

## Edward Manning to Mr. Jones.

MECHIAS, ME., NOVEMBER 11TH, 1796.

Having received your epistle wherein are many things asserted against the cause and interests of the Redeemer, some false and some, (if they are as they have been represented to you) ought to be opposed with the greatest plainness; and some things that you are so much in the dark about, that every one who has any knowledge of divinity will see as clear as that two and two make four.

In the first place, respecting falsehoods, you mention Mr. Murphy's declaring that no minister ever went to heaven who penned his sermons, preached by notes or that had received a liberal education.

Numbers that were present when Mr. Murphy delivered his sentiments on these points declare it to be a falsehood, though he was not so prudent in his expressions as he ought to be. Mr. Murphy is a young man, exceedingly fond of reading sermons that have been penned. He highly esteems divines who many times preached by notes; and men who have been liberally educated (to my certain knowledge) he speaks of with tears of love; and their performances he respects so much, that he chooses to make them his constant companions. And, for my own part, I esteem such men (if men of grace and the good of souls at heart) as the excellent ones of the earth.

Secondly, in your comparing me to the Pharisee (a character, conduct and spirit I disdain) boldly, and in an unchristian-like manner, asserted that: That I defy any man in the world, with any show or candor of truth, to defend. That was, that I esteemed all as publicans and sinners who did not follow me. For I believe many of the established church to be eminent preachers of the gospel, whose writings I esteem beyond any others in the world, excepting the scriptures; and do I not in like manner, revere multitudes of the church scattered, and so of all the dissenting parties—I believe that of all kindreds, tongues, languages and people, there are some who worship and adore the author of their existence in spirit and in truth; and it is evident that the most of these denominations do not agree with me in sentiment respecting non-essential points.

These, my sentiments, are not kept secret. I have with cheerfulness declared them publicly to hundreds. And I am positive you nor any other person ever heard me intimate anything to the contrary in private.

Now, sir, if your conscience is clear in declaring I say anything of the kind, I am certain mine would not be. If I would say that I ever preached or believed so.

Thirdly, you say it is my intention to drive Mr. Brown out of this town in order to obtain an establishment for myself. This, sir, may be ranked among the greatest of falsehoods. Though, to say much about the offers I have had of a settlement here and many others places, together with the charge of a church at Cornwallis and Horton in Nova Scotia, would appear like ostentation. Therefore I shall observe to you that it is a design that never entered my heart. And though my veracity may not be relied on, yet I assure you that time which has iron paws will unfold this mystery and others, much in my favor.

Fourthly, you say that at the decease of the Rev. Mr. Lyon (a gentleman I have a great esteem for and I hope is now in heaven) that peace, order and harmony pervaded every part of your town. I believe that there was too much spiritual sloth or carnal peace among the people which according to direct information was the cause of old Mr. Lyon's weeping in public, and saying that he had preached among you twenty years and he did not know whether one soul was converted by his means or not, which does not argue much peace, order or harmony of a right kind.

Not only so, but numbers living in all kinds of vice which could escape the severity of the law of man; and so much averse to peace, order or harmony, that they were at variance one with another which they now declare themselves. Such persons prove now to the world that it is altered times with them. They are a people who appear to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world—a people who attend to secret devotion and in their families, (where there was nothing but profaning) the worship of God is set up; and the time formerly spent at the tavern, card table or in unnecessary visiting and gossiping from house to house, is cheerfully dedicated to God in assembling together for his worship. Such peace, order and harmony may I ever be instrumental in propagating, though it may scurrilously be called usurpation, division, heresy, schism or whatever malice can invent.

Fifthly, you mention that I can boldly pronounce your pastor and all those who will not follow me and approve of, etc., unconverted persons. Now sir, I can boldly declare that if you or an angel from heaven would come and tell me that I ever declared so, I should not believe them. Do I not charitably hope, Libby a Christian, Captain Smith, Mrs. Tabbe, John Munson, Samuel Smith's wife and more I hope are, that I am not acquainted with. This I declared when I was first acquainted with these worthy characters. Then how, in the name of common sense, (laying inspiration aside) could you con-

ceive and bring forth such a child unless you had deeply drunk into that spirit that opposes truth.

It is to be lamented that wherever there is a party spirit, much will be said on both sides that will not bear the scrutiny of an impartial man, who has discernment to discover the treachery of human nature therein. And as this may be the case in your apprehending, or being informed, that we hold that every one converted, or a good man has a right to preach the gospel. We hold that wherever God has a people converted or to convert, that he will raise and send out such officers as seemeth him good; or as will best answer his design or get most glory to his great name. If a Paul from the seats of learning, by renewing his heart and giving him a dispensation of the gospel or laying a necessity upon him, he must obey his God; and his natural abilities when improved by the Spirit of Christ, will be of great service to him in the work of the ministry.

If God sees fit to authorize a layman to preach the gospel, he will give him such qualifications as he needs for that important work, whereunto he is called by the Holy Ghost, and that degree of useful knowledge which is necessary for him to have. He is brought into a good school to attain it. He has a good instructor which is Jesus. He has the best of books to peruse, beginning at Moses and so on to Revelation, wherein is held forth all the essentials, so clear that every converted man may have a sufficient knowledge of to make him useful in his sphere, either as a preacher or private Christian. I am far from thinking every good or converted man has a right to preach. No they must be called of God to the work of the ministry, otherwise how can the Holy Ghost make them overseers over the flock of God.

You seem to speak as if I thought a jumble of words not half articulated and bellowed out with all the violence of a mad man and which cannot be understood by the audience is delivered only by divine inspiration.

Respecting this I will give you my sentiments; I believe that free religion is in the heart, and that it is a divine principle implanted there by the finger of God. As to doing God any benefit, it is no matter what language the person addresses the throne of grace in, or what expressions he makes use of, so as he is sincere, or whether he uses any, so as his heart prays; but in order that others may be benefitted or edified, I hold it requisite for the person that improves, especially a preacher, to speak plain, to have so good connection in his language and that it be spiritual. It is no matter if it exceeds in elegance the style of the royal psalmist or not, or if it does not equal it in every expression, so as it carries the same meaning with it, it will do.

But, sir, you know that a man may be a zealous and forcible patriot, and at the same time have a very poor delivery. He may be the most beneficial person to send on an embassy that is in the kingdom, in consequence of his understanding and zeal for the public weal. Whereas the person having the same degree of understanding and attachment to the country, without any impediment, would be a more fit person still. But shall the man be rejected because he is not perfect? No, by no means. For if this was the case, we would have but very few men in office among us. So respecting ministers, I am of your opinion, that every gospel minister ought to be a real child of God. But this don't argue that he must be a perfect man, or that one man can have all the gifts. One may be a very zealous man, and not have a good delivery; one may have a very low effeminate voice, another may have a very loud masculine voice; one may have a very musical voice, another may have a very harsh disagreeable voice; one may be of such a dull make as when he addresses a throne of grace or the congregation, to resemble one of the motley shapes that lately ascended from the dreary mansions; while another may through a contracted habit, natural disposition or zeal, or life in his soul, appear like a playactor, or even as bad as David did to Saul's daughter; and all be equally zealous in the cause of God.

The solemn and devout expressions of a sincere heart, uttered in a becoming manner, is what I would by no means find any fault with. It is that, that has the appearance, and no fruits corresponding thereto, is what I would oppose as a watchman of Israel stationed upon the walls of Jerusalem.

Respecting your objecting against me as a usurper, in my opinion, is so rash a judgment that I cannot find out how you can dispense with it with a clear conscience. It is true you may have heard many things prejudicial to my character as a gospel minister. You may have had things told respecting what I have said; your informers may be persons of good reputation; but how far the most sincere men may be led astray by prejudice or blind zeal is hard to determine. As to, personal acquaintance I am sure you have had so little of that, that you must be very rash to make up a judgment against me in a matter of such consequence so speedily. If you had given yourself the liberty to come and hear me improve in public; requested a conference with me, examined my manner of life, my travails of mind; my convictions, what reasons I had to believe that I was converted to God; how I came to undertake the work of the ministry, what my principles were; whether I had met with success in my

undertakings; whether the progress I made was of a Scriptural nature or a delusion; if I had come to Mechias for the fleece or for the good of the flock; in travail of spirit for poor Christian souls; and if you had found that I did not bear the fruits (for by their fruits ye shall know them says Christ; try the spirits for many false spirits have gone out into the world; try all things, hold fast that which is good; you have proved them which say they are apostles and are not, and do lie)—now, sir, if you had done your duty after this manner, and found me to be a man not what I profess, then you might censure me with propriety.

I make no doubt but you will feel hurt when you read these lines, being conscious of being slack in your duty and hasty in your judgment.

Sir, if my religion is not according to Scripture, it ought to be condemned. That it may be proved, I am ready and willing to have it examined. I am willing to have any man, or set of men, high, low, rich or poor, search me to the bottom. If my preaching has not precept and example to back it in holy writ, it will not stand the fire. If the church I belong to, and the churches I assist in organizing are not built upon that foundation which is already laid, namely, upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, the gates of hell will prevail over them. Now, sir, if you can say that it does not positively, and prove it from Scripture, you are right in your mode of proceeding.

You say it is a great piece of enthusiasm for me to say I pray, preach or speak by the influence or inspiration of the Divine Spirit, or to say I am sure of acceptance before God by the righteousness of Christ.

If Scripture was not so full of proofs of this doctrine I might be ashamed of it. But when I turn my eyes into my Bible, I see not a book, chapter or verse but proves this doctrine to be true. Not only so, but the venerable ancestors, you say so much about, hold it forth in the strongest terms. Mr. Flavel says that the confession of Christ in our souls saves us; the confession and profession of Christ honors God and edifies. Mr. Whitfield says that it is as easy for any adult to tell the dealings of God with their souls as to tell when they were married, if they have been joined in the holy bonds of matrimony. The assembly of divines at Westminster say that true believers have assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace and perseverance therein to the end.

You think very hard of me asking Mr. Brown if he could not repeat his prayer, or if he did not learn it out of some book.

Sir, after what he said himself, I might say so. If a man tells me as Mr. Brown did, that any one who professed to be converted to God or to know his sins forgiven, be called by the spirit of God to preach, to think that God gave or put words into their mouth, was a delusion of the devil. Sir if this is the case that he denies any such assistance or instruction, where must he get his sermons and prayers from? It must be from men or books, or both; for he told me that he got all his ideas from reading.

Though you may find much fault with me for praying for Mr. Brown, yet I find more fault with myself for not praying for him oftener than I do, both in public and in private.

You extol yourself for your good heart, good desires, exalted thoughts, etc., and positively and absolutely declare you equal me in piety, and go beyond me. Not only so, but every other or any other man. To say that this was an exalted spirit or the Pharisee-spirit would be needless; for we need not go out at noon day and say there is the sun, for it proves it itself. You say that my frequently mentioning the name of God borders on profanity. I remember Paul was charged with this heresy, and his answer was "that after the manner ye call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers." It seems to you that I treat that omnipotent Being as my familiar—"And truly their fellowship is with the Father and the Son." And were your wishes as great as they might be for the welfare of the church and State, you would be often upon your knees in private with tears of gratitude trickling down your aged cheeks, praising God for his kindness to the inhabitants of Mechias for sending men, the unlearned, among them, to stir up their minds and cultivate their morals, qualifying them for obeying the laws of God and man; and that God would raise up faithful laborers to send into his vineyard, who would have the welfare of souls at heart, and not think so much about the fleece. Then would you be a father indeed. You would be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them who do well. Instead of your opposing the work of God among the poor inhabitants, you would be going among them as a kind, tender, aged parent, strengthening the weak, instead of condemning them without ever going among them, or one of their meetings, or to hear their ministers or speakers.

I am of opinion that all legal contracts should be binding till dissolved by mutual consent of the parties. But if a contract is illegal, and it evidently appears in equity, it cannot stand; or if a man is bound to one or a number of men, it does not argue that he is bound to every man. For, if this was the case, if a man made a league with the devil, he never could get an acquaintance from him. Not only so, but in this enlightened age liberty of conscience