

# A FARTHER APPEAL

TO

## MEN OF REASON AND RELIGION.

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*And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! Luke xix. 41, 42.*

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### PART III.

I. 1. Now, what can an impartial person think concerning the present state of religion in England? Is there a nation under the sun which is so deeply fallen from the very first principles of all religion? Where is the country in which is found so utter a disregard to even heathen morality; such a thorough contempt of justice and truth, and all that should be dear and honourable to rational creatures?

What species of vice can possibly be named, even of those that nature itself abhors, of which we have not had, for many years, a plentiful and still-increasing harvest? What sin remains either in Rome or Constantinople, which we have not imported long ago, (if it was not of our native growth,) and improved upon ever since? Such a complication of villanies of every kind, considered with all their aggravations; such a scorn of whatever bears the face of virtue; such injustice, fraud, and falsehood; above all, such perjury, and such a method of law, we may defy the whole world to produce.

What multitudes are found throughout our land, who do not even profess any religion at all! And what numbers of those who profess much, confute their profession by their practice! yea, and perhaps by their exorbitant pride, vanity, covetousness, rapaciousness or oppression, cause the very name of religion to stink in the nostrils of many (otherwise) reasonable men!

2. "However, we have many thousands still of truly virtuous and religious men." Wherein does their religion consist? in righteousness and true holiness; in love stronger than death; fervent gratitude to God, and tender affection to all his creatures? Is their religion the religion of the heart; a renewal of soul in the image of God? Do they resemble Him they worship? Are they free from pride, from vanity, from malice and envy; from ambition and avarice; from passion and lust; from every uneasy and unlovely temper? Alas, I fear neither they (the greater part at least) nor you know what this religion means; or have any more notion of it, than the peasant that holds the plough of the religion of a Gymnosophist.

It is well if the genuine religion of Christ has any more alliance with what you call religion, than with the Turkish pilgrimages to Mecca, or the Popish worship of our Lady of Loretto. Have not you substituted, in the place of the religion of the heart, something (I do not say equally sinful, but) equally vain, and foreign to the worshipping of God "in spirit and in truth?" What else can be said even of prayer, (public or private,) in the manner wherein you generally perform it? as a thing of course, running round and round in the same dull track, without either the knowledge or love of God, without one heavenly temper, either attained or improved! O what mockery of God is this!

And yet even this religion, which can do you no good, may do you much harm. Nay, it is plain it does; it daily increases your pride, as you measure your goodness by the number and length of your performances. It gives you a deep contempt of those who do not come up to the full tale of your virtues. It inspires men with a zeal which is the very fire of hell, furious, bitter, implacable, unmerciful; often to a degree that extinguishes all compassion, all good nature and humanity, Inso-much that the execrable fierceness of spirit, which is the natural fruit of such a religion, hath many times, in spite of all ties, divine and human, broke out into open violence, into rapine, murder, sedition, rebellion, civil war, to the desolation of whole cities and countries.

*Tantum hæc religio potuit suadere malorum!* \*

3. Now, if there be a God, and one that is not a mere idle

\* So much mischief *this* religion does!

spectator of the things that are done upon earth, but a rewarder of men and nations according to their works, what can the event of these things be? It was reasonable to believe that he would have risen long ago and maintained his own cause, either by sending the famine or pestilence among us, or by pouring out his fury in blood. And many wise and holy men have frequently declared that they daily expected this; that they daily looked for the patience of God to give place, and judgment to rejoice over mercy.

4. Just at this time, when we wanted little of "filling up the measure of our iniquities," two or three Clergymen of the Church of England began vehemently to "call sinners to repentance." In two or three years they had sounded the alarm to the utmost borders of the land. Many thousands gathered together to hear them; and in every place where they came, many began to show such a concern for religion as they never had done before. A stronger impression was made on their minds, of the importance of things eternal, and they had more earnest desires of serving God than they had ever had from their earliest childhood. Thus did God begin to draw them toward himself, with the cords of love, with the bands of a man.

Many of these were in a short time deeply convinced of the number and heinousness of their sins. They were also made thoroughly sensible of those tempers which are justly hateful to God and man, and of their utter ignorance of God, and entire inability, either to know, love, or serve him. At the same time, they saw in the strongest light the insignificancy of their outside religion; nay, and often confessed it before God, as the most abominable hypocrisy. Thus did they sink deeper and deeper into that repentance, which must ever precede faith in the Son of God.

And from hence sprung "fruits meet for repentance." The drunkard commenced sober and temperate; the whoremonger abstained from adultery and fornication; the unjust from oppression and wrong. He that had been accustomed to curse and swear for many years, now swore no more. The sluggard began to work with his hands, that he might eat his own bread. The miser learned to deal his bread to the hungry, and to cover the naked with a garment. Indeed, the whole form of their life was changed: They had "left off doing evil, and learned to do well."

5. But this was not all. Over and above this outward change,

they began to experience inward religion. "The love of God was shed abroad in their hearts," which they continue to enjoy to this day. They "love him, because he first loved us," and withheld not from us his Son, his only Son. And this love constrains them to love all mankind, all the children of the Father of heaven and earth; and inspires them with every holy and heavenly temper, the whole mind that was in Christ. Hence it is that they are now uniform in their behaviour, unblamable in all manner of conversation. And in whatsoever state they are, they have learned therewith to be content; inasmuch that now they can "in every thing give thanks." They more than patiently acquiesce, they rejoice and are exceeding glad, in all God's dispensations toward them. For as long as they love God, (and that love no man taketh from them,) they are always happy in God. Thus they calmly travel on through life, being never weary nor faint in their minds, never repining, murmuring, or dissatisfied, casting all their care upon God, till the hour comes that they should drop this covering of earth, and return unto the great Father of spirits. Then, especially, it is that they "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." You who credit it not, come and see. See these living and dying Christians.

Happy while on earth they breathe;  
 Mightier joys ordain'd to know,  
 Trampling on sin, hell, and death,  
 To the third heaven they go!

Now, if these things are so, what reasonable man can deny (supposing the Scriptures to be true) that God is now visiting this nation, in a far other manner than we had cause to expect? Instead of pouring out his fierce displeasure upon us, he hath made us yet another tender of mercy: So that even when sin did most abound, grace hath much more abounded.

6. Yea, "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation," present salvation from inward and outward sin, hath abounded of late years in such a degree, as neither we nor our fathers had known. How extensive is the change which has been wrought on the minds and lives of the people! Know ye not that the sound has gone forth into all the land; that there is scarce a city or considerable town to be found, where some have not been roused out of the sleep of death, and constrained to cry out, in the bitterness of their soul, "What must I do to be saved?"

that this religious concern has spread to every age and sex; to most orders and degrees of men? to abundance of those, in particular, who, in time past, were accounted monsters of wickedness, "drinking in iniquity like water," and committing all "uncleanness with greediness."

7. In what age has such a work been wrought, considering the swiftness as well as the extent of it? When have such numbers of sinners in so short a time been recovered from the error of their ways? When hath religion, I will not say since the Reformation, but since the time of Constantine the Great, made so large a progress in any nation, within so small a space? I believe, hardly can either ancient or modern history supply us with a parallel instance.

8. Let understanding men observe also the depth of the work, so extensively and swiftly wrought. It is not a slight or superficial thing; but multitudes of men have been so thoroughly "convinced of sin," that their "bones were smitten asunder, as it were with a sword dividing the very joints and marrow." Many of these have been shortly after so filled with "peace and joy in believing," that, whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could scarcely tell. And in the power of this faith they have trampled under foot whatever the world accounts either terrible or desirable; having evidenced, in the severest trials, so fervent a love to God, so invariable and tender a goodwill to mankind, particularly to their enemies, and such a measure of all the fruits of holiness, as were not unworthy the apostolic age. Now, so deep a repentance, so firm a faith, so fervent love and unblemished holiness, wrought in so many persons, within so short a time, the world has not seen for many ages.

9. No less remarkable is the purity of the religion which has extended itself so deeply and swiftly. I speak particularly with regard to the doctrines held by those among whom it is so extended. Those of the Church of England, at least, must acknowledge this. For where is there a body of people in the realm, who, number for number, so closely adhere to what our Church delivers as pure doctrine? Where are those who have approved and do approve themselves more orthodox, more sound in their opinions? Is there a Socinian or Arian among them all? Nay, were you to recite the whole catalogue of heresies enumerated by Bishop Pearson, it might be asked, Who can lay any one of these to their charge?

Nor is their religion more pure from heresy than it is from superstition. In former times, wherever an unusual concern for the things of God hath appeared, on the one hand, strange and erroneous opinions continually sprung up with it; on the other, a zeal for things which were no part of religion, as though they had been essential branches of it. And many have laid as great, if not greater, stress on trifles, as on the weightier matters of the law. But it has not been so in the present case. No stress has been laid on anything, as though it were necessary to salvation, but what is undeniably contained in the word of God. And of the things contained therein, the stress laid on each has been in proportion to the nearness of its relation to what is there laid down as the sum of all, the love of God and our neighbour. So pure from superstition, so thoroughly scriptural, is that religion which has lately spread in this nation!

10. It is likewise rational as well as scriptural; it is as pure from enthusiasm as from superstition. It is true, the contrary has been continually affirmed: But to affirm is one thing, to prove is another. Who will prove that it is enthusiasm to love God, even though we love him with all our heart? to rejoice in the sense of his love to us? to praise him, even with all our strength? Who is able to make good this charge against the love of all mankind? or, laying rhetorical flourishes aside, to come close to the question, and demonstrate that it is enthusiasm, in every state we are in, therewith to be content? I do but just touch on the general heads. Ye men of reason, give me a man who, setting raillery and ill names apart, will maintain this by dint of argument. If not, own this religion is the thing you seek; sober, manly, rational, divine; however exposed to the censure of those who are accustomed to revile what they understand not.

11. It may be farther observed, the religion of those we now speak of is entirely clear from bigotry. (Perhaps this might have been ranked with superstition, of which it seems to be only a particular species.) They are in nowise bigoted to opinions. They do indeed hold right opinions; but they are peculiarly cautious not to rest the weight of Christianity there. They have no such overgrown fondness for any opinions, as to think those alone will make them Christians, or to confine their affection or esteem to those who agree with them therein. There is nothing they are more fearful of

than this, lest it should steal upon them unawares. Nor are they bigoted to any particular branch even of practical religion. They desire indeed to be exact in every jot and tittle, in the very smallest points of Christian practice. But they are not attached to one point more than another: they aim at uniform, universal obedience. They contend for nothing trifling, as if it was important; for nothing indifferent, as if it were necessary; for nothing circumstantial, as if it were essential to Christianity; but for every thing in its own order.

12. Above all, let it be observed, that this religion has no mixture of vice or unholiness. It gives no man of any rank or profession the least license to sin. It makes no allowance to any person for ungodliness of any kind. Not that all who follow after have attained this, either are already perfect. But however that be, they plead for no sin, either inward or outward. They condemn every kind and degree thereof, in themselves as well as in other men. Indeed; most in themselves; it being their constant care to bring those words home to their own case, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

13. Yet there is not found among them that bitter zeal in points either of small or of great importance, that spirit of persecution, which has so often accompanied the spirit of reformation. It is an idle conceit, that the spirit of persecution is among the Papists only: It is wheresoever the devil, that old murderer, works; and he still "worketh in" all "the children of disobedience." Of consequence, all the children of disobedience will, on a thousand different pretences, and in a thousand different ways, so far as God permits, persecute the children of God. But what is still more to be lamented is, that the children of God themselves have so often used the same weapons, and persecuted others, when the power was in their own hands.

Can we wholly excuse those venerable men, our great Reformers themselves, from this charge? I fear not, if we impartially read over any history of the Reformation. What wonder is it then, that, when the tables were turned, Bishop Bonner or Gardiner should make reprisals; that they should measure to others (indeed good measure, shaken together) what had before been measured to them? Nor is it strange, when we consider the single case of Joan Bocher, that God should suffer

those (otherwise) holy men, Archbishop Cranmer, Bishop Ridley, and Bishop Latimer, to drink of the same cup with her.

14. But can you find any tincture of this in the case before us? Do not all who have lately known the love of God, know "what spirit they are of;" and that the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them? Do they approve of the using any kind or degree of violence, on any account or pretence whatsoever, in matters of religion? Do they not hold the right every man has to judge for himself, to be sacred and inviolable? Do they allow any method of bringing even those who are farthest out of the way, who are in the grossest errors, to the knowledge of the truth, except the methods of reason and persuasion; of love, patience, gentleness, long-suffering? Is there any thing in their practice which is inconsistent with this their constant profession? Do they in fact hinder their own relations or dependents from worshipping God according to their own conscience? When they believe them to be in error, do they use force of any kind, in order to bring them out of it? Let the instances, if there are such, be produced. But if no such are to be found, then let all reasonable men, who believe the Bible, own that a work of God is wrought in our land; and such a work (if we survey in one view the extent of it, the swiftness with which it has spread, the depth of that religion which was so swiftly diffused, and its purity from all corrupt mixtures) as, it must be acknowledged, cannot easily be paralleled, in all these concurrent circumstances, by any thing that is found in the English annals, since Christianity was first planted in this island.

II. 1. And yet those who "can discern the face of the sky, cannot discern the signs of the times." Yet those who are esteemed wise men do not know that God is now reviving his work upon earth. Indeed, concerning some of these, the reason is plain: They know not, because they think not of it. Their thoughts are otherwise employed; their minds are taken up with things of quite a different nature: Or, perhaps, they may think of it a little now and then, when they have nothing else to do; but not seriously or deeply; not with any closeness or attention of thought. They are too much in haste, to weigh the facts whereof we speak, and to draw the just inference therefrom: Nor is the conviction which they may sometimes feel, suffered to sink into their hearts; but things that have



a larger share in their affections soon destroy the very traces of it.

2. True it is, that there are some who think more deeply, who are accustomed to consider things from the foundation, and to lay circumstances together, that they may judge of nothing before they have full evidence; and yet even some of these appear to be in doubt concerning the present work. Now, supposing it to be a work of God, how can this be accounted for,—that they who so diligently inquire concerning it, do not know the time of their visitation? Perhaps because of the deeply rooted prejudice which they brought with them to the inquiry; and which, still hanging on their minds, makes it scarce possible for them to form an impartial judgment. Perhaps, even a slight prepossession might occasion their stumbling on some of those rocks of offence, which, by the wise permission of God, always did and always will attend any revival of his work. Nay, it may be, their very caution was carried to excess. They would not judge before they had such evidence as the nature of the thing would not admit, or, at least, God did not see fit to give.

3. All this is very easy to conceive. But it may at first appear surprising, to find men of renown, men supposed to be endowed with knowledge, and with abilities of every kind, flatly, openly, peremptorily denying, that there has been any unusual work of God at all! Yea, a late eminent writer goes farther yet; accounts it an instance of downright enthusiasm, to imagine that there is any extraordinary work now wrought upon the earth. (*Observations*, Part III.)

It avails not to say, “No; he does not deny this, but he denies it to be the work of God.” This is palpably trifling; for the work under consideration is of such a nature, (namely, the conversion of men from all manner of sins, to holiness of heart and life,) that if it be at any time wrought at all, it must be the work of God; seeing it is God alone, and not any child of man, who is able to “destroy the works of the devil.”

Yet neither is this difficult to be accounted for, if we consider things more closely; for the same prejudice which keeps some in doubt, may easily be conceived so to influence others, as to make them wholly deny the work of God. And this it may do in several ways: It may either bring them to question the facts related, and hinder their endeavouring to be more fully informed; or prevent their drawing such inferences from those

facts, as they would otherwise see to be plain and undeniable. Yea, and it will give tenfold weight to the offences which must come, so as to over-balance all evidence whatsoever.

4. This also may account for the behaviour of those who, not content to suspend their judgment, or to deny the work of God, go farther still, even to the length of contradicting and blaspheming. Nay, some of these have expressed a deeper abhorrence, and shown a stronger enmity against this, than they were ever known to do against Popery, infidelity, or any heresy whatsoever. Some have persecuted the instruments whom it pleased God to use herein, only not to the death; and others have treated in the same manner all those whom they termed their followers. A few instances of this it may be proper to mention, out of very many which might be recited.

5. On the 20th of June, 1743, a great multitude of people gathered together, chiefly from Walsal, Darlaston, and Bilston, in Wednesbury church-yard, Staffordshire. They went from thence (when by sounding a horn they had gathered their whole company together) to Mr. Eaton's house, in the middle of the town, who was at that time Constable. He went to the door with his Constable's staff, and began reading the Act of Parliament against riots; but the stones flew so thick about his head, that he was forced to leave off reading and retire. They broke all his windows, the door of his house, and a large clock in pieces. They went then to above fourscore houses, in many of which there were not three panes of glass left.

6. On June 20, 1743, John Baker, at the head of a large mob, came to the house of Jonas Turner, at West-Bromwich, near Wednesbury, and asked him, whether he would keep from these men that went preaching about, and go to the church. He answered, "I do go to the church; but I never see any of you there." Presently one Dan. Oniens, with a great club, broke great part of the window at one blow. Others laid hold of him, and dragged him about sixty yards before he could get loose from them. Afterwards they broke all his windows, and threw into the house abundance of stones, to break his goods.

About four in the afternoon they came to the house of widow Turner of West-Bromwich. They threw in bricks and stones so fast, that she was forced to open the door and run out among them. One of her daughters cried out, "My mother will be killed!" On which, they fell to throwing stones at her. She

ran into a neighbour's house ; but before she could shut the door, they broke the bottom off with a brick-end. They followed her other daughter with stones, and one with a great stake. She ran into another house, much frightened, expecting to be murdered. The widow asked, "How can you come and abuse us thus?" On which, one came with a large club, and swore, if she spoke another word, he would knock her on the head, and bury her in the ditch. Then he went and broke all the glass that was left. The same they did to many of the neighbouring houses.

7. On the 19th of June, James Yeoman, of Walsal, saw Mary Bird in her father's house at Wednesbury, and swore, "By G—, you are there now ; but we will kill you to-morrow." Accordingly, he came with a mob the next day ; and after they had broken all the windows, he took up a stone, and said, "Now, by God, I will kill you." He threw it, and struck her on the side of the head. The blood gushed out, and she dropped down immediately.

Another of them took Mr. Hands, of Wednesbury, by the throat, swore he would be the death of him, gave him a great swing round, and threw him upon the ground. As soon as he rose, one Equal Baker gave him a blow on the eye, and knocked him down again. In about half an hour, the mob came to his house, and broke all the windows, except about twenty panes. The kitchen windows they cleared, lead, bars, and all, broke the window-posts, and threw them into the house. The shop was shut up ; (he being an apothecary ; ) but they quickly broke it open, broke all the pots and bottles in pieces, and destroyed all his medicines. They broke also the shelves and drawers in the shop to pieces, and many of his household goods.

8. On January 13, 1743-4, the mob rose again at Darlaston, broke all the windows of all who followed "this way," (except two or three who bought themselves off,) broke open several houses, and took what they liked, the people belonging to them being fled for their lives.

About the same time the Rev. Mr. E—— came to Darlaston ; and meeting some others at Thomas Forshew's, they drew up a writing ; and Nicholas Winspur, the crier of the town, gave public notice, That all the people of the society must come to Mr. Forshew's, and sign it, or else their houses would be pulled down immediately. It was to this effect,

That they would never read, or sing, or pray together, or hear these Parsons, any more.

Several signed this through fear. They made every one who did, lay down a penny,—“to make the mob drink.”

9. About Candlemas, the wife of Joshua Constable, of Darlaston, was going to Wednesbury, when a mob met her in the road, threw her down several times, and abused her in a manner too horrible to write. A warrant was procured for some of these; but one of them only was carried before Mr. G——, who came back and told his companions, the Justice said that they might go home about their business. On this the mob rose again, came to Joshua's house, and destroyed all the necessary goods therein. They likewise broke and spoiled all his shop tools, threw the tiles off the roof of the house, and pulled down one room, the joist of which they carried away with them. All his gun-locks they took away; they tore in pieces all his wife's linen, cut the bed and bedstead, so that it was good for nothing; and tore her Bible and Common Prayer Book all to pieces. She and her husband retired to another house; but one telling the mob they were there, they swore they would tear it down immediately, if the man let them stay any longer: So they went out in the frost and snow, not knowing where to lay their head.

10. On Tuesday, January 31, 1743-4, Henry Old came to John Griffith's house, saying, if he did not leave following “this way,” he had a hundred men at his command, who should come and pull his house down. Soon after he brought some with him; but the neighbours gave him money, and sent him away for that time.

Monday, February 6, between seven and eight at night, came part of the same company. Hearing them afar off, John and his wife fastened the door, and left the house. Some of the neighbours going in soon after, found them destroying all they could: Two chairs and several bundles of linen were laid upon the fire. After they had destroyed what they could, they loaded themselves with clothes and meat, and went their way.

The same day public notice was given at Walsal, by a paper fixed up there, That all who designed to assist in breaking the windows, and plundering the houses, of the Methodists at Wednesbury, should be ready at ten o'clock, the next morning, on the Church-hill.

11. The next morning, February 7, (being Shrove-Tuesday,)

about half an hour after ten, great numbers of men were gathered together on the Church-hill. Thence they marched down, some armed with swords, some with clubs, and some with axes. They first fell upon Benjamin Watson's house, and broke many of the tiles, and all the windows. Next they came to Mr. Addinbrook's, broke a fine clock, with many of his goods, and stole all the things they could carry away. The next house was Jane Smith's, whose windows they broke, with what little goods she had. The next was Mr. Bird's, where they destroyed every thing they found, except what they carried away; cutting the beds in pieces, as they did all the beds which they could anywhere find. Thence they went to Mr. Edge's house: He was ill of a fever; so, for a sum of money, they passed it over. The next house was Mr. Hands's. They broke all his counter, boxes, and drawers, and all (except some bedsteads) that axe or hammer could break. They spilt all his drugs and chemical medicines, and stole every thing they could carry, even all his and his wife's wearing apparel beside what they had on.

12. Mr. Eaton's house was next. They broke all his windows, and all his inside doors in pieces, cut the lead off his house, destroyed or stole whatever they could lay their hands on. Some gentlemen offered to stop them, if he would sign a paper, implying that he would never hear those Parsons more. But he told them, he had felt already what a wounded conscience was; and, by the grace of God, he would wound his conscience no more.

After they had done at Mr. Eaton's, they plundered several other houses in Wednesbury and West-Bromwich. It is scarce possible to describe the outrages they committed; only they left them they plundered alive.

While they were plundering John Turner's house, he waded through the brook, to try if he could save some of his goods, which one David Garington was carrying away: Upon which Garington told him, it would be the same here as it was in Ireland; for there would be a massacre very quickly; and he wished it was now.

13. About eleven o'clock, Sarah, the wife of John Sheldon, being told the mob was coming to her house, went and met them at the gate. She asked John Baker, their captain, what they were come for. He answered, if she would have nothing more to do with these people, not a pennyworth of her goods should be hurt. She made no reply. Then they broke the door open, and began

breaking and plundering the goods. One coming out with a fire-shovel, she begged him not to take it away. He swore, if she spoke another word, he would beat her brains out.

John Sheldon was this while helping Thomas Parkes to hide his goods, though he knew by the noise they were breaking his own to pieces. Between two and three he came to his house with William Sitch. William asked Sarah how she did, saying, for his part, he took joyfully the spoiling of his goods. She answered, that, seeing so much wickedness, she could not rejoice; but she blessed God she could bear it patiently, and found not the least anger in her. John Sheldon seeing the spoil they had made, smiled and said, "Here is strange work." His wife told him, if she had complied with their terms, not one pennyworth would have been hurt. He replied, that if she had complied to deny the truth, and he had found his goods whole on that account, he should never have been easy as long as he lived; but he blessed God that she had rather chosen to suffer wrong.

I believe every reasonable man will allow, that nothing can possibly excuse these proceedings; seeing they are open, bare-faced violations both of justice and mercy, and of all laws divine and human.

III. 1. I suppose no Protestant will undertake to defend such proceedings, even toward the vilest miscreants. But abundance of excuses have been made, if not for opposing it thus, yet for denying this work to be of God, and for not acknowledging the time of our visitation.

Some allege that the doctrines of these men are false, erroneous, and enthusiastic; that they are new, and unheard of till of late; that they are Quakerism, fanaticism, Popery.

This whole pretence has been already cut up by the roots; it having been shown at large, that every branch of this doctrine is the plain doctrine of Scripture, interpreted by our own Church. Therefore it cannot be either false or erroneous, provided the Scripture be true. Neither can it be enthusiastic, unless the same epithet belongs to our Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy. Nor yet can these doctrines be termed new; no newer, at least, than the reign of Queen Elizabeth; not even with regard to the way of expression, or the manner wherein they are proposed. And as to the substance, they are more ancient still; as ancient, not only as the gospel, as the times of Isaiah, or David, or Moses, but as the first revelation of God to man. If, therefore, they

were unheard of till of late, in any that is termed a Christian country, the greater guilt is on those who, as ambassadors of Christ, ought to publish them day by day.

Fanaticism, if it means anything at all, means the same with enthusiasm, or religious madness, from which (as was observed before) these doctrines are distant as far as the east from the west. However, it is a convenient word to be thrown out upon anything we do not like; because scarce one reader in a thousand has any idea of what it means. If any part of this doctrine is held by the Quakers, there is the more reason to rejoice. I would to God they held it all, though the doctrine itself would be neither better nor worse for this.

Popery in the mouth of many men means just nothing; or, at most, something very horrid and bad. But Popery, properly speaking, is the distinguishing doctrines of the Church of Rome. They are summed up in the Twelve Articles which the Council of Trent added to the Nicene Creed. Now, who can find the least connexion between any of these, and the doctrines whereof we are speaking?

2. Others allege, "Their doctrine is too strict; they make the way to heaven too narrow." And this is in truth the original objection, (as it was almost the only one for some time,) and is secretly at the bottom of a thousand more, which appear in various forms. But do they make the way to heaven any narrower than our Lord and his Apostles made it? Is their doctrine stricter than that of the Bible? Consider only a few plain texts: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." "For every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment." "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." If their doctrine is stricter than this, they are to blame; but you know in your conscience, it is not. And who can be one jot less strict, without corrupting the word of God? Can any steward of the mysteries of God be found faithful, if he change any part of that sacred depositum? No. He can abate nothing, he can soften nothing; he is constrained to declare to all men, "I may not bring down the Scripture to your taste. You must come up to it, or perish for ever."

3. This is the real ground of that other popular cry concerning "the uncharitableness of these men." Uncharitable, are

they? In what respect? Do they not feed the hungry, and clothe the naked? "No; that is not the thing: They are not wanting in this: But they are so uncharitable in judging! They think none can be saved but those of their own way. They damn all the world beside themselves."

What do you mean? "They think none can be saved but those of their own way." Most surely they do. For as there is but one heaven, so there is but one way to it, even the way of faith in Christ, (for we speak not of opinions or outward modes of worship,) the way of love to God and man, the highway of holiness. And is it uncharitable to think or say that none can be saved but those who walk in this way? Was He then uncharitable who declared, "He that believeth not shall be damned?" or he that said, "Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord?" and again: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned," yet, "if I have not *αγαπην*, charity," love, all this "profiteth me nothing."

"But they damn all," you say, "beside themselves." *Damn* all! What kind of word is this? They damn no man. None is able to damn any man, but the Lord and Judge of all. What you probably mean by that strange expression is, they declare that God condemns all beside those who believe in Jesus Christ, and love him and keep his commandments. And so must you also, or you sin against God, and your neighbour, and your own soul. But is there any uncharitableness in this, in warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come? On the contrary, not to warn a poor, blind, stupid wretch that he is hanging over the mouth of hell, would be so inexcusable a want of charity, as would bring his blood upon our own head.

4. But there is no room for dispute, touching these doctrines in general, seeing our Lord gives you so plain a rule, by which you may easily and infallibly know whether they be of God: "The tree is known by its fruit: Either therefore make the tree good, and its fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt." (Matt. xii. 33.) Now, what fruit does the tree before us bring forth? Look and see; believe your own eyes and ears. Sinners leave their sins: The servants of the devil become the servants of God. Is this good or evil fruit; that vice loses ground, and virtue, practical religion, gains? O dispute no more! Know the tree by its fruit. Bow, and own the finger of God.



5. But many who own these doctrines to be of God, yet cannot be reconciled to the instruments he hath made use of. A very common exception taken against these is, and was from the beginning, that "they are so young:" Therefore, (abundance of men have readily inferred,) this work cannot be of God.

Perhaps they are not so young as you conceive. Mr. Whitefield is now upwards of thirty; my brother is thirty-seven years of age; I have lived above forty-two years; and a gentleman in Cornwall, for whom I often preach, has the merit of having lived threescore and seventeen years.

But, supposing the antecedent true, what a consequence is this! What shadow of Scripture have you to support it? Doth not God "send by whom he *will* send?" And who shall say to him, "What doest thou?" "These are too young; send elder men." What shadow of reason? Is it not possible that a person of thirty or forty may have as true a judgment in the things of God, and as great a blessing attending his preaching, as one of fifty or fourscore?

I wish you would explain yourself a little on this head:—

*Scire velim, verbo, pretium quotus arroget annus? \**

How old do you require a man to be, before God should have leave to speak by his mouth? O my brethren, who could have believed any serious man would once have named such an argument as this; seeing both Scripture and reason teach, that God herein "giveth account to none of his ways!" But he worketh by whomsoever he *will* work; he showeth mercy by whom he *will* show mercy.

6. "But there are only a few young heads." I cannot but observe here what great pains have been taken, what diligence shown, to make and to keep them few. What arts have not been used to keep back those, of the Clergy in particular, who have been clearly convinced, from time to time, that they ought to join hearts and hands in the work? On this occasion it has been accounted meritorious to "say all manner of evil of us falsely;" to promise them whatever their hearts desired, if they would refrain from these men; and, on the other hand, to threaten them with heavy things if ever they went among them more. So that how fully soever they were convinced, they could not act according to their conviction, unless

\* How old must a book be before it is good for anything?

they could give up at once all thought of preferment either in Church or State; nay, all hope of even a Fellowship, or poor Scholarship, in either University. Many also have been threatened, that if they went on in this way, what little they had should be taken from them. And many have, on this very account, been disowned by their dearest friends and nearest relations: So that there was no possibility the number of these labourers should ever be increased at all, unless by those who could break through all these ties, who desired nothing in the present world, who counted neither their fortunes, nor friends, nor lives, dear unto themselves, so they might only keep "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

7. But what do you infer from their fewness? that, because they are few, therefore God cannot work by them? Upon what scripture do you ground this? I thought it was the same to Him, to save by many or by few. Upon what reason? Why cannot God save ten thousand souls by one man, as well as by ten thousand? How little, how inconsiderable a circumstance is number before God! Nay, is there not reason to believe that whensoever God is pleased to work a great deliverance, spiritual or temporal, he may first say, as of old, "The people are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands?" May he not purposely choose few as well as inconsiderable instruments, for the greater manifestation of his own glory? Very few, I grant, are the instruments now employed; yet a great work is wrought already. And the fewer they are by whom this large harvest hath hitherto been gathered in, the more evident must it appear to unprejudiced minds that the work is not of man, but of God.

8. "But they are not only few, but unlearned also." This is a grievous offence, and is by many esteemed a sufficient excuse for not acknowledging the work to be of God.

The ground of this offence is partly true. Some of those who now preach are unlearned. They neither understand the ancient languages, nor any of the branches of philosophy. And yet this objection might have been spared by many of those who have frequently made it; because they are unlearned too, though accounted otherwise. They have not themselves the very thing they require in others.

Men in general are under a great mistake with regard to

what is called *the learned world*. They do not know, they cannot easily imagine, how little learning there is among them. I do not speak of abstruse learning; but of what all Divines, at least, of any note, are supposed to have, namely, the knowledge of the tongues, at least, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and of the common arts and sciences.

How few men of learning, so called, understand Hebrew; even so far as to read a plain chapter in Genesis! Nay, how few understand Greek! Make an easy experiment. Desire that grave man, who is urging this objection, only to tell you the English of the first paragraph that occurs in one of Plato's Dialogues. I am afraid we may go farther still. How few understand Latin! Give one of them an Epistle of Tully, and see how readily he will explain it without his dictionary. If he can hobble through that, it is odds but a Georgic in Virgil, or a Satire of Persius, sets him fast.

And with regard to the arts and sciences; how few understand so much as the general principles of logic! Can one in ten of the Clergy, (O grief of heart!) or of the Masters of Arts in either University, when an argument is brought, tell you even the mood and figure wherein it is proposed; or complete an enthymeme? Perhaps you do not so much as understand the term;—supply the premiss which is wanting, in order to make it a full categorical syllogism. Can one in ten of them demonstrate a Problem or theorem in Euclid's Elements, or define the common terms used in Metaphysics, or intelligibly explain the first principles of it? Why then will they pretend to that learning which they are conscious to themselves they have not? nay, and censure others who have it not, and do not pretend to it? Where are sincerity and candour fled?

It will easily be observed, that I do not depreciate learning of any kind. The knowledge of the languages is a valuable talent; so is the knowledge of the arts and sciences. Both the one and the other may be employed to the glory of God and the good of men. But yet I ask, Where hath God declared in his word, that he cannot, or will not, make use of men that have it not? Has Moses or any of his Prophets affirmed this? or our Lord, or any of his Apostles? You are sensible all these are against you: You know the Apostles themselves, all except St. Paul, were *ανδρες αγραμματοι και ιδιωται*, "common, unphilosophical, unlettered men."

9. "What! Then you make yourselves like the Apostles." Because this silly objection has so often been urged, I will for once spend a few words upon it, though it does not deserve that honour. Why, must not every man, whether Clergyman or layman, be in some respects like the Apostles, or go to hell? Can any man be saved if he be not holy, like the Apostles; a follower of them, as they were of Christ? And ought not every Preacher of the gospel to be in a peculiar manner like the Apostles, both in holy tempers, in exemplariness of life, and in his indefatigable labours for the good of souls? Wo unto every ambassador of Christ, who is not like the Apostles in this! in holiness, in making full proof of his ministry, in spending and being spent for Christ! We cannot, and therefore we need not, be like them in working outward miracles; but we may, and ought, in working together with God for the salvation of men. And the same God who was always ready to help their infirmities, is ready to help ours also. He who made them "workmen that needed not to be ashamed," will teach us also "rightly to divide the word of truth." In this respect likewise, in respect of his "having help from God," for the work whereunto he is called, every Preacher of the gospel is like the Apostles: Otherwise, he is of all men most miserable.

10. And I am bold to affirm, that these unlettered men have help from God for that great work,—the saving souls from death; seeing he hath enabled, and doth enable them still, to "turn many to righteousness." Thus hath he "destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nought the understanding of the prudent." When they imagined they had effectually shut the door, and locked up every passage whereby any help could come to two or three Preachers, weak in body as well as soul, who they might reasonably believe would, humanly speaking, wear themselves out in a short time;—when they had gained their point by securing, as they supposed, all the men of learning in the nation, "He that sitteth in heaven laughed them to scorn," and came upon them by a way they thought not of. "Out of the stones he raised up" those who should beget "children to Abraham." We had no more foresight of this than you: Nay, we had the deepest prejudices against it; until we could not but own that God gave "wisdom from above" to these unlearned and ignorant men, so that the work of the Lord prospered in their hand, and sinners were daily converted to God.

Indeed, in the one thing which they profess to know, they are not ignorant men. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination, in substantial, practical, experimental Divinity, as few of our candidates for holy orders, even in the University, (I speak it with sorrow and shame, and in tender love,) are able to do. But, O! what manner of examination do most of those candidates go through! and what proof are the testimonials commonly brought, (as solemn as the form is wherein they run,) either of their piety or knowledge to whom are entrusted those sheep which God hath purchased with his own blood!

11. "But they are laymen. You seem to be sensible yourself of the strength of this objection. For as many as you have answered, I observe you have never once so much as touched on this."

I have not. Yet it was not distrust of my cause, but tenderness to you, which occasioned my silence. I had something to advance on this head also; but I was afraid you could not bear it. I was conscious to myself that, some years since, to touch this point, was to touch the apple of my eye: And this makes me almost unwilling to speak now, lest I should shock the prejudices I cannot remove.

Suffer me, however, just to intimate to you some things which I would leave to your farther consideration: The Scribes of old, who were the ordinary Preachers among the Jews, were not Priests; they were not better than laymen. Yea, many of them were incapable of the priesthood, being of the tribe of Simeon, not of Levi.

Hence, probably, it was that the Jews themselves never urged it as an objection to our Lord's preaching, (even those who did not acknowledge or believe that he was sent of God in an extraordinary character,) that he was no Priest after the order of Aaron: Nor, indeed, could be; seeing he was of the tribe of Judah.

Nor does it appear that any objected this to the Apostles: So far from it, that at Antioch, in Pisidia, we find the rulers of the synagogue sending unto Paul and Barnabas, strangers just come into the city, "saying, Men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." (Acts xiii. 15.)

If we consider these things, we shall be the less surprised at what occurs in the eighth chapter of the Acts: "At that time

there was a great persecution against the Church ; and they were all scattered abroad ” (that is, all the Church, all the believers in Jesus) “ throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.” (Verse 1.) “ Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” (Verse 4.) Now, what shadow of reason have we to say, or think, that all these were ordained before they preached ?

12. If we come to later times : Was Mr. Calvin ordained ? Was he either Priest or Deacon ? And were not most of those whom it pleased God to employ in promoting the Reformation abroad, laymen also ? Could that great work have been promoted at all in many places, if laymen had not preached ? And yet how seldom do the very Papists urge this as an objection against the Reformation ! Nay, as rigorous as they are in things of this kind, they themselves appoint, even in some of their strictest Orders, that “ if any lay-brother believes himself called of God to preach as a Missionary, the Superior of the Order, being informed thereof, shall immediately send him away.”

In all Protestant Churches it is still more evident that ordination is not held a necessary pre-requisite of preaching ; for in Sweden, in Germany, in Holland, and, I believe, in every Reformed Church in Europe, it is not only permitted but required, that before any one is ordained, (before he is admitted even into Deacon’s Orders, wherever the distinction between Priests and Deacons is retained,) he should publicly preach a year or more *ad probandum facultatem*. And for this practice they believe they have the authority of an express command of God : “ Let these first be proved ; then let them use the office of a Deacon, being found blameless.” (1 Tim. iii. 10.)

13. “ In England, however, there is nothing of this kind ; no layman permitted to speak in public.” No ! Can you be ignorant, that in an hundred churches they do it continually ? In how many (particularly in the west of England) does the parish-clerk read one of the Lessons ? (In some he reads the whole Service of the Church, perhaps every Lord’s day.) And do not other laymen constantly do the same thing, yea, in our very cathedrals ? which, being under the more immediate inspection of the Bishops, should be patterns to all other churches.

Perhaps it will be said, “ But this is not preaching.” Yes, but it is essentially such. For what is it to preach, but *prædicare verbum Dei* ; “ to publish the word of God ?” And this

laymen do all over England; particularly under the eye of every Bishop in the nation.

Nay, is it not done in the Universities themselves? Who ordained that singing-man at Christ-Church; who is likewise utterly unqualified for the work, murdering every Lesson he reads? not even endeavouring to read it as the word of God, but rather as an old song! Such a layman as this, meddling at all with the word of God, I grant, is a scandal to the English nation.

To go a step farther: Do not the fundamental constitutions of the University of Oxford, the statutes, even as revised by Archbishop Laud, require every Bachelor of Arts, nine in ten of whom are laymen, to read three public lectures in moral philosophy, on whatever subject he chooses? My subject, I well remember, was, "the *love* of God." Now, what was this but preaching?

Nay, may not a man be a Doctor of Divinity even in Oxford, though he never was ordained at all? The instance of Dr. Atwell, (late) Rector of Exeter College, is fresh in every one's memory.

These are a few of the considerations that may readily occur to any thinking man on this head. But I do not rest the cause on these. I believe it may be defended a shorter way.

14. It pleased God, by two or three Ministers of the Church of England, to call many sinners to repentance; who, in several parts, were undeniably turned from a course of sin, to a course of holiness.

The Ministers of the places where this was done ought to have received those Ministers with open arms; and to have taken them who had just begun to serve God into their peculiar care; watching over them in tender love, lest they should fall back into the snare of the devil.

Instead of this, the greater part spoke of those Ministers as if the devil, not God, had sent them. Some repelled them from the Lord's table; others stirred up the people against them, representing them, even in their public discourses, as fellows not fit to live; Papists, heretics, traitors; conspirators against their King and country.

And how did they watch over the sinners lately reformed? Even as a leopard watcheth over his prey. They drove some of them also from the Lord's table; to which till now they had

no desire to approach. They preached all manner of evil concerning them, openly cursing them in the name of the Lord. They turned many out of their work; persuaded others to do so too, and harassed them all manner of ways.

The event was, that some were wearied out, and so turned back to their vomit again. And then these good Pastors gloried over them, and endeavoured to shake others by their example.

15. When the Ministers by whom God had helped them before came again to those places, great part of their work was to begin again; (if it could be begun again;) but the relapsers were often so hardened in sin, that no impression could be made upon them.

What could they do in a case of so extreme necessity, where many souls lay at stake?

No Clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was, to find some one among themselves, who was upright of heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God; and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them, as he was able, in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation.

God immediately gave a blessing hereto. In several places, by means of these plain men, not only those who had already begun to run well were hindered from drawing back to perdition; but other sinners also, from time to time, were converted from the error of their ways.

This plain account of the whole proceeding I take to be the best defence of it. I know no scripture which forbids making use of such help, in a case of such necessity. And I praise God who has given even this help to those poor sheep, when "their own shepherds pitied them not."

"But does not the Scripture say, 'No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron?'" Nor do these. The honour here mentioned is the Priesthood. But they no more take upon them to be Priests than to be Kings. They take not upon them to administer the sacraments,—an honour peculiar to the Priests of God. Only, according to their power, they exhort their brethren to continue in the grace of God.

"But for these laymen to exhort at all is a violation of all order."

What is this order of which you speak? Will it serve instead



of the knowledge and love of God? Will this order rescue those from the snare of the devil, who are now taken captive at his will? Will it keep them who are escaped a little way, from turning back into Egypt? If not, how should I answer it to God, if, rather than violate I know not what order, I should sacrifice thousands of souls thereto? I dare not do it. It is at the peril of my own soul.

Indeed, if by order were meant true Christian discipline, whereby all the living members of Christ are knit together in one, and all that are putrid and dead immediately cut off from the body; this order I reverence, for it is of God. But where is it to be found? in what diocese, in what town or parish, within England or Wales? Are you Rector of a parish? Then let us go no farther. Does this order obtain there? Nothing less. Your parishioners are a rope of sand. As few (if any) of them are alive to God; so they have no connexion with each other, unless such as might be among Turks or Heathens. Neither have you any power to cut off from that body, were it alive, the dead and putrid members. Perhaps you have no desire; but all are jumbled together without any care or concern of yours.

It is plain, then, that what order is to be found is not among you who so loudly contend for it, but among that very people whom you continually blame for their violation and contempt of it. The little flock you condemn is united together in one body, by one Spirit; so that "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one be honoured, all rejoice with it." Nor does any dead member long remain; but as soon as the hope of recovering it is past, it is cut off.

Now, suppose we were willing to relinquish our charge, and to give up this flock into your hands, would you observe the same order as we do now with them and the other souls under your care? You dare not; because you have respect of persons. You fear the faces of men. You cannot; because you have not overcome the world. You are not above the desire of earthly things. And it is impossible you should ever have any true order, or exercise any Christian discipline, till you are wholly crucified to the world, till you desire nothing more but God.

Consider this matter, I entreat you, a little farther. Here are thirty thousand persons\* (perhaps somewhat more) of whom

\* In the year 1772.—EDIT.

I take care, watching over their souls as he that must give account. In order hereto it lies upon me, (so I judge,) at the peril of my own salvation, to know, not only their names, but their outward and inward states, their difficulties and dangers. Otherwise, how can I know either how to guide them aright, or to commend them to God in prayer? Now, if I am willing to make these over to you, will you watch over them in the same manner? Will you take the same care (or as much more as you please) of each soul as I have hitherto done? Not such *curam animarum*\* as you have taken these ten years in your own parish. Poor empty name! Has not your parish been, in fact, as much a sinecure to you as your prebend? O what an account have you to give to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls!

18. There is one more excuse for denying this work of God, taken from the instruments employed therein; that is, "that they are wicked men." And a thousand stories have been handed about to prove it.

But you may observe, their wickedness was not heard of till after they "went about doing good." Their reputation for honesty was till then unblemished. But it was impossible it should continue so, when they were publicly employed in "testifying of the world, that its deeds were evil." It could not be but the Scriptures should be fulfilled: "The servant is not above his Master. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household!"

Yet I cannot but remind considerate men, in how remarkable a manner the wisdom of God has for many years guarded against this pretence, with respect to my brother and me in particular. Scarce any two men in Great Britain, of our rank, have been so held out, as it were, to all the world; especially of those who from their childhood had always loved and studiously sought retirement. And I had procured what I sought; I was quite safe, as I supposed, in a little country town, when I was required to return to Oxford, without delay, to take the charge of some young gentlemen, by Dr. Morley, the only man then in England to whom I could deny nothing. From that time both my brother and I (utterly against our will) came to be more and more observed and known, till we were more spoken of, than perhaps

\* "A cure of souls."—EDIT.

two so inconsiderable persons ever were before in the nation. To make us more public still, as honest madmen at least, by a strange concurrence of providences, overturning all our preceding resolutions, we were hurried away to America. However, at our return from thence, we were resolved to retire out of the world at once; being sated with noise, hurry, and fatigue, and seeking nothing but to be at rest. Indeed, for a long season, the greatest pleasure I had desired on this side eternity was,

*Tacitum sylvas inter reptare salubres,  
Quarentem quicquid dignum sapiente bonoque.\**

And we had attained our desire. We wanted nothing. We looked for nothing more in this world when we were dragged out again, by earnest importunity, to preach at one place, and another, and another, and so carried on, we knew not how, without any design but the general one of saving souls, into a situation, which, had it been named to us at first, would have appeared far worse than death.

19. What a surprising apparatus of Providence was here! And what stronger demonstrations could have been given, of men's acting from a zeal for God, whether it were "according to knowledge" or no? What persons could, in the nature of things, have been (antecedently) less liable to exception, with regard to their moral character, at least, than those the all-wise God hath now employed? Indeed I cannot devise what manner of men could have been more unexceptionable on all accounts. Had God endued us with greater natural or acquired abilities, that very thing might have been turned into an objection. Had we been remarkably defective, it would have been matter of objection on the other hand. Had we been Dissenters of any kind, or even Low-Church men, (so called,) it would have been a great stumbling-block in the way of those who are zealous for the Church. And yet had we continued in the impetuosity of our High-Church zeal, neither should we have been willing to converse with Dissenters, nor they to receive any good at our hands. Some objections were kept out of the way, by our known contempt of money and preferment; and others, by that rigorous strictness of life which we exacted, not of others, but ourselves only. Insomuch, that, twelve or fourteen years ago,

\* Creeping silent through the sylvan shades,  
Exploring what is wise and good in man.

the censure of one who had narrowly observed us (me in particular) went no farther than this:—

Does John beyond his strength persist to go,  
To his frail carcase literally foe?  
Careless of health, as if in haste to die,  
And lavish time to' insure eternity!

So that, upon the whole, I see not what God could have done more in this respect which he hath not done; or what instruments he could have employed in such a work, who would have been less liable to exception.

20. Neither can I conceive how it was possible to do that work, the doing of which, we are still under the strongest conviction, is bound upon us at the peril of our own souls, in a less exceptionable manner. We have, by the grace of God, behaved, not only with meekness, but with all tenderness toward all men; with all the tenderness which we conceived it was possible to use, without betraying their souls. And from the very first it has been our special care, to deal tenderly with our brethren, the Clergy. We have not willingly provoked them at any time; neither any single Clergyman. We have not sought occasion to publish their faults; we have not used a thousand occasions that offered. When we were constrained to speak something, we spake as little as we believed we could, without offending God; and that little, though in plain and strong words, yet as mildly and lovingly as we were able. And in the same course we have steadily persevered, (as well as in earnestly advising others to tread in our steps,) even though we saw that, with regard to them, by all this we profited nothing; though we knew we were still continually represented as implacable enemies to the Clergy, as railers against them, as slanderers of them, as seeking all opportunities to blacken and asperse them. When a Clergyman himself has vehemently accused me of doing this, I bless God he could not provoke me to do it. I still “kept my mouth as it were with a bridle,” and committed my cause to a higher hand.

21. The truth is, you impute that hatred to us, which is in your own breast. (I speak not this of all the Clergy; God forbid! But let it fall on whom it concerns.) You, it is certain, have shown the utmost hatred to us, and in every possible way; unless you were actually to beat us, (of which also we are not without precedent,) or to shoot us through the head. And if

you could prevail upon others to do this, I suppose you would think you did God service. I do not speak without ground. I have heard with my own ears such sermons, (in Staffordshire particularly,) that I should not have wondered if, as soon as we came out of the church, the people had stoned me with stones. And it was a natural consequence of what that poor Minister had lately heard at the Bishop's visitation; as it was one great cause of the miserable riots and outrages which soon followed.

It is this, my brethren, it is your own preaching, and not ours, which sets the people against you. The very same persons who are diverted with those sermons, cannot but despise you for them in their hearts; even those who on your authority believe most of the assertions which you advance. What then must they think of you, who know the greatest part of what you assert to be utterly false? They may pity and pray for you; but they can esteem you no other than false witnesses against God and your brethren.

22. "But what need is there," say even some of a milder spirit, "of this preaching in fields and streets? Are there not churches enough to preach in?" No, my friend, there are not; not for us to preach in. You forget; we are not suffered to preach there, else we should prefer them to any places whatever. "Well, there are Ministers enough without you." *Ministers enough, and churches enough!* for what? to reclaim all the sinners within the four seas? If there were, they would all be reclaimed. But they are not reclaimed: Therefore, it is evident that there are not churches enough. And one plain reason why, notwithstanding all these churches, they are no nearer being reclaimed, is this,—they never come into a church, perhaps not once in a twelvemonth, perhaps not for many years together. Will you say, (as I have known some tender-hearted Christians,) "Then it is their own fault; let them die, and be damned?" I grant it is their own fault; and so it was my fault and yours when we went astray like sheep that were lost. Yet the Shepherd of souls sought after us, and went after us into the wilderness. And "oughtest not thou to have compassion on thy fellow-servants, as he had pity on thee?" Ought not we also "to seek," as far as in us lies, "and to save, that which is lost?"

Behold the amazing love of God to the outcasts of men! His tender condescension to their folly! They would regard nothing done in the usual way. All this was lost upon them.

The ordinary preaching of the word of God, they would not even deign to hear. So the devil made sure of these careless ones; for who should pluck them out of his hand? Then God was moved to jealousy, and went out of the usual way to save the souls which he had made. Then, over and above what was ordinarily spoken in his name in all the houses of God in the land, he commanded a voice to cry in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

23. Consider coolly, if it was not highly expedient that something of this kind should be. How expedient, were it only on the account of those poor sinners against their own souls who, to all human appearance, were utterly inaccessible every other way! And what numbers of these are still to be found, even in or near our most populous cities! What multitudes of them were, some years since, both in Kingswood, and the Fells about Newcastle! who, week after week, spent the Lord's day, either in the ale-house, or in idle diversions, and never troubled themselves about going to church, or to any public worship at all. Now, would you really have desired that these poor wretches should have sinned on till they dropped into hell? Surely you would not. But by what other means was it possible they should have been plucked out of the fire? Had the Minister of the parish preached like an angel, it had profited them nothing; for they heard him not. But when one came and said, "Yonder is a man preaching on the top of the mountain," they ran in droves to hear what he would say; and God spoke to their hearts. It is hard to conceive anything else which could have reached them. Had it not been for field-preaching, the uncommonness of which was the very circumstance that recommended it, they must have run on in the error of their way, and perished in their blood.

24. But suppose field-preaching to be, in a case of this kind, ever so expedient or even necessary, yet who will contest with us for this province? May we not enjoy this quiet and unmolested? Unmolested, I mean, by any competitors: For who is there among you, brethren, that is willing (examine your own hearts) even to save souls from death at this price? Would not you let a thousand souls perish, rather than you would be the instruments of rescuing them thus? I do not speak now with regard to conscience, but to the inconveniences that must

accompany it. Can you sustain them, if you would? Can you bear the summer sun to beat upon your naked head? Can you suffer the wintry rain or wind, from whatever quarter it blows? Are you able to stand in the open air without any covering or defence when God casteth abroad his snow like wool, or scattereth his hoar-frost like ashes? And yet these are some of the smallest inconveniences which accompany field-preaching. Far beyond all these, are the contradiction of sinners, the scoffs both of the great vulgar and the small; contempt and reproach of every kind; often more than verbal affronts, stupid, brutal violence, sometimes to the hazard of health, or limbs, or life. Brethren, do you envy us this honour? What, I pray, would buy you to be a field-preacher? Or what, think you, could induce any man of common sense to continue therein one year, unless he had a full conviction in himself that it was the will of God concerning him?

Upon this conviction it is (were we to submit to these things on any other motive whatsoever, it would furnish you with a better proof of our distraction than any that has yet been found) that we now do, for the good of poor souls, what you cannot, will not, dare not do: And we desire not that you should. But this one thing we may reasonably desire of you,—Do not increase the difficulties, which are already so great, that, without the mighty power of God, we must sink under them. Do not assist in trampling down a little handful of men, who, for the present, stand in the gap between ten thousand poor wretches and destruction, till you find some others to take their places.

25. Highly needful it is that some should do this, lest those poor souls be lost without remedy: And it should rejoice the hearts of all who desire the kingdom of God should come, that so many of them have been snatched already from the mouth of the lion, by an uncommon, though not unlawful, way. This circumstance, therefore, is no just excuse for not acknowledging the work of God; especially, if we consider, that whenever it has pleased God to work any great work upon the earth, even from the earliest times, he hath stepped more or less out of the common way;—whether to excite the attention of a greater number of people than might otherwise have regarded it; or to separate the proud and haughty of heart, from those of an humble, childlike spirit; the former of whom he foresaw, trusting in their own wisdom, would

fall on that stone and be broken; while the latter, inquiring with simplicity, would soon know of the work, that it was of God.

26. "Nay," say some, "but God is a God of wisdom : And it is his work to give understanding. Whereas this man is one of them, and he is a fool. You see the fruits of their preaching." No, my friend, you do not. That is your mistake. A fool very possibly he may be. So it appears by his talking, perhaps writing too. But this is none of the fruits of our preaching. He was a fool before ever he heard us. We found and are likely to leave him so. Therefore his folly is not to be imputed to us, even if it continue to the day of his death. As we were not the cause, so we undertake not the cure, of disorders of this kind. No fair man, therefore, can excuse himself thus, from acknowledging the work of God.

Perhaps you will say, "He is not a natural fool, neither; but he is so ignorant. He knows not the first principles of religion." It is very possible. But have patience with him, and he will know them by and by; yea, if he be in earnest to save his soul, far sooner than you can conceive. And, in the mean time, neither is this an objection of any weight. Many, when they begin to hear us, may, without any fault of ours, be utter strangers to the whole of religion. But this is no incurable disease. Yet a little while, and they may be wise unto salvation.

Is the ignorance you complain of among this people (you who object to the people more than to their teachers) of another kind? Do not they "know how in meekness to reprove or instruct those that oppose themselves?" I believe what you say: All of them do not; they have not put on gentleness and longsuffering. I wish they had: Pray for them that they may; that they may be mild and patient toward all men. But what, if they are not? Sure, you do not make this an argument that God hath not sent us! Our Lord came, and we come, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" passionate sinners, (such as these whereof you complain,) as well as those of every other kind. Nor can it be expected they should be wholly delivered from their sin as soon as they begin to hear his word.

27. A greater stumbling-block than this is laid before you, by those that "say and do not." Such, I take it for granted, will be among us, although we purge them out as fast as we can; persons that talk much of religion, that commend the Preachers, perhaps are diligent in hearing them; it may be,



read all their books, and sing their hymns; and yet no change is wrought in their hearts. Were they of old time as lions in their houses? They are the same still. Were they (in low life) slothful or intemperate? Were they tricking or dishonest, over-reaching or oppressive? Or did they use to borrow and not pay? The Ethiopian hath not changed his skin. Were they (in high life) delicate, tender, self-indulgent? Were they nice in furniture or apparel? Were they fond of trifles, or of their own dear persons? The leopard hath not changed her spots. Yet their being with us for a time proves no more than that we have not the miraculous discernment of spirits.

Others you may find, in whom there was a real change. But it was only for a season. They are now turned back, and are two-fold more the children of hell than before. Yet neither is this any manner of proof that the former work was not of God. No, not though these apostates should, with the utmost confidence, say all manner of evil against us. I expect they should. For every other injury hath been forgiven, and will be to the end of the world. But hardly shall any one forgive the intolerable injury of almost persuading him to be a Christian. When these men, therefore, who were with us, but went out from among us, assert things that may cause your ears to tingle, if you consider either the Scripture or the nature of man it will not stagger you at all: Much less will it excuse you for not acknowledging the work in general to be of God.

28. But to all this it may possibly be replied, "When you bring your credentials with you, when you prove by miracles what you assert, then we will acknowledge that God hath sent you."

What is it you would have us prove by miracles? that the doctrines we preach are true? This is not the way to prove that. (As our first Reformers replied to those of the Church of Rome, who, you may probably remember, were continually urging them with this very demand.) We prove the doctrines we preach by Scripture and reason, and, if need be, by antiquity.

What else is it then we are to prove by miracles?

Is it, (1.) That A. B. was for many years without God in the world, a common swearer, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker?

Or, (2.) That he is not so now?

Or, (3.) That he continued so till he heard us preach, and from that time was another man?

Not so. The proper way to prove these facts is by the testi-

mony of competent witnesses ; and these witnesses are ready, whenever required, to give full evidence of them.

Or, would you have us prove by miracles,

(4.) That this was not done by our own power or holiness ? that God only is able to raise the dead, those who are dead in trespasses and sins ? Nay, if you "hear not Moses and the Prophets" and Apostles, on this head, neither would you believe, "though one rose from the dead."

It is therefore utterly unreasonable and absurd to require or expect the proof of miracles, in questions of such a kind as are always decided by proofs of quite another nature.

29. "But you relate them yourself." I relate just what I saw, from time to time : And this is true, that some of those circumstances seem to go beyond the ordinary course of nature. But I do not peremptorily determine, whether they were supernatural or no ; much less do I rest upon them either the proof of other facts, or of the doctrines which I preach. I prove these in the ordinary way ; the one by testimony, the other by Scripture and reason.

"But if you can work miracles when you please, is not this the surest way of proving them ? This would put the matter out of dispute at once, and supersede all other proof."

You seem to lie under an entire mistake, both as to the nature and use of miracles. It may reasonably be questioned, whether there ever was that man living upon earth, except the man Christ Jesus, that could work miracles when he pleased. God only, when he pleased, exerted that power, and by whomsoever it pleased him.

But if a man could work miracles when he pleased, yet there is no Scripture authority, nor even example, for doing it in order to satisfy such a demand as this. I do not read that either our Lord, or any of his Apostles, wrought any miracle on such an occasion. Nay, how sharply does our Lord rebuke those who made a demand of this kind ! When "certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee;" (observe, this was their method of answering the strong reasons whereby he had just proved the works in question to be of God !) "he answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; but there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas." (Matt. xii. 38, 39.) "An evil and adulterous

generation!" else they would not have needed such a kind of proof. Had they been willing to do his will, they would, without this, have known that the doctrine was of God.

Miracles, therefore, are quite needless in such a case. Nor are they so conclusive a proof as you imagine. If a man could and did work them in defence of any doctrine, yet this would not supersede other proof; for there may be *τερατα ψευδους*, "lying wonders," miracles wrought in support of falsehood. Still, therefore, his doctrine would remain to be proved from the proper topics of Scripture and reason: And these even without miracles are sufficient; but miracles without these are not. Accordingly, our Saviour and all his Apostles, in the midst of their greatest miracles, never failed to prove every doctrine they taught by clear Scripture and cogent reason.

30. I presume, by this time you may perceive the gross absurdity of demanding miracles in the present case; seeing one of the propositions in question, (over and above our general doctrines,) viz., "That sinners are reformed," can only be proved by testimony; and the other, "This cannot be done but by the power of God," needs no proof, being self-evident.

"Why, I did once myself rejoice to hear," says a grave citizen, with an air of great importance, "that so many sinners were reformed, till I found they were only turned from one wickedness to another; that they were turned from cursing or swearing, or drunkenness, into a no less damnable sin, that of schism."

Do you know what you say? You have, I am afraid, a confused huddle of ideas in your head; and I doubt you have not capacity to clear them up yourself, nor coolness enough to receive help from others.

However, I will try. What is schism? Have you any determinate idea of it? I ask the rather, because I have found, by repeated experiments, that a common English tradesman receives no more light when he hears or reads, "This is schism," than if he heard or read,—

*Bombatio, stridor, clangor, taratantara, murmur.*

Honest neighbour, do not be angry. Lay down your hammer, and let us talk a little on this head.

You say, we are in the damnable sin of schism, and therefore in as bad a state as adulterers or murderers.

I ask once more, What do you mean by schism? "Schism! schism! why, it is separating from the Church." Ay, so it is.

And yet every separating from the Church to which we once belonged is not schism ; else you will make all the English to be schismatics, by separating from the Church of Rome. " But we had just cause." So doubtless we had ; whereas schism is a causeless separation from the Church of Christ. So far so good. But you have many steps to take before you can make good that conclusion, that a separation from a particular national Church, such as the Church of England is, whether with sufficient cause or without, comes under the scriptural notion of schism.

However, taking this for granted, will you aver in cool blood, that all who die in such a separation, that is, every one who dies a Quaker, a Baptist, an Independent, or a Presbyterian, is as infallibly damned as if he died in the act of murder or adultery? Surely you start at the thought ! It makes even nature recoil. How then can you reconcile it to the love that " hopeth all things?"

31. But whatever state they are in, who causelessly separate from the Church of England, it affects not those of whom we are speaking ; for they do not separate from it at all.

You may easily be convinced of this, if you will only weigh the particulars following :—

(1.) A great part of these went to no church at all before they heard us preach. They no more pretended to belong to the Church of England, than to the Church of Muscovy. If, therefore, they went to no church now, they would be no farther from the Church than they were before.

(2.) Those who did sometimes go to church before, go three times as often now. These, therefore, do not separate from the Church. Nay, they are united to it more closely than before.

(3.) Those who never went to church at all before, do go now, at all opportunities. Will common sense allow any one to say, that these are separated from the Church?

(4.) The main question is, Are they turned from doing the works of the devil, to do the works of God? Do they now live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world? If they do, if they live according to the directions of the Church, believe her doctrines, and join in her ordinances ; with what face can you say, that these men separate from the Church of England?

32. But in what state are they whom the Clergy and Gentry (and perhaps you for one) have successfully laboured to preserve from this damnable sin of schism, whom you have kept from hearing these men, and separating from the Church?

Is not the drunkard that was, a drunkard still? Inquire of his poor wife and family. Is not the common swearer still horribly crying to God for damnation upon his soul? Is not the sinner in every other kind, exactly the same man still? Not better at least, if he be not worse, than he was ten years ago.

Now, consider, (1.) Does the Church of England gain either honour, or strength, or blessing, by such wretches as these calling themselves her members? by ten thousand drunkards, or whoremongers, or common swearers? Nay, ought she not immediately to spew them out, to renounce all fellowship with them? Would she not be far better without them than with them? Let any man of reason judge.

(2.) Is the drunkard's calling himself of the Church of England, of any more use to him than to the Church? Will this save him from hell, if he die in his sin? Will it not rather increase his damnation?

(3.) Is not a drunkard of any other Church just as good as a drunkard of the Church of England? Yea, is not a drunken Papist as much in the favour of God as a drunken Protestant?

(4.) Is not a cursing, swearing Turk, (if there be such an one to be found) full as acceptable to God, as a cursing, swearing Christian?

Nay, (5.) If there be any advantage, does it not lie on the side of the former? Is he not the less inexcusable of the two, as sinning against less light?

O why will you sink these poor souls deeper into perdition than they are sunk already? Why will you prophesy unto them, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace? Why, if you do it not yourself, (whether you cannot, or will not, God knoweth,) should you hinder us from "guiding them into the way of peace?"

33. Will you endeavour to excuse yourself by saying, "There are not many who are the better for your preaching; and these by and by will be as bad as ever; as such and such an one is already?"

I would to God I could set this in a just light! But I cannot: All language fails.

God begins a glorious work in our land. You set yourself against it with all your might, to prevent its beginning where it does not yet appear, and to destroy it wherever it does. In part you prevail. You keep many from hearing the word that is able to save their souls. Others who had heard it, you induce

to turn back from God, and to list under the devil's banner again. Then you make the success of your own wickedness an excuse for not acknowledging the work of God! You urge, that not many sinners were reformed; and that some of those are now as bad as ever!

Whose fault is this? Is it ours, or your own? Why have not thousands more been reformed? Yea, for every one who is now turned to God, why are there not ten thousand? Because you and your associates laboured so heartily in the cause of hell; because you and they spared no pains, either to prevent or to destroy the work of God! By using all the power and wisdom you had, you hindered thousands from hearing the gospel which they might have found to be the power of God unto salvation. Their blood is upon your heads. By inventing, or countenancing, or retailing lies, some refined, some gross and palpable, you hindered others from profiting by what they did hear. You are answerable to God for these souls also. Many who began to taste the good word, and run the way of God's commandments, you, by various methods, prevailed on to hear it no more: So they soon drew back to perdition. But know, that, for every one of these also, God will require an account of you in the day of judgment.

34. And yet, in spite of all the malice, and wisdom, and strength, not only of men, but of "principalities and powers," of the "rulers of the darkness of this world," of the "wicked spirits in high places," there are thousands found who are turned from "dumb idols to serve the living and true God." What a harvest then might we have seen before now, if all who say they are "on the Lord's side," had come, as in all reason they ought, "to the help of the Lord against the mighty!" Yea, had they only not opposed the work of God, had they only refrained from his messengers, might not the trumpet of God have been heard long since in every corner of our land; and thousands of sinners in every county been brought to "fear God and honour the King?"

Judge of what immense service we might have been, even in this single point, both to our King and country. All who hear and regard the word we preach, "honour the King" for God's sake. They "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," as well as "unto God the things that are God's." They have no conception of piety without loyalty; knowing "the powers that

be are ordained of God." I pray God to strengthen all that are of this mind, how many soever they be! But might there not have been at this day a hundred thousand in England, thus minded, more than are now? Yea verily, even by our ministry, had not they who should have strengthened us, weakened our hands.

35. Surely you are not wise! What advantages do you throw away! What opportunities do you lose! Such as, another day, you may earnestly seek, and, nevertheless, may not find them. For if it please God to remove us, whom will you find to supply our place? We are in all things "your servants for Jesus's sake;" though the more we love you, the less we are loved. Let us be employed, not in the highest, but in the meanest, and not in the easiest, but the hottest, service. Ease and plenty we leave to those that want them. Let us go on in toil, in weariness, in painfulness, in cold or hunger, so we may but testify the gospel of the grace of God. The rich, the honourable, the great, we are thoroughly willing (if it be the will of our Lord) to leave to you. Only let us alone with the poor, the vulgar, the base, the outcasts of men. Take also to yourselves the saints of the world: But suffer us "to call sinners to repentance;" even the most vile, the most ignorant, the most abandoned, the most fierce and savage of whom we can hear. To these we will go forth in the name of our Lord, desiring nothing, receiving nothing of any man, (save the bread we eat, while we are under his roof,) and let it be seen whether God hath sent us. Only let not your hands, who fear the Lord, be upon us. Why should we be stricken of you any more?

IV. 1. Surely ye are without excuse, all who do not yet know the day of your visitation! the day wherein the great God, who hath been forgotten among us days without number, is arising at once to be avenged of his adversaries, and to visit and redeem his people. Are not his judgments and mercies both abroad? and still will ye not learn righteousness? Is not the Lord passing by? Doth not a great and strong wind already begin "to rend the mountains and to break in pieces the rocks before the Lord?" Is not the earthquake also felt already? and a fire hath begun to burn in his anger. Who knoweth what will be the end thereof? But at the same time, he is speaking to many in "a still, small voice." He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, lest he be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy!

2. What excuse can possibly be made for those who are regardless of such a season as this? who are, at such a crisis, stupid, senseless, unapprehensive? caring for none of these things; who do not give themselves the pains to think about them, but are still easy and unconcerned? What! can there ever be a point on which it more behoves you to think; and that with the coolest and deepest attention? As long as the heaven and the earth remain, can there be anything of so vast importance, as God's last call to a guilty land, just perishing in its iniquity?

You, with those round about you, deserved long ago to have "drank the dregs of the cup of trembling;" yea, to have been "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." But he hath not dealt with you according to your sins, neither rewarded you after your iniquities. And once more he is mixing mercy with judgment. Once more he is crying aloud, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" And will you not deign to give him the hearing? If you are not careful to answer him in this matter, do not still shut your eyes, and stop your ears, and harden your stubborn heart. O beware, lest God laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh!

3. Will you plead that you have other concerns to mind; that other business engages your thoughts? It does so indeed? But this is your foolishness; this is the very thing that leaves you without excuse. For what business can be of equal moment: The mariner may have many concerns to mind, and many businesses to engage his thoughts; but not when the ship is sinking. In such a circumstance (it is your own) you have but one thing to think of,—save the ship and your own life together! And the higher post you are in, the more deeply intent should you be on this one point. Is this a time for diversions; for eating and drinking, and rising up to play? Keep the ship above water. Let all else go, and mind this one thing!

4. Perhaps you will say, "So I do: I do mind this one thing, —how to save the sinking nation. And therefore now I must think of arms and provisions. I have no time now to think of religion." This is exactly as if the mariner should say, "Now I must think of my guns and stores. I have no time now to think of the hold." Why, man, you must think of this, or perish.



It is there the leak is sprung. Stop that, or you and all your stores will go together to the bottom of the sea.

Is not this your very case? Then, whatever you do, stop the leak; else you go to the bottom! I do not speak against your stores: They are good in their kind; and it may be well they are laid in. But all your stores will not save the sinking ship, unless you can stop the leak. Unless you can some way keep out these floods of ungodliness, that are still continually pouring in, you must soon be swallowed up in the great deep, in the abyss of God's judgments. This, this is the destruction of the English nation. It is vice, bursting in on every side, that is just ready to sink us into slavery first, and then into the nethermost hell. "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you?" Let him think of this. Think of this, all that love your country, or that care for your own souls. If now especially you do not think of this one thing, you have no excuse before God or man.

5. Little more excuse have you who are still in doubt concerning this day of your visitation. For you have all the proof that you can reasonably expect or desire, all that the nature of the thing requires. That in many places, abundance of notorious sinners are totally reformed, is declared by a thousand eye and ear witnesses both of their present and past behaviour. And you are sensible, the proof of such a point as this must, in the nature of things, rest upon testimony. And that God alone is able to work such a reformation, you know all the Scriptures testify. What would you have more? What pretence can you have for doubting any longer? You have not the least room to expect or desire any other or any stronger evidence.

I trust you are not of those who fortify themselves against conviction; who are resolved they will never believe this. They ask, "Who are these men?" We tell them plainly; but they credit us not. Another and another of their own friends is convinced, and tells them the same thing. But their answer is ready, "Are you turned Methodist too?" So their testimony likewise goes for nothing. Now, how is it possible these should ever be convinced? for they will believe none but those who speak on one side.

6. Do you delay fixing your judgment till you see a work of God, without any stumbling-block attending it? That never was yet, nor ever will. "It must needs be that

offences will come." And scarce ever was there such a work of God before, with so few as have attended this.

When the Reformation began, what mountainous offences lay in the way of even the sincere members of the Church of Rome! They saw such failings in those great men, Luther and Calvin! Their vehement tenaciousness of their own opinions; their bitterness toward all who differed from them; their impatience of contradiction, and utter want of forbearance, even with their own brethren.

But the grand stumbling-block of all was their open, avowed separation from the Church; their rejecting so many of the doctrines and practices, which the others accounted the most sacred; and their continual invectives against the Church they separated from, so much sharper than Michael's reproof of Satan.

Were there fewer stumbling-blocks attending the Reformation in England? Surely no: For what was Henry the Eighth? Consider either his character, his motives to the work, or his manner of pursuing it! And even King Edward's ministry we cannot clear of persecuting in their turns, yea, and burning heretics. The main stumbling-block also still remained, viz., open separation from the Church.

7. Full as many were the offences that lay in the way of even the sincere members of the Church of England, when the people called Quakers first professed that they were sent of God to reform the land. Whether they were or no is beside our question; it suffices for the present purpose to observe, that over and above their open, avowed, total separation from the Church, and their vehement invectives against many of her doctrines, and the whole frame of her discipline, they spent their main strength in disputing about opinions and externals, rather than in preaching faith, mercy, and the love of God.

In these respects the case was nearly the same when the Baptists first appeared in England. They immediately commenced a warm dispute, not concerning the vitals of Christianity, but concerning the manner and time of administering one of the external ordinances of it. And as their opinion hereof totally differed from that of all the other members of the Church of England, so they soon openly declared their separation from it, not without sharp censures of those that continued therein.

8. The same occasion of offence was, in a smaller degree, given by the Presbyterians and Independents; for they also

spent great part of their time and strength in opposing the commonly-received opinions concerning some of the circumstantial of religion ; and, for the sake of these, separated from the Church.

But I do not include that venerable man, Mr. Philip Henry, nor any that were of his spirit, in this number. I know they abhorred contending about externals. Neither did they separate themselves from the Church. They continued therein till they were driven out, whether they would or no. I cannot but tenderly sympathize with these ; and the more, because this is in part our own case. Warm men spare no pains, at this very day, to drive us out of the Church. They cry out to the people, wherever one of us comes, "A mad dog, a mad dog !" if haply we might fly for our lives, as many have done before us. And sure it is, we should have complied with their desire, we should merely for peace and quietness have left the Church long before now, but that we could not in conscience do it. And it is on this single motive, it is for conscience' sake, that we still continue therein ; and shall continue, (God being our helper,) unless they by violence thrust us out.

9. But to return : What are the stumbling-blocks in the present case, compared to those in any of the preceding ?

We do not dispute concerning any of the externals or circumstantial of religion. There is no room ; for we agree with you therein. We approve of, and adhere to, them all ; all that we learned together when we were children, in our Catechism and Common-Prayer Book. We were born and bred up in your own Church, and desire to die therein. We always were, and are now, zealous for the Church ; only not with a blind, angry zeal. We hold, and ever have done, the same opinions which you and we received from our forefathers. But we do not lay the main stress of our religion on any opinions, right or wrong ; neither do we ever begin, or willingly join in, any dispute concerning them. The weight of all religion, we apprehend, rests on holiness of heart and life. And consequently, wherever we come, we press this with all our might. How wide then is the difference between our case and the case of any of those that are above mentioned ! They avowedly separated from the Church : We utterly disavow any such design. They severely, and almost continually, inveighed against the doctrines and discipline of the Church they left : We approve both the doctrines

and discipline of our Church, and inveigh only against ungodliness and unrighteousness. They spent great part of their time and strength in contending about externals and circumstances: We agree with you in both; so that having no room to spend any time in such vain contention, we have our desire of spending and being spent, in promoting plain, practical religion. How many stumbling-blocks are removed out of your way! Why do not you acknowledge the work of God?

10. If you say, "Because you hold opinions which I cannot believe are true:" I answer, Believe them true or false; I will not quarrel with you about any opinion. Only see that your heart be right toward God, that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbour, and walk as your Master walked; and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions: I am weary to hear them. My soul loathes this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion; give me an humble, gentle lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love. Let my soul be with these Christians, wheresoever they are, and whatsoever opinion they are of. "Whosoever" thus "doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

11. Inexcusably infatuated must you be, if you can even doubt whether the propagation of this religion be of God! Only more inexcusable are those unhappy men who oppose, contradict, and blaspheme it.

How long will you stop your ears against Him that still crieth, "Why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;" for a man to "contend with his Maker." How long will you despise the well-known advice of a great and learned man?—"Refrain from these men, and let them alone. If this work be of man, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." And why should you "be found even to fight against God?" If a man fight with God, shall he prevail? "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" Make haste! Fall down! Humble thyself before him, lest he put forth his hand, and thou perish!

12. How long will you fight under the banner of the great enemy of God and man? You are now in his service; you are "taking part with the devil" against God. Even supposing

there were no other proof, this would undeniably appear from the goodly company among whom you are enlisted, and who war one and the same warfare. I have heard some affirm, that the most bitter enemies to the present work of God were Pharisees. They meant, men who had the form of godliness, but denied the power of it. But I cannot say so. The sharpest adversaries thereof whom I have hitherto known (unless one might except a few honourable men whom I may be excused from naming) were the scum of Cornwall, the rabble of Bilston and Darlaston, the wild beasts of Walsal, and the turnkeys of Newgate.

13. Might not the sight of these troops show any reasonable man to what General they belonged ; as well as the weapons they never fail to use?—the most horrid oaths and execrations, and lawless violence, carrying away as a flood whatsoever it is which stands before it ; having no eyes, nor ears, no regard to the loudest cries of reason, justice, or humanity. Can you join heart or hands with these any longer ? with such an infamous, scandalous rabble-rout, roaring and raging as if they were just broke loose, with their captain Apollyon, from the bottomless pit ? Does it not rather concern you, and that in the highest degree, as well as every friend to his King and country, every lover of peace, justice, and mercy, immediately to join and stop any such godless crew, as they would join to stop a fire just beginning to spread, or an inundation of the sea ?

14. If, on the contrary, you join with that godless crew, and strengthen their hands in their wickedness, must not you, in all reason, be accounted (like them) a public enemy of mankind ? And indeed such must every one appear, in the eye of unprejudiced reason, who opposes, directly or indirectly, the reformation of mankind. By reformation, I mean the bringing them back (not to this or that system of opinions, or this or that set of rites and ceremonies, how decent and significant soever ; but) to the calm love of God and one another, to an uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. With what colour can you lay any claim to humanity, to benevolence, to public spirit, if you can once open your mouth, or stir one finger, against such a reformation as this ?

It is a poor excuse to say, “O, but the people are brought into several erroneous opinions !” It matters not a straw, whether they are or no ; (I speak of such opinions as do not touch the foundation ;) it is scarce worth while to spend ten words about

it. Whether they embrace this religious opinion or that, is no more concern to me, than whether they embrace this or that system of astronomy. Are they brought to holy tempers and holy lives? This is mine, and should be your, inquiry; since on this, both social and personal happiness depend, happiness temporal and eternal. Are they brought to the love of God and the love of their neighbour? Pure religion and undefiled is this. How long then will you "darken counsel by words without knowledge?" The plain religion now propagated is *Love*. And can you oppose this without being an enemy to mankind?

15. No, nor without being an enemy to your King and country; especially at such a time as this. For, however men of no thought may not see or regard it, or hectoring cowards may brave it out, it is evident to every man of calm reflection, that our nation stands on the very brink of destruction. And why are we thus, but because "the cry of our wickedness is gone up to heaven?" because we have so exceedingly, abundantly, beyond measure, "corrupted our ways before the Lord?" and because to all our other abominations we have added the open fighting against God; the not only rejecting, but even denying, yea, blaspheming his last offers of mercy; the hindering others who were desirous to close therewith; the despitefully using his messengers, and the variously troubling and oppressing those who did accept of his grace, break off their sins, and turn to him with their whole heart.

16. I cannot but believe, it is chiefly on this account that God hath now "a controversy with our land." And must not any considerate man be inclined to form the same judgment, if he reviews the state of public affairs for only a few years last past? I will not enter into particulars; but, in general, can you possibly help observing, that, whenever there has been any thing like a public attempt to suppress this new sect, (for so it was artfully represented,) another and another public trouble arose? This has been repeated so often, that it is surprising any man of sense can avoid taking notice of it. May we "turn" at length "to Him that smiteth us, hearing the rod and Him that appointeth it!" May we "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God," before the great deep swallow us up!

17. Just now, viz., on the 4th of this instant December, the Reverend Mr. Henry Wickham, one of His Majesty's Justices of Peace for the West-riding of Yorkshire, writes an order—

*To the Constable of Keighley*, commanding him, “to convey the body of Jonathan Reeves” (whose real crime is, the calling sinners to repentance) “to His Majesty’s gaol and castle of York; suspected,” said the precept, “of being a spy among us, and a dangerous man to the person and government of His Majesty King George.”

God avert the omen! I fear this is no presage either of the repentance or deliverance of our poor nation!

18. If we will not turn and repent, if we will harden our hearts, and acknowledge neither his judgments nor mercies; what remains, but the fulfilling of that dreadful word, which God spake by the Prophet Ezekiel: “Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch forth my hand upon it, and break the staff of the bread thereof.—Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land:—Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood:—Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” (xiv. 13, 14, 17, 19, 20.)

“Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant, that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters.—And ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem.—And ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.” (Verses 22, 23.)

LONDON, December 18, 1745.