short of Christ and his  
 “ Comfort; by resting in externals. You  
 “ are not to be content with the Form and  
 “ outside of Religion, without the Life and  
 “ Spirit of it. And herein the Parable con-  
 “ demns those Persons, who upon their being  
 “ first brought under some Concern about  
 “ their Souls; are apt to trust in Duties, in-  
 “ stead of going to Christ. They set about  
 “ reforming their outward Behaviour.—Go  
 “ to Church,—Say their Prayers—Read  
 “ the Scriptures.—Give Alms.—Attend con-  
 “ stantly at the Sacrament, supposing that  
 “ these outward Things can give Life to the  
 “ Soul.”

Now it is very well worth your while to  
 observe

observe in what manner he treats those two afflicted Souls, To the *former*, who complains of his helpless, lost Condition, and that he knew not which way to turn himself, he says, “ *turn thyself to the Blessed Jesus, wait upon him in the Ways of his Ordinances, and he will supply all thy Wants.*” To the *latter* who laments that he had found no Comfort, he says, “ it may be so.” But why ? (or, as he puts it, “ who is to blame? ”.) was it for want of waiting for Jesus ? No He had waited upon him long. Was it for want of keeping his Ordinances ? No. For he tells him, had he kept them ever so strictly, it would avail’d him nothing ; for still he might have sought for Comfort in a wrong manner. But pray in what manner did he seek it ? Was it not the manner the Preacher prescrib’d ? Was it not by waiting for Jesus, and being found in the ways of his Ordinances ? And was not this the Medium by which he promis’d the other, that all his Wants would be supply’d ? How then can he ask, who was to blame ? Not the Patient it is clear, who truly and punctually follow’d the Recipe of his spiritual Physician.—Such Inconsistencies and Contradictions are Flowers with which our modern Pulpit Eloquence abounds.

abounds. Let us try however if by any means we can reconcile this.—Perhaps he may look upon reforming our outward Behaviour.—Going to Church.—Saying our Prayers.—Reading the Scriptures.—Giving Alms.—Attending constantly at the Sacrament as no Ordinances of Christ. No. This cannot be the Case. What then? Is it that there are two ways of waiting upon Christ, and the latter poor afflicted soul had taken the wrong? I believe we have hit upon it, and that the difficulty upon inquiry will be found to lie here. Whosoever is in the least conversant with the Stile and manner of the *Methodist* Writers, must be sensible, that under the *cabalistical* Phrases of—*turning to Christ*,—*waiting upon Christ*.—*Going to Christ*, &c. is veil'd their great Mystery of union with Christ by Faith. So that tho' the poor Man had long waited upon Jesus in *external* Ordinances, yet he received no Comfort for want of that *inward* and spiritual Union. Agreeably to which the Preacher tells us, in the Words immediately following those already cited, that “ Christ alone hath Life to give to the  
 “ dead in Sin, and that whosoever is not u-  
 “ nited to him by Faith, has no true spiritu-  
 “ al Life in him.” Hence we may infer,  
 that

that when he assur'd the *first* afflicted Soul that if he would wait upon the blessed Jesus and be found in the Ways of his Ordinances, he would supply all his Wants, he meant if he would become *united to him by Faith*; and when he signified to the *latter*, that he might have waited upon Jesus long without finding comfort. He supposed him to have waited upon him without being by faith *united to him*.

Having been at some pains to make the Preacher appear a little more consistent with himself, it will be proper to examine into the nature and meaning of Union with Christ.—For all that he hath said of placing Religion in the Form instead of the Power.—of stopping short of Christ and his Comforts by resting on externals.—of being content with the outside of Religion without the Life and Spirit of it. of trusting in Duties without going to Christ, &c. turns upon this Point. And indeed all the mad and mischievous Doctrines so industriously propagated by our Author and his colleagues, are closely connected with that of Union to Christ. I must therefore defer the further consideration of it till the next opportunity; when I shall (I believe I may say to *yours* and I am sure I can say) to *my* satisfaction release you from a tedious Process

cess or Examination which nothing but the reasonableness of it could excuse, when I think of *that* I grudge not my Time; my only concern is for your Patience. To strengthen which let me again put you in mind, that the Discourse on which I have hitherto bestow'd so particular and minute a Scrutiny is not the Work of a *Novice* in Divinity, but of a well read and experienced *Divine*, who for Reasons best known to himself is lately become the *Head* of a dangerous Sect: All the false notions or opinions of which are in this little Performance fully compris'd and subtilly insinuated.

—And therefore in drawing them from behind the cloud under which their deformity lies concealed, and exposing them in their true portrait and proper colours; in shewing likewise that the Author with all his abilities, is very able sometimes to deviate from Common Sense, sometimes to utter such *Things*, or, (rather I should have said) such *Trafh* as is unbecoming the dignity of the Pulpit; and sometimes such sentiments and expressions as are shocking to human ears; I hope I may, in some measure, contribute towards



towards lessening the influence of all such Preachers upon the heads and hearts of the ignorant and unwary, and thereby act in the true Character of a Minister of Christ, and *Steward of the Mysteries of God.*



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# S E R M O N VII.

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2 COR. iv. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus  
the Lord.*—

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## P A R T VII.

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**I**N that remarkable Discourse, which I selected as a proper specimen of the new way of preaching, and which therefore I have (as far as I have gone) set before you in its true light, the Author introduceth one of his melancholy hearers, complaining, “ That he had waited long upon the Lord  
“ Jesus, but had found no comfort.” To which he gives him this answer.

“ It may be so, but who is to blame?  
“ May you not have sought comfort in a  
“ wrong manner, by placing religion in the  
“ form instead of the power.—You are not  
“ to stop short of Christ and his comforts,  
“ by

“ by resting in Externals.” He then condemns those persons, who “ upon their being  
 “ first brought under some concern for their  
 “ Souls, are apt to trust in duties instead of  
 “ going to Christ. (They set about says he)  
 “ reforming their outward Behaviour; go to  
 “ Church; say their Prayers; read the Scrip-  
 “ tures; give Alms; constantly attend at the  
 “ Sacrament; supposing that these outward  
 “ things can give life to the Soul: They  
 “ rest in them, as of themselves insufficient  
 “ and meritorious. Which is setting them up  
 “ against our Saviour, and resting in them as  
 “ Saviours; whereas Christ alone has Life  
 “ to give to the dead in Sin.—Whosoever is  
 “ not united to him by Faith, has no true  
 “ spiritual Life in him.”

Tho’ what the Author understands by being *united to Christ* is what I reserv’d, in the conclusion of my last Discourse on this Subject, for our present Examination, yet it will not be amiss to examine the whole passage above cited, in order as it lies before us.

“ May you not have sought Comfort by  
 “ placing Religion in the Form instead of  
 “ the Power?”

The Difference betwixt these two is doubtless very great and very obvious. The same

as betwixt the *formal Hypocrite*, and the *sincere Christian*. The mere *Formalist*, when he waits upon Christ in the ways of his Ordinances, goes (if I may so speak) *without his Heart*. His Attendance is no more than a Debt he pays to custom: Or if he hath any further view in it, perhaps it may be to save appearances with the World: Or perhaps he may flatter himself, that by the punctual payment of that customary Tribute, he shall be freed from the obligations to Virtue and a holy Life.—This is truly and properly to place Religion in the *Form*. But how could the Preacher suppose this to be the case of the poor afflicted Soul to whom he address'd himself? It's true he like the other waited upon Christ in the ways of his Ordinances, but upon a better principle, and for a wiser purpose. He therein sought for comfort: Which plainly shews his Religion was not placed in the *Form* but in the *Power*. And if his waiting upon Christ had not that power upon his Heart which he expected to *feel*, or did not bring him that comfort which he hoped to *experience*, it is because he had been taught to expect not that ordinary measure of Grace, which is thereby communicated to every honest and sincere Christian, but those extraordinary Influxes and

Operations of the Holy Spirit, which neither Scripture, nor Reason afford us any grounds for expecting. And therefore had the Preacher consider'd his own manner of preaching, he needed not to have ask'd who was to blame, that his poor disconsolate Hearer was disappointed.

Again.—“ You are not,” says he, “ to stop short of Christ and his comforts by resting in externals,”

What he means by stopping short of Christ and his comforts is not for me to explain. But taken out of the Metaphor, I should understand no more by it than our not doing, or neglecting what is necessary to our securing an interest in him, or to our obtaining those Benefits, which otherwise we might derive from him.

What he means by *Externals* is, (as appears from what hath been already observ'd) *divine Ordinances*. But as these were mercifully appointed, by the holy Jesus himself, as the conduit thro' which to convey his Grace and Consolation to our Souls, how can we be said to stop short of Christ and his comforts, by resting in them ?

Again.—“ And herein the Parable condemns those persons, who upon their being  
“ first

“ first brought under some concern about  
 “ their Souls, are apt to trust in Duties, in-  
 “ stead of going to Christ.”

*Going to Christ*, is another of those Phrases which the late eminent *Dr. Sberlock*, (speaking of such sort of Preachers, in his day) justly and ingeniously calls “ the Shibboleth of  
 “ the Party.”

But what are those Duties in which they are so apt to trust? Why, “ they set about  
 “ reforming their outward Behaviour, go to  
 “ Church, say their Prayers, read the Scrip-  
 “ tures, give Alms, and attend constantly at  
 “ the Sacrament.” That’s all.

And really I am apt to think it is enough ; since if (as he allows) they have begun to have some concern for their Soul, we may reasonably conclude they do all this not with Hypocrisy, or indifference, but with sincerity and zeal. And, if so, that not only their outward Behaviour, but also their inward mind and affections maybe reform’d by it ; and that their trusting to the success of such Duties faithfully and habitually perform’d is very consistent with their *going to Christ*, if I have any conception what that Metaphor means.

I always understood till now, that it  
 I 2 signified

signified only our *believing and obeying his Gospel*: And that every Christian was then in the ready way to Christ, when he was doing his Duty; and especially when he was engaged in any act of christian Worship. But it seems, as if it had a further and latent meaning, which the Preacher hath not thought fit to reveal to all, but to such only as have been initiated into his Mysteries.—However, till we are acquainted with some other and safer way of going to Christ, than that of obedience to his Ordinances, he must excuse us for thinking, that those Persons, who upon their being first brought under some concern for their Souls, immediately set about reforming their lives and manners (which he is pleas'd to phrase “ their outward Behaviour,”) set out properly and as they ought: And that with such pious and penitent Resolutions, in going to Church, saying their Prayers, reading the Scriptures, giving Alms, and attending constantly at the Sacrament, they proceed as properly; and (especially with regard to the last) in the same order the Church prescribes. For who is it she invites to the holy Communion, but “ all those who truly and earnestly  
 “ repent, and are in love and charity with  
 “ their Neighbours, and intend to lead a new  
 “ life



“ life, following the Commandments of God,  
 “ and walking from thenceforth in his holy  
 “ ways ?”— Our blessed Saviour’s Subject  
 when he first began to preach, was Repen-  
 tance. *Repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven*  
*is at hand.* Such is St. Matthew’s account;  
 St. Mark’s joins Faith to Repentance, *Repent*  
*and believe the Gospel.* Christ now here says  
 to his Disciples, come unto me instead of  
 trusting in Duties, but *come unto me all ye that*  
*travel and are heavy laden, and I will give you*  
*rest : For my Yoke is easy and my Burden is*  
*light :* Meaning the commands and duties  
 he had laid upon them.

Which Duties, it is observable, our Author,  
 calls sometimes *outward Things*, and some-  
 times the *Externals of Religion*: In oppositi-  
 on as I conceive to the *internal Principle of*  
*Faith.* But is not Faith of the Grace of  
 God ? And doth not his Grace (as hath been  
 shew’d) accompany his Ordinances ? What  
 occasion therefore is there for that distinction.

But perhaps he will tell us, that it is not  
 their performance of those Duties that he ob-  
 jects to, but their vain confidence *in* them ;  
 for, says he,

“ They suppose that these outward things  
 “ can give Life to the Soul. They rest in  
 I 3 them

“ them, as of themselves sufficient, and meritorious: Which is setting them up against our Saviour, and resting in them as Saviours.”

And who are *they* of whom he thus speaks? Are they not the same Persons whom he before described, as having been brought under some concern for their Souls, and thence immediately resolving upon a new course of Life? If therefore thus piously dispos'd, they go to Church, say their Prayers, and attend constantly at the Sacrament, or, (in other Words,) wait regularly upon the blessed Lord, both at his House and at his Table, what, I beseech is the fair and natural conclusion? That consequently they suppose such Duties are able, as efficient, to give life to the Soul? That they rest in them as of themselves sufficient and meritorious? That they set them up against our Saviour, and rest in them as Saviours? No such thing. But on the contrary, that they consider them only as the means or instruments, by which Christ is pleas'd to convey the influences of his Grace and holy Spirit into their Hearts, the better to enable them to perform their holy Purposes and resolutions of amendment. And in this sense they may as fitly suppose those outward

outward things, (as he stiles them,) to give life to the soul, as the Sun to give life to the vegetable World: The one as means in the hand of Christ. The other as the instrument in the hand of God. And so far they may securely rest in them, without any Derogation from the merits of a Saviour. For how can they, without absurdity, be said to derogate from these, by trusting only in such means, as he himself hath instituted for the conveyance of that spiritual life, which as he alone can give, so he may dispense by what medium, or thro' what channel his infinite Wisdom sees best.

Our Author ascribes this spiritual life to our Union with Christ by Faith.

“ Whosoever, (says he,) is not united to  
 “ him by Faith has no spiritual Life in him ;  
 “ as he found who had more Duties than we  
 “ have to depend upon, and yet he counted  
 “ them but Dross and Dung, that he might  
 “ win Christ. The Life which I now live  
 “ in the Flesh, says (the Apostle) I live by the  
 “ Faith of the Son of God. It is a spiritual  
 “ life, derived from the Son of God, and re-  
 “ ceiv'd from him by Faith: Which is the  
 “ Breath of Life in the justified Soul, inspired  
 “ by the Holy Spirit.”

And this brings me round to the Place where I left off in my former Discourse : Which was to enquire what the Author here means by being united to Christ by Faith.

It is I confess, a difficult and puzzling inquiry; since in this and other the like Phrases of coming to Christ, stopping short of Christ, and a great many more of the same sort, neither he nor any of these new Gospel Preachers think proper to explain themselves.—

However tho' we must not hope to penetrate into his precise and profound meaning, yet I doubt not but we may easily discover that by this union he understands, or at least wou'd have others conceive, something very different from the sense in which it is understood by all thinking and sober Christians; something utterly inconceivable to any but Enthusiasts.

It must be very obvious to every one who makes use of his reason that *to be united to Christ* is a figurative Expression, signifying our spiritual Relation to him.

“ Those Metaphors, (says the late excellent  
 “ Writer before quoted) which describe our  
 “ Union with Christ, do primarily refer to the  
 “ Christian Church, not to every Individual  
 “ Christian : As Christ is the Head and the  
 “ Church,

“ Church, or whole society of Christians, his  
“ Body ; a Husband, and the Church his  
“ Spouse ; a Shepherd, and the Church his  
“ Flock ; a Rock whereon his Church is  
“ built ; the chief corner Stone, and the  
“ Church a holy Temple.

“ But as for particular Christians, their  
“ union with Christ is by means of their  
“ union to the Christian Church: That is,  
“ no man can be united to Christ, till he be  
“ a Christian, till he make a public profes-  
“ sion of his Faith, and be solemnly ad-  
“ mitted into the Christian Church, which  
“ is the Body of Christ, for which he died,  
“ and to which all the Promises of the Gos-  
“ pel are made.

“ A secret and private Faith in Christ is  
“ not ordinarily enough to make a man a  
“ Christian ; but Faith in the Heart, and  
“ the Confession of the Mouth, are both  
“ necessary. Christ himself hath appointed  
“ a public sacrament of our initiation. And  
“ our Church teaches her children, that in  
“ their Baptism (which is their solemn ad-  
“ mission into the Christian Church) they  
“ are made members of Christ, children of  
“ God, and inheritors of the kingdom of  
“ Heaven.”

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The more clearly to discern whether our Author's notion of Union with Christ is agreeable to this, it may be proper to take to pieces the whole clause, or passage last cited, and separately and distinctly to examine each part of it.

“ Whosoever is not united to Christ  
“ by Faith, has no true spiritual Life in  
“ him.”

If by being united to Christ he means being incorporated into his Body, the Church, and if by spiritual Life he also means that internal principle of Grace and Sanctification vouchsafed only to such as are Christians, I entirely agree with him, and the Apostle with us both, when he says, *The Life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*: Which is nothing more than ascribing whatever seemed good and laudable in him to the influences of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of his faith in Christ.

But that this is not the Union the Author intends, appears very probable from the next Words.

“ It is a spiritual Life derived from the  
“ Son of God, and received from him by  
“ Faith.”

Here it looks as if this spiritual Life was  
derived

derived immediately and instantaneously, from the Person of the blessed Jesus, without any medium whatsoever. And what follows makes it still more apparent.

“ Which Faith is the Breath of Life in  
 “ the justified Soul, inspired into it by the  
 “ Holy Spirit: As the last part of the Para-  
 “ ble proves. The dry Bones had come  
 “ together; the sinews and flesh had grown up  
 “ upon them; the skin was spread over all:  
 “ Here were all the parts of an human Body,  
 “ but there was no Life, until the Spirit of  
 “ the Lord put Breath into them, and they  
 “ lived and stood up. It is the very same  
 “ case with the sinful Soul. Nothing can  
 “ give it Life, but the Spirit of God. He  
 “ is to the Soul what Breath is to the Body.  
 “ He is so much the Breath of Life, that  
 “ in the Old Testament and the New, the  
 “ same word which stands for the Breath  
 “ that supports the life of the body, stands  
 “ for the Holy Spirit who supports the life  
 “ of the soul. The air that we breathe and  
 “ the Holy Spirit have but one name in  
 “ Scripture: and therefore as the body is  
 “ not alive until it breaths, so neither is the  
 “ soul alive to God, until the Holy Spirit  
 “ infuse into it the Breath of Life. And as  
 “ the

“ the Body is alive only so long as it breathes,  
 “ so in like manner the soul lives to God,  
 “ only so long as the Holy Spirit breathes  
 “ in it. Let his influence stop, and the  
 “ Life of Grace is at an end, as the Life of  
 “ the Body is at an end, so soon as its  
 “ breathing is stopt.”

Now tho' Christ is the alone minister and dispenser of Grace, yet we do not derive it immediately from his Person, but from the administration of his Word and Sacraments, and such other regular means as himself hath ordained and appointed for that end.

The *Antinomian* indeed maintain such an Union with Christ as made all his personal Excellencies, Fulness, Beauty, and Righteousness their own. They represent Christ as having not only done all *for* us, but also undertaken to do all *in* us; and that by such natural conveyances of Grace from his Person, as there is of the animal spirits from the head to the rest of the members; and that men must first be united to Christ before they can be capable of any spiritual motion.

I will cite you the Words of one of that sect, which harmonize so well with those of our Author, that it is hardly possible to  
 doubt



doubt but that they are both of the same opinion.

“ Christ, (says he) is the Head. Now  
 “ the Head is the Fountain of all animal  
 “ Spirits, and of all motion. Without a  
 “ Head, a Man cannot hear, see, walk, feel,  
 “ stir, nor do any thing, since all these Ope-  
 “ rations come from the Head. Christ is the  
 “ Head of his Church. He is the Fountain  
 “ of all spiritual sense and motion. You  
 “ may as soon conceive that a Man is able to  
 “ see whilst he has not a Head, as to think  
 “ he may have spiritual Eyes; whether the  
 “ Eye of Faith to behold Christ, or the Eye  
 “ of mourning to lament his Wickedness,  
 “ before there be actually the conjunction of  
 “ Christ, the Head to such a Body. Thus  
 “ Christ is call’d Life; and can any one be  
 “ an active Creature before there be life  
 “ breath’d into him? As a Body without a  
 “ Soul is dead, so every Person in spiritual  
 “ Actions is wholly dead, till Christ, the Soul  
 “ of that Soul be infus’d into him, to animate  
 “ and enliven him.”

These two Quotations are sufficient to ex-  
 pose the wild and ridiculous notions of our mo-  
 dern Preachers touching union with Christ; and  
 “ to convince us that a good Man, (as a good  
 “ Man

“ Man once observ’d) who heartily believes  
 “ the Gospel of Christ, and makes conscience  
 “ of obeying it, if he be so weak as to heark-  
 “ en to their Preachments, may be perplex’d  
 “ with endless Scruples about his union to  
 “ Christ; while a bad Man who hath a  
 “ warm and enthusiastic Fancy, and can  
 “ work his Imagination into all the various  
 “ scenes of the new Birth, shall live in the  
 “ perpetual Embraces of Christ, and in the  
 “ raptures and extasies of assurance; and  
 “ despise the low attainments of Morality and  
 “ a good Life.”

In short to be united to Christ, signifies no more than to be a sound Member of his mystical Body the Church; and those metaphorical Phrases of *being one with Christ*, of *having the Spirit of Christ*, of *Christ’s dwelling in us*, and the like, mean only the Conformity of our Lives and manners to his holy Precepts and Example; the being animated by the same love of virtue and goodness, the having the same spirit and temper with him, (or as the Apostle expresseth it in fewer words) *letting the same mind be in us, which was in Christ Jesus*.

But to return to our Author.— “ It is  
 “ the Holy Spirit, says he, and his work  
 “ upon



“ upon the Heart that makes us Christians.  
 “ For if any Man have not the Spirit of  
 “ Christ, he is none of his; he is no Chris-  
 “ tian; so say the Oracles of Truth.”

If by the Spirit he means what is generally understood by it, that constant principle of the Divine Life, peculiar to our christian state, he is greatly inconsistent with himself elsewhere, in supposing that it is the Holy Spirit and his work upon the Heart that makes us Christians. For the gift of the Spirit, in the sense of it just now mentioned, is promised by Christ to such only as are already Christians, or united to Christ as being Members of his Church. And indeed, in order of nature, a member must be first united to the body, before it can receive any influence from the head.

God vouchsafes the assistances of the Holy Spirit to all men to whom the Gospel is preached, to work Faith in them; but when they do actually believe, and dedicate themselves to Christ, in the regular way he hath prescribed, then the Holy Spirit is a constant Principle in them, upon covenant and promise, on which account he is said to dwell in them, and to make his abode with them, because he is always present as a Principle

ciple in them, upon covenant and promise, on which account he is said to dwell in them, and to make his abode with them, because he is always present as a Principle of divine life.—But the Author goes on.

“ If any Man be ever so moral and honest, a strict observer of outward Duties, a good Church-man, and a charitable Man, yet if he has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, he is none of Christ’s Family ; he is not a living member of Christ’s Body. He may have a Name that he liveth, but he is dead.”

How is it possible to imagine that any Christian, much more such a one as comes up to his description, should not have the *Spirit of Christ*, if by that is meant what ought to be meant by it, that constant principle of Holiness of which we have been speaking ? By the Spirit it’s plain he intends not those ordinary means of Grace, which are communicated to Christians as such, but some extraordinary indwellings and operations, some immediate and sensible Influences of that good Spirit upon the Soul, which none but the Elect are acquainted with.

As the following part of his discourse is entirely founded upon this idle and whimsical

cal Conceit, it is not worth while to spend any more time or trouble about it.

From all the rest which hath been faithfully and impartially laid open and consider'd, I hope it appears to be no improper Specimen of the new method of preaching: And that these can want no further Evidence that the Author and all of the same stamp by the abuse of Scripture, and treating figurative Phrases or Expressions not as *Metaphors*, but as *Mysteries*, at the same time that they glory in being the only true Preachers of Christ, are, out of a pretended veneration for his Person, as far as in them lies, thrusting his Gospel out of the World: Or making it a mere Nose of Wax, such as will serve any Purpose but that it was design'd for. Which was to bring us the glad Tidings of our Reconciliation to God, thro' Christ; to set before us the Terms and Conditions of it, requir'd on our parts; and for our better Performance of such Conditions, to assure us of the Succours of the divine Grace and holy Spirit, not irresistably to force our Wiles and supersede our Endeavours, but gently to guide and govern us in such a manner, as is proper and suitable to rational Creatures, or those who are to give an account of their own Works.



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# SERMON VIII.

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EPHE. iv. 14.

*That we henceforth be no more Children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine.*

**S**AINT Paul begins this Chapter with an earnest exhortation to the Christians, then at *Ephesus*, that they wou'd, as becometh all those who assume that sacred name and Character, endeavour to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*. And because peace and unity cannot possibly be preserv'd without Order and Government; because that spiritual body the Church, wou'd of course be mangled and torn to pieces was it under no sort of discipline or œconomy; because in such a disorderly State of it false Teachers without number wou'd arise to corrupt the true Faith, and draw many *from* and unsettle more *in* their Christian principles, by a wild and wanton mixture of new and

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strange Opinions ; he therefore points to the Remedy provided against this Evil. *He* (says the context, speaking of Christ) *gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastures, and Teachers for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the Stature of the fulness of Christ, That we henceforth be no more Children, &c.*

In discoursing upon which Words, I shall endeavour,

I. To shew what we are Properly to understand by being *tossed to and fro and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine.*

II. The Folly and Danger of such a Temper.

And III. To point out a Remedy against it.

I. I am to shew what we are properly to understand by being *tossed to and fro and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine.*

And so far we may with certainty pronounce, that it signifies levity and instability of Mind. Some have supposed St. *Paul* by that Phrase or Expression to have alluded to  
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the unsteady and fluctuating motion of a Ship. But to this it may be objected that Ships are not so light as to be agitated, except by a rougher blast, And therefore it seems rather to be a metaphor borrow'd from Reeds which are shaken with every Wind. Be that as it will, this is evident, that he meant by it a looseness or unsettledness in Christian Principles.

Justly therefore do they fall under the Apostles description, who take up different Opinions upon the *slightest Grounds*, or very often without *any grounds at all*: Who are perpetually fluctuating in their religious notions, and changing them, not as *reason* but *fancy* directs, quitting one for another without weighing their merits, or bringing any to that true Standard by which all shou'd be tryed. In short. Who led by Appearances, and those the most shadowy and superficial, are ready to embrace any doctrine, or follow any Sect, and to be almost perswaded to be any thing, except sound Christians.

This may be sufficient for explaining the Sense of the Words *tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine*; and for shewing what sort of Persons they are to whom that Character belongs. Consider we,

## II. The Folly and Danger of such a Temper.

The Folly is implied in the word Next, and immediately going before, those which we had but just now in view. *That we henceforth be no more Children tossed to and fro.*

That is. That we behave not as *Children*; that we be not like them, fickle, inconstant, precipitate, weak, undistinguishing: That we do not, as they are apt to do, change our minds without knowing *why* or *wherefore*; or fondly embrace, or frowardly reject, our opinion, as they do their Toys or their Sports; seeking only to gratify the present humour or inclination.

This indeed we must not call folly in them,—that wou'd be harsh and cruel. Such levity in them deserves a better Name. Their Behaviour is suitable to their circumstances. It is not to be expected that being *green* in *Years*, they shou'd be *ripe* in *Judgment*. As well might it be expected they shou'd be born *Men* in *Stature*, as in *reason* and *understanding*. *When I was a Child* (says our Apostle elsewhere) *I spake as a Child, I understood as a Child, I thought as a Child, but when I became a Man, I put away childish Things.* His discourse and his

his reflections alter'd with his Years. But now they who even in manhood retain their *puerility*, as if they were ambitious of perpetuating their *non-age*; or as if they esteem'd that fickleness or inconstancy which is incident to such a State, too great a Privilege to be parted with, these are intitled to very little favour and indulgence. Of such we may pronounce without Severity *that this their Way is their Folly*.

Especially when this giddiness or instability discovers itself in their religious principles which of all others ought to be the most fix'd and stable and permanent. To be always varying and changing these upon every the least specious or plausible pretence, or faintest colouring of Reason, is that levity which is not only *childish*, but in such as have arrived to Years of discretion, in a very high degree *foolish and absurd*.

Again. Our text intimates the *danger*, as well as *folly* of such a fluctuating temper, or wavering state of mind: *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*.

Here the Apostle puts the Church in mind

of impostors and deceivers, and what sort of persons are most liable to be seduced or drawn aside by them, viz. *Children*, not in age, but in prudence and discretion, children, or *Christians* as ill-grounded in the true doctrines and principles of Christianity, as if there had been neither *Apostles*, nor *Prophets*, nor *Evangelists*, nor *Pastor*, nor *Teachers*, appointed for their instruction, or to bring them *in the unity of the Faith, unto a perfect man*.

And this brings me,

Thirdly, To point out a remedy against this childish evil. And that is to use their utmost endeavours for the thorough grounding or settling themselves in the true principles of Christianity, that so they may not become a prey to such as lie in wait to deceive them.

This indeed would be incumbent upon them were there no seducers. The high importance of their most holy religion demands their greatest care and diligence to be intimately acquainted with it: to spare no pains for the right understanding of the doctrines or articles it suggests, and the evidence by which it is supported.

Again. To endeavour earnestly to be well

well rooted and grounded in our Christian Principles is our duty, because in proportion to our *Knowledge*, will be our increase in *Faith*; and the stronger our *Faith*, the brighter will be our *Zeal*, and the more fruitful our *Piety*. And tho' we might not be in so great danger of a total apostacy, or falling away from the faith, were there no seducers or deceivers to draw us from it: Yet would our faith grow very languid, and weak, and inconstant, was it not according to knowledge, or founded upon full and rational evidence and conviction. Again, were there no deceivers from without to put us upon our guard, yet is there one within, against which we never can be too well guarded. *The Heart of Man is deceitful above all things.* This would be ever suggesting doubts and difficulties, enough to undermine that faith which was not built upon the surest foundation of reason and intelligence. And therefore 'tis our duty to give all diligence that our faith may be fixed and established upon that firm, and strong, and lasting foundation.

These things I mention lest it should be thought by some that the only reason why we ought to build ourselves up as securely as

we are able, in the true faith of Christ, is what our text particularly points out to us, *that we be not tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.* This, tho' not the *sole*, is one very *substantial* reason for our endeavouring to be perfectly acquainted with the nature and grounds of that faith, that so we may be the less liable to be removed or led away from it, by such impostors and deceivers.

Nor is the Apostle's caution less necessary to us, than it was to those to whom it was immediately directed. In every age of the Christian Church perverse men have started up to vex and disturb it, not with *persecutions*, but *heresies* and *false doctrines*. With such St. Paul advertised *Timothy*, the Church of *Ephesus* was infested; and from such we have no reason to boast that ours is free. On the contrary, never was there any age in which his prophecy was more literally fulfilled than it is in ours. *For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.* And as his *prediction* is applicable to us, so is his *admonition*,—*Wherefore watch, and remember*

*member that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one, night and day with tears.* And in them every Christian is alike warned to the same vigilance and circumspection.

And truly our vigilance and circumspection cannot possibly be employed to a better or a wiser purpose, than in watching and warding against those who are ever studious to subvert or corrupt our faith, or betray us into errors of the most dangerous consequence to our eternal welfare. If the due exercise of our reason and understanding is always a duty, how criminal must be the neglect of them when the Honour of God, and the everlasting interest of our souls require that we should exert them to their utmost stretch and capacity.

It will perhaps be pretended, that so great is the disparity between the intellectual faculties of one man and another, that no care will be sufficient to protect the weak and illiterate Christian from being imposed upon by those of superior parts and learning. But this, however plausible it may appear, is a weak and groundless pretence. It is not the *unlearned*, but the *unwary* Christian, that is the most subject to such imposition. It is not  
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the want of *literature*, but of *labour*, that exposeth him to that *cunning craftiness* of which the Apostle speaks.

The Scriptures are a plain and easy rule. Had they been otherwise, they would not have been of that universal use for which they were intended by their Divine Author. And tho' *some things therein are hard to be understood*; yet are they such things as may safely not be known: Such things as are not essentially necessary either to faith or manners. Whatever is needful to the common salvation is clear and perspicuous. And therefore, he who hath not acquired such a competent knowledge of them as is sufficient, with the assistance of God's Grace, to secure him from fundamental errors, however speciously or artfully insinuated, must not complain that he wants *abilities*, but *application*.

The two prerequisites to the right forming and confirming our religious Principles, are first, to satisfy ourselves whether the Scriptures are a divine revelation, and then secondly, what are the doctrines or precepts therein contained. And however the solution of these questions may seem to lie above the level of common capacities, yet one may



venture to say, that the most illiterate tradesman or mechanic, did he plainly perceive his temporal or worldly happiness to depend on it, would soon qualify himself to give a proper and rational account of both. If therefore he is now ignorant of those saving truths, it is not for *want* of talents, but of *will* to employ them: The defect is not in the *Understanding*, but in the *Inclination*. This is the case in general. There are, it must be confessed, some exceptions. There are doubtless those to be found who have not the power; but they are few, very few, in comparison of those who have; and will only be accountable for what they have received. Where little is given, much will not be required. We serve not a severe taskmaster; our Lord is not so cruel as to expect *to reap where he has not sown*, or *to gather where he has not sowed*.

Our Saviour indeed in one of his Parables exhibits a *certain Servant* making this complaint; but then it was *a wicked and slothful Servant*. And the ill success of his Plea will be small encouragement to others to plead in like manner. On the contrary, the reply he met with and the punishment he suffer'd shou'd deter every one from hiding  
his

his Talent in a Napkin, or burying it in the Earth, or not improving it to the best advantage. To conclude. Wou'd all Christians be perswaded to receive and hear the Word, (after the noble example of the *Bæreens*) *with all readiness of Mind and search the Scriptures daily* the more perfectly to understand them, and live up to their *Precepts*, as well as study their *Principles*, there wou'd be no fear of their falling into any dangerous Errors. A good Life is the best Interpreter. *Whosoever will do his Will, may know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.*

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# S E R M O N IX.

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I COR. vii. 16.

*For what knowest thou O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy Husband?*

**T**HIS is *one* of those Texts which are apt not only to inspire the Ridicule of the *impious and unbelieving*, who rejoice in every opportunity of burlesquing the Holy Scriptures, but also tempt *others* of a *worthier* Character, but a little too *gay* in Temper, to sport with things *sacred* and to be witty out of *season*: Neither of which can hear St. Paul suggesting the probability or possibility of the Husbands being saved by the Wife, with due seriousness and composure; or even without that *scoffing* which is profane, or that *jesting*, which is unseemly. 'Tis too easy to conceive what is likely to be said by *both* upon the occasion; by *those* out of the *Wickedness*, by *these* out of the *Wantonness* of their Hearts. And yet there is nothing in the Apostle's suggestion but what a little Attention to the Drift or Design

sign of his Argument, or to the Matter with which the Text is connected, might protect from every light, or ludicrous Interpretation : Except with those who are studious to turn all Religion into Farce, or those who must enjoy their Joke, however dearly they purchase it.

*If any Brother hath a Wife (saith the context) that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the Woman who hath an Husband that believeth not, and if he be pleas'd to dwell with her, let her not leave him : For the unbelieving Husband is sanctified by the Wife, and the unbelieving Wife is sanctified by the Husband.*

It's very probable, that amongst those, to whom the Apostle now address'd himself, there might be some, who having enter'd into the married State imagin'd *Infidelity* on either side a reasonable ground of *Seperation*. Or if matters were not *then* come to that pass, 'tis certain he was aware that such was like to be the consequence of promiscuous Marriges of Believers with Unbelievers ; and therefore, (whether by way of *Prevention* or *Cure*, is not material) he gives them the seasonable Caution, or Advice which I have just been repeating, adding in the Words of my Text,

*For*

*For what knowest thou, O Wife whether thou shalt save thy Husband.*

Which Words I shall apply to a different purpose to that for which the Apostle made use of them.—The Case is much altered since he wrote. There is little occasion now to exhort a *Brother* not to put away an unbelieving *Wife*, or a *Sister* not to leave an unbelieving *Husband*. Not that there's no such thing as *Infidelity* subsisting amongst us, not but that Believers and unbelievers still intermarry; not but that man and wife are oft as well disposed to be released from their matrimonial Bands *now*, as they were *then*; but that it seldom, or never happens that they separate from each other, on a *religious* account.—Separation itself is as much in use, as ever it well cou'd be: Nay perhaps it never was in any age so modish and fashionable, as it is in this. It then becomes only unpolite, when religion is the cause. If it is about punctillios of honour, or questions of domestick Government, or servants or equipages, or any thing of the like Importance, that they quarrel or contend, reason would that they should not bear with one another, but immediately separate. But if it is only in words and names that they differ; if there is no

more betwixt them than that trifling distinction of *Heathen* and *Christian* they are those *Gallios*, who care for no such matters.—For *People of Figure* (as the World now goes) to part about *Faith*, would be deem'd as whimsical and awkward, as through scruple of conscience *not to part at all*. Our Saviour intimated the unlawfulness of a man's putting away his Wife for *any* Cause, save only for that of *Fornication*: But the Language of our times is, 'tis lawful to put her away for *every* cause, except that of *Religion*. Whence it is; that a Bill of *divorce* is grown almost as common as a Bill of *Exchange*; and a clog upon the great Man's *freedom* is much easier shook off, than the Incumbrances upon his *Fortune*. Nor is this parting humour confined to *one* Sex: *Both* are forward and skilful enough to negotiate such Bills as those I first mention'd. The least affront, or Resentment on either side will make one Flesh again become twain.—But though this severing of Man and Wife, this putting asunder those, whom God had joined together; this dispensing with Vows the most solemn and sacred, is very customary, yet not (as was observed before) in such cases as St. *Paul* had in view, not where *one* is a *Believer*, and the *other* an  
*Infidel*

*Infidel.* And therefore, *what knowest thou, O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy Husband,* is an Argument *now* out of date, as to the primary Intention of it. It was doubtless highly proper and necessary for the time and place for which it was calculated : When a Woman was led by *principle* to leave her Husband ; when it was matter of *pure and conscientious scruple* to have no fellowship with an Unbeliever ; when she thought, she best consulted the honour of God, and her own eternal Interest, by separating from him : And so *vice versa*, when the believing Husband was moved and excited by the same pious reasons to put away his unbelieving Wife, then the Apostle's reasoning was close and to the point : Then he admonished them very seasonably that their Zeal carried them too far ; that *want* of faith in the *one* is no Justification for *Breach* of Faith in the *other* ; no dissolution of the nuptial Tye ; nay that *Charity* as well as *Justice* required, that they should still live as Man and Wife together ; *For what knowest thou, O Wife whether thou shalt save thy Husband? Or what knowest thou O Man whether thou shalt save thy Wife?* How knows either of you, but *Faith working by Love* may convince the *Gainsayer*? Who

can tell but the virtuous endeavours, the kind persuasions, the Christian conversation, the *fervent, effectual prayer* of the *Believer*, may prevail to the conversion of the *Infidel*?

And now I hope it begins to appear that tho' the words of my Text, in their first or immediate Design or Tendency, are not applicable to the present State of the Church Divorces, or separations betwixt Man and Wife however usual, or ordinary, in other cases, seldom arising from religious causes, or principles, yet they have their uses notwithstanding. They are a great Encouragement to those of either Sex, who are unhappy in their Alliances with, or speculative, or practical Infidels, to continue stedfast in the Faith, to persevere in those good Works, which are the genuine Fruits of it, not to be drawn aside by a foolish Complaisance, or an ill tim'd reverence, or respect; not to be frown'd or flatter'd, or laugh'd out of their Principles; but rather to be more resolved and determin'd in their virtuous and christian Behaviour; more strict in their lives, more constant and earnest in their Devotions, and every way more zealous in their Duty: Since the Influence of their good Examples may clear the *Head*, or mollify the *Heart* of unbelief,

may



may subdue the prejudices, or shame the Vices of their faithless, or debauch'd Associates, may reclaim, or recover them from the Error of their Way; and in short, be the blessed Instruments of saving those whose salvation they are bound by all the Ties of duty and affection, most ardently to wish and pray for.—In this light St. Paul's Caution is still proper and seasonable, and ever will be so. *For what knowest thou O Wife, &c.* That is, there is great room to hope, that the exemplary Faith and piety of the one, may with the blessing, or grace of God cooperating be effectual to the conversion and salvation of the other.—

The Apostle speaks of the advantage as mutual, or reciprocal; as what may arise to the unbelieving *Wife*, as well as to the unbelieving *Husband*, from a consort of christian principles. But I have taken into my Subject the *former* part of the verse only. And that principally with a view to our *female Enthusiasts*, those I mean of the most modern Sect: Whose *frantic piety* (for so I must call it whatever *method* there may be in it) will be apt to gather strength from the misconstruction of the Scripture before us. When they hear St. Paul thus expostulating, *what knowest thou O Wife, &c.* how natural will it be for them to conclude that the Apostle is of

their party, that by this his Doctrine they are warranted and countenanced in their distempered Zeal, their bloated Sanctity; and that whilst they are neglecting, or transgressing all the offices and duties of the Wife, all is well, since thereby they become the Instruments of saving the Husband. And was that the real Case, or consequence all would be well indeed.—But before so much is granted, it will be convenient to enquire into the nature and properties of that *saving Faith*, upon which the Apostle had his Eye.

Now the Faith he meant, when he said, the unbelieving *Husband* is sanctified by the *Wife*, was a sober and rational Persuasion of Mind, founded upon the Word of God, as delivered to us by the holy Scriptures; influencing our Lives, and governing our Actions; displaying itself in all Christian Graces and Virtues; disposing us to the Love of God and our Neighbour, and to behave prudently and properly in every Relation, in which we stand to each other.—She therefore, who is under the Dominion of such a Faith, will shew it by the whole Course of her Behaviour; will be *actuated* by the internal Principles of Holiness; will *breathe* the pure Spirit of Christianity; will be *cloathed* with the  
fair.

fair Vestments of Modesty and Humility, Courteousness and Candour; will put on *the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit*; will *open her Mouth with Wisdom*, and her *Tongue will be the Law of Kindness*; in short, will copy and come up to our Apostle's Character of a good Wife; will *love her Husband, love her Children*; *be discreet, chaste; a Keeper at Home, condescending to her Husband*. It was such a Faith, such a Wife as this St. Paul had in view, when he said, *What knowest thou, O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy Husband?*—And however some may think, that such strange Salvation is far beyond what now a-days may be expected, or looked for, yet, I doubt not, but that *even now* may be found many such pious and prudent Matrons, who are not ashamed of the Apostle's *old-fashion'd* Character; who win over their Husbands to the true Faith and Fear of Christ, by their chaste Conversation: I'm persuaded, that the most loose, and profligate, and abandon'd, have sometimes been recover'd by these Means, when all other Remedies and Applications have fail'd.—And indeed, how is it possible to be otherwise? Man is not so wretchedly corrupted and depraved, as to be quite blind to the *Beauty of Holiness*, and

Charms of Virtue ; or, altogether out of the Power of their Attraction. Few, it's to be hoped, are fallen into such a State of Numbness and Stupidity, as not to be moved with the *lovely*, tho' but *Ideal* Form ; how much rather then, when it is substantiated and realliz'd, and the bright Original stands, as it were, ever before them ; when not the *Shadow* passes by them, but the *Substance* dwells with them ; when they have it ever under their Eye, and are themselves always under its Aspect ?—A good Example is so very powerful and prevalent, that we cannot live in the Suburbs, or Neighbourhood of Virtue and Religion, without being in some Sort the better for them. How much more when they reside within our Walls ; when the virtuous and religious are our *Friends*, our *Companions*, our *Partners for Life* ? If we receive some 'Tincture of Good or Evil, some Semblance of Temper, or Disposition from the Company we keep, tho' less frequently, what a Similitude of Manners—what a happy and heavenly Mould, or Cast of Mind, may not he be likely to contract, who harbours beneath his Roof a Person, whose Faith shews itself by an uniform, unaffected Piety ; not breaking out in sudden,

short

short, interrupted Flashes, but diffusing a regular, steady, and even Light and Heat all around it?—And should this excellent and exemplary Person happen to be his nearest and dearest Relation, his second Self, the Wife of his Bosom, he must indeed be deeply *intrench'd* in Libertinism and Infidelity, who would not *surrender*, when so strongly and closely *besieg'd*. He must be altogether brutaliz'd, or stiffened in Vice and Folly, who would not be all Attention to one, whose *Life* as well as *Love*, pleaded so forcibly for his Reformation. Yea, was he *dead in Transgresses and Sins*, one would think her influential Graces and Virtues, ever as it were, stretching themselves over his Soul, like *Elisha* over the Body of the *Shunamite's* Child, should restore him to his spiritual Life again.—Such admirable Effects may a *right and rational Faith*, shining forth in the Life and Conversation of a truly religious and virtuous Wife, produce in an unbelieving, vicious Husband.

But now those poor infatuated Women, who are bid to hope that their *Enthusiasm* will be attended with the like, or any salutary Consequences, are miserably absurd. *Faith* they have, that is certain; yea, *not a little*

*little Faith*, but then it is mix'd with a *great deal of Folly and Frenzy*. Shall we enquire how their Faith is founded? Alas! we may search very long, and very deep, e'er we discover the Foundation of a *Dream*. For what better than a Dream is that instantaneous Regeneration, those sudden influxes of Grace, or impulses of the Spirit, by which the new Birth is formed, or wrought within them, and which they pretend certainly and sensibly to *feel*, tho' they are not able, in any Sort, to *describe*?

Now can a *Faith*, (if it may be so called) dug out of their own deluded and delusive Imagination, having no Footing in Scripture, Reason, or common Sense, contribute in the least towards mending the Head, or Heart of an Infidel or Libertine, or towards making a *bad Man* a *good Christian*? Or must not the Husband, if he hath a Grain of Understanding left, treat with the utmost Scorn and Contempt, and Derision, this most extraordinary and unaccountable *Feeling* of his Wife, and look upon her, and her Faith, (both of them) as false and fanatical? Must he not abhor that Religion from *his Heart*, which hath thus turn'd *her Head*; and con-

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clude, that Infidelity and Immorality are at least as *eligible* as Madness and Distraction?

Nor are the *moral Fruits* of her chimerical, enthusiastic Faith, more likely to work a Cure upon him, than such Faith itself. Since it disposeth her to reverse in her Behaviour that truly matron-like Character, recommended by the Apostle;—prompts her to *despise* her Husband, and usurp an Authority over him, upon the Score of her greater Sanctity; to *neglect* her Children and her Household, under Colour of being crucified to the World, and having renounced all carnal and worldly Affections; to *keep little* at home, that she may prostitute her itching Ears to every ignorant, visionary Preacher, or bold Impostor: Of which Sort are they, who (according to ancient Custom, as appears from St. Paul's Account) *creep into Houses, and lead captive silly Women, laden with Sins, led away with diverse Lusts; ever learning, and never able to come at the Knowledge of the Truth;* to pursue with Clamour and Invective; the Man she promis'd and vow'd to reverence, because he will not reverence her delirious Piety; and, in a word, not only to *dishonour*, but to *defraud* him into the Bargain, and to render him a Prey to  
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those Deceivers, or false Teachers, *who make a Gain of Godliness*. As if she flatter'd herself, or was rather flatter'd by them, that the *Godliness* of the *Intention* would sanctify the *Injustice* of the *Act*, and that such an Act of Injustice would be imputed to her for Righteousness.—But however she may be buoy'd up with the Hopes of taking Heaven by this Kind of Stratagem, or by such an odd Carriage or Deportment; this is not the way to win, to reclaim, to save her Husband. It may make him a *poorer*, but not a *better* Man; it may *hurt* his *Charity*, but cannot *help* his *Faith*; it may *murder* his *good Qualities*, but will hardly *mend* his *bad* ones: It will be far more likely, on the contrary, to kindle his Indignation, confirm him in his Infidelity, and harden him in his vicious Courses.

The Sum of the Matter is this: It is the pure and artless Goodness; cool, chearful, and compos'd Sanctimony; unforc'd, modest, and easy Virtue, and true Simplicity of Life and Manners; and not the wild, extravagant Whimsies, powerful Imagination, blind Zeal, ignorant Devotion, pharisaical Holiness, or religious Melancholy of the Wife, that will ever save the Husband.

*These*



*These* will serve only to increase his Prejudices, but *those* will generally have their proper Influence.

Let then the good and pious Women, whose Honour and Happiness it is to fill up that amiable Character, go on still to support it. Let them not be ashamed of Religion, for that uncomely Dregs, those false Colours in which some mistaken Zealots have array'd it; but rather by their laudable Example, endeavour to rub off the deceitful Paint, strip it of its antic, ridiculous, unnatural Garb, and restore it to its genuine Complexion, original Form, and native Beauty.

And as to others, who never yet attempted to recommend themselves by the pure and innocent and lovely charms of religion and virtue, as either imagining they have no such charms, or affrighted by the ugly Distortions of Enthusiasm, or thick varnish and daubings of Hypocrisy, from examining whether they have, or no, let them be persuaded to survey them in their just portrait and true proportion, and they will soon be convinced that instead of spreading a gloom over their *Persons*, or sullyng their *perfection*,

*0125,*

ons, it will add a *lustre* to every *grace*, and be the best *improvement* upon *nature*.

True Religion indeed is the greatest Ornament to *both* Sexes, tho' 'tis to be feared, the least studied or sought for by either : But my Text confines me to *one*, and of that to the *married* only.

May all such consider seriously what hath been said ; and aspire after the Character which so universally becomes them. The *Fashion* may seem something *old*, but such are sometimes *reviv'd*, and none can be more worthy of a revival than this. It will appear comely and graceful in all times and circumstances ; suit every age, and every complexion.—But, what is most pertinent to my Subject, it will bid the fairest of any other Scheme or method whatsoever for the conviction and conversion of an Infidel, or immoral Associate : It will open his Ear to her kind admonitions ; and tho' duty *cannot*, affection *may* prevail : It will give weight to every word, and prepare his Heart for every good Impression : It is that plain and natural Rhetoric, which can hardly be resisted : Tears may have a *temporary* effect, but 'tis simple Virtue and Piety alone, which can work a *perfect* cure. Let these be constant-  
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ly applyed, and then, tho' we cannot absolutely promise *success*, yet we may properly say with the Apostle,

*What knowest thou, O Wife whether thou shall save thy Husband.*



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# SERMON X.

2 TIMOTHY iv. 3.

*After their own Lusts shall they heap to themselves Teachers, having itching Ears.*

**S**T. Paul begins this Chapter with a very solemn and awful charge to Timothy to be diligent and constant, zealous and intrepid in his ministerial function. *I charge thee before God and our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead at his appearing, and his Kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.* As if he had said, “ I charge thee as thou wilt answer for thy behaviour at the great Day of accounts, when God shall judge the World by his Son Jesus Christ, that thou preach the word committed to thee with the utmost perseverance and constancy; that thou shrink not from thy Duty, either for the difficulty or the danger of the performance; that thou consult neither thine  
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“ own ease nor security, but that thou re-  
 “ prove all those who deserve to be blam’d,  
 “ however harsh or ungrateful thy admoni-  
 “ tions may be to them, however irksome or  
 “ hazardous to thyself, in a word, *that thou*  
*lift up thy Voice like a Trumpet, and whether*  
 “ *they will bear, or whether they will forbear,*  
 “ that thou persist in thy good Instructions,  
 “ and use all thy utmost efforts and endea-  
 “ vours to convince and reclaim them.” The  
 ground or reason of which Injunction, are  
 subjoined in the Verse of which my Text is a  
 part. *For the time will come when they will*  
*not endure sound doctrine, but after their own*  
*Lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having*  
*itching Ears.*

In discoursing upon which words my de-  
 sign is,

1st. To point out some of the Causes of  
 the Custom or practice here mentioned by  
 the Apostle, *Mens heaping to themselves*  
*teachers.*

2dly. Set before you a few of the mis-  
 chievous consequences of it.

1st. I am to point out, &c.

The first which I shall take notice of is,  
 what the Text speaks for me, Curiosity or the  
 itch of hearing.

These

There are too many professors of Christianity in the World, whose whole religion lies in the qualification of this keen and tickling humour; in the indulgence of this *levity*; or (why may I not say) *leachery* of Ears. Such are all they who rarely vouchsafe their attendance upon all religious assemblies unless they are led thither by the fame of some celebrated Preacher, or by the Expectation of some new and extraordinary subject: Who are wonderfully taken with the Voice of Strangers, not so much regarding the Matter as the variety; who contrary to all rule and order and decency, stroll from the Church to Conventicle, or from one Church to another, not in hopes of *improvement* but *entertainment* by the change. These Men must have variety as well as truth; they must be amused as well as instructed. Words without meaning, Sound without Sense, the most unintelligible Jargon, the wildest rapsodies, the vaineft babbling, if it hath but something new and uncommon either in the matter or manner of it, is more agreeable and sweet and harmonious to their Ears than the most sober, coherent and rational discourse without novelty to recommend it.

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Again,

Again. Another cause why Men heap to themselves Teachers, and which is also here assigned by the Apostle, is the satisfaction of their Lufts *after their own Lufts shall they heap to themselves Teachers.*

Luft in the most usual acceptation of the word signifies lewdness or lasciviousness, or any other Species of uncleanness ; but then beside *this*, interpretation it hath *another*, and is sometimes put for *will* or *inclination*. Indeed there is a lewdness in the Will when it becomes humerfome and capricious : And if to gratify a fond and foolish inclination without any appeal to their reason or assent of their judgment, Men become followers of every new Sect or yield an attentive Ear to every Novelist that falls in their way, they may be said with some propriety according to the other more harsh and rigorous sense of the word, *after their own Lufts* to heap to themselves Teachers.

*St. Paul* I doubt not had still a more general aim and intention and meant to suggest that the Time would come when Men would greedily run after those Teachers, whose Doctrines were most favourable to their Vices, or squar'd best with their Prejudices, or freed them from the uneasy Yoke of a  
 virtuous



virtuous and holy Life. And how well the Doctrine of our modern Enthusiasts who place the whole Christianity in a strong fancy, which they fondly call by the Name of Faith, is adapted to such hearers I need not say.

Another cause is unsettledness of Principles, but as I mentioned this in a former Discourse I shall only touch upon it now.

It is the misfortune of these Men not to be well rooted and grounded in the religion they profess, not to have duly weighed and considered the Articles and constitution of that Church into which they have been baptized ; not to have made right reason the Basis and Model, the Touchstone and Standard of their Faith ; without which 'tis impossible the Mind should ever be at Anchor, but will be perpetually tossed about with every Wind of Error, and at last be in great danger of splitting upon one of those opposite Rocks, Infidelity or Enthusiasm.

The Man who knows not why he is of this Religion or Sect rather than another may easily be persuaded to enlist or join with any. He is what he is only by chance, and may chance to be any thing else : And therefore no wonder he should be led away by appear-

ances, become an easy prey to every seducing Spirit ; be fond of following every new light though it hurries him he knows not where and leaves him in the End quite lost and bewildered in the fruitless and foolish chace.

Another reason why Men heap to themselves Teachers is remorse of Conscience. If after a long habit of sinning they happen to be alarmed into a sense of danger, 'tis natural in the fright to close in with that Friend who promiseth them the surest and speediest deliverance. As the man who labours under any acute bodily pains, impatient of his anguish, is apt to throw himself into the Hands of an Emperic rather than wait the slower but safer proces of the regular Physician ; so he who is tortured with a wounded Spirit, rather than put himself under that more gradual course which his true spiritual Physician, would prescribe to him for his Recovery, chooseth to follow the directions of a bold and ignorant Impostor who confidently assures him of immediate relief. This impudent quackery hath been of great service to the Cause of Methodism. By this specious Bait many poor Souls have been flattered into her Net. For whither should the desponding Sinner fly for refuge but into the  
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Bosom of those who pretend to immediate Inspiration, and who durst say to him with the Authority even of Christ himself *this Day is salvation come to thine House* who have learnt to substitute I know not what kind of Faith, or rather feeling, in the place of true and pure morality, and are persuaded or would persuade others that they may be sanctified without Virtue, religious without good Works, and perfect without Holiness.

So much for the Causes, proceed we

2dly. To set before you some of the mischievous Consequences of Men's heaping to themselves Teachers.

Now this Indulgence of itching Ears, is mischievous, as it tends to subvert and destroy the Order and Peace of the Christian Church; as it encourages every bold Usurper to broach new Doctrines, or set up new Ways of Worship, just as Humour or Interest leads him. So long as Men are curious to listen, there never will be wanting Seducers. If they will prostitute their Ears to this Love of Novelty, or catch at every Word of Doctrine, by whatever Wind it comes, *great of Consequence will be the Company of Preachers.* They who have not a proper Call, if they cannot squeeze them-

selves into a Pulpit, *will cry aloud from the Street, and lift up their Voices in the chief Places of Concourse*; and they who have, if they think their Merit to be neglected, if they are not rewarded with that double Honour of which they account themselves worthy; if they see Ecclesiastical Dignities or Benefices conferr'd on others, which they fancy would much better become themselves, provok'd by their Disappointment, will immediately fly in the Face of the Establishment, withdraw that canonical Obedience to which they had bound and oblig'd themselves, to seek for that Success in a *new*, which they could not obtain in the *old* Way. And the Effect will be the same, if, instead of Resentment or Revenge, Affectation, Self-Conceit, Spiritual Pride, or Enthusiasm be the Cause. If swell'd and puff'd up with an high Opinion of their own extraordinary Gifts and Graces, they begin to look upon themselves as specially delegated and appointed by God to be the Reformers of a wicked Age, and the Restorers of true Piety; if a heated Imagination, or the Blaze of Religion hath buoy'd them up, as it were, into the third Heaven, and there lock'd up their Senses in an holy Ecstasy, they will,  
when

when come to themselves, be very apt to glory in their Vision, and be fond of publishing it to every one who will hear it; they will industriously propagate the delusive Dream, and make it the Plan of a new Charter of Salvation.

But besides the envious and conceited, and enthusiastical, there is another Sort of People ready enough to set up for Preachers, provided they can meet with proper Encouragement; I mean those who chuse rather to talk, than work for their Bread, or get their Living rather by their Lungs, than their Labour. If Nature hath blessed them with a tolerable Share of Tongue, and a double Portion of Face, a very little Furniture of Head will suffice to set them up; and therefore no wonder, if thus qualify'd and harden'd for a higher Calling, they quit a laborious manual Employment, and seek an easier Way of Subsistence.

And now if every one who upon such Motives, boldly endeavours to put himself at the Head of a new Sect, shall be favour'd with Followers; if every one who assumes to himself the Office and Authority of a Teacher shall be able to gather a Congregation, the Peace of Christianity could not possibly

possibly be preserv'd among such Divisions of Christians, but Christ wou'd be more torn and mangled in his spiritual, than he was in his natural Body.

Must not every well-wisher to the Christian Religion have often reflected, with Concern, how difficult it is for Persons of the most humane, candid, and peaceable Dispositions, to keep up and maintain the true Spirit of Charity, under different Modes of Worship? If there are no outward Hostilities or Bickerings between them, have they the same inward Good-will, the same hearty Affection for each other, as if they were united both in Faith and Worship? If they do not perplex and persecute Christians of other Denominations, do they behave towards them with the same Openness and Freedom, which they shew to those of their own? If no uncharitable Sourness is not an ungracious Shyness, for the most part too visible in their mutual Behaviour? If there is no Malice or Hatred, is there not a narrowness of Hearts, where there is a Difference of Communion. But then, if this Prejudice and Partiality sticks so close to the wise and meek, and moderate Christian, what must be expected from those of a contrary

trary Spirit, Men of a warm Temper, or mistaken Zeal? What but that Bitterness and Wrath, that Clamour and Evil-speaking, that Strife and Envy, which we of this Nation have formerly experienc'd to be the natural Consequences of Difunion in Worship: And if Men will still heap to themselves Teachers without end; if they will hunt after Novelty; if they will forsake the broad Sunshine of Truth, to follow the strange Lights of every bold Impostor, or blind Enthusiast, what can we expect but a fearful looking for again of that unhappy State of our national Church, when she will be rent with Schisms and choak'd with Heresies, more and more fatal than those with which she hath been already infested; and after having been long toss'd about with the rude Breath of false Teachers, and shaken and shatter'd with the boisterous Winds of contrary Doctrines, will at last be swallow'd up by the proud Waves of Atheism or Infidelity.

Hitherto we have consider'd the Consequence of itching Ears, only with Regard to the Public, as it brings Mischief and Misery upon the Christian Church in general; but another Inconvenience arising from such

a Practice, is, that it tends to confound the Understanding of those who are guilty of it, and to vex and torture them with a contrariety of Opinions.

Indeed, as I before observ'd, it is partly owing to such a doubtful fluctuating State that Men heap to themselves Teachers : But the Misfortune is that what they propose as a Remedy, heightens the Disease, and instead of satisfying their doubts increaseth them. The further they proceed in this road, the more they are bewildered. The mist thickens, the labyrinth spreads, and the Mind is quite lost. And the reason's plain. They set out wrong at first. They have never thoroughly examined the principles of the Christian religion and therefore have no rule by which to try the different doctrines and opinions of different Sects.

Let a man unread in the Law go into our Courts of Judicature, and hear the debates of the most eminent in that profession, and after a great expence of Lungs and learning on both sides, he will come out just as wise as he went in ; nay perhaps not quite so wise : For both will be so plausible he will be apt to think both in the right, and yet frequently both in the wrong, and instead of informing  
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his Judgment will loose common Sense. Whereas the truth of the Case to another well skill'd in the Law woud in spite of all the pains the disputants had took to puzzle and perplex it, appear as clear as the day. He would easily blow of the Cloud in which they had wrap'd it, and see plainly that they had only been keeping up the ball of contention to amuse the ignorant and divert themselves.

But perhaps it may be said tho' the Bar may have a perscriptive right to such insincerity, are there any so hardy as to sport with truth from the Pulpit? I told you of some such haughty Men unable to bend, and idle Men unwilling to labour. The one will prostitute the Pulpit, to indulge his envy, the other his ease. For these purposes they will endeavour to embarrass and obscure the plainest Truths wantonly cavil at the Articles of our Church, pervert the sacred Text upon which they are founded and spread a Mist around that bright and glorious Gospel which brought life and immortality to light: A Mist tho' thin and airy in itself, yet thick enough to deceive the wavering mind and to confound such as are weak in the Faith. Yea supposing a Man's Faith to be better settled, and that he hath so well weigh'd and studied  
the

the principles of the Christian Religion, so as to be able to give a reason to them that shou'd ask him for the Hope that is in him, still this hope may be weakened, those principles unsettled, by heaping to himself Teachers: And his religion at last instead of becoming a regular System is made a *Babel* or confusion of different opinions.

Well but you'll naturally then ask me, are we not to give Truth a fair and free examination? are we not to exercise our Judgments for fear of their being overset? Are we to stick so close to our own opinions as to allow none else the Hearing? This would shew us to be rather stubborn than stedfast, stiff rather than settled in our opinions. Very true. And therefore it is not a mind desirous of knowledge, but itching Ears which I am opposing. It is one thing seriously to prove every Doctrine and another wantonly to run after every Preacher. That is searching Truth to the bottom.—This is only seeking it upon the Surface, the place where errors generally float. In short as he who for securing his *civil* property consults every Lawyer he meets is sure to be in an uneasy, fluctuating State, so is he also, who for the preservation of his *spiritual*, listens to every Teacher that falls  
in

in his way. He may have very strong and rational grounds for his persuasion, and yet not be able to support it, against the art and sophistry of a more subtle reasoner.

But now the honest, artless, unlearn'd Christian, not distinguishing between a good cause and a good manager, when he finds himself press'd with difficulties he cannot get clear of, will be apt modestly to give up what he hath not skill to defend, and to submit, not for want of truth, but abilities. Besides without striking directly or openly at the root of his present Opinions, new ones may be so artfully insinuated that he shall greedily imbibe them without discerning that they are heterodox or contrary to the Faith before received. Again,

Heaping up to himself Teachers, is further mischievous to the man who is faulty therein, as it hath an unhappy Tendency to frustrate and disappoint the main end or design of hearing the amendment of the Heart. This is necessarily the case of those who are led into that Error by itching Ears. While they are too closely observing the stile, the language, the method and address of the Preacher, their thoughts are carried away from the principle Points, the importance  
and

and usefulness of his doctrine. But now as a man who goes to a festival Entertainment only to feed his Eye with the sumptuousness of the repast will gain no *bodily* nourishment so neither will he receive any *spiritual* who goes to Church only to feast his Ear with an elegant or pleasing Discourse. His imagination may be struck but his Heart will be unaffected. His fancy will be highly entertained but his Morals no way improved. The Seed of the Word will produce and bring forth in such a hearer no fruit unto holiness, but will spout up into Pride, Conceit, and the love of Disputation. As he who attends to the preaching of God's Word with an honest and sincere Intention to profit by it cannot well be disappointed, if the Doctrine be sound however artless the Preacher, so he who brings the same disposition to Church as to the Theatre, and judges of a Sermon as he would of a Play, not by the usefulness of his Moral, but by the beauty of the Composition may return home *pleas'd* but by no means *profited*. Let the preacher speak as never man spake, yea let him speak with the tongue not of men but of Angels, if there be no better a temper in the hearer, it will to him be no more than a Sounding brass or a tinkling

ling Cymbal. But indeed itching Ears are not always nice, tho' ever inquisitive. If there should be neither Beauty nor meaning in what they hear, novelty alone is a sufficient recommendation.

Certainly this is a very bad motive. There is no religion in it, and consequently no good to be expected from it. No matter what is the Seed, if the Soil be barren, no matter who plants or who waters, unless God give the increase: but an Heart over-run with Curiosity, and ungarnish'd with piety, is an improper Residence for the Divine Spirit, whilst it remains so unprepared and incumbered; the word sown in it will have little effect, will rather turn to disease than nutriment.

Give me leave to make a short application of what hath been said to the people of the new separation before taken notice of.

I am charitable enough to suppose that among these, there are not wanting some, who are in their Hearts true Friends to the cause of God, and the Interest of Religion, and who earnestly desire and long to see christian piety raised from it's low and languishing State and shine out again in its full strength and primitive lustre: And imagine that happy change

is now to be effected by the Founders of their Sect, who they look upon as the special and extraordinary Delegates and Missionaries of Heaven to set on foot and compleat a general reformation. Now I agree with them that piety hath long been in a very faint and sickly condition, that it hath not only lost it's vigour, but it's Complexion, that many are grown so cool and indifferent in the great Business of Religion that they scarcely think it worth the trouble, so much as to save appearances. That some impudently *deny the Lord that bought them*, and others who confess him, put him to a still greater shame.—In short that we are a sinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity, and wretchedly fallen away both in faith and manners.—In all this I can readily agree with them, because all this I stedfastly believe. And he must be a very bad Christian indeed who, satisfy'd of the distemper, wou'd not agree with them farther in ardently wishing for a Remedy. But I can never think, as they do, that the way to save the Patient is to destroy his Constitution, or that Christian piety is to be raised again upon the Ruins of the Christian Church. And hath it not been shewed that the multiplication of Sects is utterly subversive of it's peace and

and prosperity? That it is naturally productive of Heresies, Emulation, Envyings, Strife? And *where Strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.* Hath it not been shew'd how hard it is to keep charity alive among persons of different communions, persons in other respects of the greatest candour and meekness and moderation; and I may further add whose different modes of worship are merely accidental, the prejudices of birth, education or country? What then are we to expect from a Sect whose Leaders are of quite the reverse Temper and Disposition? Whose Minds are sour'd with the leaven of spiritual Pride, and whose enthusiastick Zeal hath burnt up their charity; whose avow'd design is to vex, and disturb, and, if possible, overturn the establish'd Church, and to resettle it upon a Plan of their own contriving: Who having first shamefully apostatized from their own order, have not since spar'd to revile, and fly in the face of those powers, from whom they received their Commission, and to whom in the most solemn manner, they had promised all dutiful Obedience. Who are not afraid to vilify the Rulers and Governors of our Church both dead and living, and while they are dealing out to their weak

Disciples their own pious Dreams and fanatical Rapfodies, to caution them against the use of those venerable Authors, whose names have ever been had in honour by all Protestant Churches, and whose writings have been generally recommended as the best calculated for settling true Religion upon a firm and lasting Foundation.

And are these they from whom such wonders are expected? Are these they who are to restore the Kingdom, the spiritual Kingdom, of Christ to Israel in it's original Purity and Perfection? Are these they who should reform the age, and mend the faint Heart, and sickly Face of Virtue and Religion? These most assuredly cannot be the Men. No Reformation is to be hoped for from Apostates. No probability of the decay of Christian piety being at all helped by such as are enemies to the Church of Christ. No great harvest of godliness to be expected from those whose profess'd design is to sow the Tares of dissention among Brethren. Lastly, no reformers to be sought for among those who carry about them all the marks and characters of deceivers, *creeping into houses, and leading captive silly Women laden with sins, speaking great swelling words of vanity, presumptuous, self-willed, despising*



*prising Dominions and speaking Evil of Dignities.*

In a word and to conclude. The only proper method to reclaim the age, is for Men not to heap to themselves *new* teachers, but to give a due and constant attendance to the *old*: Not to gratify their Ears with novel Doctrines, but to let Truth sink down into their Hearts.—They have the same Altars, the same Ordinances, and the same Gospel, and, notwithstanding the slandering Tongue of Enthusiasm) the same Ministers they ever had. They have Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles duly read and preach'd to them, let them hear them.



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# SERMON XI.

I TIMOTHY iii. 9.

*Holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure  
Conscience.*

**T**HOUGH this is here mentioned by the Apostle as one of the qualifications proper and necessary to the sacred office of a *Deacon*, yet is such qualification not confined to that or any particular order of Christians, but is universally requisite to all who profess Christianity: Whose profession without it, is no other than an empty name. It ought indeed to be the more especial care of those who are called to any office or administration in the Church; but it is at the same time the common duty of Christians in general, to *hold the mystery of Faith in a pure conscience.*

That by *Faith* the Apostle intends the *Gospel of Christ*, is very obvious. But why he calls it a *mystery*, deserves our enquiry. In order to which, some previous explanation of that term may be convenient.

The word *mystery* is variously used.—In common speech, we say that thing is mysterious, which is so puzzled with difficulties, or involved in darkness, as at present to elude and disappoint our utmost skill and most painful researches. Not that it is in itself inscrutable to our capacity, or understanding, but because more time, or experience, is wanted, to bring it to light. Thus many new discoveries in natural philosophy, which have been made by the ingenious labours of *this* century, were mysteries to those of the *last*; and very probably if the *next* generation should be equally prying and inquisitive, they may become acquainted with many secrets in nature, which are mysteries to the *present*.

Again. The word mystery is sometimes applied to such things as are not discoverable by *human reason*, or any otherwise knowable than by a *divine revelation*. Of this sort are all the secret counsels and purposes of God: Into which the most piercing eye would in vain attempt to penetrate. Busy curiosity is too apt to search into them over boldly, but can never by searching find them out. Such secret things *Man* with all his penetration, must of necessity be ignorant  
of

of, till *God* himself is pleased to reveal them; and thence they are, in the mean time, in the language of the Scripture, called mysteries.

Again. The same term is used for expressing such things as neither reason nor revelation can open, or unfold to us, in this our present imperfect state, so as that we should be able to comprehend them. Of this kind is the manner of *God's* existence; the nature of Spirit; the union of Soul and Body; the glories of Heaven, and the like. These are mysteries in the highest sense of the word, inasmuch as the knowledge of them is neither possibly to be *acquired by us*, nor *communicated to us*, till our capacities are enlarged, or our faculties suited to such objects.

This being premised, proceed we to enquire in what sense *St. Paul* in the Text styles the Gospel of Christ the *mystery of Faith*?

And I think, from what hath been said, it appears very evident, that he had his eye upon the two last Senses in which we have been considering that term. In the *former* of which he look'd upon the Gospel, or which is the same thing; the glad tidings of Man's  
Redemp-

Redemption, or of God's most gracious purpose to save mankind, as *having been* an unsearchable mystery, till God in his infinite wisdom and goodness thought proper to reveal it. In the *latter* as *being still* a mystery, not capable of being revealed to Man, because Man as now formed, is not capable of receiving it.

But however the Apostle might here intend to apply the word, 'tis certain the Redemption of the World by Christ Jesus, which is the end and design of the Christian dispensation, may truly be called a Mystery in both respects.

Let us imagine, or suppose, God's merciful Intention herein, to have been even till now, and at this time concealed from us, what light could reason afford us towards the discovery of it? What room could we have for conceiving any such thing? Or by what traces could we pursue the inquiry? You will say perhaps that the mercy of God is infinite; and thence you might be assisted and directed in your pursuit. It's true. This might give you some faint glimmerings of hope. This Consideration might lead you on one step further, but there your Inquiry would be at end. It would soon bring you to another

ther consideration, which is, that as the *mercy*, to the *justice* of God is infinite : And to reconcile these two upon the principles of human reason, or shew how they could possibly meet together in the great work of Redemption, would be a difficulty never to be got over.

So that the purpose of God of sending his Son into the world to redeem and restore lost Man, which is the comfortable Message of the Gospel, and the sum of the Christian Faith, may properly be stiled a *Mystery*, since before its publication, it lay hid in the unfathomable Abyss of his own eternal counsels. Hence our Apostle elsewhere speaking of it, says it is *the Mystery which was kept secret since the world began. Immediately adding, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures, of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God ; made known to all Nations for the obedience of faith.* That is says the Bishop of London in one of his most excellent Discourses lately published. “ This great work was a mystery in all ages, “ being kept secret in the counsels of God ; “ but since the coming of Christ, ’tis no longer a mystery, but is manifest and made “ known to all Nations and People.” And  
again

again ; “ with respect to this time of secrecy  
 “ and silence, the Gospel is called a *Mystery* ;  
 “ but upon the *revelation* of it by Christ Je-  
 “ sus, it is no longer look’d upon as a *Myfte-*  
 “ *ry*, but a *manifestation of God’s will and*  
 “ *Goodness to Men.*

When this admirable Writer tells us, it is  
*no longer look’d upon as a Mystery*, he means  
 no more than that the Purpose of God, to  
 redeem the World, was *no longer a Secret*.  
 And thus he explains himself, in the very  
 next Words : “ Here, says he, you see plainly  
 “ the Opposition is between *Mystery* and  
 “ *Revelation*. What God has reserved to  
 “ himself, without communicating the know-  
 “ ledge of it to the World, that is a *Myfte-*  
 “ *ry* ; what he has revealed, is no longer a  
 “ *Mystery*, but a *Manifestation of his Will*  
 “ *and Purpose.*” He had no Design to infi-  
 nuate, that there is nothing mysterious in the  
*Work of Redemption itself*. So far from it,  
 that in many parts of his Writings he de-  
 clares the quite contrary. Declares in ex-  
 press Terms, “ that it is a *Mystery* still, not-  
 “ withstanding its publication, inasmuch as  
 “ we cannot penetrate into the *Depths* of  
 “ the *divine Oeconomy*, or *Account*, by the  
 “ *Principles of Human Reason*, for every  
 “ *Step*



“ Step or Article of it.—That it is a Dispen-  
 “ sation of Providence which the Reason of  
 “ Man cannot fathom, which the Angels  
 “ themselves desire to look into; and after  
 “ all their Inquiries, are content to reverence  
 “ and adore at an awful Distance.—“ That  
 “ whatever is the Effect of God’s secret  
 “ Counfels, in order to the Redemption of  
 “ the World, is a Mystery.”

All which amounts to this, *viz.* That as the secret Purpose of God to redeem Mankind *was* a Mystery till it was revealed; so the Manner, or Means of such Redemption *is still* a Mystery, notwithstanding that Revelation. And indeed it is impossible it should be otherwise, except our Reason was a sufficient or adequate Rule, by which to measure the Divine Proceedings.

Enough hath been said to shew how we are to understand that Phrase in my Text, the *Mystery of the Faith*.

Proceed we next to consider what is meant by *holding it in a pure Conscience*.

St. Paul, in the 9th v. of the 3d ch. of this same Epistle, saith to Timothy, *This Charge I commit unto thee, Son Timothy according to the Prophecies, which went before on thee, that thou mightest by them war a good warfare*

*warfare, holding Faith and a good Conscience.* In the Scripture, which is my Subject, he delivers the same Precept, the Expression only a little varied, *holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience,* By both we are admonished to be sincere and stedfast in our Profession of Christianity, and to add to our Faith, Conformity of Life and Manners.

*To hold the Faith,* is not barely to yield our Assent to the Truths of the Gospel, but also firmly and resolutely to adhere to them at all Times, and under all Trials and Temptations to the contrary.—*To hold the Faith in a pure Conscience,* may signify, either to embrace it conscientiously and upon Principle, in contradistinction to a formal, hypocritical Profession; or together *with* it, to preserve such a Behaviour as is agreeable to it. And here let me observe, that as a good or a pure Conscience naturally springs from a good and right Conversation, so the one is put for the other, the Effect for the Cause, and is the same as if the Apostle had said, “ Holding the Faith with Holiness, or Purity of Life.”

'Tis too evident how apt Men are to slight the *latter* part of this apostolical Precept, at the same Time that they have, or would seem

seem to have, a high Regard for the *former*. There are many who contend earnestly for the Gospel as the *Mystery of the Faith*, but despise or neglect it, as a *Rule of Manners*; by which Means it sometimes happens, that its warmest Advocates become its worst Adversaries, and make more Apostates by their *Lives*, than Converts by their *Arguments*. So that the Apostle, when shewing how a Deacon ought to be qualified; *to holding the Mystery of the Faith*, very properly adds, *in a pure Conscience*; thereby intimating, that it was not less incumbent upon such to be exemplary in their *Lives*, than sound in their *Doctrine*, or to practise its *moral Institutes*, than to preach its *mysterious Truths*. Incumbent upon *them*, more especially; for the Precept is *general*, or at least virtually includes in it an Admonition to all those who profess Christianity, not only to hold fast and persevere in the Faith of a Christian, but also to order their Conversation according to the Gospel of Christ, and to *live righteously* as well as to *believe rightly*. Not only to make themselves as well acquainted, as they are able, with all the necessary and saving *Truths* of their most holy Religion, but also,

to the best of their Power, to yield an universal Obedience to it's *Laws*.

And whosoever performs these two Duties piously, tho' imperfectly, may be truly said, to hold the faith in a good Conscience.—Perfection is a property which belongs not to any human Creature. Our judgment is weak, and our will corrupt; how is it possible that Man should be perfect? All that is, or can be required of us, is to use our honest and sincere Endeavours to prevent, or rectify the Errors of both; in which if we are not wanting, we need not fear the Consequences of either. If our Errors, whether in Faith or Practice, are such as proceed from mere natural Imperfection; as from invincible Ignorance, or Incapacity, or the like, and not from any fault or neglect on our part, they will not be imputed to us.—But how are we to know certainly when that *is* the Case, and when it *is not*? It is no easy matter to discover the true source of our Errors, or how far we have had a share in them, or contributed to them. Where shall we seek for that Information? Where should we, (you will say) but from our own Consciences? And for this you will probably quote St. John *Beloved if our Hearts condemn us not, then have*

*we*

*we Confidence towards God.* Condemn us not of what? Of Hypocrisy only : And so far our Confidence is well grounded. But now we may be very *sincerely* and conscientiously in the wrong, and yet very *faulty* for being so. Which was the Case of St. Paul. He was as sincere a *persecutor*, as he was an *Apostle* ; but did his Sincerity acquit him ? Hear then his own Confession. *I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of Christ*

And where lay his fault? In his prejudices : Which precluded a free and impartial Inquiry into the Truth of those things, which he so zealously opposed. “ A little Knowledge of humane nature, (saith an ingenious Writer) will teach us that our sincerity may be charg’d with guilt : Not as if we are guilty because we are *sincere*, but because it may be our fault that we are *sincere in such or such ill grounded Opinions.* It may have been from some bad conduct of our own, some Irregularities, or abuse of our Faculties, that we conceive things as we do, and are fix’d in such or such Tenets.” Conscience doubtless ought to be our guide, her dictates should be inviolably observ’d : But at the same time it should

be remember'd that she is very capable of being herself deceived and consequently of deceiving us, as when she is blinded by prejudices, or hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin : And therefore it should be our first care as much as possible, to keep her clear of those Impediments or Obstructions, if we would hold the faith in a pure conscience.

1st. Since the Word Mystery is a Scripture Term ; since it is the most expressive of such things as neither our Faculties can explore, nor our reason can comprehend ; since Christianity itself, and all the Hopes and Comforts deriv'd from it, entirely centre in that great and stupendous Mystery of Redemption, what Candor, what sense is there in reproaching the Preachers of the Gospel, as tho' they themselves were the authors and inventors of the Mysteries they teach.

Or again if men are satisfied that the Doctrine of the Redemption is, and in the very nature of it can't be otherwise than mysteries and that all the other Mysteries of our most holy Religion necessarily flow from it, or are involved in it, as every one must know who makes the least use of his Bible, if then they are offended at them, if they nauseate them as they would the foolish and absurd Mysteries of  
the

the Heathens, 'tis an argument of a weak and sickly Faith; an Evidence rather of their being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Or

Again. If they both know and believe Christian Mysteries; now that they are revealed in Gods Word and believe the Word of God to be true, how strangely then do they err in imagining that the Ministers of Christ, whose profess'd Business it is to strengthen and confirm their hearers in the Christian Faith would do well very rarely to touch upon the main points or objects of it? And yet, alas! this is a prevailing Error. Many very many there are who call themselves Christians, and who nevertheless would be very well pleased if the *Stewards of Mysteries of God*, would bury them in the Earth as Talents incapable of being improved, who could wish the Preacher would always keep close to mere heathen morality, and cautiously avoid every Gospel Truth which hath any thing in the least mysterious about it. But we must not, cannot indulge their wishes because the Gospel itself (as hath been shew'd) is founded in the *sublimest*, or perhaps I had better have said, in the *profoundest* Mystery. And it is expected that the Ministers of the Gospel should preach the Gospel; should

not confine themselves to the morals of the wisest and purest Teacher (and who that was I need not tell you) even of him who in the Judgment of an Adversary *spake as never Man spake*, but should likewise preach those things which concern the Lord Jesus.

2dly. Since these and other Gospel Mysteries are in their own Nature inexplicable to our finite understanding, how vain and presumptuous is it to attempt to explain them? Would not that Man deserve contempt who would pretend to draw the portrait of a Spirit? However exquisite the painting, the piece must be ridiculous. And no less are all those airy and refined Essays to explain the Mystery of the Trinity, or any other Article of Faith which soars above our Reason, however lively the Fancy, or beautiful the Similes.

3dly. Since mysteries are truths incomprehensible, hence appears the unreasonableness of those who oppose Christianity on that account, since it is in effect to quarrel with God, that he hath not created them other sort of Beings than they are. 'Tis to tell him that he ought not to require of them the belief of any thing of which he hath not given them full and adequate ideas; and consequently that 'tis imposing upon them to  
expect



expect them to believe his existence, except he would let out and extend their capacities so as they might be able to see him as he is. “ If (says the Right Reverend Author before quoted) it is not reasonable to believe God upon the Gospel Evidence, there is an end of all mysteries : but if it is reasonable, there must be an end of all further inquiries. And I think common sense will teach us not to call God to account, or pretend to enter into the reason of his doings.”

4thly. Since the Apostle requires us to hold the mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience, which is the same thing, as I have before insisted, as holding it in purity of life ; and as the whole scope and tenor of the Gospel plainly shews, that our obedience to it, is as requisite as our faith *in* it ; how vain is it either speculatively or practically to separate those two duties which are so closely connected, and so alike necessary to constitute the Christian?—much more for a man to be always puzzling and perplexing himself by prying into it's *mysteries*, which are veiled from him, whilst he neglects to lay hold of the *mercies*, which by their means are laid open and offered to him. This bor-

ders upon that strange principle ascribed by one of the Fathers to some of the people called *Gnosticks*, that were it possible for eternal salvation to be separated from the knowledge of God, the *latter* ought to be chosen.

5thly and lastly. Since the real and necessary mysteries of Christianity have too many adversaries even amongst those who make profession of it, surely they are greatly to be condemned, who by their manner of preaching must of course increase the number of such adversaries; and who unnecessarily multiply it's mysteries, or treat every thing in it as mysterious. But indeed all their mysteries center at last in this one, that in consequence of our personal union with Christ, or, rather I should have said, of our being united to the person of Christ by Faith, we are to be sav'd by his righteousness without any righteousness of our own. But what said *John* to those whom he guarded against that erroneous and extravagant notion? *Be not deceived, he that doeth righteousness is righteous.*

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# SERMON XII.

## A VISITATION SERMON.

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TITUS ii. 15.

*Let no Man despise thee.*

I Shall not take up any of your time in opening the Scope and Occasion of the Text, which is here needless, but enter immediately upon the Subject, and beg leave to mention a few of the many precautions necessary to be used by the Clergy, for the avoiding the contempt here spoken-of; and those only which they who bear good will to our Order, are willing to suppose to be most neglected by us,

The first is, a close application to study.

A studious life is so essential to the clerical character, that he who cannot submit to it out of Duty, ought at least to seem to do it out of Decency. If he cannot endure the fatigue of reading, should however set apart proper or stated hours of retirement to save

appearances, should live amongst his Books if he rarely *converses* with them, and keep in his study was he to use it only as his Dormitory.—But tho' this virtuous dissimulation will make him pass very well with some, yet others will not be so deceived. To come off tolerably with these he must not only act a part, but apply in good earnest. Otherwise they will soon discover the Imposition, and laugh at the Impostor. They may not perhaps come and find him sleeping; but they will easily perceive that he hath been but little awake, or awake to little purpose.

That the Soul be without Knowledge it is not good. Much more the Soul of the Priest from whose Lips others are to seek it. If it be wanting there, tis bad indeed. But Knowledge comes not by Inspiration, but Application. All who seek may find it, but it will not force itself upon any. It will meet us upon every thought, but not run before Reflection.

“ If, (says one of the Fathers) the mean-  
 “ est arts are not to be attained without great  
 “ diligence and perseverance, 'tis ridiculous  
 “ to imagine that the art of Wisdom, the  
 “ noblest and most excellent of all others, as  
 “ comprehending the knowledge of things  
 “ divine

“ divine, as well as human, is the easy purchase of a wish.” It’s true we should *wish*, but we must *work* too if we hope to be *wise*. Wisdom is the fruit of labour and industry, of pains and patience, of discipline and duty ; we must come unto her with our whole Heart, put our Feet into her Fetters, and our Neck into her Chain ; we must bow down our shoulders and not be grieved with her Yoke, if we expect to possess her, so said the *Son of Sirach*, speaking of *practical* wisdom ; and with respect to *speculative* the case is the same.

Ignorance in those who have neither been favoured with a liberal education, nor have leisure and opportunity to cultivate their Minds, or improve their Understanding, is Matter of Pity : But in such as are blessed with all those advantages, and have taken upon them a public character, and are to instruct others, ’tis worthy of *Contempt*.—In the more barbarous, or unenlightened ages of Christianity, the unskilfulness of the Priest might lye pretty well sheltered under the universal ignorance of the *people*, nay at some times and in some places it sought for ’no shelter. “ For (as *St. Chrysostom* remark’d) “ there were those amongst the Clergy, who  
“ valued

“ valued themselves for want of learning,  
 “ partly from mistaking certain Passages in  
 “ *St. Paul*, as depreciating it’s use, and part-  
 “ ly from a wild opinion that the whole of a  
 “ Minister consisted in a good life, whence it  
 “ happened, (as another Father observed)  
 “ that young Men, quite raw and unletter’d,  
 “ after having read David’s P’salms, and  
 “ treasured up a few pious Words in their  
 “ Memories, and distinguished themselves, by  
 “ a grave Habit or Vestment, fancied them-  
 “ selves well qualified for the ministerial  
 “ Office.”

And even in the last Century, and in our  
 own Kingdom, when *Enthusiasm* had usurped  
 the place of *Religion*, and *Sanctity* (so call’d)  
 trampled upon *Science*, an illiterate Teacher  
 was no despicable character. But rather the  
 best qualification was to have no learning at  
 all.—But now the case is altered, and those  
 Sectaries who before decry’d all literature,  
 have discovered it’s usefulness: Have found  
 it necessary to the strength’ning their separa-  
 tions. And tho’ the studying to keep up  
 divisions in the Church, is studying to a bad  
 purpose, yet this should stimulate and excite  
 the Clergy to a greater vigilance in opposing  
 such designs. For should they be less upon  
 their

their guard, when the adversary is become more skilful, it would be a contemptible weakness.— “ There is (says our Right  
 “ Reverend and learned Diocefan) the great-  
 “ er need now of study and application in  
 “ the Clergy with regard not only to Dif-  
 “ fenters, whose Teachers, generally speak-  
 “ ing, are more learned than formerly, and  
 “ Papifts who are as diligent as ever in cor-  
 “ rupting and seducing the members of our  
 “ communion, but also with respect to the  
 “ younger gentry, too many of whom, out  
 “ of a love of novelty, and under a pretence  
 “ of thinking with freedom, are become  
 “ zealous advocates for such doctrines and  
 “ principles, as subvert and destroy the di-  
 “ vine mission and authority of Christian  
 “ Ministry, and a Christian Church. The  
 “ broaching of these schemes, (says he) car-  
 “ ries in it a shew of new discoveries, and  
 “ of a penetration which disdains to go on  
 “ in the common road, and in both these  
 “ respects is calculated to feed the vanity of  
 “ young men; who are therefore eager on  
 “ all occasions to discover and maintain their  
 “ sentiments, and think it no small matter  
 “ of triumph, when they meet with Cler-  
 “ gymen unacquainted with the cause, and  
 “ not

“ not able to manage the dispute against  
 “ them.”

But give me leave to observe, that the necessity of more study and application is now become greater than it was four and twenty years ago. For the fashion which was then in a good measure confined to the younger gentry, hath since, like other modes, spread it self thro' all ranks and degrees of men; who, tho' for the most part unlearned in other matters, are well enough read in the common places of Infidelity. To their zeal for the defence of which, is owing the little knowledge of any religion, whether natural or revealed, which they have acquired. And therefore should it be the fate of any of us, thro' indolence or neglect, to be subdued and silenced by such weak adversaries, we should make a most ridiculous figure indeed.

2dly. To prevent which, it is necessary not only that we be studious, but that our studies be of a right sort.

The greatest thirst of Knowledge, or the greatest improvement in it, will not protect a Clergyman from contempt, if whilst he is emulous of excelling in all other arts and sciences, he is the least acquainted with that  
 which



which concerns him most. Divinity is that which he *professeth*. This therefore ought to be his first, and principal study: Which if he neglects for the sake of any other he doth *not profess*; the higher he climbs, the more he exposeth himself: with all his learning he is truly despicable, and the meanest and most illiterate mechanic, whose views and endeavours are directed to that single point, the attaining a competent skill in his own business, or occupation, reproaches his folly.—  
—St. *Jerom* complains, that there had been *some* in the Church who were more given to reading of Plays than the Scriptures, and wanton Bucolicks than the writings of the Prophets, and had *Virgil* more frequently in their hands than the *Bible*: The plain and unaffected stile of which *others* could not relish, but conversed with Heathen Orators to bring their language to a more polite or *Attick Dialect*. These we may suppose were of the younger sort of Clergy, and to such the remark perhaps may never be unseasonable.

It is hardly to be imagined that others of more years and experience, should judge so ill: should indulge such a gay and sportive fancy, or encourage so vain and false a delicacy

cacy.—And yet most certain it is, that there have been some, who grown grey in the service of the Church, or rather in the profession of that service, have acted a part not unlike it. Who affecting to enrich their minds, or more properly to crowd their heads with all kinds of science of an exotic growth, have left it almost barren of that only which more immediately pertained to their function.—Not that it is a fault to aspire after universal knowledge. No; 'tis a laudable ambition, when prudence hath the direction of it. If a Clergyman studies for use, and not for ostentation; not that he may be puffed up, but others edified, the more extensive his enquiries, the greater is his merit.—There is no harm in gathering either fruit or flowers from the writings of the antient Heathens, so long as the Scriptures, and best Christian Writers are not set aside or slighted. On the contrary, many of them if properly and judiciously grafted into the Stock of Christianity, will serve both as it's ornament and defence. The Fathers read and used them for that purpose were well vers'd in Gentile Philosophy, and found their account in it. Met with various things therein which confirmed the Truth of Christi-

anity

anity, and shew'd the Heathens that they stood confuted out of the Mouths of their own Philosophers, as *St. Paul* did the *Athenians* out of the Mouths of their own Poets.—But now if a Christian Minister instead of making secular learning the handmaid to Divinity, adopts it into it's place; if he cuts off the natural Branches, to make room for a spurious Issue, the better to gratify his Pride and conceit; if he is more expert in the Works of *Homer* and *Virgil*, *Demosthenes* and *Plato*, than the lively Oracles of God, committed to him, if these are ever ready upon demand to embellish or enliven a conversation, whilst those must be forc'd, if they come at all, into a studied Discourse; if he can demonstrate every Proposition in *Euclid* with more ease and perspicuity than any one Article of the Christian Faith, or run over the Adventures of *Ulysses* with greater Facility and accuracy than the travels of *St. Paul*; if he is more intimately acquainted with the Life and character of any illustrious Heathen than of *Jesus Christ*, and with their *Mythology* than his *Doctrines*; in a word, if he knows minutely ten thousand things, of which he might innocently be ignorant, and is but a Novice in others which he's under the strictest

strictest obligation to know more perfectly, the Christian institutes.—Would not such a Minister be truly despicable? Undoubtedly. For either he does not believe their importance, at the same time he would impose such Belief upon others, which is the highest arrogance, or believing their Importance, thinks the reputation of great learning of still more consequence, which is the most *ridiculous vanity*. In either case he will have his Reward, and be despis'd as he well deserves.—As will he also.

3dly. Who is not as diligent and punctual in his public duties, as in his private studies.

“ Those, (says an ingenious writer,) who  
 “ enter into holy Orders accept a *Trust*; and  
 “ without diligence in Duty, do not answer  
 “ that confidence repos'd in them. Are not  
 “ faithful, are not honest, are not just.  
 “ There is a work, and there are wages;  
 “ and the wages are for the work. If it be  
 “ true that the labourer is worthy of his  
 “ hire, it is no less true, that the hire is wor-  
 “ thy of a labourer. And if in the opinion  
 “ of the labourer, the hire at any time be  
 “ but small, yet the duty is not therefore  
 “ to be done negligently. The Duty is  
 “ such

“ such, as that the present and future hap-  
 “ piness of multitudes depend on it's being  
 “ well perform'd. The hire, tho' small, is  
 “ accepted. Diligence was presum'd.

“ The hire is sometimes (as he handsomely  
 “ insinuates) but small, indeed;” and great  
 pity 'tis, but it was augmented. For tho' it  
 may be said, that all who labour in the vine-  
 yard, do indeed eat of the fruit of the vine;  
 and all who wait at the altar, are partakers  
 of the altar; yet I doubt we cannot truly  
 say, that every one who preaches the gospel,  
 lives of the gospel; lives at least as he ought  
 to live; in such circumstances as are suitable  
 to his character, or in even such as are suffi-  
 cient to protect both that or his person from  
 the sneers of the scorner, who rather than  
 not joke upon our order, will turn our very  
 necessities into derision. But we need not  
 be afraid of such mockery, unless where we  
 ourselves are the authors of those hardships  
 from whence it ariseth. We may and must  
 lament, indeed, the poverty of many of our  
 brethren, as it is the fruitful parent of vari-  
 ous and great inconveniences. From what-  
 ever cause such poverty proceeds, this we are  
 assur'd of, that *offences* on it's account *will*  
*come; but woe unto him by whom the offence*

*cometh.*—Be that as it will. He who takes the duty of a church upon him, ought to do it duly and diligently; and not to think the smallness of his reward will justify an abatement of his care; or that it is enough if he proportions his performances to his pay. But he is to consider whose minister he is, and for whose service he is appointed. And that however unequal his recompence may be from men, it will not give him a dispensation to deal deceitfully with God. Which if he does, tho' he may be pity'd for his poverty, he will be contemn'd for his impiety. But yet highly blameable as he would in that case be, he might be call'd a good shepherd compar'd to him who plac'd by providence in an easy situation, and eating the milk of more flocks than one, should neither feed them himself, nor care how they were fed, so as the fleece was full. Such a one, if we can suppose such a one, every man must despise.—Nor will he escape much better, who, 4thly, Performs divine service in a cold and careless manner. There is nothing that exposes a clergyman to the contempt of friends, as well as enemies, more than this: Nothing that brings so great a discredit upon our excellent liturgy. Hence arise all those  
 invidious

invidious terms of *lip-labour*, *unedifying forms*, *heartless prayers*, &c. with which we so oft have heard it ridicul'd and reproach'd by those who dissent from our Communion. Whereas was it read, or deliver'd, or treated as it ought to be, with a decency and devotion, a seriousness and solemnity, an ardour and affection equal to itself—all such clamours would cease, their prejudice would be struck dumb, or rather would open it's mouth in praises. At least such would be the heat and influence they would feel within themselves from our public service so perform'd, that their own hearts would tell 'em, ours were not heartless prayers.—And what a pity is it, that taking so much pains to convince them by every other argument, this should be so much neglected, which would be the most effectual to their conviction.—It must indeed be granted, that when a man has took all the care he can, nature must be kind, if the speaker is just; and that where nature has been the kindest, the justness of the speaker will hardly equal the dignity of the composition. But surely we may read with an *honest zeal*, tho' we fail of a *happy elocution*. If we cannot do it honour, if we cannot do it justice, surely we need not turn it into

farce, by hurrying it over with indifference and unconcernedness, with as little devotion as we would a Gazette, and as great celerity as if we were praying by the beads, or as if Christianity was in a literal sense *a race*, which we despair'd of getting to the end of, without running ourselves out of breath. Such a behaviour cannot possibly be ascribed to the want of voice or judgment, but of fervour and affection. Let nature and art have done ever so little, grace here would be sufficient for us. And if we appear in the very act of duty to be void of grace, we shall most certainly have disgrace enough, tho' not more than our due.—To keep clear of which, it will be incumbent upon us,

5thly, to stand at a distance from those most unclerical weaknesses of pride, avarice and ambition, and all appearances of them.—The appearance of them, indeed, when we are considering them in an exemplary view, is all with which we are at present concern'd.

It must indeed be confess'd, that there is not one failing about which the world is more apt to be mistaken, than in this; nor one set of men about whom it is more willing to be mistaken, than about the clergy. But yet  
pride



pride may oft times be seen where it *is*, tho' it is sometimes censur'd where it *is not*. And this also, we must allow, that the clergy have their *frailties*, as well as the world it's *prejudices*.—In judging betwixt the clergy and the laity, the world is very subject to err, because here it is both judge and party. But in judging betwixt clergyman and clergyman, it is more disinterested, and consequently it's judgment more likely to be right. If, therefore, they should happen to be of opinion that we are verily guilty of this failing in our behaviour towards one another, if they should think they observ'd a shyness or fullness, a contemptuous neglect, or a supercilious distance mutually to prevail amongst us; or, if they should suppose they saw distinctions kept up by the clergy which they never heard of in the church, and that every *brother* is treated not according to his *order*, but his *figure*, then we ought to be afraid, lest there should be too much truth in such their opinions, and to guard strictly for the future, not only against such a weakness (to call it no worse) but against all appearances of it. For otherwise we set an edge upon the dull wit of the adversary; and give his senseless jokes a meaning. But the truth is, the scoffer then would

have the countenance of the most ferious, yea the whole world would be on his side in despising us, if we despised one another.

Again.—As pride comports so ill with the clerical character, so avarice fits no less awkwardly upon it.

But here, I verily believe, the world is generally in the wrong in it's censures of the Clergy: Who if they would avoid the imputation of being covetous, must neither seek to have any property, nor to support it when they have it: Nay, must not only sacrifice their own, but other men's rights, to the wanton humours, or encroaching claims, of every invader or oppressor; must hold every thing they do hold, at the capricious will of the people; Or be tenants by curtesie, the very worst tenure in this age they could hold by. Then indeed, in one sense, they would hardly fail of being *spiritualiz'd*, but I doubt it would be such a weariness of the flesh, that it would not be able to stand it; 'Then the Church would soon be reduced to it's primitive state of *Poverty*, tho' not of *Purity*, and every Prophet's reward would be full as little as his work, if yet there should remain a Prophet in *Israel*.—But now, tho' the avarice of the Clergy as a  
body

body is a groundless prejudice, yet if a firm persuasion obtains among the people, that there are some, who, rich in ecclesiastical or temporal revenues, stipulate with their brethren to supply their cures, or assist them in their duties upon such hard and unkind terms, as are not sufficient to keep all decent without, and all quiet within; in that case there is more probability of their being in some measure in the right, because the complaint lies not betwixt *them* and *us*, but, between *one Minister* and *another*: An issue which they will be apt to try with more fairness and impartiality, than a question of tythes, or of dues, or any other matter where themselves are interested. And therefore every private Clergyman who hath the least spark of zeal for the honour of his Master, the credit of his Function, the interest of the Christian Religion, or the common Salvation, may be allowed to wish, that if this is a calumny, it's mouth was stopped, or if a truth, that the stumbling-block was remov'd. However that be, I will venture to say, that these (if there be any such), are instances of covetousness of the basest kind; and will draw the heaviest load of contempt after them.

Again.—As a due regard to the precept in the text, makes it necessary that we beware of covetousness, so also of ambition. By which I mean a restless desire of pre-eminence or superiority.—If it was a fault in the two brethren the children of *Zebedee*, who at that time were strangers to the nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom, to seek for such precedency, much more criminal is it in us,

The Apostles were so fixed and intent upon the duties of their function, that they would not permit even works of charity to interfere with them, or give them any interruption. It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God to serve tables. Not but that they very well knew what that meaneth *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, or were unconcerned that the widows were neglected in their daily ministrations, but that they judged it more proper, more consistent with their sacred characters, and more conducive to the furtherance of the Gospel, that others should be appointed over that business, that so they might give themselves continually to prayer.

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Their study was the edification of the Church. The honour they expected from which was that of pouring out their blood in it's defence, for it had then no other purple to reward them. Now indeed it hath, and somebody must wear it. Now it hath the left-hand dowry of riches and honours, many dignities and promotions to bestow, and it must bestow them somewhere, but certainly they who are most desirous, are for that alone reason, (however in other respects qualified) the least deserving. But more especially they who leave the word of God that they may be more at leisure, not to attend upon their poor brethren, but their rich patrons; to cringe at their levees, and crouch at their tables; to catch their words and watch their looks, to be subservient to their views, and obsequious to their vices.

These are some of the necessary means for preserving the clerical character from contempt, and which our adversaries (as I observed in the beginning of this discourse) are pleased to say, are not properly observed by us.—I hope there are but few to whom  
that

that charge belongs. Some there may be, and in so large a body it would be strange if there were not, when only of twelve Apostles one was a traitor. The accusation indeed is unlimited. We are condemned by the lump. That figure of speech, of putting a part for the whole, is never more used than in the characters of men, nor ever so much as in the censure of the Clergy. And there seems to be no better expedient for redressing that grievance, than the public expression of our dislike of such men and such measures, as give occasion to the world to revile the ministry.—If after all, there are no such men, this is one means of providing that there may be none such. If there are, 'tis impossible they should be defended; to attempt a vindication, is to adopt the ignominy. To be silent then is all that remains; but silence, if not for patronage, would be construed partiality, and make our adversaries more fierce and furious, and like an exasperated mob, do themselves more than justice, if they thought we did them less.—This was ever my own private opinion. And if it should tend in the judgment of my Brethren to hurt the  
cause

cause I meant to serve by it, I humbly and heartily retract it, and wish it had rested in my own breast. The sincerity of what hath been said, I am the best judge of, the discretion of it I leave to others.





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## SERMON XIII.

JOSHUA vii. *part of the 13th Verse.*

*There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel.*

**I**N the foregoing chapter, we have an account of the besieging and taking of *Jericho*, by the Children of *Israel*, under the command of *Joshua*, or rather of the *Almighty*; for it was God who expressly appointed the siege, prescribed the manner, and promised the success of it. As you will find by consulting the same chapter, from the second verse to the sixth.

The special directions which *Joshua*, in that affair, had received from God, he communicated to the people: Strictly charging them withal to reserve to themselves no spoils of that devoted city, but to appropriate such a part of them to the service of the sanctuary, and to commit the rest to the flames. *And you, saith he, in anywise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest you make*  
*your-*

*yourselfes accursed when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.* But *Achan*, in disobedience to this injunction, made a concealment of some of the choicest of the spoils, and hid them in the earth, in the midst of his tent, till a convenient opportunity should offer of carrying them off, and converting them to his own use. *Joshua*, altogether ignorant of *Achan's* false and perfidious behaviour at *Jericho*, carried his arms forward to *Ai*; where the *Israelites*, upon the first encounter, were routed. The fall of about thirty-six of them so dispirited and daunted the three thousand which were sent upon that expedition, that they immediately turned their backs upon the men of *Ai*, and fled. *Their hearts* (says the context) *became as water*—This sudden and disgraceful defeat was as great a surprize to *Joshua*, as the falling of their walls had been to the people of *Jericho*. That he, who had just before in so signal and wonderful a manner reduced a populous and well fortified city, should now be put to flight by a small handful of men, so inconsiderable in his esteem, that he disdained to draw out a tenth part of his forces to give them battle, was such a reverse

verse of providence as quite amazed and confounded him.—In this sore distress he first humbled himself, and then thus called upon God. *O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! for the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round about, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?* Joshua was afraid that they should now be as contemptible, as before they were formidable in the sight of their adversaries; that all the nations, encouraged by this event, would confederate against them; that instead of a conquering, they should become a conquered people; and that their enemies would not only insult them, but blaspheme the name of the Lord himself, and say, that his arm was shortened. To ease him of which fears, and to restore his confidence, God lets him into the cause of this unexpected change in his conduct. *Israel hath sinned; and they have also transgressed my covenant, for they have even taken of the accursed thing; and have also stolen, and dissembled also; and they have even put it amongst their own stuff: Therefore the Children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, because they were accursed:*

*Neither.*

*Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from amongst you.* And therefore as a means of expiating their guilt, and putting them again under his divine protection, he commands him in the words of which my text is part :

*Up, sanctify the people, and say, sanctify yourselves against to-morrow; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: Thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take the accursed thing from among you.*

My design from the text thus opened, is to apply the case of the *Israelites* to one not unlike it at home; and I am mistaken if you are not before-hand with me in such application.—But yet, applicable as it is, some caution is requisite in order to our applying it aright; without which, tho' there is an apparent and obvious similitude betwixt them, we may be apt to deceive ourselves in drawing the parallel; for it doth not hit in every point. In those circumstances which, at first view, are most striking, and wherein we may fancy we see the exactest conformity or agreement, even in those, upon a more close and critical search or examination

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tion, we shall find the comparison will not strictly hold.

The resemblance, it is true, seems to be great, and to lie in these particulars.

First, That as the *Israelites* were engaged in a war; so are *we*.

Secondly, That as *they* were ignominiously routed and put to flight; so *we* seem to have been.

Thirdly, That as there was in the midst of *them*, so there is in the midst of *us* an accursed thing.

By comparing the two cases together in these several circumstances, we shall clearly perceive where they agree, and where they differ. And I doubt not but we shall find the agreement betwixt them to be sufficient to warrant this conclusion, that as the *Israelites* were not, so neither shall we be able to stand before our enemies, till the accursed thing is taken away from among us.

*First* then, As they were engaged in a war, so are we.

We must not indeed with them pretend an express command from God to take up arms. They acted under a divine commission. 'See, (said the Lord to *Joshua*) *I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the King thereof, and*

*ye shall compass the city, &c.* And again, *I have given into thine hand the King of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land, and thou shalt do to Ai and her King, as thou didst unto Jericho and her King, &c.* So that you will observe, the war the *Israelites* entered into and pursued, under the conduct of *Joshua*, was authorised by the special precept of *Jehovah* himself, whose will and pleasure it was, that the *Hebrews* should destroy and utterly extirpate the *Canaanites*, and take the land of *Canaan* into their own possession. And this as the punishment of the provoking abominations, and particularly of the idolatries of the one, and as a means of preventing the like in the other. Agreeably to which, you will find in the 18th of *Leviticus*, this solemn admonition, as proceeding out of the mouth of the great God of heaven and earth. *Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things, for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you, and the land is defiled. Therefore I do visit the iniquities thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall not commit any of these abominations, that the land spare not you also, when ye defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you.*—The war then of  
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the *Israelites* was truly and literally a religious and holy war. For ours we must not plead either the same authority, or directly and immediately the same intention. We trust nevertheless that it is just and warrantable; was not set on foot to gratify a proud presumptuous Prince, or to extend the bounds of his empire; was not a hasty or rash resolution, the effect of passion, or of party; but the result of the most serious and deliberate counsels; and agreed upon as the last expedient for preserving our national rights, redressing our national injuries, and bringing down the haughty and incroaching spirits of our adversaries. That we were not precipitate or over forward in making use of that expedient, all the world will vouch for us; and will rather ask with wonder and surprize, why we had not recourse to it sooner? Why, having been so highly provok'd *to*, and so well prepared *for* war, we listened so long to the most (trifling, shall I say, or) insolent conditions of peace? Why, being bless'd with a Prince, than whom none ever had more at heart the interest and happiness of his people, or was better form'd by nature to humble the pride of an aspiring rival, we were notwithstanding

ing so pacifick and patient under all the insults of our enemies, who whilst they spake of peace, were only making themselves more ready for battle? Such questions have been ask'd: and doubtless will at a proper time be answered by those whom they more immediately concern. Be that as it will, they shew (which is enough for my purpose) with what reluctance we took up arms; that we did not draw the sword till every other remedy was hopeless; and therefore that our war is just, because it was necessary.

But to go on with the parallel.

*Secondly*, As the *Israelites* were routed and ignominiously put to flight, so we *seem* to have been.

But now here, in justice to ourselves, we ought to distinguish. It cannot be said with truth or propriety, that *we* in like manner with *them* have *timidly* turn'd our backs upon our adversaries. We have been forward peevishly to talk in that language; but surely it is as improper, as it is impolitic. For there is betwixt the two cases this very wide difference; *Jeshua's* mighty warriors were  
*all*



*all* at the same time seized with the same pannick: Whereas only *one* of ours is accused of timidity; and, with respect to that *one*, our politicians are much divided in their sentiments. If some will have it that he fled *from* the *Foe*, for fear of being hurt *himself*, others are as firmly persuaded that he retreated *with* the *Fleet*, for fear of hurting the *Enemy*; and others again, who, tho' the fewest, seem to be the wisest, think it best to suspend their opinions till further proof.— Things frequently appear quite contrary to what they are: Every one must have experienced this common deception, and yet we go on to be deceived by trusting to appearances: But however by our carelessness we may contribute to the deceiving of ourselves, we should be very cautious of thereby injuring others. For which reason our blessed Saviour hath left us this rule, *Judge not according to the appearance, but iudge righteous judgment*; and St. Paul gives us the same advice, where he saith, *Judge nothing before the time*. By both we are admonished not to pronounce too hastily, either upon men, or things, or to let our determinations out-run our evidence. Appearance may be a sufficient ground for *suspicion*, but

*censure* ought to have a better foundation; especially in cases which affect the life, liberty, or fortune of the person censured. In such cases we should determine nothing till facts suspected are substantially supported; by proofs, not by appearance, which is ever changing its forms.—Our *Laws* in this respect are very wise and good; they suppose every one to be innocent, till he is proved to be otherwise: Not suffering presumption to pass for proof, unless such presumption be violent indeed. And that our *Religion* is not less tender and considerate, is evident from what hath been already quoted from Christ and his Apostle. The latter of whom (let me further observe) teacheth us, that Charity, which is the chief characteristick of Christianity, believeth all things; that is, inclines or disposeth us to believe every thing in favour of another, where there is the least degree of probability: Whence the conclusion is natural, that the same charity will incline us to doubt of every thing to his prejudice, without the clearest testimony.

Such testimony hath not as yet been produced in the case, which led us into this train of thinking. It is not so clear as to admit of no sort of doubt, that the unhappy person

son upon whom every eye is fix'd, and every tongue employ'd, hath either timorously deserted, or treacherously betray'd the publick and important trust committed to him. They who are best qualified to judge of the affair, as it now stands, will be the last to say there is need of further witnesses, who have evidence more than sufficient to awake our *jealousy*, but not any to determine our *judgment*.

A strange misconduct somewhere may be justly suspected; so justly that the want of suspicion would shew the want of that publick spirit, which ought to be carefully cherished in every breast: But at the same time our suspicion, however well grounded, should, till it is turn'd into certainty, be modest and decent, and carry us no greater lengths than to make us earnestly wish and seek for a discovery what such misconduct is, and where it lies. In which laudable inquiry there is no necessity for rage and passion, clamour and invective to intermix. These, and all such auxiliaries will rather clog and embarrass, than facilitate and forward our honest and generous aims and purposes. Much less is it necessary to call in the assistance of the ruder and ill discerning crowd, by souring or inflaming their minds, which

are generally of themselves too much leavened and over-heated, and be things ever so bad, seldom fail to leave them worse than they found them. To rouse up the wild and fierce resentment of these is the worst policy in the world. Instead of the spur, they stand in need of the rein, to check their impetuosity, to restrain their blind patriotism, and to keep 'em within the bounds of decency and duty.—We have had abundant proof, that in this kingdom, in this metropolis, there are not wanting able and proper patriots, who without passion or prejudice, but with a zeal equal to the importance of the subject, will search to the very bottom of the cause of our present national disappointment and discontent: And should there lie at the root any baseness or iniquity, will, after having brought the crime, what ever it is, to light, spare no pains to bring the criminal, whoever he is, to justice.—This is enough, and not too much; no true *English* heart will either rest satisfied with less, or wish for more. This satisfaction we may reasonably expect in due time.—And therefore impatiently to anticipate such inquiry, and without hearing, or whilst the matter hangs, at least, in some doubt, to let our fears and jealousies run  
away

away with our discretion; to lose all temper, to fill our mouths with reproaches, and abuse and blacken by every method of disgrace, is a temerity pitiable in the populace, but scarcely pardonable in those of a better education, and a superior understanding.

I hope I shall not be thought to have forgot the place from whence I speak, or the character in which I appear, when it is consider'd how becoming and suitable to both it is to enforce our blessed Saviour's own express prohibition against rash judgment; to plead for that equity, which every one would expect from every one in his own case, and to encourage a due regard and reverence for that sacred part of our most excellent constitution, which would not that we should in any sort, be treated as criminals, till *we* have been properly called upon *to answer the crimes laid against us*: But faith to each of us, as *Agrippa to Paul, thou art permitted to speak for thy self*: A privilege to which, tho' all mankind have a natural right, yet are there many people and nations in the world, who never were so happy as to enjoy it; which should teach us to value it the more, and not to sacrifice it to a quick and peevish resentment, or upon whatever motive to pass  
sentence

sentence upon any unheard, untry'd, or before he is legally convicted. Be the appearance of guilt ever so glaring, we ill consult our own true interest and security, when we run before the Law in pronouncing any man guilty. For tho' our prejudging will not put *that* out of it's due *course*, it is but too obvious how many ways it may prevent it's due *effect*. If we would avail our selves of that care with which our Laws have guarded our lives, liberties and properties, we ought to preserve inviolably, as far as lies in us, not only the *formality*, but also the *freedom* of trials; and especially to beware of throwing any prejudices in the way of either the judge or the witness, which may obstruct the free enquiry of the one, or the fair evidence of the other. But every prejudication of the publick tends to the obstruction of both, by insensibly giving a bias to the mind, and leading the judgment; especially when such publick censure happens to have got an angry populace on it's side.

So that I apprehend it would on all hands be both unjust and imprudent, as yet, to affirm, that we have *timidly* turned our backs upon *our* enemies, as the *Israelites* did upon *theirs*, for the sake of making the cases more  
similar,

fimilar, which alas! are but too much alike without it.—That we fled, feems to be the general opinion. If it was in fact fo, then that our flight was ignominious cannot be doubted: Whether timidity or treachery, or what elfe gave us wings, remains to be decided by proper judges, to whose decifion let us leave it; only wifhing that, however they fhall be, they may answer the character of thofe whom *Mofes*, by the advice of *Jethro* his father-in-law, appointed over his people, *able men, fuch as fear God, men of truth, bating covetoufnefs*: Or, which is much the fame, that their behaviour may be agreeable to what God the righteous judge prefcribed to *Mofes* himfelf; *not wrefting judgment; nor refpecting perfons, nor taking gifts*. And that if beneath this ugly face of cowardice fhould lurk a far uglier thing, a perfidious heart; if inftead of having been basely intimidated *by*, we have been more basely betrayed *to* the enemy, the treacherous fcene, be it laid ever fo deep, may be dragged out of darknefs into open day, and the traitor, ftand he ever fo high, may receive the juft reward of his iniquity: But in the mean time, that every one would be fparing of his reflections, and confider, that as the offence would be enormously

great

great, so the evidence ought to be proportionably clear to warrant our censure.

*Thirdly*, The next circumstance in which our case resembles that of the *Israelites*, is, that as there was in the midst of *them*, so there is in the midst of *us*, an accursed thing.

In this there is not only a seeming similitude, but a real agreement. Some will be willing to carry it further, and tell us, that *we* have, as *they* had, an *Achan* amongst us; but this (as appears from what has been said before) is being in too great a hurry, and begging a question, which will not, neither ought to be granted. It is supposing *that* perfidy, which as yet wants proof.—*Achan* the troubler of *Israel*, confessed his crime, and the temptation which drew him into it. The enticing garment, and the bewitching gold, every thing that contributed to furnish out the bribe, was found amongst his stuff, by the inquisitors who were by himself directed to the place where he had concealed it. But the troubler of our *Israel* hath made no such confession, nor we any such discovery. Whatever may hereafter be  
found,



found, when the time comes for a strict and proper scrutiny, nothing of that sort hath hitherto been detected. And therefore till we have more to shew for it than we have at present, we have no right to point out any one man amongst our tribes, whose case may correspond with that of *Achan*; neither will the true sense of our text bear us out in it, which speaks not of the *Man*, but of the *Thing*, *There is an accursed THING in the midst of thee, O Israel.*

But tho' we should be tender and cautious of stigmatizing particular persons, and to that end of straining both the text and the parallel, yet we may, without violence to either, or injury to any, say, *There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Britain.* This may be said without scruple, or reserve. Yea, we may safely and modestly extend the comparison beyond this, and insist that the accursed thing which is in the midst of *us*, is the same with that which was in the midst of *Israel*, *Corruption*. Only with this difference, that the former is not like the latter, confined to one person, to one household, to one family, to one tribe, but more or less runs through every tribe, and family, and household.

The

The occasion and circumstances of our late ill success in our naval expedition, which hath spread such a general alarm through the three kingdoms, are to us, as yet, an impenetrable secret. And therefore who is in fault, and how far, are questions, about which we ought to say *little*, to determine *nothing*; as many of us especially as are unexperienced in the several arts of war and navigation, and (I may add) unskilled in the much greater mystery of politicks: In all which we should be well read, and also well practised, before we pretend to judge of those questions, even when time hath ripened them for judgment; till when, indeed, the best judges are no more than conjecturers. But now it is not requisite that we should be soldiers, or sailors, or politicians, in order to be satisfied — that we are become a most venal and mercenary people, — that there is little or no publick virtue left amongst us — that selfish regards have swallowed up all true social affection — that *each looks his own way, for his gain from his quarter*, and is studious to serve his own at the expence of the common interest — that bribery, which heretofore modestly *waited for the twilight, and disguised itself,*  
*saying,*

saying, *No eye shall see me*, now impudently stalks about barefaced, and at noon-day daring sometimes to be seen, even in the place where it hath been proscribed, and a price set upon it's head — and in short, that corruption hath taken such deep root in our political body, as to have almost ruined the best constitution in the world. These are abuses which every one sees and feels, and which every one should earnestly endeavour to reform.

Instead therefore of letting loose all our rancour and resentment against one only suspected coward or traitor, (for it cannot as yet be absolutely pronounced of him, *Thou art the man*) we should do well to turn a share at least of our indignation upon that epidemical evil just now mentioned, *viz.* our *national venality*. Here we are certain the mark is right. Here we cannot possibly be deceived. Here, be our censure ever so bold, we are in no danger of *rash judgment*. Here, be we ever so zealously affected, we have the Apostle's warrant for it, since it is in a *good thing*. It is in a good thing indeed; it is in a cause which demands our zeal: A cause which will not endure our indifference: A cause wherein, I will presume to say, these

these honourable societies want no retainer. It is in the cause of our country, which at this critical juncture calls loudly upon every one, who bears a hearty good-will to her, to exert himself in her defence.

We all now seem pretty well convinced, that however sometimes the alarm of her danger may have been construed, as no other than a mere political engine for oppressing the people, or a seditious pretence for abusing the ministry, or sometimes no more than an artifice made use of (to the great reproach of commerce) by a certain set of men, and for a certain purpose, which need not be named, yet here the case is otherwise, and will admit of no such construction. We may now with the utmost simplicity and truth, take up *Jeremiah's* lamentation over *Jerusalem*, and say, *Her adversaries are chief, and her enemies prosper: And I may add, Her friends stand looking afar off.* Nay, much worse, looking not how they may come to her assistance, but how each may turn her misfortune to the best advantage. *They who honoured her, despise her, as the same pathetic Prophet complains, because they have seen her nakedness. All that pass by clap their hands at thee. They hiss and wag their heads at*

*at the daughter of Jerufalem, faying, Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth? All thine enemies have opened their mouths againft thee; they bifs and gnafh their teeth; they fay, We have fwallowed her up: Certainly this is the day we looked for; we have found, we have feen it.*

There wants very little ftraining or fretching, to make this fquare with our own cafe. Thus much, at leaft, I apprehend to be unexceptionably true;—that the proud and haughty power, now at war with us, buoyed up with it's (what muft I call it? victory? no, but) unaccountable fuccefs, is meditating new mifchiefs for us: and, not fatisfied with invading our foreign fettlements, is forming defigns upon our mother country. That fome other powers, on whofe friendfhip we depend, have deserted and deceived us, and entered into alliances altogether favourable to the aspiring and envious views of our enterprifing adverfary.—That our flag feems to have become the jeft and fcorn of thofe nations, which heretofore it kept in awe. That all the kingdoms round about us appear, by their naval preparations and difpofitions, determined by confent to chace us out of thofe fea, in which not one (perhaps I might

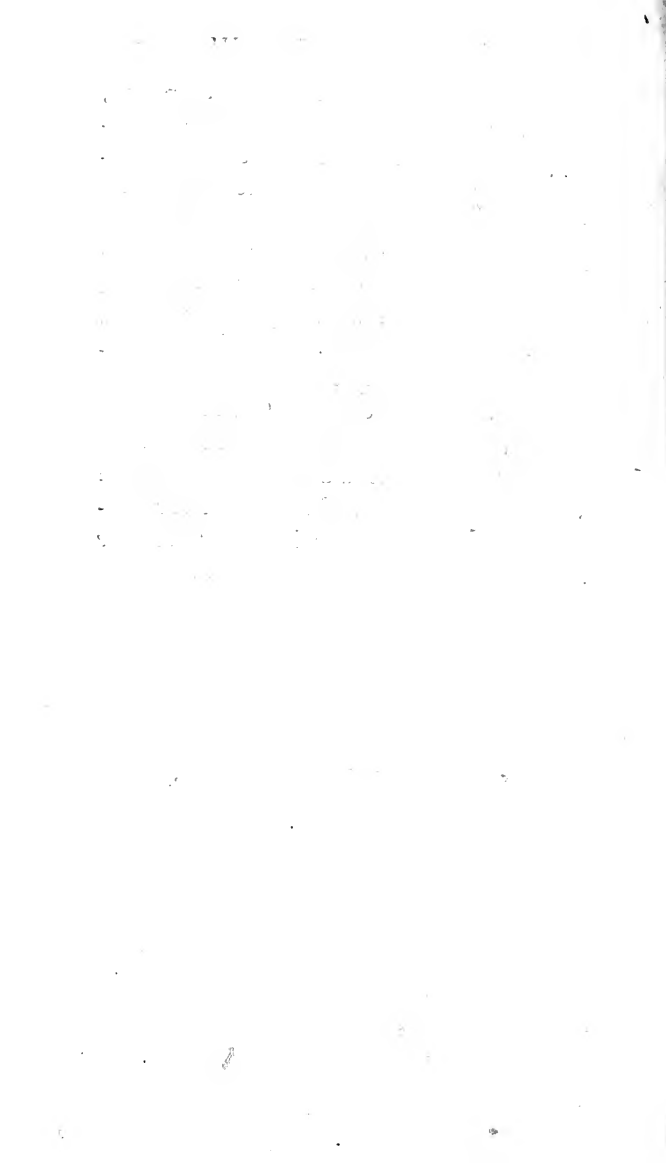
have said not all) of them in times past would have dared to meet us.—And in short, that the war we are engaged in, as well by land as by sea, at present wears a very discouraging aspect, and deserves our most serious attention. And however we may guess at the more immediate occasion of it, or impute it to this man's cowardice, or that man's treachery; or to want of capacity in one, or of care in another, and what not? If we trace this, and all other the maladies, under which our nation hath for a series of years laboured and languished, to the spring-head, we shall probably find they have all one and the same source, all flow from the bitter and unwholsome fountain of corruption.

If then we freely wish the welfare and prosperity of our country, let us endeavour by all possible means to dry up that poisonous fountain, which is the very bane of it. Let us give bribery no countenance, no quarter within it's borders.—Let us detest it in all it's shapes, pursue it through all it's haunts; and not rest till we have banished from our island that ravenous wolf, which in our days hath been infinitely more hurtful to it than all that in former times infested it. Where it appears open and undisguised,

let

let us without respect to place, or person, resolutely put the laws against it in execution : And where it is so masked, or metamorphosed, as to elude their force, tho' we cannot *mult*, let us *mark* the offender, and point him out as a public nuisance. In a word, let us try every remedy for purging our nation of this foul and spreading disease, which, had we no other foes to fear, would in the end inevitably subdue and destroy it. And I will venture to assert, what, would the time permit, might easily be shewed, that as the *Israelites* did not, so neither can we reasonably hope to stand before our enemies, till our corruption is let out, and *the accursed Thing taken away from among us.*

*The End of the First Volume.*









J. L. S.

