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METHODISM

EXAMINED and EXPOSED;

OR,

The CLERGY'S Duty of guarding
their Flocks against False Teachers.

A

DISCOURSE

Lately delivered in Four Parts.

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L O N D O N:

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METHODISM

EXAMINED and EXPOSED :

ACTS xx. 28, 29, 30.

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.

For I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous Wolves enter in among you, not sparing the Flock.

Also of your own selves shall Men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away Disciples after them.

ST Paul being now upon his Journey to Jerusalem, from whence he was apprehensive he should never return, and his Time not permitting him to call at Ephesus, appointed the Elders of that

Church to meet him at *Miletus* upon the Road, where, as he was about to transfer his sacred and important Trust to them, he left with them the Pastoral Charge of which the Text is a Part.

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

We at least, as many as have any Office or Administration in this of ours, as many more especially as are intrusted with the Cure of Souls, may fitly apply them to ourselves. — For, to speak with the Apostle in the Figure, long, very long, hath our Church been infested with those grievous Wolves he dreaded, which tho' no more than two, when they first entered in among us, (and they so young they might rather be called Wolfings) have yet been so prolific, as to spread their ravenous Kind through every Part of this Kingdom: where, what Havock they have made amongst our Sheep, how many they have torn, and how many scattered,

how many fleeced, and how many frightened, I need not say. None can be ignorant, that they have made very great Devastation, and are still prowling about our Folds, and watching every Opportunity, and employing every Artifice for surprizing and catching their Prey.—Or, to follow my Text in the plain and simple Letter of it, *Of our own selves have Men arose, speaking perverse things, to draw away Disciples after them.*

Applying therefore this Scripture to our national Church, I design

First, To give some Account of those grievous Wolves which have entered in among us, or false Teachers who have arose from us; who and what they are; when it was they made their first Appearance; and whence their Principles are derived.

Secondly, To shew that they make use of those Means of Seduction mentioned in the Text, *speaking perverse things, &c.*

Thirdly, I shall consider with what Force and Energy the Apostle's Caution to the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus*,

comes home to the Clergy of the Church of *England* ; *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the Flock, &c.*

First then, I am to give you some Account of those *grievous Wolves, which have entered in among us*, or false Teachers, who have arose from us ; who, and what they are ; when it was they made their first Appearance ; and whence their Principles are derived.

It is about twenty-five Years ago, that two bold, though beardless Divines, or (to speak in *St. Paul's* Language) *Novices in Divinity*, being lifted up with spiritual Pride, were presumptuous enough, in the very Noviciate of their Ministry, to become Founders of the Sect called *Methodists* ; new in *Name*, but in *Principles* as old as many which were of the Produce of the three first Centuries.

But now though I have dated its Origin only about twenty-five Years backwards, yet it is proper to observe, that as *those* Sects or Heresies with which the Church was anciently infested : when
 seeming

seeming extinct in one Form, from Time to Time revived in another, so hath it fared with *this*. And Methodistical Principles have, ever since the Reformation, been avowed and propagated, only under different Titles. Thus it was particularly *in* the last Century, as the late Bishop of London remarked in one of his *Pastoral Letters. In which, speaking of the Slanders thrown upon our Church and Clergy, by this very Sect, he says, ' It is now a
 ' hundred Years since the like Clamours
 ' were raised and spread throughout the
 ' Nation, against the established Clergy,
 ' as a Body lazy and inactive in the Work
 ' of Religion, and whose Defects in
 ' the Discharge of their Duty did great-
 ' ly need to be supplied by itinerant
 ' Preachers. And these Preachers, under
 ' the Notion of greater Zeal and Sanc-
 ' tity, and by Pretences to more than or-
 ' dinary Measures of the Spririt, drew af-
 ' ter them confused Multitudes of the
 ' lower Rank, and did all that was in
 ' their Power to lay waste the Bounds of

* Pastoral Charge, begun 1741, and finished 1742.

‘ Parochial Communion, and to bring
 ‘ the established Service into Disgrace.’
 These, doubtless, though not *nominally*,
 were *really* Methodists.

It is also necessary to be observed, that
 henceforth whenever I speak of *Methodists*,
 I mean not only the Persons who at first
 assumed, or went under that Denomina-
 tion, but also others, who, though per-
 haps not agreeing with them in all their
 Notions, (for such an Agreement doth not
 subsist even among themselves) yet accord
 with them so far as to have deservedly
 acquired their Name and Character; es-
 pecially the *Hutchinsonians*, who seem,
 both by their Preaching and Practices, to
 be incorporated with them; vending the
 same Sort of Wares in the *Church*, which
 the others do in the *Tabernacle*, and using
 the same Methods of subverting, if pos-
 sible, our ecclesiastical Establishment.

If the Methodists are considered in this
 Light, it may be said of them as it was of
 the first *Anabaptists*, who started up about
 two hundred and twenty-four Years ago,
 that

that all ancient Heresies have in a Manner centered in *them*; or at least that they have borrowed something from almost every one of them.

For the putting this Matter beyond all doubt, a Review of the Principles of a few of those early Heretics may be proper and necessary. In which passing over such of their foolish and impious Doctrines as concern not my present Purpose, I shall take notice of such only as bear some Similitude to those of the Methodists.

The *Simonians* (of whose diabolical Author we have an Account in the * *Acts* of the Apostles) were the first Sect that vexed and disturbed the Peace, and corrupted the Purity of the Christian Church. They taught their People, that to press the Necessity of good Works, was inconsistent with the *Gospel Liberty*, and that believing the *Sorcerer Simon*, and his wicked Associate *Helen*, they might be saved by *Grace alone*.—The *Methodists* teach *theirs*, that to insist upon the Necessity of good Works, is derogatory from
the

* *Acts* viii. 9.

the *Merits of Christ*; and that confiding in the Truth of their new Scheme of Divinity, they may be saved by *Faith alone*. Thus in the main there is a perfect Harmony betwixt them; they both alike deny the Necessity of *good Works*: in this only they differ; the one would not infringe on the *Gospel Liberty*; the other upon the *Merits of Christ*: the one would have their Followers saved by *Grace alone*; the other by *Faith alone*. These are trifling Differences. But there is one other very essential Point in which again they perfectly harmonize; and that is, a blind and implicit Trust in their Guides, is on both Sides required. For as the *Simonians* would not allow *them* to have *Grace* who could not swallow down all their absurd and monstrous Fables, upon the bare Authority of those who propagated them; so neither will the *Methodists* allow *them* to have *Faith*, who refuse to believe things equally ridiculous, upon the Strength and Credit of their Word and Assurance. And whether this is preaching up Faith in *Christ*, or in *themselves*, let any Man judge.

The *Gnostics* pretended, that they were the only Persons who were favoured with the true Knowledge of Christianity ; and that all other Christians were ignorant and barbarous ; explaining the sacred Writings in a too low, literal, and unedifying Sense.—The Name of *Gnostic* was not peculiar to *one*, but assigned to *various* Sects, who though (like our Methodists) not the same in all Points, yet agreed in some common Principles. Each had his particular System, but they were *all* no more than so many different Refinements upon *one*, which *they* derived from *Simon Magus*, and *he* from the *Pagan* Poets and Philosophers. To these, it is generally supposed, the Apostle alludes, where he reminds * *Timothy*, to charge some not to give heed to *Fables*, and *endless Genealogies*, which minister *Questions*, rather than *godly edifying*, which is in *Faith*. This however answers the Character of the *Gnostics* ; the principal Part of whose Religion consisted in composing *Combinations* and *Genealogies*

* 1 Tim. i. 4.

logies of *Æons*, or Attributes and Operations of the Deity : to which *Æons*, or to the Angels produced by them, they attributed the Creation and Government of the World, and not to the supreme *God*. They alledged, that although their Doctrines were not *expressly* contained in holy Writ, yet they were *implicitly* revealed by *Christ* in his Parables, to as many as were acquainted with the mystical Sense of them.

This extraordinary Light or Knowledge of the *Gnostics*, seems now to have been transferred to the *Methodists*; who make their boast, at least, that they now are the only Persons blessed with true Christian Science, or who *know the Truth, as it is in Christ Jesus* : and that all others are unenlightened, and uninformed, interpreting the Scriptures according to the *Letter which killeth*, but ignorant of the *Spirit which giveth Life*. They have not indeed, like the *Gnostics*, puzzled and perplexed their System with *endless Genealogies*; but they have darkened it
with

with many other Fancies equally ridiculous in themselves, and not less injurious to Christianity; tending no less to confound the Head, and to corrupt the Heart. They have not, like the others, built upon the Foundation of heathen Philosophers and Poets, for they abhor all *Philosophy and such vain Deceit*; but they have built upon a worse, their own vainer Imaginations, which have deceived them more grossly than all the Poets and Philosophers in the World could do. *They* endeavour to support *their* weak and wild Notions in the same Manner *the others* did *theirs*, that is, by the Abuse and Perversion of Scripture. And that their Fancy may have a freer Scope, and a larger Field to rove in, they suppose that every Scripture Word hath a *spiritual* as well as a *literal* Sense, and that every true Believer hath the infallible Interpretation of it in his own Breast. Building that whimsical Conceit upon those Words of our blessed Saviour, *It is written in the Prophets, they shall be all taught of God.* From which
single

single Instance it appears, what a wretched Use they make of his holy Word, notwithstanding their inward and infallible Interpreter.

The *Valentinians* (a particular Sect of the *Gnostic* Crew, as Dr. * *Cave* styles them,) arrogated to themselves the Title of *Spiritual Men*; insisting that they could not lose their Spirituality. They pretended that they were entitled, not by *Merit*, but by *Nature*, to eternal Life; and that whatever they did, they could not miss of it: that if good Works were necessary to Salvation, it was to *animal* Men only; that is, to all who were not of their Clan: and that, though Sin might *damn others*, yet it could not *hurt them*. In Consequence of which Principle (saith *Irenæus*, a Father of the second Century) they lived in all Lust and Impurity, and wallowed in the most horrible and unheard-of Bestialities.

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

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

they claim from *Grace*, what the *Valentini-
nians* claimed from *Nature*: and as *these*
maintained that it was impossible for *them*
to lose their *Spirituality*; so *those* with
equal Confidence assert, that it is impossible
for *them* to fall from *Grace*. Which is the
same thing as saying with the other, that
they are sure to be saved.

The *Donatists* boasted, that the *Catholic*
Church was no where to be found, but
in that little Corner of *Afric*, where they
lived: that in the true Church is no
Spot or Wrinkle; which was the Case of
theirs. Hence they considered them-
selves as the *Lord's* People, each of their
Members as a chosen Vessel, and the
happy Possessor of perfect Righteousness.

The *Methodists* talk as proudly of
their being the only true Preachers of the
Gospel; esteem themselves in Contradif-
tinction to others, as the regenerate, the
elect, the Children of *God*, and as having
arrived at sinless Perfection.

The *Predestinarians* held, that such as
were fore-appointed to Salvation, could
not

not be *damm'd*, however *vicious* their Behaviour: and that such as were fore-appointed to Damnation, could not be *saved*, however *virtuous* theirs. That is, ~~as~~ that from all Eternity every Man's Doom was irreversibly fixed by the Supreme Being, according to his absolute Power, and arbitrary Will and Pleasure.

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

The *Antinomians* must not be forgot. For though their Name cannot pretend to the same Antiquity with those of the Sects before-mentioned, being only of the same date with the *Anabaptists*, yet their Errors are coeval with those of the *Simonians* and *Valentinians*, and plainly discover their base Original. — They taught, that neither were *good Works* conducive, neither *evil Works* dangerous to Salvation: that **the** Regenerate were as pure as *Christ* himself; and therefore for them to pray for Pardon of Sin would be criminal: that *God* never punisheth his
 Children

Children for Sin :—that even the greater Crimes are no Crimes in the Saints :—that no Man's Conscience ought to trouble him, for the Commission of any Sin :—that no Christian believeth, or worketh any good, but *Christ* only believeth, and worketh :—that *God* doth not love Man for his Holiness ; and that *Sanctification* is no Evidence of a Man's *Justification*.

Which impious and blasphemous Notions are at this Day, to the great Disgrace of Christianity in general, and no less to the Reproach of our national Church in particular, publicly avowed and inculcated amongst us, by one Party of the People called Methodists.

I shall only mention one Sect more, and that is the *Montanists* : on which I shall dwell a little more particularly, because in this you may behold, as in a true Mirrour, the bold Lineaments and bloated Countenance of the Methodist. — *Montanus*, the Founder of that Sect, (as we learn from *Eusebius* and other early Ecclesiastical Historians) a little after he had

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embraced

embraced Christianity, which was towards the Close of the second Century, thirsting after Episcopal Dignities, thought the shortest Way of coming at his Point, was to pretend to immediate Inspiration, new Revelations, and the Gift of Prophecy. He began his Imposture in *Phrygia*, his native Country, at a little Town called *Pepuza*, which with another neighbouring Village called *Tymium*, he new-named *Jerusalem*, that he might the more plausibly invite simple and unwary *Proselytes* to flock thither. For their easier Deception he used to throw himself into enthusiastic Fits and ecstatic Raptures, during which, in a furious and frantic Manner, he uttered Abundance of strange unintelligible Jargon, which the ignorant and vulgar greedily swallowed down for Prophecy. Amongst the rest of his Disciples were two Women, more especially remarkable, *Prisca* and *Maximilla*; who filled with the same delusive Spirit, left their Husbands, joined themselves to *Montanus*, and set about prophesying: being
soon

soon followed by many others of both Sexes, who boasted the same supernatural Gifts and Vouchsafements. He instructed his People to reproach the whole Christian Church for refusing to acknowledge and Reverence his psuedo-prophetic Spirit: pronouncing those blessed who became his Converts, and swelling them with mighty Promises and ravishing Expectations. He laid his Scheme with all imaginable Subtilty; agreeing with the *Catholic* Church in most of her fundamental Principles; founding his wicked Pretensions upon Scripture; and suggesting the Necessity of his receiving the Gifts of the *Holy Ghost* especially conferred upon him. He made a singular Shew of some unusual Rigours and Severities in Religion, and put on a very grave and formal Appearance of Sanctity. Nevertheless he used every Art of extorting Money from his infatuated Votaries, especially under the Notion of Gifts and Offerings: appointing Collectors to receive the Oblations brought in; with which

he maintained Under Officers, and paid Salaries to such as propagated his Doctrines up and down the World.

In short, the Impostor had by his hypocritical Cunning wrought such strong Delusion in the Minds of his foolish Followers, that they believed him to be the very Comforter promised by our *Saviour*.

Now I will not say, that the two Founders of our new Sect had, like the other, their Eyes and their Hearts fixed upon Episcopal Dignities; but they have given us Reason enough to suspect, that they aspired after still higher Honours: that they were ambitious of being accounted Ministers of greater Eminence and Authority than either Bishops or Archbishops; Missionaries immediately delegated by Heaven to correct *their* Errors, and reform *their* Abuses; to instruct the Clergy, of whatever Denomination, in the true Nature of Christianity; and to caution the Laity not to venture their Souls in any such unhallowed Hands, as refused

fed to be initiated into all the Mysteries of Methodism. — Neither do I say, that, like *Montanus*, they pretended to the Gift of Prophecy. The ill Success *He* met with in that Part of his Project, notwithstanding the favourable Circumstance of the Time when he set up such Pretensions, (which was before that Gift was entirely withdrawn from the Church,) was sufficient to discourage them from the like Imposture ; but as to other extraordinary Gifts, Influences, and Operations of the *Holy Ghost*, no Man who hath but once dipped into their Journals, and other ostentatious Trash of the same Kind, can doubt their looking upon themselves, as not coming one whit behind the greatest of the Apostles.

And the same Jargon which with the ignorant and credulous in the one Case passed for *Prophecy*, in the other passed for *Inspiration*. — They likewise had a numerous Crowd of Followers both Male and Female, all alike spiritually gifted, and blessed with special Divine Communications.

nications. *Men* who being converted themselves, were inwardly called from the lowest and meanest Employments to convert their Brethren: and *Women*, not a few, had *their* inward Call too; some to *leave* all that they had and follow their new Apostles, and some to *sell* all that they had and lay it *at their Feet*.—They were as industrious as the other in training up their Disciples in a thorough Contempt of such of the Clergy as disapproved of their proud Pretences: inso-much that (as a late celebrated Writer observed of a certain Set of People in his Day of the same Complexion) ‘ every
 ‘ Boy who was acquainted with their
 ‘ Notions, learnt to despise his Teachers,
 ‘ as if they knew nothing of *Christ* and
 ‘ of the Mystery of the Gospel.’ —Then again, for external Sanctity, and Severity of Discipline, they outstripped, if possible, their great Original. They condemned all Regard for *temporal* Concerns as a vicious Love of the World, and the most innocent Amusements of Life as sinful Pleasures.

Pleasures. They encouraged their bigoted Devotees to have their Conversation so much in *Heaven*, as to take no Thought for any one Thing upon *Earth*. The Consequence of which frequently was a total Neglect of their Affairs, and Impoverishment of their Families. But yet they themselves, with all their Heavenly-mindedness, could not help casting a Sheep's Eye at the unrighteous Mammon any more than *Montanus*; nor did they pay their Court to it with less Cunning and Success than he. --- Again, as he had his Hirelings or Vassals for the more easy and effectual Execution of his iniquitous Scheme, so had they; as he, under the specious Appearance of Gifts and Offerings, raised Contributions from every Quarter for the Payment of Salaries, &c. so did they. In short, his Tax could not be more universal, nor more artful than theirs; and besides the weekly and other little Pensions squeezed out of the poorer and lower Part of their Community, they were favoured with very large

and liberal Oblations from Persons of better Figure and Fortune, and especially from many *believing* Wives, who had learned to practise their pious Frauds upon their *unbelieving* Husbands, that they might thereby win them to *Christ*.— And lastly, the *Montanists*, extravagantly as they conceived of *their* Master, could not shew him greater Reverence than the *Methodists*, ever did and continue to do to *theirs*. For they seem to look upon every Place on which they tread, as holy Ground ; they superstitiously seek, and strive to touch, if it is but the Hem of their Garments ; they are comforted and refreshed with their very Shadows passing over them ; they follow in Crowds, wherever it is noised about that they are to vociferate ; and when the Throng is so great, that *there is no Room to receive them, no not so much as about the Door*, they climb into the Windows, and would be glad, if permitted, to ascend up higher, and even to uncover the Roof, so as they might be let down thence into the House, to feed
and

and feast upon the most delicious Repast there prepared for them.

If any Respect paid to *Montanus* by his Followers can come nearer, to Idolatry than this, I am greatly mistaken. And yet this is as proudly received on the one Hand, as it is superstitiously paid on the other : which shews as much the Want of common Decency in the Priest, as common Sense in the People.

Thus have I given you a brief Account of the Sect called Methodists; which hath for about the Space of five-and-twenty Years been insulting our established Church, despising Dominions, speaking Evil of Dignities, and trampling all Rule and Authority under its Feet. I have shewed you its Rise and its Pedigree; by whom it was founded, and from what Family it sprung. That its Authors were a couple of young, raw, aspiring Twigs of the Ministry, (Twin Brothers at first, but now it seems Twin Rivals) who dreamed, or pretended to have dreamed, of a special and supernatural Call to it; of having been
endued

endued with an extraordinary Power from on high, to restore corrupt and degenerate Christianity to its primitive Purity and Perfection. I have shewed you that their Doctrines or Notions square or coincide with many of the oldest and rankest Heresies that ever defiled the Purity, and disturbed the Peace of the Christian Church from its first Institution ; particularly those of the *Simonians*, the *Gnostics*, the *Valentinians*, the *Donatists*, the *Predestinarians*, the *Montanists*, and of another, whose Principles are as old, though its Name is more modern than the rest, the *Antinomians* ; whose Errors shew that they descended from *them*, as *they* from that Arch-Heretic and Impostor *Simon Magus*. From whence it appears that the Clergy of our national Church are in the same, or worse Circumstances, than those of the Church of *Ephesus*, to whom *St. Paul's* Pastoral Charge was immediately directed ; those *grievous Wolves*, which he foresaw *would* enter in *among them*, have entered in *among us*, and carried off Numbers of
our

our Flocks. If therefore we can preserve those that are left, it will be well : if we can recover those that are lost, it will be better. And certainly both should be attempted by every Pastor who would be able to say with the Apostle, *I am pure from the Blood of all Men.*—As this hath been the End and Aim of several of my late Discourses, so the present hath the same View ; for I have always thought, and am still willing to hope, that were our respective Congregations well acquainted with the true Nature of Methodism, we should have no Occasion for either the Secular or Spiritual Arm to restrain its Progress; but that a thorough Knowledge of its Principles would be a sufficient Antidote against its Poison ; and work in every rightly disposed Mind, an Abhorrence of those Doctrines, which directly tend to distract the Head and to debauch the Heart, by turning Faith into Frenzy, and *the Grace of God into Wantonness.*

PART



P A R T II.

I Am now to shew, Secondly, that they, the Methodist Preachers, make use of the same Means of Seduction mentioned or implied in the Text, *speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them.*

Perverse things, strictly signify, things contrary to Truth or Rectitude; but in a looser Sense, things not only untrue, but also spiteful, peevish, malicious, invidious, mischievous, wicked, are comprehended in that Phrase. In which Latitude the Term *perverse* may very well be taken or understood in this Place; as denoting the false Doctrines and Opinions, by which the Impostors and Deceivers, the Apostle had in his Eye, whose coming he foretold, would corrupt the Truth and Purity of the Gospel; and the foul Insinuations and Pretences, by which

which they would labour to support those Doctrines.

In both these Respects, I hope I shall be able to make it appear, that the Apostle's Words are fairly applicable to the Methodists, and that they may be justly charged with *speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them.*

First then, for their Doctrines and Opinions.—I mean not here to enter into a full and particular Examination of them, that being an Undertaking not so proper for a single Sermon as for a Volume; I shall therefore content myself at present with a few general Hints or Remarks upon them.

Now either *their* Doctrines are false and erroneous, or the *Scriptures* must be so: for these two are not less contrary to one another than Light and Darknes, as a short Parallel betwixt them will abundantly shew.

The Methodists treat Christianity as a wildenthusiastical Scheme, which will bear no Examination: the *Scriptures*, as a fo-
ber

ber and rational System, which the more it is examined, the better it is approved.

The Methodists suppose every one's final Doom entirely to depend upon *God's* Sovereign Will and Pleasure: the Scriptures, upon his own Conduct and Behaviour.

The Methodists will have it, that we may be saved by Faith in *Christ*, without any other Requisite, on our Part: the Scriptures make a Gospel Obedience and holy Life, a necessary Condition.

The Methodists consider Man as a mere Machine, and as such unable to do any thing for himself, or towards his own Salvation: the Scriptures throughout consider him as a free Agent; and as such, set Good and Evil, Life and Death before him; bidding him choose the one and refuse the other; persuade him to strive to enter in at the strait Gate; to use all Diligence to make his *Calling and Election sure*; and afford him the greatest Encouragements to excite and stimulate his Endeavours.

The

The Methodists represent *Faith*, as a Principle supernaturally infused into the Heart, altogether precluding the Judgment and Understanding, and discerned by those who have it, by some internal, mysterious Signs and Operations : the Scriptures, as a firm Persuasion of Mind, founded upon the Evidence of Reason, and discernable only by a Conformity of Life and Manners to such Persuasion.

The Methodists speak of *Grace* as they do of *Faith*, that it is communicated to them by the Holy Spirit, and is as perceptible to their Hearts, as sensible Objects are to their Senses : the Scriptures also speak of Grace as proceeding from the same Divine Fountain, but intimate at the same Time, that it is conveyed to us secretly and imperceptibly ; and that the only Way to be satisfied whether or no, and in what Degree, we are possessed of it, is to appeal not to our *inward Feelings*, but to our *outward Actions*.

The

The Methodists talk of Regeneration in every Christian, as if it was as sudden and miraculous a Conversion, as that of *St. Paul* and the first Converts to Christianity; and as if the Signs of it were frightful Tremors of Body, and convulsive Agonies of Mind, arising from a Sense of original Sin, and the Corruption of human Nature: the Scriptures set it forth as a Work graciously begun and gradually carried on by the Blessed Spirit, in Conjunction with our own rational Powers and Faculties; and the Signs of it to be a sincere and universal Obedience to the Laws and Precepts of the Gospel.

The Methodists amuse their Followers with a Notion, that after having gone through such and such Stages in the Divine Life, and arrived at such a Pitch of Perfection, they may be absolutely certain of their Salvation: the Scriptures teach us a different Lesson; discountenance such vain Confidence and bold Presumption; exhort us not to be *high-minded*, but diffident and modest; admonish *those who*
 C *think*

think they stand, to take heed lest they fall; represent Christianity as a continual Warfare; assure us indeed that he who holdeth out to the End shall be saved, but give no Man absolute Certainty of his Perseverance.

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

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

And yet what may seem more strange, they pretend to build all their Doctrines, or Notions, upon Scripture Authority: but then, it is by wresting and straining those sacred Books, putting Texts to the Tortures, and racking them till they will speak to their Purpose, dealing arbitrarily with them, and taking them literally, or metaphorically, as best suits their Scheme; and,

and, to say all at once, practising every Means, or Method of Perversion.

A late learned and reverend Author †, one of whose Remarks I gave you before, upon some new-fangled Preachers of the last Age, much resembling those we have now in Contemplation, furnisheth me with a few more Observations, so pertinent to the Point in Hand, that it would be a Fault not to transcribe them.— ‘ There
 ‘ are no Men, that so abound in Scripture
 ‘ Proofs, to confirm what they say : if you
 ‘ consult their Writings, you shall find
 ‘ their Books stuffed with Scripture; or, if
 ‘ you talk with them, their whole Dis-
 ‘ course is little else but Scripture Phrase,
 ‘ all which they accommodate to their own
 ‘ Dreams and Fancies.—The wildest and
 ‘ most extravagant Opinions that were ever
 ‘ yet vented under the Name of Religion,
 ‘ have pretended the Authority of Scrip-
 ‘ ture for their Patronage; though any

† The late Dr. Sherlock in his Discourse concerning the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, &c. Chap. iii. Sect. iv. Second Edition.

‘ unprejudiced Man would wonder how
 ‘ the reading such Places of Scripture
 ‘ should suggest such Notions to them :
 ‘ but this is no wonder, when we confi-
 ‘ der, that Men first contrive their Reli-
 ‘ gion, and possess their Fancies strongly
 ‘ with their own private Opinions, and
 ‘ then read the Scripture with no other
 ‘ Design, than to find something there,
 ‘ to stamp Divinity on their own Con-
 ‘ ceits ; for it is easy to pervert the plainest
 ‘ Sense, and by the Help of a strong Ima-
 ‘ gination, to make any thing of any
 ‘ thing. Such Men doat upon Words
 ‘ and Phrases, Metaphors and Allusions,
 ‘ as best fitted for their Purpose. They
 ‘ found their Religion on obscure Texts,
 ‘ or mystical Interpretations of plain ones ;
 ‘ and by the Aid of some arbitrary Di-
 ‘ stinctions and Limitations, Glosses and
 ‘ Paraphrases, by curtailing of Texts, or
 ‘ transplacing Words, or Commas, or
 ‘ separating a single Word from the Body
 ‘ of the Discourse, make the Scriptures
 ‘ speak their Sense, as plainly, as the
 ‘ Bells

‘ Bells ring what every Boy will have
 ‘ them. And at this rate, we may find
 ‘ the Bible in the Alcoran, as well as
 ‘ make so many Books, so different and
 ‘ contrary to each other, from the various
 ‘ Composition of twenty-four Letters.’

Were we not acquainted with the Author, and the Time when he wrote, we must have supposed him to be here pointing at our Methodists; for thus it is, that they play Tricks with the Scriptures, to make them countenance their Errors, and to deceive the ignorant and unwary: who yet would not be deceived, did not their own Passions and Prejudices join in the Deception.

But the Case is this; the Notions instilled, or rather drove into their *Ears* by their Preachers, are such, as in their *Hearts* they wish to be true.—They would gladly be saved; and who would not?—They would be absolutely assured of their Salvation; and so would every one, if that could possibly be.—But that, if possible, would not satisfy them; they want to get

to Heaven, not only the *safest*, but also the *shortest Way*, and with the least Trouble. All which Privileges are by their new Guides annexed to a fiducial Reliance upon the Person, and Merits of *Christ*, and a disclaiming of Good Works; which are Terms so easy that the merest Libertine, or Infidel, could not have a Face to ask for easier. The Obligation to Good Works, is generally the chief Ground of that Opposition and Contempt which Christianity meets with from both; remove that Obstacle, or Stone of stumbling, the one may probably become a pious Christian, and the other a sound Believer; persuade them that they may be sure of being saved by the Righteousness of *Christ*, without any Holiness of their own, and the Business is half done; and this comfortable Persuasion the Methodist Preachers kindly and zealously labour to graft in their People: nay, more than this, for their further Comfort and Encouragement, represent Good Works as not only unnecessary, but also dangerous; and censure such

ſuch of the Clergy, as make uſe of thoſe low and lifeleſs Expreſſions of *being virtuous and becoming good, reforming, and amending* the Life, &c. with the ambiguous Phraſes of *good Reſolutions and ſincere Endeavours*, &c. as thereby puffing up the Pride of Man's Nature.

Is it therefore any Wonder that thoſe Preachers, whoſe Doctrines are ſo well adapted to the ſoothing and flattering the Paſſions and Prejudices of Men, ſhould be ſo mightily followed; or that their Followers ſhould, without Examination, embrace and hug cloſe to their Hearts that Senſe of Scripture, however forced and ſtrained, which ſeems moſt favourable to ſuch Doctrines? Or, may we not rather ſtand amazed, that they, who are ever lamenting over corrupt Nature, and teaching that *it is the firſt Work of the Spirit, to make Men duly and deeply ſenſible of it*, ſhould yet be ſo fond of a Scheme of Divinity, of all others the moſt civil and indulgent to its Corruptions? And it cannot be doubted, but

this Indulgence hath gained them great Numbers of *Profelytes*; who must be transported with Joy and Extacy to think, that since *strait is the Gate and narrow the Way that leadeth unto Life*, they shall find a safer and smoother Passage, by divesting themselves of the Incumbrances of *Moral Duties*. Marvel not, that they should be so delighted with those Expressions of coming to *Christ*, closing with *Christ*, resting in *Christ*, being united to *Christ*, with various others of the same Kind, since after that, there is nothing more for them to do, but to sleep in his Arms, as secure and tranquil as *Lazarus* in *Abraham's* Bosom. Neither be surpris'd, that they should love, reverence, and almost adore the gracious Ministers of such sweet Consolation; who in this Respect, have carried our *Saviour's* Generosity and Compassion farther than he did himself; in taking quite away that *Yoke and Burthen*, which he had only made *light and easy*. Neither think it strange, that after having been so far imposed upon, they should readily suck in

all

all the rest of their Myſteries ; for unleſs they ſwallow down theſe, they muſt diſgorge that, which yields them ſuch unſpeakable Peace and Satisfaction. But, there is great Reaſon for us to be aſtoniſhed at the Boldneſs, (I had almoſt ſaid Blaſphemy) of thoſe Preachers, who proudly triumphing in their numerous Train of credulous and crazy Followers, (the weak and ſpurious Iſſue of their inſidious Craft and Cunning,) publicly aſcribe the glorious Event to the Efficacy of the Divine Grace, accompanying their Preaching ; praizing *God* for the Succeſs of their Deception, by them arrogantly called *the Seal of their Miniſtry* ; and ſolemnly, in almoſt every Page of their paltry, but pathetic Harangues, invoking the Bleſſed Spirit ſtill to go along with them in their pious and ſoul-awakening Work ; that is, to continue to aſſiſt them, in deceiving and ſeducing the ſimple and unwary, by the Abufe and Perverſion of thoſe very Scriptures, which were given by his Holy Inſpiration.

Thus

Thus having, I hope, made it appear that the Methodist Preachers are guilty of *speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them*; taking the Term *perverse* in the Text to denote the false Doctrines and Opinions, by which the Impostors and Deceivers, the Apostle had in his Eye, and whose coming he foretold, would corrupt the Truth and Purity of the Gospel; I shall now endeavour to make good the same Charge, taking that Term to denote also the foul Insinuations and Pretences of those Deceivers, by which to support their Doctrines.

One would think indeed, that since the Doctrines themselves are, (as hath been shewed,) in their own Nature so captivating and ensnaring, they would stand in need of no Wiles, or Artifices, for making Disciples, except that which hath been already mentioned, as constantly practised by them, the perverting and prostituting the Scriptures, in support of them. But now, lest this Fraud, which is the Spring, or Wheel, that governs their
whole

whole System, should be found out, it is necessary that it be well guarded, and that they have recourse to other Tricks, to prevent a Discovery. And no Trick is more likely to prevent it, than the invidious Misrepresentation of the sound and orthodox Clergy, thereby to bring them into Contempt; without which, their *Craft* would be in great Danger, and the *Craftsmen* soon set at nought. Were their deluded Followers to consult their own lawful and proper Pastors, about the true Sense and Meaning of those Texts, or Passages of Scripture, which their New Guides, sometimes by Strength, and sometimes by Slight, bend to the Square of their own foolish, but favourite Notions; their Eyes would be opened, and they would see the Fallacy. And whom should they consult, but those who are set over them by Authority; whose peculiar Province it is to explain the Scriptures to them, and who can have no Interest in deceiving them? For which Reason the Methodistical Factory is very industrious to keep them

them

them as much as they can at a Distance, to dissolve or break off that spiritual Inter-
course, which the Relation in which they stand to each other requires should be preserved betwixt them; and to raise in the Minds of the People, the most groundless Jealousies and Distrusts of their Ministers, thereby to withdraw their Attention from them. They represent them as destitute of that inward Call to the Ministry, which is necessary to the rendering their Preaching effectual;—as Strangers to Grace and Experience;—as altogether unacquainted with the Naughtiness and Depravity of human Nature themselves, and therefore unqualified to teach it others;—as preaching another Gospel, and joining with *Deists, Arians, Socinians*, and the rest of the Opposers of Christianity;—as denying the Doctrine of original Sin, and the Necessity of Regeneration, and making the Christian Religion little more than a refined System of Moral Philosophy;—as being very bad practical Moralists, however zealously they inculcate the Du-
ties

ties of Morality;—as negligent of their Charge, attached to the World, fond of its Pleasures, hunting after its Honours and Promotions, and making a Trade of their spiritual Function, striving for Pre-eminence in the Church, and looking big under swelling Titles.---But this, tho' calumnious and scurrilous enough, is modest when compared to many other their Abuses and Invectives, which both from the Pulpit and the Press they pour forth like a Torrent against us; and which, that the same may work more strongly, they mix and impregnate with the operative Waters of the holy Scriptures. ———

The Author before quoted (as you may remember) speaking of their Predecessors of the last Century, observed, *that both their Writings and their Discourses were little else than Scripture Phrase.* But now these Men dress up and convey their very Slanders and Reproaches in this sacred Stile. In this they tell the World; that we are *carnally-minded, puffed up with fleshy Wisdom, have not Christ in our Hearts*

by Faith, are Ministers of the Letter, not of the Spirit, and preach ourselves, instead of Christ Jesus. In this they liberally bestow upon us the Titles of false Prophets, blind Guides, Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing, Shepherds not caring for the Sheep, Physicians of no Value, dumb Dogs who cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber; with almost every hard Name they can pick out of those Divine Records, which they seem piously and painfully to have traversed, the better to qualify them to rail in Scripture Language.—This is that Milk with which they feed their Babes: who naturally suck in Slander with Greediness, (one of the Effects of original Sin, of which they are not very ready to inform them) and who by their great Facility and Forwardness like Parrots to prate against us in the same Terms, plainly shew that such scriptural Railing is their Catechism, or first Rudiments, and how well they are grounded in them.—The stronger Meats which they administer to those of riper Age, are, that 'however

‘ we pretend to Orthodoxy, our Doctrines
 ‘ are repugnant to the true Principles of
 ‘ Christianity; that our Sermons contra-
 ‘ dict the Articles, Homilies and Liturgy,
 ‘ of our own Church; yea that we con-
 ‘ tradict ourselves, saying one Thing in
 ‘ the Desk, and another in the Pulpit.’

These Suggestions were first hatched and
 propagated by the Twin-founders of the
Methodistical Sect, of whom I took notice
 before, but have been since adopted and
 urged with greater Vehemence and Viru-
 lence, if possible, by one of the principal
 Leaders of the *Hutchinsonian* Party; which
 is a Proof, amongst many others, that I
 had good Reason for speaking of them as
 united, or incorporated Societies. . . ‘Some
 ‘ Years ago, saith an ingenious Writer †,
 ‘ we saw the *Westlys* and the *Whitfields*,
 ‘ declaiming in the Pulpits of this Metro-
 ‘ polis, and boasting that they were the
 ‘ only Part of the Church of *England*,
 ‘ who had not deviated from their Arti-

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

‘cles and Subscriptions. But they soon
 ‘threw off the Mask; and now enjoy
 ‘under a Sanction from *Hicks's Hall*, that
 ‘Privilege, which Episcopal Jurisdiction
 ‘might have deprived them of, and
 ‘finding the Church no Sanctuary, they
 ‘made their Retreat to the Tabernacle.
 ‘The Hutchinsonian Preachers of this
 ‘Day tread in the Steps of their Predeces-
 ‘sors the Methodists. For if the *former* still
 ‘continue to profess themselves Members
 ‘of that Church, which the *latter* have
 ‘deserted, we may pronounce, without
 ‘any Spirit of Divination, that they bend
 ‘with large Strides towards a Separation.’
 And I must confess for my own Part, I
 cannot help wishing that their Strides
 were larger, unless we had more Hopes of
 their being reclaimed, since I am sure
 they do greater Mischief *in* the Church
 than they could do *out of* it.

But what I was going to remark is,
 that one † of the Chiefs of this rude and

† See the Preface to the Reverend Mr. Romaine's
 Commentary on the 107 Psalm.

refractory Tribe, who will neither separate *from* us, nor live peaceably *with* us, hath with an Effrontery scarcely to be parallel'd, published to the World, not only with the *Westleys* and the *Whitfields*, that we have departed from the Doctrines of our Articles and Homilies, to which we have subscribed, but also that we still keep up our Subscriptions to them; that is, that we subscribe and renounce, and subscribe again, as best suits our Conveniency: or (as he afterwards insinuates in stronger Terms) that we make no Conscience of our Oaths and Subscriptions; daring to risk our eternal Salvation, for the Sake of some present Honour, or Preferment.—

This infamous Libel, (like many others equally base and groundless) is propagated from every Pulpit into which he and his Collegues can by any Means thrust their Heads, and circulated through every Parish by them and their Emissaries. Infomuch that hardly any proverbial Speech is more common in the Mouths of the whole Herd of Methodists, than that we the Clergy,

all of us except such as are for their turn, have in our Preaching (tho' not in our Oaths and Subscriptions) deviated from the Doctrines of our Articles and Homilies. This is the very Burden of their Song. This every Cully can chant, and every Child can chatter. But this I call an infamous and groundless Libel: and very justly, since he hath not offered the least shadow of Proof or Argument, by which to make good the Charge. He says, indeed, *it is a Truth too evident to be denied.* And what is easier than for a confident Asserter who *hath* no Proof, to pretend there *wants* none? yet this Pretence, however by all Persons of the least Discernment it will be taken for a shrewd Sign of its being (as it really is) *a notorious Falsehood*, will pass for sufficient Evidence of its being true, with those weak and credulous People, who believe every thing upon the bare Affirmation of their great *Gamaliel*, whose Authority they will not, or dare not dispute; and whose very Calumnies they

reve-

reverence, as the infallible Dictates of the Spirit of Truth. And the same may be said of all the Methodist Preachers, in whom their blind and bigoted Disciples trust as implicitly, as the Papists in their Pope, Councils, or Church.

Since therefore these are the Arts and Devices, by which they seek to make Profelytes; since such are their Doctrines and Principles, and such their Manner of propagating and supporting them; since the whole Strength of their Cause lies in the Perverſion of the Scripture, and the Abuse of the Clergy, as many as diſapprove of their extravagant and enthuaſtical Notions; ſince by the moſt peeviſh and ſpightful Invectives, the moſt rude and rankerous Revilings, the moſt invidious Calumnies, they ſtudy and ſtrive to poiſon the minds of our People, to raiſe Doubts and Jealouſies in them, and by theſe and many other foul and inſidious Practices, to ſeducer them from their true and rightful Paſtors; I think we may juſtly charge them in the Words

and in the Intention of my Text, with *Speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them.*

And now from what hath been said, it is very easy, and, I hope, not impertinent, to give you a succinct, yet full View of the Methodistical Scheme, and of the Policy, or Subtilty of its Founders.

They set out with forming and fashioning a fair and tempting Draught, or Model of Religion, so flattering to the Frailties and Follies of degenerate Man, that it could not fail to catch the Ear, and gain the Hearts of Multitudes, especially of the loose and vicious, the lazy and indolent, the melancholy and timorous, or of such as are under the Dominion of any strong Passions, or Prejudices, or labour under any Inability, or Weakness of Mind. And in this they shewed, what they are apt to boast of, a thorough Insight into Original Sin; a feeling and experimental Knowledge of the Naughtiness and Depravity of Human Nature; and also a kind and generous Desire to
favour

favour and befriend it, by suiting Duty to Inclination, and by persuading the Guilty, that they had nothing more to do than *to believe in Christ, and accept of Pardon, because in the Crucified Jesus is Fulness of Grace, and All sufficiency to save.*

Their next Step is to accomodate the pure, but severe Morals of Christianity, to this their beautiful and charming Scheme of Religion, or to make the one consistent with the other.

To which end, it was necessary they should talk with the Scriptures, and by some means or other bring *them* over to their side. And these they managed with great Dexterity and Address. They attentively listened to the Sound, and watched the Looks of every Phrase, Word and Syllable; and wherever they discovered the least Clink, or Appearance of Favour, they searched no further, for fear of finding a Change of Countenance, and the Sound contradicted by the Sense, but immediately counted them as Friends, content with the Civilities they had shewn

them. Such Texts as seemed tractable and coming they treated a little modestly; with these a gentle wresting, or bending was sufficient; but for such as were stubborn and inflexible, they had Racks and Tortures to force their Compliance. Whence some that were inclined to speak literally, they made to speak metaphorically; and others that were disposed to speak metaphorically, they constrained to speak literally; and others again that were mute, and unwilling to speak at all, for their Contempt they turned into Allegory.

Then the Church of *Rome* (to which on many Accounts they were much obliged, and as gratefully returned the Obligation) had taught them to put an arbitrary Sense upon Scripture, and to set up for infallible Interpreters: with this difference, that the one derive their Infallibility from the holy Apostle *St. Peter*, the other from the immediate Inspiration of the Holy Ghost.—When by these Arts and Assistances they had brought
over

over the Scriptures to their Interest; there was only one thing wanting to complete their Design ; and that was, to find out an Expedient for preventing the Impostition being detected, and the Impostors exposed.—This, tho' it hath the Appearance of a great Difficulty, was, with our spiritual Politicians, the easiest thing in the World. For as such Detection was the most likely to come from the Clergy, they had nothing more to do than to keep the People from their Pastors, by giving them hard Names, recommended by Scripture Language, enforced with an Apostolic Energy, and by dressing them up in such odious Colours as were enough to fright the one from coming near the other. Besides which, they soon by their Craft and Cunning gained such an Ascendancy over their weak and ignorant Followers, that their Command, or even Exhortation, not to hear any Preachers, or read any Books, or attend to any Arguments, in Opposition to their new Divinity, was sufficient to discourage, and

deter them from it.—By these Artifices they held them in Darknefs, and suffered not the leaft Glimmering or Ray of Light to beam upon them, except that fecret and fupernatural Illumination, which the Spirit, thro' *their* Preaching, conveyed into them.

This I conceive to be a true and faithful Account of the original, *Methodiftical* Scheme. In which if I am miftaken, I fhall always be ready, and defirous to retract my Error.

But here it is proper and neceffary to be obferved, that this Scheme hath received great Helps and Improvements from the Junction or Alliance of the *Hutchinfonian* Sect. Whole Author,* the late infpired Mr. *Hutchinfon*, hath done fingular Service to the Methodift Preachers.

For

* See a Treatife, intituled, The Ufe of Reason asserted in Matters of Religion: or, Natural Religion the Foundation of Revealed: by Ralph Heathcote, A. M. Preacher Affiftant at Lincoln's Inn. Second Edition. London, printed for Thomas Payne, Corner of Duke's Court, Caftle-ftreet, near the Mews-gate, 1756. In which the ingenious Author, towards the Clofe of his Difcourfe, beginning at Page 85, hath
by

For besides his joining with them in their loud and terrible Outcry against human Learning and natural Religion, he hath by his critical Skill and Acumen in the *Hebrew Language* (which *he learnt under Ground*, as he used to say for himself, *the dark Bowels of the Earth being his School, and the inspired Light his Master*, as some of his Admirers say for him,) found out, as is pretended, the best Key for explaining the mediatorial Scheme, and the Doctrines of Christianity; hath from the Old Testament struck out for them a new Revelation; hath opened to them Mysteries in Abundance, which lay deeper than the subterraneous Apartment, in which he studied and explored them; Mysteries which *they* would never have conceived, or dreamt of; and hath put them in a way how to supply themselves with as many more as they please, and that upon

by Extracts from Mr. Hutchinson's own Writings, obliged the World with such a View of his Principles, as one would think could not fail to beget in the Mind of every serious Christian, or even sober and honest Man, an utter Detestation or Abhorrence of them.

very

very cheap and easy Terms. They need not, like their great Principal and Patron, *make the dark Bowels of the Earth their School*, nor *Hebrew Roots their Diet*; a little smattering of that sacred Language, joined with a piercing Wit, and lively Imagination, is sufficient. By the help of which, and having the same *inspired Light* that he had for their Master, some of the most illiterate of our New Stile Preachers (who triumph, and with great Reason if they knew it, in their Foolishness of Preaching) are all at once become acute and penetrating *Hebrew Etymologists*, critically skilful in Scripture Hieroglyphics, Adepts in typical and allegorical Learning, and as dextrous at amusing and confounding the weak and wondering Crowd, as the first *Rabbi* of their Tribe; or, to say all in fewer and better Words, which I will take the Liberty of borrowing from one of the ingenious and spirited Writers before quoted, at their Will and Pleasure, *every thing is made a Type, every Text is wrested into Allegory, every*
Fact

Fact hath a double Meaning, and even Names, like so many Abacadabras of Magicians, contain Mysteries, and can work Wonders.

And now you have the full Portrait of that frightful Monster called *Methodism*: made far more monstrous than it was in itself, by the adjunct, or accession of *Hutchinsonian* Conceit and Arrogance. Very ugly and deformed it was before, but then it appeared plain and simple in its Deformity; whereas now you behold it trick'd up and decorated with borrowed Ornaments, and strutting in Oriental Buskins, fitted to it by the Labour and Ingenuity of that indefatigable Man, and exquisite Genius, the unparallel'd Mr. *Hutchinson*. *

* If this should seem inconsistent with the true Character of the Methodists, who are known to despise Human Learning, let it be remembered, that so did Mr. *Hutchinson*, notwithstanding his wonderful Proficiency in it. Besides, in whom do the Methodists despise it? Not in themselves, but in others. One of their own Writers hath told you, that tho' it is of great Use, and a great Blessing, when in a sanctified and renewed Minister, yet in a carnal and unregenerate one, it is the greatest Enemy to Truth; and who (in his Opinion) is the sanctified, and who the carnal Minister, I need not say.

From which Draught, and what hath been said in the former Part of my Discourse, it is very evident with what Force and Energy the Apostle's Caution to the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, comes home to the Hearts and Consciences of the Clergy, or Pastors of the Church of *England* *Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the Flocks over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, &c.*



P A R T III.

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

Our blessed *Saviour*, when warning his Disciples to beware of those false Prophets, which he foresaw would arise to vex and disturb his Church, intimated, that their Subtilty would be great enough to *deceive, if possible, the very Elect*. Which Prediction was sadly verified, during the three first Centuries. Several of the pious and venerable Fathers having been a little warped in their Christian Principles, by such cunning Corrupters of the true Faith: especially *Tertullian*, who was unhappily drawn

drawn into certain Errors of the *Montanists*, as some of our own Clergy have lately been into those of the *Methodists*. Whence it is plain, that the Caution in the Text, *take heed unto yourselves*, was *then* not unnecessary, but is *now* also very reasonable.

The second Part of the same Caution, *and to all the Flock, &c.* will, I suppose, want no Apology. These, it will be on all hands allowed, are very subject to be seduced, and that it is the Duty of Shepherds to watch over them, and guard them against Seduction. But the misfortune is, that many who allow this to be our Duty, and are ready on all occasions to remind us of it, and to urge to us very freely the Apostle's Argument on which it is grounded, viz. That we are *appointed by the Holy Ghost* to that sacred Office, yet are displeas'd with our faithful Performance of it: and when, with true Simplicity, and a becoming Zeal, we forewarn, and endeavour to forearm them against those Seducers, the *Methodist-Preachers,*

Preachers, they foolishly call it, *Preaching Christ of Contention*: whence we may reasonably suspect that they are tainted, and consequently stand more in need of our Advice and Applications. However that be, certain it is that to *take heed unto ourselves and to our Flocks*, that neither *we* nor *they* be led away by those deceitful Workers, is indispensably required of us. And therefore, without consulting who will *be angry*, or who will *be pleased*, but studious only how *all* may be profited; I shall now consider wherein our Care consists, in both respects.

1st. then, with respect to ourselves.

Our first Care should be, candidly and fairly to examine their Doctrines. For, as to censure them *unexamined*, would be unjust, so to do the same, without a *fair and impartial* Examination, would be ungenerous. We ought therefore to enquire into their Nature and Tendency—their Truth or Falseness.—In the *former* of which Enquiries, *Reason* is to be
our

our Guide; of *her* we must ask, whether they are agreeable to our natural Notions of the Supreme Being? whether they are worthy of *God*, and tend to the Happiness of *Man*?

In the *latter*, our only Rule is the *Scriptures*.—But since these, like all other Writings, are capable of *various* Constructions, therefore to the finding out the *true*, many other Rules are necessary to be observed.——For Instance, we ought to compare Scripture with Scripture; and see how one agrees with another, and every Part with the Scope and Tenor of the Whole, and with the main Drift, or Design of Christianity:—To interpret obscure and ambiguous Texts or Passages, by others that are clear and certain:—To keep close to the *Letter*, where it may be done without Absurdity or Impropriety; and, where *Metaphors* are unavoidable, to be chaste and modest in the Use and Application of them:—To consult the ablest and best Critics and Commentators, especially those of the
purest

purest and most primitive Antiquity: and above all the Sentiments of the Catholic, or Universal Church; not only in the first; but in all After-Ages, excepting that unhappy Period, during which it was overspread with the thick Clouds of Popish Ignorance and Superstition.—These are a few of those Laws, which should be observed in the Interpretation of Scripture: which otherwise would be a very blind Guide, or rather a *Lesbian* Rule, that would bend to the Humour of every one who used it.

So that since the Methodist-Preachers pretend to build themselves upon Scripture-Authority, after having first enquired into the Nature and Tendency of their Doctrines; our next Enquiry should be, how they interpret those Scriptures, on which they would found them. And if, upon such a Scrutiny, we should discover that their Doctrines are consistent with Reason, with our natural Notions of the Deity, with the Honour of G O D, and the Happiness of Man; and that in the

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Interpretation of the Scriptures, by which they seek to establish them, they have conformed to the Laws, or Rules, I have been mentioning, we should be both uncharitable and unjust, in stigmatizing them by the Name of *false Teachers*. But, if on the other hand, we should find that their Doctrines are in themselves unreasonable and ridiculous, clash with our natural Ideas of the Divine Attributes and Perfections, with the End and Design of all Religion, with the Honour of G O D, the Interest of Society, and Man's both present and future Happiness; if we should find that their Method of interpreting the Scriptures, cited by them, is contrary to all the right and just Rules of Interpretation, and that their Sense of them is repugnant to that of the most pious and learned Christian Writers, to the Judgment of the wisest and holiest Fathers and Martyrs, and to the consent of the Universal Church, in its earliest and purest State; if we should find, that sometimes they stick close to the *Letter*,
 where

where Reason and common Sense require a *Metaphor*, and at other times ramble into unnecessary Metaphors, craftily to serve their own turn; if we should find, that they explain what is dark by something more obscure, and make what is plain and easy, mysterious and unintelligible, taking away that Light they never bring; if we should find that they confound the Scriptures, setting one Text at variance with another, and both with a third, and destroy not only the Order and Harmony, but also the End and Intention of all, which was not to make Men conceited and enthusiastical, but virtuous and good; in short, if we should find, that in the Interpretation of those inspired Writings, they are governed by no Law, but that of their own proud, perverse, positive Will or Humour; that they despise all Helps and Assurances for their understanding them aright, except what they pretend to receive immediately from the Holy Ghost; that from this vain Imagination of their being *taught of God*,

they presume to fix the most unreasonable, unnatural, and even monstrous Sense upon them; and, to crown all, that they place such their vile Perversion and Prostitution of them to the Account of the Blessed Spirit; if, I say, we should find this to be the Case, then I hope we may, without the least Breach of either Justice or Charity, pronounce them not only *false Teachers*, but also, in the Language of St. Jude, *filthy Dreamers*, turning Faith into Fancy, and the Gospel into Farce, and thereby adding Blasphemy to Enthusiasm.

Thus it is that we (I speak of my own order) should *take heed unto ourselves*, if we would not be deceived by those false Teachers: We should, in the first place, carefully and candidly examine their Doctrines, and the true Sense of the Scriptures, which they would force to patronize and support them: And after this, should we fall into their Errors, I cannot think it is the *Methodists*, but *our own Hearts* that must be the Deceivers.

And

And therefore our next Business is, to guard these against a Temptation, which that conceited Sect hath accidentally thrown in our way; I mean a favourable Opportunity of indulging certain corrupt and disorderly Passions and Affections, to which we are subject like other Men. And I am fully persuaded, (tho' very sorry to say it) that this Bait hath caught those few of the Clergy, who have adopted the false Notions of the Methodists, or gone into their foolish way of Preaching. It can hardly be supposed, that Persons of a liberal Education, regularly trained up for the Ministry, and whose Conversation, from the very Nature of their Profession, ought to be chiefly with the Scriptures, and the ablest and best Writers upon them, should so egregiously play the Fool upon *Principle*; but that they are led into it by worse Views or Motives. And tho' it would be a little too bold positively to say what their Inducements are, yet we may reasonably suspect Spiritual Pride, Vain-

Glory, Resentment, Envy, the Love of Applause, or Popularity, any, or all of these, to lie at the Root. For Instance; *one* probably may imagine, that in the rational way of discoursing, he is too much limited or confined, or hath not room enough to display the Orator: A *second* may be stung with the fancied Neglect of his conspicuous Merit: A *third* may be mortified to behold that Mitre upon another Head, which (in his opinion) would sit so much more gracefully upon his own: A *fourth* may think the Preacher happy, who is followed from Church to Church, and where-ever he goes is sure to draw a Crowd after him; and, observing by what Method some have arrived at that Happiness, may thence be tempted to become an Adventurer upon the same Bottom: Which last, as it is the least criminal, I am willing to hope is the most general Motive; especially amongst the younger Brethren, who are apt to esteem that Popularity as an Honour, which the more Experienced

look

look upon as the reverse. But the Truth is, if we would *all* be safe and secure from the Delusion of those false Teachers, I have all along had in View, *this*, and every other the like Evil, or irregular Affection, must be conquered, or kept under, for they are the most dangerous Auxiliaries in the Cheat.

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

First then, we ought to give them Notice of their perilous Situation. — And for this we have the Example of the great Apostle, in the Verse immediately following my Text, *Therefore watch and remember, that for the space of three Years I have warned you Night and Day with Tears*, which Words have reference not only to the Elders, but also to the whole Church; and afford us a fine Proof or

Instance of his extraordinary Care and Vigilance in protecting it from those Impostors, or Deceivers he was aware of, and at the same time an excellent Lesson how to behave on the like Occasion. By this we are taught, that in warning our People of the prevailing Errors and Influence of the Methodist-Preachers, we ought to persevere in our Cautions; not to think a short and casual Hint now and then from the Pulpit, join'd with a few Ebullitions of Wit, or strokes of Satire sufficient; (such Spouts or Stings alone are harmless to our *Foes*, and useless to our *Flocks*); but by sober and solid Arguments, frequently and zealously urged and inculcated, to set before them their Danger; and having endeavoured to awake them into a due Sense of it, our next Step should be;

Secondly, to put them into a proper Posture of Defence, and to fortify them against it, in the best Manner we are able; and what that is, the Example of the same Apostle hath again instructed us.

I have

I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you and taught you publickly and from House to House, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.—Acts xx. 20, 21. Here it is proper to be observed, that St. Paul considers *Repentance* and *Faith* in their most comprehensive Sense, as including all *other* Christian Doctrines deducible from them, and connected with them, and which doubtless in his Preaching he inculcated as well as *these*.—The same is incumbent upon *us*; for tho' a thorough Knowledge of *these* alone is sufficient to as many as are able of themselves to make such Deductions, or discover such Connection, yet to others it is not. The Condition of our People in general, requires us to be more explicit; to deduce those several derivative Doctrines *for* them, to shew them how they are connected; and to illustrate and explain to them each Doctrine, particularly and distinctly, and with all the Perspicuity

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we can; especially such as have been corrupted or vitiated, clogged or incumbered by the Methodist-Preachers. In these we ought more assiduously and earnestly to instruct them; to make them perfectly acquainted with the Scriptures from which we draw them, and with those also by which such Preachers change and pervert them; and to set *our* Interpretations and *theirs*, with the Authorities by which they are on both Sides supported or defended, in a fair and opposite View; that so by comparing the *one* with the *other*, the humblest Capacity, joined with an honest Heart, may easily determine whether of them is right. — Was this done in the constant Course of our Preaching, it could not but have a very good Effect. For sure I am, there are many who are inclined to think more favourably of the Errors of the Methodists, or rather not to think them in any Error at all, purely for want of better Information. — Be that as it will, our doing this, is so necessary to our taking

heed to our Flocks, that it would be in vain to pretend to justify ourselves in the Neglect or Omission of it. For it was from a Consciousness of his having faithfully performed this, that the Apostle makes this solemn Appeal to the Church of *Ephesus* for his Integrity. *Wherefore I take you to Record*, says he, *this Day, that I am free from the Blood of all Men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the Counsel of God.* Acts xx. 26, 27.

Thirdly, the Care of our Flocks requires us to press home to them the Duty of a constant Attendance upon, and conscientious Adherence to their own particular Churches: which, besides many incomparable Privileges and Advantages that attend it, is at *all* times one strong Barrier against Error and Seduction, and at *this* more especially, when the Methodist-Preachers are no longer confined to Tabernacles, and other the like Haunts peculiar to themselves, but have found the way into our Churches, intruding into as many as they possibly can,

can,

can, for the wider spreading of their new and strange Divinity : So that Men cannot now strole from Church to Church, as heretofore (a Custom much to be lamented) without greater Hazard of being corrupted or ensnared. On which Account, we ought to labour more abundantly, to keep our Flocks within our own Folds, and to restore, as far as lies in us, the primitive, but long-neglected, Practice of Parochial Communion ; by setting forth the Excellency of the Institution ; how much more conducive it is to Decency and Order, to the Peace and Unity of the Christian Church, to the better Edification (in the right Sense of that Word) of private Christians, and (which is most to my present Purpose) to the keeping them stedfast in the true Faith of Christ, and to the preserving them from false, or unsettled Principles ; than ranging, or running about, from one Church to another, as Fancy, or as Humour leads them.—

It must be confessed, such wanton
 Rambling

Rambling may plead Prescription, and besides long Use and Custom, hath also on its side an Infirmity, natural to Man, called by *Solomon*, *the wandering of the Desire*, and by *St. Paul* (more directly to the Point) *itching Ears*: How then? Are not all evil Propensities and wrong Habits to be opposed? And why not *this* as well as the rest?—It must also be allowed, that Men have found out various other Pleas and Pretences in Justification of *this*: But such Pleas and Pretences are weak and trifling; and were we not sometimes to shew them that they are so, we should, by that Neglect, furnish them with one Plea worth them all, and one that we could not answer, which is, that we did not instruct them better. ———

Well, but hath not this been a thousand times done? How many Sermons have been preached, and how many Treatises published, for the refuting and reforming this Error, and yet how much do we see the Matter mended? How much it is *mended*, I shall not take upon me to say;

say ; but this I will venture to affirm, that had it not been for such Opposition, we should have found it *much worse*, which is Reason sufficient for our continuing to oppose it.—And tho' we must never hope totally to remove an Evil so rooted in Nature, and confirmed by Habit, or prevail with all we are concerned with to keep strictly, in their public Worship, within the bounds of their own Parish Churches ; yet possibly we may, by our seasonable Advice and Admonitions, be able to check its Growth, and to restrain some, if not altogether from hunting after *New Teachers* ; at least, from following those of the *Methodists*, and from mixing with any Assembly, or Congregation, where their Ears may be poisoned by the enthusiastical and intoxicating Doctrines of such vain Declaimers. So far our Hopes may be indulged. But should we be therein disappointed, the next Means I shall mention of taking heed to our Flocks, promiseth better Success.—

And

And that is, Fourthly, If we cannot keep our People from such *Preachers*, to use our utmost Efforts and Endeavours, to keep such Preachers from our *Pulpits*.

But this being a nice and tender Point, which requires some Time and Delicacy to treat it in such a manner, as that it may be useful to all, without giving just Cause of Offence to any, I shall respite the Consideration of it till the next Opportunity, when I shall put an End to this Subject.—

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

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

It is very true, I have been setting forth a Duty peculiar to the Clergy. But then pray remember, that it is a Duty which

(as

(as I hinted before) we rarely discharge without disgusting some of our Hearers: who are apt, if our Instructions happen to be less palatable than wholesome, to serve *us*, as our Master's Disciples did *him*, that is, to *turn their Backs, and walk no more with us*; nay, what is still worse, to give us hard Words at parting, and to keep up their Resentment till it hath pretty well spent itself in Clamour and Invective. And this more particularly hath been our Misfortune, when we have been affectionately advising them, to beware of the Leaven of those modern Pharisees, the Methodists.

Hence ye may perceive, that the Laity are more interested or concerned in my present Subject, than you might at first imagine. And that as the Duty of the *Preacher* is expressly contained *in* it, so the Duty of the *Hearer* plainly results *from* it. For if (as hath been shewed, and as the Text imports) every Pastor is under the most strict and solemn Obligation, to *take heed to his Flock*, as at all times,

times, so especially when he apprehends them to be in more immediate Danger, it follows that they also are equally obliged to hear his Voice : or however they may be more taken with the Voice of *Strangers*, still to hear *his* with Patience, if not with Pleasure.

In short, as we are often thought over-officious and troublesome, when we are only doing what the Nature of our Office requires, it is very proper that the *Laity* as well as *Clergy* should be put in mind of that Office. For nothing is more likely to reconcile our People to our seasonable Admonitions, than shewing them that it is no other than a Trust vested in us for their Welfare : and that whatever they may think, it is not their *Opinion*, but our own *Consciences* alone, that can acquit us at that awful Tribunal, where we must one Day be accountable for our Stewardship.

This Reflection, one would imagine, should be sufficient to drive all Prejudice from the *Heart*, and to entitle us to an

obedient *Ear*. Upon this however it was that the Apostle founded his Injunction, with which I shall conclude,

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



P A R T IV.

WITHOUT either Preface or Recapitulation, I shall now proceed where I last left off; and shew, that if we cannot, by all fair Arguments and Dissuasives, keep our *People* from the *Methodist-Preachers*, we ought to use our utmost Endeavours to keep such *Preachers* from our *Pulpits*.

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

Instances of this sort, I hope, are but few.—But it is a truth neither to be denied nor dissembled, that Methodist-

Preachers, well known to be such, having distinguished themselves, both by their Preaching and Writing, do frequently gain admittance into the Pulpits of this Metropolis, by the Permission of those, who, in Obedience to the Apostle's Precept, should be the first to oppose it; and without whose Consent, or Connivance, that Nufance could not be.

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

It would look like a Reflection upon
many

many worthy Incumbents of this City and Suburbs, who appear to consent *to*, or connive *at* the Nufance I am fpeaking of, to doubt their Difapprobation of Methodical *Principles*, at the fame time that they allow the Ufe of their Pulpits to the Methodist-*Preachers*. And yet it feems impoffible to reconcile the one to the other, or to conceive how they can difapprove of Principles in their *Heart*, to the Propagation of which they lend their helping *Hand*.

This is a Myftery, and fo I muft leave it, without attempting a Solution of which to me it appears incapable. I fhall only add, that I cannot fufpect them of being Well-wifhers to the Caufe of Methodifm, or of intending the leaft Injury, or Difhonour to our eftablifhed Church.

But however we are inclined both to think and fpeak tenderly of their Intention, nothing can be more evident than that our Church fuffers greatly by fuch a Conduct. For is it not behaving injuriously and difhonourably to her, to fhew

any Countenance to those her ungracious and ungrateful Sons, who have perfidiously set up a Scheme for undermining her Doctrines, laying waste her Discipline, and getting her Authority into their own Hands ; and who are perpetually practising every Art for drawing the rest of her Children into the Confederacy ? Or can we afford them greater Countenance, than that of favouring them without Pulpits ? That such Preachers are not silenced, is an extraordinary Instance of *Lenity* ; that they are not more opposed, may be thought a proper Token of Contempt ; but this is such a Mark of Esteem as one cannot reflect upon without Astonishment and Concern. For is not this to take part with those turbulent and treacherous Men ? Is it not to assist their Cause, to abet their Faction, to encourage their Abuses, and to contribute to delude those, whom it is our Duty to guard against Delusion ? I am fully persuaded that some, who have, I know not how, been led into that Error, *meant* none of these

these bad Consequences; but the Consequences are the same, whatever was their *Meaning*. And I can only stand amazed, that they who would not upon any Account receive into their *Houses* a known Traitor to the *State*, should yet be prevailed upon to admit into their *Pulpits* a known *Traitor* to the *Church*. I hope I do not exceed the just Bounds of *Moderation*, I am sure not of *Truth*, when I consider those under that Character, who at the same time that they eat *of* her Bread, are eating *out* her Bowels; or, which is the same thing, are preying upon her *Vitals*, and destroying her Constitution: the Case of all those new Gospel-Preachers, who have not yet separated themselves from us; but who, after the Example of their subtle Predecessors, seem only to continue in the Bosom of the *Church*, till they can secure a safer Retreat, and warmer Bed in that of the *Tabernacle*.—And ought *we* then to second this Scheme, by giving them Opportunities of extending their Influence,

of multiplying Disciples, and of gathering Congregations out of ours ?

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

But here I must observe (tho' at first it may seem a little inconsistent with what hath gone before) that this Error for the most part hath so generous and amiable an Origin, or proceeds from so good a Cause, that one cannot help being sorry that it should be productive of so bad an Effect. The Cause I mean is *Charity*, and that of a most excellent Kind, the Support of Schools instituted for the Education of poor Children : than which a better Institution can scarcely be conceived, nor any Place found, where it is more remarkably encouraged, than in this opulent and charitable City. But the Misfortune is, that the Zeal of the Governors, or Managers of those pious Foundations, is too apt sometimes to hurry them
them

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

1st. That the best *End* is vitiated when pursued by wrong or injurious *Means*.—
 2^{dly}, That to have recourse to any unbecoming Arts, or irregular Methods, for the better Support of their Schools, reflects a Dishonour upon their laudable Undertaking, and argues a Distrust of Providence.—
 3^{dly}, That to provide for the poor Children by improper, or indirect Ways, is a bad Example to them, and may have an unhappy Influence upon
 their

their Behaviour during the whole Course of their Lives.—4thly, That as the principal End, or Design of Charity Schools, is the training up and grounding such Children in the true Principles of the Church of *England*, therefore to appoint Preachers on the Occasions mentioned, who inculcate quite contrary Doctrines, or Notions, and whose Master-craft is that of an easy Manner of insinuating themselves into the Hearts of the young and simple, the weak and credulous, is inconsistent and absurd.

The great Desire of seeing their Schools flourish is certainly a commendable Ambition, in those who have the Care and Superintendency over them; and when they prosecute that End by direct and ingenuous Means, the more they increase their Funds, the greater Thanks they deserve both of the Poor and of the Public, for that Work and Labour of Love.

It must also be confessed that a Methodist-Preacher generally produces them the most copious Collections. But why?
Because

Because he is sure to draw a numerous Crowd of enthusiastical Followers after him, who are willing to give liberally, (and many of them doubtless beyond their Abilities) for *his* Credit, and for the Good of the Faction ; that it may appear to the Ignorant or Superstitious, as if the rich Harvest produced was solely owing to the Efficacy of his Preaching, or to the Power of the Holy Ghost accompanying it, and in an extraordinary Manner opening the Hearts of his Hearers ; and that thence his Fame may be trumpeted thro' every *Parish*, and pave the way for him into every *Pulpit*. So that the retaining such Preachers on such Occasions, tho' it may be a private, pecuniary Benefit, is nevertheless a public and pestilential Injury, if the spreading of *Methodism* be so, which none but a *Methodist* can doubt : since it is the unhappy Means of introducing those false Brethren, or Heads of that Sect into many of our Churches, into which probably they might otherwise never have found an Entrance,

trance, nor, I hope, ever would again, did they who have hitherto inadvertently given them that Encouragement, seriously consider the pernicious Consequences arising from it.

But now tho' Charity Schools, or rather Charity Sermons, are frequently (as hath been observed) the Cause of the Error I have been animadverting upon, yet are they not the *necessary* Cause, nor are the Governors, or Trustees of those Schools so much Principals, as Accessories in it. They are indeed the first Movers; they take one single Step, and that a false one, but they can proceed no further. They do appoint the Preacher, but it is in the Power of the Rector, or Incumbent of every Parish, either to confirm, or annul such Appointment. And if we find that their Zeal hath misled them in their choice, it becomes us to check its Impetuosity, and to endeavour to bring it back into its right Course. And when this hath been done with due Temper, fair Remonstrances, and kind Expostulations, they

they cannot take it amiss, if at their Importunity, we should not think proper to prostitute our Pulpits.

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

which is the first Step towards his freeing himself *from* it.—

I am not ignorant upon what weak and slender Grounds a Suspicion of that sort is apt to be founded.—Sometimes a Preacher unhappily incurs it by his Voice, Manner, Gestures, Pronunciation, nay, even by his very Countenance.—Sometimes by the Pathos of his Stile, and the Vehemency of his Address. Sometimes by his being misunderstood by his less attentive, or distinguishing Hearers: In all such Cases, the Suspicion is trifling and groundless, and brought upon him by the Envy, or Ignorance of others.

But then sometimes again, he brings it upon himself; as by heaping Scripture upon Scripture, either foreign to his Subject, or unconnected with his Matter; by a studied and more frequent Repetition, or hackneyed use of the adorable Name of Jesus, than is either prudent, or decent; by being fond of rapturous Expressions, and high Flights of Piety,
 soaring

soaring quite beyond the Regions of Reason and common Sense; and especially by adopting and making use of those quaint and affected Terms and Phrases, which are peculiar to the Methodist-Preachers: Here then our Apprehension of his being one himself, hath no bad Foundation.

It is remarked in the Preface of an † Occasional Discourse lately published, that ‘ there is a sort of People, who think
 ‘ it sufficient to decry a good Man, or
 ‘ a good Work, if they brand it with
 ‘ the Name of *Methodist*.’ I am not acquainted with this sort of People, but if there be any such, I do agree with the Author, that they therein behave injudiciously and absurdly; nay, I should think them worthy of a much sharper and severer Reprimand; and yet was I to hear a Preacher describing the Pity and Compassion of our blessed Saviour,

† A Sermon lately preached by the Reverend Mr. Dodd, at St. Lawrence Jewry.

by the * *Yearnings of Immanuel's Bowels*, or inviting and entreating the Guilty to *accept of Pardon*; I must own I should, from such conceited Expressions, be induced to believe him a *Methodist*, unless I had very strong Reasons to the contrary: and this not with an Inclination to decry a *good Man*, but to discourage a *bad thing*. Or again, was I to hear another magnifying the Power of Christ in the Destruction of Sin and Satan, by giving him the quaint Title of the *Immortal Bruiser*; I should form the same Judgment of *him* likewise. But should I find the same Person afterwards suggesting, that † *Methodism is a weak, wild, and blasphemous Scheme; and that they who lead Men to hope for Pardon without Penitence, and to depend on an Enthusiastic Faith without Fruits, or a Righteousness without Works; lead Men to depend on that*

* See a weak and scurrilous Pamphlet, intituled, *Plain Queries*, humbly offer'd to the Clergy, p. 34.

† See Preface and Sermon mentioned before.

which

which hath no Existence, and to deceive themselves with a Delusion, which is of all others the most dangerous, I should then be ready and glad to change my Opinion of him, and to conclude, that if ever he was a Methodist, he is not one now, but that this amounts to a full and proper Recantation.

Which Satisfaction we ought to require of all reputed Methodists, before we trust that they are not so; we should be satisfied, either that they never belonged to that Fraternity, or that they have renounced it.—We are not to look upon it as sufficient, that they disclaim the Imputation, for that is what they all do; disavow the *Name*, at the same time that they adhere to the *Thing*; in like Manner as § one of the most popular Preachers amongst them, sneers at those who suspect him of being enthusiastical, in a Discourse, which from one End to the other is stuffed with Enthusiasm.—

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

Neither is it sufficient that they do not invariably preach the same weak, wild, and blasphemous Doctrines; that all their Discourses do not carry in their Foreheads the same deep Marks of Methodism; or that some of them, upon Occasion, are decent and orderly, or at least, stripp'd of every thing offensive, or obnoxious; for the *false* as well as the *true* Apostle knows how to *become all things to all Men*, or, *being crafty to catch them with Guile*. —But we ought to be well assured, that the Tenor of their Preaching hath been found and right, or free from the Errors of the Methodists; or if they had been unhappily drawn into them, we should have some public Testimony of their having forsaken them (for which that a little before-mentioned is a very good Precedent) before we oblige them with the Use of our Pulpits.

From which (I must but barely hint) it is requisite, as a further Caution, that we exclude all Strangers, except such as are recommended by those we can depend upon,

upon, both for the Lawfulness of their Ordination, and the Soundness of their Principles. Without this Guard, they would be liable to be annoyed, not only by Heterodox Preachers, but also by others, who have no Authority to preach at all: Of the *latter* have been many scandalous Instances; of the *former* we may now reasonably expect a great many more, if we neglect to use our utmost Care and Circumspection, in order to prevent it.

There is one other Case which belongs to that Branch of my Discourse, now under Consideration, and which is as worthy our particular Attention, as any that hath yet employed it.

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

their Licence; and *others*, who have changed them since. But then the Privilege thence derived, is a very short and limited one, reaches not beyond those particular Churches to which they are nominated or appointed; and therefore it lies upon us not to permit them to scatter their Poison in any other, but to confine them strictly within their own Bounds. So far the Remedy for this fore Evil is in our own Hands.

It is an Expression of our Duty and Obedience to our Ecclesiastical Rulers, not to oppose the Power they have given them, but to sit down content till they, in their Wisdom, shall judge it proper to revoke, or supersede it themselves: But methinks it is an Argument of our Weakness, or of something for which that venerable Bench will scarcely thank us to extend that Power further than they themselves have done. And tho' (doubtless for good and wise Reasons) they have not as yet interposed *their* Authority for silencing such Preachers; yet I am persuaded

suaded

suaded they would not be offended, if we exerted *ours*, for keeping them out of our Pulpits. However, this the Care of our Flocks requires of us.

Fifthly and lastly, It is also requisite, that in our weekly Discourses, as occasion serves, we endeavour to place the wild and whimsical Notions of those new Gospel-Preachers, in a true and proper Light:—That we expose the many pious Frauds and Artifices, by which they incessantly labour to seduce the ignorant and unwary, and to beguile unstable souls:—That we point out the pernicious Tendency of their Errors, both to Church and State:—That we shew that the Abettors of them are close Friends to the *Church of Rome*, by harmonizing or agreeing with her in almost every thing, except the Doctrine of Merit:—That they are no less kind to the Cause of *Infidelity*, by making the Christian Religion a mere Creature of the Imagination; a light and airy Phantom, which one single Breath of the most illiterate Free-thinker

thinker can easily demolish :—That they cut up *Christianity* by the Roots, by insinuating that a good Life is not necessary to Justification ; and under a Pretence of setting a higher Value upon Christ's propitiatory Sacrifice, frustrating and disappointing, as far as in them lies, the very End for which he died ; which was, that by Faith in him, and living up to his holy Rules and Precepts, we might become meet to be Partakers of his everlasting Kingdom:—— That they are Enemies, not only to the *Christian*, but also to *every Religion* whatsoever, in which Reason or common Sense hath any share, by labouring to subvert, or overturn the whole System of Morality, by speaking contemptuously of all the relative and reciprocal Duties of social Life, and by erecting a proud and enthusiastic Faith upon the Ruins of practical Holiness and Virtue :— And consequently that they must be Enemies to Society, by thus seeking to dissolve those Bands, or Ligaments, by which it is united and knit together.

Such

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

And now as a further Testimony how much this is our Duty, I will give you a Quotation from a favourite Author of the Methodists, tho' not so much their Friend as they imagine. ' If Satan destroy Men's
' Souls, he shall answer for them as a
' Murderer only, not as an Officer in-
' trusted with the Care of them; but if
' the Watchman doth not warn, if the
' Shepherd doth not feed, if the Prophet
' doth not instruct, if the Steward doth
' not provide, he shall answer not only
' for the Souls that have miscarried, but
' also for an Office neglected, for a Talent
' hidden, and for a Stewardship unfaith-
' fully administered.' Under whichsoever
of these Characters we are considered, I
do not see how we can be acquitted, if
we do not employ all our Skill, and exert
all

all our Power, for stopping the spreading Infection of that religious Enthusiasm, which now prevails amongst us, and will, it is to be feared, be more and more prevalent, if not opposed, at least, from the Pulpit, the Place from whence it chiefly springs.

Here, methinks, we might learn from our Adversaries to lift up our Voices and spare not, and to sound the Gospel-Trumpet (to borrow one of their Phrases) oftener and louder than we generally do. Which tho' from *our* Mouths might not perhaps give so *shrill*, would I'm sure (as the Apostle speaks) give a more *certain* or intelligible Sound than it doth from *theirs*. — As to mere *Sound*, with all its marvellous Operations, we are not ashamed to own their great Superiority. By *this* alone they are able to perform such Exploits as we justly stand amazed at. By *this* alone they can raise a Tempest in that Breast, in which we cannot rouse a Sigh, and make those Eyes flow over; from which we cannot draw a Tear.

But

But tho' we submit to them in the magical Force and Influence of Sound, and many other the like wonderful Gifts and Endowments, yet one Advantage we have over them (a very contemptible one, it's true, in their Eyes) and that is *Reason*. For want therefore of *other* and superior Powers, we should make the best use we can of *this*; and as we have no Pretensions to *Art*, try what we can do by *Argument*: hoping for that Blessing upon our weak Endeavours, whilst we are applying to the Judgment and Understanding of *our* Hearers, which they boldly presume upon, when only courting the blind Passions and Prejudices of *theirs*.

Reason indeed cannot be supposed to do much with an Enthusiast, whose first Principle it is to have nothing to do with Reason, but to resolve all his religious Opinions, or Notions, however erroneous and extravagant, into immediate Inspiration. But with others it will, more or less, have its Effect.——However, be our *Success* what it will, *Endeavours* are

our Duty; which we cannot neglect without disobeying the Apostle's Injunction, *to take heed unto our Flocks, that they be not scattered by those grievous Wolves which have entered in among us, or seduced by these false Brethren, who have arose from us, speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them.*

T H E E N D.
12 MR 58



October 2, 1759.

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