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17
R E M A R K S

On a B O O K, intitl'd,

A N

E A R N E S T A P P E A L

T O

M e n o f R E A S O N a n d R E L I G I O N.

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L E T T E R

T O T H E

R e v. M r J O H N W E S L E Y.



N E W C A S T L E :

Printed in the Year M D C C X L I I I .



*James Hustler of Acklam in
Cleveland in the North Riding of
the County of Yorke Esq.^r 1780*



R E M A R K S

On a BOOK, intitl'd, An

EARNEST APPEAL

T O

Men of Reason and Religion.

In a LETTER to the

Reverend Mr JOHN WESLEY.

Reverend Sir,

I Have read a Book, intitl'd, *An Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, and am sorry to say I received not the Satisfaction I promis'd myself in seeing the Name of *John Wesley* prefix'd to it. I expected, from the Character you bear in the World, a more able Performance; and in this I have undertaken to shew you the Weakness or Invalidity of it. I shall treat you with all Decency and Regard, but yet you must give me leave to tell you my Thoughts freely and plainly.

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I confess I had conceiv'd a very good Opinion of you, and believ'd your Labours were directed to the Good of Mankind. I still think you an honest and well-meaning Man, but wistful as one unhappily fallen into Error, or carried away with a warm Spirit of Enthusiasm. You will tell me, I know, that you have the comfortable Feeling of the Spirit which informs you that you are in the right and no Enthusiast. I would gladly know of you, how you judge of this Spirit. Is it enough to say you feel it? May not I, or any one else, desire to know some Signs by which we may discover it? I speak not here of the ordinary Influences of the Spirit: I speak now of an extraordinary Share of it conferr'd by God upon Creatures set apart in a more particular Manner, for the promoting his Glory, or for the Propagation of his Religion. You may now apply it to yourself; I leave it with you to draw the Consequence.

Be so ingenuous as to tell us, whether you pretend to an higher Commission than others to preach the Gospel. If you answer in the Negative, then are you guilty of Disobedience towards your Superiors, and the Governors of the Church, despising Order and Decency, and acting in Opposition to those Rules or Canons you took upon you to observe and maintain at your Ordination.

Yo

You see it will at last return upon you, notwithstanding your Caution against it.

You say, you are willing to pay Obedience to them in Things of an indifferent Nature. But then are not your selves to be Judges? But you do not obey them. And why? Because, if you will be consistent with your selves, you must insist upon a Right to supercede the Authority and Commission you received from them.

I always thought Governors had a Right to Obedience in Things for the good Order and Discipline of the Church: And it seems a Matter of some Nicety with me how far a Man may contradict these Orders, or be free from an Engagement he has solemnly resolved to perform. Be not rash in your Determination. If Men may be thus at Liberty, and have this dispensing Power within themselves, farewell all Order, Discipline, and Government.

There is a Sect in the World, which disclaims all Submission to Bishops and Ecclesiastical Persons, upon a Pretence of Conscience. You are not, I hope, one of them. You will not, I know, allow it. Remove then all Suspicion of your acting in concert with them.

I see we must often have Recourse to the Principle of the Spirit to make you consistent in your Doctrines; and I think I have

authority from Scripture to enquire of you how we may distinguish this Spirit in you *Beloved*, (says St *John*) *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God, for many false Prophets are gone out into the World.* 1 *John* iv. 1. To you then I appeal for Satisfaction in particular.

There is another Thing I cannot but take Notice of; I cannot but observe how you pervert the Sense and Meaning of the Scriptures, measuring the Scriptures by your Principles, and not your Principles by the Scriptures. Of which I shall have Occasion to remark hereafter.

It methinks your Application of the Scriptures is somewhat of an extraordinary Nature, and ill becoming that Humility and Lowliness of Mind, which is one distinguishing Mark of the Christian Profession.

For an Instance of this, let any one read your Journals and your other Writings, and he will be often at a Loss to know whether it is St *Paul*, or *John Wesley*, that is speaking to him. I will not call this by any harsh Name; I choose rather to impute it to an intemperate Degree of Zeal and Transport.

One wou'd expect you would clear yourself of this Charge, by appealing to the Reason of Mankind. Reason, did I say? You wont allow Reason to be any Judge of Divine Truths: It may serve us in transacting
the

the Affairs of this Life, but for another it is vain to expect Reason shou'd help us in our Researches after it, without pre-supposing God has implanted in us some internal Senses.

“ Here, you say, Reason has no ground to stand, no Materials to work upon.”

Here let me ask you, in the Name of Reason, (if you will allow me any Share of it) how came you by the Notion of God, one supreme, self-existent Being, the Creator and Preserver of all Things, and upon whose Being depends Religion itself? Received you, I say, this by the Deductions of Reason, or by any internal Sense?

To set up Instincts, or any internal Sense, for the Foundation of Religion, is making it too precarious: And might not a Speculative Atheist, if such an one there be, have some Plea for his monstrous Ingratitude, if he shou'd be told that the Proof of the first Cause depended upon Senses, which of themselves are so uncertain and liable to Change, and which he can neither discover in himself, nor have any Notion about them.

You have stumbled, I am afraid, upon a Thing, which will be but little to your Advantage, “ Before it is possible, (*you say*), to form a true Judgment of them, it is absolutely Necessary to have a clear Apprehension of the Things of God, and that our Ideas thereof be all fix'd, distinct and

“ determinate. And seeing our Ideas are not
 “ innate, but must originally come from the
 “ Senses; therefore 'tis certainly necessary
 “ that we have Senses of discerning Objects
 “ of this Kind.”

Now because we receive our Ideas originally from Sensation, and because the Ideas of Body are different from the Ideas of Spirit; therefore it is necessary we shou'd have a new Class of Senses to discern what belongs to a Spirit.

Very fine Reasoning! But how will this mend the Matter? Refine your Senses as much as you please, the same Difficulty will yet remain; and therefore, I conclude, those Senses you talk of, are unnecessary and superfluous.

This then is a Specimen of the Philosopher, I shall now consider you as a Divine. And here I wish your Notions of Religion were more clear, and that your Ideas were more distinct and determinate.

It is here I see will be the Labour to trace you thro' all your difficult and perplexing Mazes, to unravel all your dark and intricate Expressions, and to bring Words back to their original Standard. I shall yet be so kind to you as always to take your Words in the best meaning, and if by doing this I still remain unsatisfied with your Doctrine, you will, I hope, explain your self further upon

upon these Particulars, and condescend to think and talk like other Men. This will advance your Cause, if it be good; if not, you must expect to be confuted.

For my Part, I think the Cause of Christianity so good, that there is no Occasion to puzzle it with dark Words, or darker Interpretations. The Language of the Apostle is, *Be ready to give to every Man that asketh you, a Reason of the Hope that is in you:* And, I think, the Arguments which prove the Christian Religion of Divine Authority, will at the same time be the best Foundation for the Practice of a Christian.

But to return to your Book, in which you give us this Definition of Faith. " Faith, you say, (supposing the Scripture to be of God) is the demonstrative Evidence of Things unseen, the supernatural Evidence of Things invisible, not perceivable by the Eyes of Flesh, or by any of our natural Senses and Faculties. Faith is that divine Evidence, whereby the spiritual Man discerneth God, and the Things of God: It is the spiritual Sensation of every Soul, that is born of God."

Now Sir, if you wou'd consider with yourself, you must allow this Account of Faith to be too lax and indeterminate.

Pray Sir, recall your Ideas; What do you mean by saying that Faith is the demonstrative

tive Evidence, and a supernatural Evidence? How do you think it wou'd appear, if one shou'd say, that by Faith we demonstrate Things above our Comprehension.

But perhaps I go too far, and by supernatural you wou'd only express something which we do not originally receive from our natural Senses and Faculties. If then the Ideas of Sensation are not the Objects of Faith, how comes it then that Faith is the spiritual Sensation of every Soul, that is born of God?

You are afterwards so obliging as to say, that perhaps Men have not consider'd it in this View. I believe you are in the Right, and as far as my little Reading and Observation has carried me, I don't know any one that will rob you of the Glory and Reputation of this new Exposition; which afterwards, for the Sake of a poor, dark, and ignorant World, you say, you will venture to explain a little further.

Here you entertain and amuse us with running over Four of the Senses. *Faith is the Eye of the new-born Soul. — It is the Ear of the Soul. — It is the Palate of the Soul. — It is the Feeling of the Soul.* It is a great Pity but that you could have added to these the other Sense, and then your Hypothesis wou'd have been complete.

It is surprizing to me, that a Man of your Sense shou'd lay so much stress upon Words, which

which are accommodated to the common Forms of Speech, and are not to be taken in the Literal Meaning. People might as well fancy, because God is sometimes in Scripture represented as having Hands, Feet, &c. or exercising the Passions of Humanity, that these therefore are inherent in the Godhead: A Notion as unphilosophical, as contrary to Religion.

I don't know but it may be owing to your using Words without a Meaning, or without any fixt Meaning, that you make such Impressions upon weak Brethren: I am persuaded your Preaching upon such Topicks can tend little to Edification. It may serve to make People stare and wonder, and those poor deluded Creatures, who, we know, are govern'd more by Sense than Reason, may be too apt to imagine they see, hear, and feel God within themselves, by the Force of one, who has the Art and Management to move the Passions.

I am at a Loss to know what you mean by the next Paragraph. "If you ask (*these are your Words*) why then have not all Men this Faith? All at least that conceive it to be so happy a Thing? Why do they not believe immediately? We answer (in the Scripture Hypothesis) it is the Gift of God, no Man is able to work it in himself."

I know

I know very well that every thing I enjoy is the Gift of God, that from him I derive my Reason and every Faculty of my Soul. This likewise I know, that being endued with Intelligence and Freedom of Will I am bound to enquire what is the Will of God, and to pay him the grateful Return of a reasonable Creature.

Now if any Man shou'd ask me, why Men have not Faith, *i. e.* a Faith to be saved I wou'd answer, it is owing to themselves they are still in love with their Vices, and by persisting in their sinful Course of Living they frustrate the gracious Promises of God in the Gospel, deprive themselves of the Merits of their Saviour, and by acting so unreasonable a Part become proper Subjects of all that Pain and Misery denounc'd against Sinners in another Life.

But if I take you right, by Faith you mean some instantaneous Influx of the Spirit that notwithstanding what is promised and declared in the Gospel, and if a Man shou'd even live up to the Precepts of it, yet till he has received Faith in the Manner and Operation you describe, he is still dead in Trespases and Sins.

I don't know from what Parts of Scripture you collect your Hypothesis. The Scriptures, as I understand them, propose eternal Life as the Gift and free Gift of God, assured

assured to us upon the Sufferings and Satisfaction of Christ; but yet require Faith and Repentance from Christians.

Now these would be quite unnecessary if they were out of our Power; and to what Purpose would be that Exhortation to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling. But this I see is your favourite Doctrine.

“ Can you give yourself this Faith (*you say*) Is it now in your Power to see, or hear, or taste, and feel God? Have you already any Perception of God, or of an invisible World.”

I confess this is very extraordinary. Cannot you suppose a Man may believe in a God that made him from the very light of Reason; and may not such a one, from considering the present State of Things, and the unequal Portion of Happiness and Misery to the Merits and Demerits of Mankind, be further inclin'd to believe that God has reserved another State for the more exact Distribution of his Favours, in which he will reward the Virtuous, and punish the Wicked.

Your own Reading must have furnished you with many Examples of wise Heathens who reason'd with great Judgment concerning God and his Attributes, concerning the moral Differences of things, the Immateriality and natural Immortality of the Soul. Now these were Men that were never acquainted

quainted with the glorious Dispensation of the Gospel, would you have us, after all this, to think we can have no Notion of God! What a World must you suppose us to live in? And what a stupid Race of Mortals must you suppose us to be, as not to be able to discover a God in all his Works, when even the Creation affords such a Variety of Arguments to prove a first Cause. Even that poor Wretch you introduce in your Book, could tell you, that he knew there was a God, who was all in all, the *Anima Mundi*,

— *Vastam*

Mens agitant molem & magno se corpore miscens.

You may now allow that Men may have a Notion of God, contrary to your Supposition; and it may as easily be shewn, that Men may have a Faith in Christ, and in the Promises of God, the very reverse of your Assertion. As for your Tasting, Feeling, &c. I have already given you my Sentiments of them.

Your next Proposition is founded on the Validity of the former; for if it is not possible for us to have Faith in ourselves, then where it is found, it must be the Gift and free Gift of God.

“ This Gift God bestows not on those
 “ who are worthy of his Favour, nor on
 “ such

“such who are previously holy, and so fit
 “to be crown’d with all the Blessings of
 “his Goodness; but on the Ungodly and
 “the Unholy, on those who till that Hour
 “were fit only for everlasting Destruction,
 “those in whom was no good Thing, and
 “whose only Plea was, *God be merciful to me*
 “*a Sinner.*”

If you had said, that God was not wanting to give Faith to all Mankind, I could have had some tolerable Notion of it, because all Men are Sinners. But to limit, as you do, the Mercies of God in the Redemption of Mankind, what is this but to contract the Scheme of Providence, and to make that, which was to be of general Use, become only a private and particular Good?

This is what you go upon, and, I dare say, without Foundation from Scripture; for the Scripture encourages all to expect Remission of Sins who repent and believe.

I may now retort an Argument which you seem to be very fond of. Do you deny that the Scriptures make use of these Terms? Dare you with any Face disprove them?—Consider, Sir, again and again the Nature of our Redemption, as deliver’d to us in the Scriptures, and then tell me whether you or I advance a Doctrine most worthy of God. I will be determin’d in the Matter by what you say yourself.

“ You

“ You bring in a Person objecting, that
 “ those who profess this Faith are the most
 “ unreasonable of all Men. You ask, Who
 “ are those that profess this Faith? Perhaps
 “ you do not know personally such a Man
 “ in the World. Who are they that so
 “ much as profess to have this Evidence of
 “ Things not seen? That profess to see him
 “ that is invisible? To hear the Voice of
 “ God, and to have his Spirit witnessing
 “ with their Spirits, that they are the Sons
 “ of God? I fear you will find few who pro-
 “ fess this Faith among the large Numbers
 “ of those who are call'd Believers.”

How do you think it would appear, if it
 had been said, that God had offer'd Redemp-
 tion and Salvation to all Mankind, and yet
 he had not vouchsafed the Means necessary
 thereto? You give us, indeed, a most me-
 lancholy Picture of human Nature; and, I
 would hope, represent Mankind more vicious
 than they really are, when you tell us, that
 we perhaps don't know personally one Man
 that has this Faith, *i. e.* a Faith to be sav'd.

I must own to you, I don't know one
 who professes to believe with Mr *Wesley* ;
 and yet I trust I know a great many person-
 nally, who entertain reasonable Hopes of
 Salvation, notwithstanding they pretend not
 to believe in those sudden Impulses, and in-
 stantaneous Motions, in which you think
 Re-

Religion to consist. I cannot therefore but look upon your first Principle to be false, and dishonourable to God: And in this I submit to the Judgment of all reasonable and religious Men.

I must tell you once and again, that the Foundation of your Doctrine is too precarious. I can neither think it consistent with the Doctrine of *St Paul*, nor that of *St James*, nor agreeable to the Practice of the Primitive Church. Read and compare your Notions with their Writings, for you must not imagine that the reasonable Part of the World will receive your Doctrine upon that trite Maxim of an *ipse dixit*.

Be likewise so consistent with yourself, as not to explain one Thing by another, confounding the very Use and Signification of Words: As which you say, *We are saved by Love, we are saved by Faith*, I can very easily conceive one as the Effect of the other, and have a just Notion of a Faith which worketh by Love, Love to God, and Love to Mankind; but yet I can by no means allow them one and the same Thing.

The next Doctrine you advance will not require much Notice to be taken of it, because you don't clearly give us your Opinion concerning it. " You have heard, perhaps " we say, (*these are your Words*) Men may " live without Sin. And have you not heard

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" that

“ that the Scripture says the same? ” (we mean without committing Sin).”

Here I can't but say you give a notable Instance of concealing your Sentiments.—

Men may live without Sin, i. e. without committing Sin.—From a Possibility do you infer a Probability? I am apt to believe you do, and am confirm'd in it from your Observation on *St Paul*. “ Does not *St Paul* say plainly, that those who believe, do not continue in Sin? That they cannot live any longer therein? *Rom. vi. 1, 2.*”

You certainly have not read *St Paul*, or consider'd him lately, and therefore you have made this egregious Blunder.—*St Paul's* Words are these: *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, who are dead unto Sin, live any longer therein.*

You see then it is an Objection rais'd by *St Paul* to shew the Necessity of practising an Evangelical Righteousness, and is an Exhortation to all Virtue and Holiness of Life. It is as if he had said, *Shall we, because we are justified freely by Grace, through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, continue in Sin that Grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to Sin by Baptism, or our Entrance into the Christian Covenant, live any longer therein.*

From whence I conclude, that Faith, to
which

which *St Paul* doth ascribe Justification in this Chapter, requires the Practice of all Moral and Evangelical Virtues. And hence appears a most perfect Consistency between *St Paul* and *St James*, concerning their Notions of Faith.

This Reflection will not be much for your Purpose, but yet it will not be without its Use, because it will let the World know how ingeniously you can apply Scripture to serve your own Ends.

I don't believe what you say next will make much more for you. They are the Words of *St Peter*. "He that hath suffer'd in the Flesh, hath ceased from Sin; that he no longer should live to the Desires of Men, but to the Will of God, 1 *Peter* iv. 12." The whole runs thus, *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffer'd for us in the Flesh, arm your selves likewise with the same Mind, for he that hath suffer'd in the Flesh, hath ceased from Sin.*

"And what doth *St John* say, he that committeth Sin is of the Devil, for this Purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the Works of the Devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit Sin: For his Seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God, 1 *John* iii. 8, &c."

Allowing then that he that committeth

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Sin

Sin, is of the Devil, *i. e.* he that liveth in a sinful Course, is Servant to the Devil, inasmuch as to whom ye yield yourselves Servants to obey, his Servants you are to whom ye obey. But then it is not one Act of Wickedness that renders a Man a wicked Person.

Instances we have both in the Old and New Testament of Men falling into grosser Crimes, and afterwards repenting and returning to Obedience: Of whom it could not be said that they were Children of the Devil.

I likewise believe that the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the Works of the Devil, and my Inference should be this, that we ought to be diligent to subdue our disorderly Passions and Affections, and to abstain, as far as our Strength and Ability will permit us, not only from the actual Commission, but from all Appearance of Evil.

You go on, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit Sin, for his Seed remaineth in him, and he cannot Sin, because he is born of God." The Difficulty lies in these Words, *He cannot Sin.* But St James cou'd never mean that a good Man had not a possibility of Sinning; for morally speaking, all Men are liable to Sin from the very Condition of their Nature.

In the next Place, if we compare one part of his Works with another, we may see clearly

clearly it is his Opinion, that good Men may actually committ Sin. Read Chap. ii. § 1, 2. *My little Children, these Things I write unto you, that ye Sin not. And if any Man Sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.* And yet he tells us in the 16th Verse, that their Sins are forgiven for his Name's Sake.

It would be needless to proceed any further, seeing your own Arguments do not seem sufficient to prove your Point. I hasten to consider your next Proposition, which is your Doctrine of Perfection. "But what Perfection say you? The Term you cannot object to, because it is Scriptural. The Difficulty is in fixing the Meaning of the Word." Where is the Difficulty? Perfection is either absolute or relative. Absolute Perfection is only to be found in God. Relative Perfection may be applied to Creatures, and implies Degrees of Holiness and Purity. If this be your Meaning, I have nothing to object to it.

I can likewise agree with you, that the higher Degree of Holiness a Man has attained to, the less he will be apt to be surpriz'd by the Weaknesses and Infirmities of his Nature, or overcome by the Violence of Temptations.

And yet I see very plain, that the State or
Con-

Condition of Life, in which we are here placed, is properly of a progressive Nature; we may still improve upon the best acquir'd Habits, and refine upon the best Dispositions.

And to this seems agreeable the Doctrine of St Paul, when he says, *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those Things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, I press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

It is in hopes of the same Promise, that Christians are diligent and active in their Duty, and for which they not only persevere, but are continually improving in Religion.

The Inference I wou'd make from hence, shall be only this, If there is no State so perfect, but leaves room for further Improvements, it shou'd teach us Modesty and Humility, and banish every Degree of spiritual Pride and Elation of Mind.

These are the Remarks which occur'd to me in reading your Book, nor wou'd Truth permit me (since I think Truth is contain'd in them) to let you pass upon the World for what you are not.

Imagine not I look upon you as a Cheat
and

and an Impostor; but imagine that I am confirm'd in the Opinion I declared before to have of you.

I make likewise this Difference betwixt you and an Impostor, that the latter I hold in Disdain, whereas I can lend you my Pity and Compassion.

To err is human, it is almost the Condition of Life, where we are surrounded with Frailties and Infirmities of Nature; and when even those very Passions, which taking Reason for their Guide are of singular Use and Advantage, by being directed to another Course, become the Occasion of the greatest Misfortunes in Life.

It is well known, that the Passions run high in every Fit of Enthusiasm, and Enthusiasm in Religion is of all others attended with the most dangerous Consequences; because here Men generally neglect their Reason, and suffer themselves to be govern'd by the Warmth of their Passions, which are called extatick Raptures, divine Inspiration, or the having frequent Conferences and Communication with the Supreme Being.

You glory that you make many Converts. Converts to what? to Enthusiasm. The Humour is catching, and we always see that the common People are taken with uncommon Gestures, and extraordinary Motions; and if these be expressed with any tollerable Degree
of

of Warmth, they fancy they all proceed from some over-ruling Genius or Spirit.

An uncommon Elevation of Voice sometimes have the same Effect, and this put me in Mind of *Virgil's Sibil*, where she is represented,

*Non mortale sonans afflata est Numine quando
Jam propiore Dei.*

I have one Quære yet remaining, which is whether you do more Harm than Good by Preaching. To you I know it must seem an impertinent Quære: But give me leave to explain my self. If the Passions should fall and subside, as I fancy they are not to be always kept up to the same Pitch, I wish many of your Followers may not be driven to Despair, and sink into that dismal State of Melancholy and Dejection of Mind.

I wish what I fear may not prove true. I wish likewise you wou'd make use of your Reason, to examine and review your Doctrines.

I am,

Your Very Humble Servant, &c.

