

3. Upon the whole, one cannot but observe how desirable it is, that all of us who are engaged in the same work should think and speak the same thing, be united in one judgment, and use one and the same language.

Do we not all now see ourselves, the Methodists (so called) in general, the Church and the Clergy, in a clear light?

We look upon ourselves, not as the authors or ringleaders of a particular sect or party (it is the farthest thing from our thoughts); but as messengers of God to those who are Christians in name, but heathens in heart and in life, to call them back to that from which they are fallen, to real genuine Christianity. We are, therefore, debtors to all these, of whatever opinion or denomination; and are consequently to do all that in us lies, to please all for their good, to edification.

We look upon the Methodists (so called) in general, not as any particular party (this would exceedingly obstruct the grand design, for which we conceive God has raised them up); but as living witnesses, in and to every party, of that Christianity which we preach; which is hereby demonstrated to be a real thing, and visibly held out to all the world.

We look upon England as that part of the world, and the Church as that part of England, to which all we who are born and have been brought up therein, owe our first and chief regard. We feel in ourselves a strong storge, a kind of natural affection for our country, which we apprehend Christianity was never designed either to root out or impair. We have a more peculiar concern for our brethren, for that part of our countrymen to whom we have been joined from our youth up, by ties of a religious as well as of a civil nature. True it is, that they are, in general, "without God in the world:" so much the more do our bowels yearn over them. They do lie "in darkness and the shadow of death:" the more tender is our compassion for them. And when we have the fullest conviction of that complicated wickedness which covers them as a flood, then do we feel the most (and we desire to feel yet more) of that inexpressible emotion with which our blessed Lord beheld Jerusalem, and wept and lamented over it. Then are we the most willing "to spend and to be spent" for them; yea, to "lay down our lives for our brethren."

We look upon the Clergy, not only as a part of these our brethren, but as that part whom God, by His adorable providence, has called to be watchmen over the rest, for whom therefore they are to give a strict account. If these then neglect their important charge, if they do not watch over them with all their power, they will be of all most miserable, and so are entitled to our deepest compassion. So that to feel, and much more to express, either contempt or bitterness towards them, betrays an utter ignorance of ourselves and of the spirit which we especially should be of.

Because this is a point of uncommon concern, let us consider it a little further.

[1.] The Clergy, wherever we are, are either friends to the truth, or neutrals, or enemies to it.

If they are friends to it, certainly we should do everything and omit everything, we can with a safe conscience, in order to continue and, if it be possible, increase their good-will to it.

If they neither further nor hinder it, we should do all that in us lies, both for their sakes and for the sake of their several flocks, to give their neutrality the right turn, that it may change into love rather than hatred.

If they are enemies, still we should not despair of lessening, if not removing their prejudice. We should try every means again and again; we should employ all our care, labour, prudence, joined with fervent prayer, to overcome evil with good, to melt their hardness into love.

It is true, that when any of these openly

wrest the Scriptures, and deny the grand truths of the Gospel, we cannot but declare and defend, at convenient opportunities, the important truths which they deny. But in this case especially we have need of all gentleness and meekness of wisdom. Contempt, sharpness, bitterness, can do no good. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Harsh methods have been tried again and again (by two or three unsettled raiders) at Wednesbury, St. Ives, Cork, Canterbury. And how did they succeed? They always occasioned numberless evils: often wholly stopped the course of the Gospel. Therefore, were it only on a prudential account, were conscience unconcerned therein, it should be a sacred rule to all our Preachers,—"No contempt, no bitterness, to the Clergy."

[2.] Might it not be another (at least prudential) rule for every Methodist Preacher, not to frequent any Dissenting meeting? (Though blame none who have been always accustomed to it.) But if we do this, certainly our people will. Now, this is *actually separating from the Church*. If, therefore, it is (at least) not expedient to separate, neither is this expedient. Indeed we may attend our assemblies, and the Church too; because they are at different hours. But we cannot attend both the meeting and the Church, because they are at the same hours.

If it be said, "But at the Church we are fed with chaff, whereas at the meeting we have wholesome food;" we answer, (i.) The *prayers of the Church* are not chaff; they are *substantial food* for any who are alive to God. (ii.) The Lord's Supper is not chaff, but pure and wholesome for all who receive it with upright hearts. Yea, (iii.) In almost all the sermons we here there, *we hear many great and important truths*: and whoever has a spiritual discernment, may easily separate the chaff from the wheat therein. (iv.) How little is *the case mended at the meeting!* Either the teachers are "new light" men, denying the Lord that bought them, and overturning His Gospel from the very foundations; or they are Predestinarians, and so preach predestination and final perseverance, more or less. Now, whatever this may be to them who are educated therein, yet to those of our brethren who have lately embraced it, repeated experience shows it is not wholesome food; rather, to them it has the effect of deadly poison. In a short time it destroys all their zeal for God. They grow fond of opinions, and strife of words; they *despise self-denial and the daily cross*; and to complete all, wholly separate from their brethren.

[3.] Nor is it expedient for any Methodist Preacher to imitate the Dissenters in their *manner of praying*: either in his tone,—all particular tones both in prayer and preaching should be avoided with the utmost care; nor in his language,—all his words should be plain and simple, such as the lowest of his hearers both use and understand; or in the length of his prayer, which should not usually exceed four or five minutes, either before or after sermon. One might add, neither should we sing like them, in a slow, drawling manner; we sing swift, both because it saves time, and because it tends to awake and enliven the soul.

[4.] If we continue in the Church, not by chance, or for want of thought, but upon solid and well-weighed reasons, then we should never speak contemptuously of the Church, or anything pertaining to it. In some sense it is the mother of us all, who have been brought up therein. We ought never to make her blemishes matter of diversion, but rather of solemn sorrow before God. We ought never to talk ludicrously of them; no, not at all, without clear necessity. Rather, we should conceal them as far as ever we can, without bringing guilt upon our own conscience. And we should all use every rational and scriptural means, to bring others to the same temper and behaviour. I say, "all;" for if some of us are thus minded,

and others of an opposite spirit or behaviour, this will breed a real schism among ourselves. It will of course divide us into two parties; each of which will be liable to perpetual jealousies, suspicions, and animosities against the other. Therefore, on this account likewise, it is expedient, in the highest degree, that we should be tender of the *Church to which we belong*.

[5.] In order to secure this end, to cut off all jealousy and suspicion from our friends, and hope for our enemies, of our having any design to separate from the Church, it would be well for every Methodist Preacher, who has no scruple concerning it, to attend the service of the Church as often as conveniently he can. *And the more we attend it, the more we love it, as constant experience shows*. On the contrary, the longer we abstain from it, the less desire we have to attend it at all.

[6.] Lastly. Whereas we are surrounded on every side by those who are equally enemies to us and to the Church of England; and whereas these are long practised in this war, and skilled in all the objections against it; while our brethren, on the other hand, are quite strangers to them all, and so, on a sudden, know not how to answer them; it is highly expedient for every Preacher to be provided with sound answers to those objections, and then to instruct the societies where he labours, how to defend themselves against those assaults. It would be therefore, well for you carefully to read over the "Preservative against unsettled Notions in Religion," together with "Predestination calmly considered." And when you are masters of them yourselves, it will be easy for you to recommend and explain to our societies; that they may "no more be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine;" but, being settled in one mind and one judgment by solid scriptural and rational arguments, "may grow up in all things into Him who is our Head, even Jesus Christ."

JOHN WESLEY.

I think myself bound in duty to add my testimony to thy brother's. His twelve reasons against our ever separating from the Church of England are mine also. I subscribe to them with all my heart. Only, with regard to the first, I am quite clear that it is *neither expedient nor lawful* for me to separate; and I never had the least inclination or temptation so to do. My affection for the Church is as strong as ever; and I clearly see my calling; which is, to live and to die in her communion. This, therefore, I am determined to do, the Lord being my helper.

I have subjoined the Hymns for the lay-Preachers; * still further to secure this end, to cut off all jealousy and suspicion from our friends, or hope from our enemies, of our *having any design of ever separating from the Church*. I have no secret reserve, or distant thought of it. I never had. Would to God all the Methodist preachers were, in some respect, like-minded with

CHARLES WESLEY.

Had the above sentiments, shared as will be seen by both the brothers Wesley, continued to be entertained by their followers at the present juncture, there would have been no necessity for the great schism which undeniably exists in our own day between the Methodist body and the Church. Greater liberality of feeling would have characterized Wesley's disciples, and a union with the Church so much desired by many of them, would have been no longer impracticable. Our space does not permit us to enter into all the details of Wesley's career during the latter period of his long life. "The position he occupied was most anomalous. He was a clergyman without regular duty, with no pulpit of his own, no cure of souls, no right to interfere in the instruction of the people. From this curious platform of