

A N
E S S A Y
O N
P R E A C H I N G.

L A T E L Y W R O T E

In A N S W E R to the Request of
a Young MINISTER.

By the A U T H O R of L E T T E R S *on* T H E R O N
and A S P A S I O.

T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N.

L O N D O N:

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A N
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DEAR SIR,

AS it gives me pleasure to see you concerned about maintaining the Christian doctrine in its purity, so I count it both my duty and privilege, to encourage you in that good concern. Meanwhile I must observe, that, as you have given me but small information about your situation and connections in regard to religion, or what sort of people your audience chiefly consists of, I cannot propose to be so particular and close with you as need might require. I am obliged to guess at these things, the best way I can, from the general hints you give me of your youth, and the dangers that surround you in regard to doctrine, and your question

about the proper way of preaching to saints and sinners.

Your situation, I shall suppose, is much like that of a parish-minister, who has in his congregation a number of serious professing people, as they are called, and who is heartily concerned to bring up all the rest to the same character. Let us then keep in our eye the notion of a parish-minister of the best reputed sort, and consider what influence his situation and leading purpose must naturally have on his conduct in regard to the Christian doctrine; and at the same time observe, how different his character must be from that of Paul, or even that which he desired to see in an ordinary teacher or elder of a Christian church. While we enter on this consideration, I must beg you would keep your eye on Paul's epistles, and bear in mind what a vast difference there is between a Christian church in Paul's sense, and any, even the best, of our modern parishes; and at the same time remember, that the character of a *good Christian* was no less obnoxious to the world in Paul's time than it is acceptable and reputed in our time, or rather that the word *Christian* has

has greatly changed its primitive signification.

As the parish-minister takes the charge of all the souls living in the district or part of the country called *his parish*, so he bears what is called *a pastoral relation* to them all. And they, as his christian flock, as already supposed related to Christ by their baptism, as some way subject to discipline and pastoral over-sight, must all be considered as Christians in some sense, however many classes they may be divided into, according to their different character. They may be classed as ignorant, careless, profane; as attentive, knowing, serious, experienced; or, by a more general division, as saints and sinners; still they are Christians, and objects of the pastoral care. As they are all supposed some way to hold the gospel for true, so the improvement of the more defective characters is not expected to arise from a persuasion of the truth of the gospel, but from a more diligent and devout attention to the minister, or attendance on ordinances, as it is called. And as it is the minister's great concern to promote this, so, generally speaking, his people may be fitly ranged into their different classes,

*in Ex
Distin*

classes, according as they have more or less attachment to his ministry, and the approved forms and exercises of religion. Thus the situation of the parish-minister must prove to him a great temptation of self-seeking, and likewise to change the gospel into a doctrine of self-righteousness in regard to his people.

At the same time it must be remembered, that the laws, manners, and customs of the country serve to enforce a certain degree of respect to the minister, to the stated weekly day for his officiating in public, and to other religious appointments, or, at least, to make the open and avowed neglect of these disreputable. Accordingly, while the minister works up his people to be serious by every self-righteous motive, making the joys and terrors of the world to become subservient to his purpose, he has at the same time the motive of worldly honour to prompt on the one hand, and the loss of worldly reputation to deter on the other.

Moreover, by ranging his people into different classes, either doctrinally or more practically, he finds means to stimulate them by the forcible motive of emulation. I know

none who hath made more notable use of this motive than Mr. John Wesley, who, I am told, hath distinguished his people into seekers, believers, holy bands, and the perfect. Others seem to content themselves with a more general distinction, dwelling chiefly on the difference between good and bad men, or between faints and finners; without ascertaining what makes a good and holy character by the rules of the gospel, but rather adapting their notions of goodness and holiness to what is highly esteemed among men in that part of the country where they live. But if, taking our notion of a good and holy man from Paul's doctrine, we should understand holiness to consist in the practice of brotherly love in separation from the world, we would soon find, that a man walking as becomes a faint, would be no less an object of disgust and hatred to those called *worthy godly ministers*, and their serious people, in our time, than true Christians were to those most esteemed for godliness amongst the Jews in Paul's time.

Now, keeping our eye on a parish, where the great majority have a devout character, under the care of a zealous minister, let us
suppose

suppose that a preacher of Paul's gospel makes his appearance among them, that curiosity procures him an audience, that the gospel makes a few converts, and then let us consider what would be the natural consequence.

But, first of all, I would represent him as addressing his audience to the following purpose. “ You have received much instruction
 “ about the law and the gospel: particularly
 “ you have been told, that the law says *Do* ;
 “ and the gospel, *Believe*. The distinction
 “ is plausible, and might pass without amend-
 “ ment, were it clearly understood at the
 “ same time, what is to be believed. But
 “ this is far from being the case. As few of
 “ you ever doubted much if the gospel was
 “ true, (for who but Infidels or Pagans
 “ would deny the gospel to be true !) ; so the
 “ persuasion you have hitherto entertained of
 “ the truth of the gospel, has never been confi-
 “ dered among you as what should or could be
 “ of sufficient weight, by itself alone, to give
 “ relief to a wounded conscience. Yet as the
 “ Scripture expressly connects salvation with
 “ the belief of the truth, and in a Christian
 “ land the Scripture must not be flatly con-
 “ tradicted,

“ contradicted, it became necessary to explain
 “ how men might believe or know the
 “ gospel to be true, and yet receive no spiri-
 “ tual benefit by that belief or knowledge.

“ In doing this, the bulk of teachers have
 “ not perceived, or have not been willing to
 “ observe, that the great mistake at bottom is
 “ about the proper answer to the main ques-
 “ tion, What is the gospel? Inclining rather
 “ to take it for granted, that this point is
 “ generally understood, and not seeing the
 “ like effects follow as attended the belief of
 “ the truth in the days of the apostles, their
 “ attention has been drawn away from the
 “ glory of the divine truth itself, and the rich
 “ relief which the bare truth alone affords to
 “ the guilty conscience so soon as under-
 “ stood; so that, instead of being occupied,
 “ like Paul, whose chief labour was to ex-
 “ pound and testify the kingdom of God, to
 “ persuade concerning Jesus, and to distin-
 “ guish the true gospel from all counterfeits,
 “ their chief labour has been to distinguish
 “ between a right and wrong way of be-
 “ lieving, to animate their people to dili-
 “ gence in the exercises supposed proper to
 B “ produce

“ produce a right faith, and to assure them
 “ they have attained such faith, provided they
 “ have found it attended with certain feel-
 “ ings, experiences, or inward motions of
 “ their hearts.

“ The effect of such doctrine in your
 “ minds has been, to make you consider the
 “ gospel-command to believe, as some very
 “ exalted refinement of the law of works,
 “ calling you, after you have been disap-
 “ pointed in all your endeavours to help
 “ yourselves, by doing in every other shape,
 “ now to bestir yourselves to perform some
 “ notable act of a very spiritual nature, called
 “ *believing* ; by doing which in a right man-
 “ ner, you have been led to expect com-
 “ plete relief. But let me ask such of you
 “ as have laboured most in this way, Can
 “ you present yourselves before God, and
 “ say, you have attained the expected suc-
 “ cess ? No ! if your consciences are not
 “ quite hardened, you must be straitened in
 “ your answer, and at most give a doubtful
 “ reply.

“ Let

“ Let us then set aside the deceitful ways
 “ of handling the distinction between the
 “ law and the gospel, and observe how it is
 “ illustrated in the Scripture. And where
 “ can we better look for a proper illustration
 “ of it, than to the dying words of the Lord
 “ and Saviour? who just before he bowed the
 “ head, and gave up the ghost, said, *It is*
 “ *finished*, or, *It is done*. Moses in his law
 “ said, *Do*; and while he mentioned the
 “ things required, said, *The man that doth*
 “ *them shall live in them*. No such man ap-
 “ peared, till Jesus came as the end of the
 “ law, and at the close of his work said, *It*
 “ *is done*. Thus, as the law was given by
 “ Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus
 “ Christ: for Moses said, *Do*; and Jesus says,
 “ *It is done*; and this is the great point proved
 “ by his resurrection.

“ The law is called *the ministration of con-*
 “ *demnation*, as it declared our duty, and
 “ cursed every transgressor: the gospel is
 “ called *the ministration of righteousness*, as it
 “ brings the glad tidings that a perfect righ-
 “ teousness is already wrought for the un-
 “ godly.

“ godly. The law came demanding right-
 “ eousness ; the gospel brings you the good
 “ news, that its demand is fully answered.

“ Are you persuaded of this, or does this
 “ stand true in your consciences ? Then
 “ you have found an answer to that most
 “ pinching of all questions, *Wherewith shall*
 “ *I come before the Lord ?* And now you
 “ can understand the nature of the command
 “ to believe, that it is not a command calling
 “ you to do any thing, or any new law of
 “ works, but the gracious voice of God
 “ willing you to know, that every thing re-
 “ quired is already done, even a gracious
 “ proclamation, stamped with the highest
 “ proofs of divine authority, approaching you
 “ with all the force of a divine law, and car-
 “ rying in itself evidence all-sufficient to
 “ command the belief or persuasion of your
 “ hearts. For how vain, how absurd is it to
 “ talk of a command to believe, that carries
 “ not along with it evidence sufficient to
 “ command persuasion, or to produce belie-
 “ in the heart ?

“ Moreover

“ Moreover, the same authority which
 “ commands your belief, and gives you life
 “ by what you believe, likewise commands
 “ and directs you to the proper work and
 “ exercise wherein that life is to be enjoyed,
 “ and promoted to its perfection. And that
 “ work is no other than the work of bro-
 “ therly love. Faith works by love. The
 “ life it conveys, is the life and joy of love.
 “ He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God.
 “ And the joy of love stands in the closest
 “ connection with the self-denied labour of
 “ it. Accordingly the great supernatural com-
 “ mandment which gives life to the dead in
 “ trespasses and sins, runs thus in its two
 “ branches: 1 John iii. 23. *And this is his com-
 “ mandment, that we should believe on the name
 “ of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another,
 “ as he gave us commandment. And he that
 “ keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and
 “ he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth
 “ in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*
 “ And surely nothing can be more proper,
 “ than that the gracious commandment which
 “ gives life to the dead, by making the evi-
 “ dence of the truth, or the light of divine
 “ love

“ love to shine into their hearts, should like-
 “ wise enjoin those who are made alive, the
 “ proper work and exercise wherein their new
 “ life is to be enjoyed, and promoted to its
 “ perfection.

“ Do you then hold for true what the
 “ apostles testified concerning Jesus of Naza-
 “ reth? Then surely you hold their testi-
 “ mony to be gospel, to be good news or glad
 “ tidings; for in this light it appears to every
 “ one who believes or holds it for true. Do
 “ you think it a faithful saying, that Christ
 “ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?
 “ Then surely you must think it a very ac-
 “ ceptable saying, yea worthy of all accepta-
 “ tion. You must consider that saying, or,
 “ which is the same thing, him of whom it
 “ testifies, as worthy to be affectionately re-
 “ ceived, embraced, or cleaved to, at the rate
 “ of risking or losing every thing besides.
 “ The first Christians received Jesus Christ
 “ as their Lord; when, separating themselves
 “ from all strangers, they joined together in
 “ the Christian church order and discipline,
 “ for the exercise of brotherly love according
 “ to Christ’s command.

“ Read

“ Read the Acts of the apostles, and you
 “ will find, that to be added or joined to the
 “ church, to be added to the Lord, and
 “ with purpose of heart to cleave to the
 “ Lord, are all expressions of the same im-
 “ port.

“ Paul making joyful mention of the or-
 “ der of the Colossian church, and the sted-
 “ fastness of their faith thereby manifested,
 “ exhorts them to perseverance in that order
 “ which appeared so beautiful in his eyes,
 “ in this manner: *As ye have therefore re-*
 “ *ceived Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in*
 “ *him.* He saw how they had received Christ
 “ by the order into which his authority had
 “ introduced them; therefore when he ex-
 “ horts them to walk in Christ, as they had
 “ received him, they could be at no loss to
 “ see that the Christian walk he was calling
 “ for, was no other than perseverance in that
 “ order into which Christ’s authority had
 “ brought them, by their continuing to ob-
 “ serve all things Christ commanded his
 “ apostles to teach his disciples. All the
 “ practices whereof Paul was both a teacher
 and

“ and pattern to the Gentile churches, were
 “ ways of walking in Christ. So he tells
 “ the Corinthians, he had sent them Timo-
 “ thy his beloved son and faithful in the
 “ Lord, *who, says he, shall bring you into re-*
 “ *membrance of my ways which be in Christ,*
 “ *as I teach every where in every church.* You
 “ may be well assured then, that all those
 “ teachers talk very idly to you, to say no
 “ worse, who preach up any other way, of
 “ receiving, resting upon, embracing, or
 “ cleaving to Christ, or who go about to de-
 “ scribe any other way of walking in Christ,
 “ than as the Colossian church received
 “ him.

“ Now, after all that can be said about
 “ the evidence of the truth, or divine glory
 “ of the gospel, it is to be feared, some of
 “ you will still object, and say, “ We can-
 “ not believe.—We have been diligent in
 “ reading, praying, and hearing sermons, en-
 “ deavouring to obtain a comfortable change
 “ of our state; and though we cannot say
 “ our endeavours have hitherto been success-
 “ ful, yet we retain a sincere esteem for
 “ Christ’s worthy ministers and servants, and
 “ would

“ would be glad if any of them could direct
 “ us how to exercise ourselves in religion
 “ more to our real benefit and comfort than
 “ formerly: for, without our finding in our-
 “ selves at least some promising sign of an ap-
 “ proaching change to the better, we cannot
 “ be persuaded that what Christ did long be-
 “ fore we were born, is alone sufficient to
 “ justify us as we presently stand. Can
 “ you give us no directions then how we
 “ should be exercised in order to such a
 “ change?”—The answer is short, None at
 “ all. You have heard what the apostles tes-
 “ tify of Christ, and you cannot believe it ;
 “ stand to your hazard then, and take the
 “ consequence.

“ The apostles long ago gave their sense
 “ of your hazard, as well as of the true rea-
 “ son of your unbelief, when setting forth
 “ the evidence of the truth, they added, *Be-*
 “ *ware therefore lest that come upon you*
 “ *which is written in the prophets, Behold, ye*
 “ *despisers, and wonder, and perish.* You
 “ cannot believe, because whatever honour-
 “ able mention you make of Christ and his
 “ work, still you think his work too little,

“ too despicable a thing to be your only
 “ and entire recommendation to the divine
 “ favour without more. Go on then with
 “ your serious endeavours to perform the ar-
 “ duous task ye have heard called by the
 “ name of faith. As you sow, you shall
 “ reap. All the encouragement you have
 “ from him who speaks in the Scriptures,
 “ runs thus: *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire,*
 “ *that compass yourselves about with sparks:*
 “ *walk in the light of your fire, and in the*
 “ *sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye*
 “ *have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sor-*
 “ *row.*

“ But some will still object and say, What
 “ strange doctrine is this! Would you hold
 “ forth the gospel in such a light as to set
 “ aside our duty, or rather to make our do-
 “ ing our duty a crime? The answer is ready;
 “ Far be it! You have got no reason for
 “ advancing such a question. The divine
 “ law given long before Christ came, and to
 “ which every man’s conscience bears witness,
 “ is holy, just, and good; universally and
 “ invariably binding on all men, whether
 “ they believe the gospel or not. The gospel
 “ never

“ never came to weaken, but greatly to en-
 “ force the obligation of the divine law.
 “ Would you know your duty then? Consult
 “ the law. Want you directions what to do,
 “ or how to be exercised in order to live and
 “ be happy? The law contains a complete
 “ sum of such directions. The law of the
 “ Lord is perfect. And you cannot seek di-
 “ rections any where else without charging it
 “ with imperfection. It is in all respects your
 “ indispensable duty to do all things required
 “ by it. Moses has often declared, that the
 “ man who doth these things shall live in
 “ them. And this he declared to those who
 “ were already finners, even as we are; for
 “ he had none but such to give his law to.
 “ Ezekiel in like manner says, *If the wicked*
 “ *turn from his sin, and do that which is law-*
 “ *ful and right;—if he walk in the statutes of*
 “ *life without committing iniquity; he shall*
 “ *surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins*
 “ *that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto*
 “ *him: he hath done that which is lawful*
 “ *and right; he shall surely live.* Jesus Christ
 “ also pointed at the extensive demand of
 “ the perfect law, and addressing himself like-
 “ wise to such as were already finners, says ex-

“ presly, *This do, and thou shalt live.* Do your
 “ Duty then, and you shall certainly live
 “ and be happy ; for this is the uniform doc-
 “ trine of Moses and the prophets, con-
 “ firmed by the declaration of Jesus Christ
 “ himself.

“ Many, despising disputes about faith,
 “ take a pleasure in saying, If we do as we
 “ would be done by, we hope God will not
 “ condemn us, or make any inquiry about
 “ what was our faith. Agreed : Do this, and
 “ you shall live. If you hope then to live
 “ by doing your duty, take care henceforth
 “ to do it perfectly. If you who have al-
 “ ready sinned, hope to live by your repen-
 “ tance, take care that your repentance be
 “ sincere, uniform, effectual, and permanen-
 “ Let your repentance be such an effectua-
 “ turning away from all sin, as to admit
 “ no return in any one instance. Let it be
 “ such a turning to righteousness as to admit
 “ of no failure. For the moment you fail
 “ any one instance, all your former righteou-
 “ ness goes for nothing. Hearken not to the
 “ teachers, who would persuade you to cor-
 “ pendize or abridge your duty into one

“ m

“ more acts of faith, contrition, or repen-
 “ tance. This would be making void, yea
 “ mocking both the law and the gospel: for
 “ neither of these acknowledge that for righ-
 “ teousness which comes short of perfection.
 “ Do not then imagine, that God will accept
 “ of any righteousness short of perfection, be it
 “ called sincerity, or by any other name. If you
 “ pretend then to do any thing less or more
 “ in order to acceptance with God, you must
 “ do every thing. God is not to be mocked.
 “ Go not about to impose on yourselves, by
 “ substituting, instead of the perfect obedience
 “ God’s law requires, any ambiguous, equi-
 “ vocal acts or motions of the heart. For you
 “ cannot do your duty to purpose, unless in
 “ plain terms, and in good earnest, you obey
 “ every divine precept, performing every
 “ thing required, and avoiding every thing
 “ forbidden by the divine law.—On the
 “ other hand, if there be any of you who,
 “ after many repeated trials, have found all
 “ your most serious endeavours to do your
 “ duty to prove in the issue both unsuccess-
 “ ful and deceitful, and have accordingly
 “ been brought to despair of so much as
 “ thinking one good thought, if it could save
 “ your

“ your souls for ever, then certainly you
 “ have great reason to bless God for that
 “ gospel, which evinces, with the highest
 “ kind of demonstration, that all is already
 “ done.”

Thus far the preacher of Paul's gospel ;
 who, were he to preach never so oft, hath no
 other weapon to handle, nothing else to insist
 on in regard to justification, but the simple
 truth, even the divine testimony concerning a
 righteousness already wrought for those who
 have none of their own. He appears not in
 the character of a director, but rather as a
 herald : he comes not to impose upon his
 hearers by changing the gospel into some new
 law of works : he comes not proposing new
 regulations or refinements about duty, teaching
 men how to exert or exercise themselves to
 better purpose than formerly, but declaring
 and evincing, from the Scriptures, what God
 hath already done for the relief of those who
 are in desperate circumstances.

Thus employed was Paul, who gives this
 account of his ministry : *We have renounced
 the bidden things of dishonesty, not walking in
 craftiness,*

craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. In the book of the Acts we have Paul's constant manner of preaching often described to us, particularly Acts xvii. 2. *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, (or evincing), that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you, is Christ. Yea, when he had occasion to preach at Rome a whole day, from morning unto evening, we are told what he insisted on all the time, in this manner: Acts xxviii. 23. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. Nor did he change his subject, though he many times preached at Rome: And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence,*

no man forbidding him. And he himself says to the Corinthians, *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* And from many other passages, such as Acts ix. 20. and xx. 24. and 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7. it appears, that this was the topic he never wearied of, from his conversion to his death. What a poor figure would that clergyman make, who had no other topic to insist on, nothing else to attach his parish to him but this!

Let us now suppose, as formerly hinted, that Paul's gospel makes a dozen or two of converts in such a parish as has been described; that they obtain two or more elders, as a presbytery, to preside among them; and then let us observe the consequence. You find them immediately complying with the exhortation which Peter largely insisted on to the believers on the day of Pentecost, and which is summed up in these words: *Save (or separate) yourselves from this untoward generation.* And henceforward you find them continuing stedfastly, every Lord's day at least,

~~according to the apostle's teaching, as the apostle says, that the~~
~~unbelievers should be separated from the believers.~~
~~And this is the way to the kingdom of heaven.~~

least, in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, (or contribution), and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. You find them maintaining charity, by the exercise of the Christian discipline, according to Matth. xviii. and 1 Corinth. chap. v. You find them saluting one another with a kiss of charity, using hospitality one to another without grudging, ready to do the meanest offices of love, not neglecting even to wash one another's feet when need requires. In a word, you find them maintaining fervent charity among themselves, in opposition to all the enemies of the Christian faith and order, standing fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, in nothing terrified by their adversaries. Read Paul's first chapter to the Philippians, and you will find this is what he meant by a conversation becoming the gospel; so you may perceive that his notion of such a conversation differed very widely from what is now entertained by those reckoned the best ministers, and the best people. As the elders would be the leaders in such a conversation, their employment must be of a very different nature from that of the parish-minister; but how great the difference may not

D

so

*the church is a simple body
of men highly united to each other
in a common life*

so readily and distinctly appear, but to those who have seen both. How provoking all this would appear to their neighbours, especially to those reckoned the godly, or the saints of the parish, can scarce be rightly conceived, except by those who have had occasion to observe the fact.

The world can patiently bear with a man holding almost any peculiarity of opinion, while it has no very uncommon effect on his conduct : but the appearance of a society closely united by, and at all hazards firmly maintaining that divine truth which condemns the world, is a sight which the world never did, never can endure with patience. It proves an intolerable eye-sore to them, galling them in the tenderest part, and provoking them to persecute, as far as civil government, or other restraints interposed by Providence, will allow : so that however they may be restrained, the same disposition to treat Christ's disciples with all manner of hatred and contempt, will still be manifest, till Christ appear the second time to take vengeance on his adversaries.

~~As for the scripture was approved that~~
~~with a church discipline delivered to the~~
~~it is not~~

It was the will of Christ, that his true disciples should always be thus obnoxious to the world, even as they were all predestinated to be conformed to his image. Paul joyfully concludes, that the word of God had obtained its proper effect in the Thessalonian church, because he found them suffering like things from their countrymen, as the Judæan churches did from the Jews. And it is evident from many places of the New Testament, that it cannot appear that the word of God has its proper effect in any other age or country, but where Christ's disciples are distinguished from their countrymen, and obnoxious to their hatred, in like manner as Christ and his followers were.

The apostles were so far from considering such a situation as disadvantageous to true Christianity, that we find them always taking notice of it with joy and thanksgiving, as an evident token that their friends in the faith so situated, were predestinated to eternal glory. So we never find them signifying a wish that the case were otherwise, or giving directions to Christians for operating a change of their

D 2

situation,

~~... the world ...~~
~~... the world ...~~
~~... the world ...~~

situation, but very much to the contrary. They would not exchange the joyful prospect they had of the future glory of their suffering friends, for all the benefits which the clergy have since received, or expected, from an established or triumphant state of the church.

Very different indeed were their principles and dispositions from those of our zealous orthodox clergy, who labour and long for such a flourishing state of Christianity in this world, as, being no more depressed by bearing the cross after Christ, may be attended with universal peace and prosperity. What a fine parade of Christian zeal is exhibited by your promoters of schemes for converting the Indians, when, in their sermons before large congregations, where your wealthy traders make the principal figure, they move them to contribute, by representing, in the most flattering view, the great difference between their Christian audience and the unconverted Indians; by shewing what a blessed and honourable work it would be to contribute to the conversion of those who are sitting in darkness, and under the shadow of death; and what a glorious prospect to see so many Pagan

~~and perhaps at not mentioning~~
~~of the number of such large numbers~~
~~of the number of such large numbers~~

Pagan nations translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ; not forgetting to remind the audience, that, in thus promoting the kingdom of Christ, they would at the same time promote the extent and glory of the British empire!

What bewitching views are these! Yet we cannot suppose, that the Christian audience, or their teachers, mean any other thing by the conversion of the Indians, than their becoming like themselves, that is, in reality at least twofold worse than they were before they became acquainted with such neighbours. For who knows not that the Indians daily lose their former simplicity of manners, and grow hardened in vices scarce known among them before, in proportion as their intercourse with their Christian neighbours increases?

After all, it will perhaps be difficult for you to unmask the zealous clergy, so as clearly to perceive the hypocrisy of their plausible pretences of promoting Christ's kingdom, till they be put to the proper and most effectual trial, by seeing the genuine appearance of Christ's kingdom, as exhibited in the first churches,

presented

~~in the hands of the~~
~~British national origin of Government~~

presented before them, or openly showing itself in their neighbourhood, in the confident profession of the apostolic faith, love, and hope. If you should see their dislike and contempt of this holding pace with their zeal for national Christianity, then you could no longer doubt how they stood affected to Christ and his kingdom.

May I presume then that you will fairly make the trial, and that so soon as you can find two or three hearty friends in the faith, you will closely join yourself to them, in determined separation from all others, waiting on the Lord by prayer and supplication; till he increase your number, and grant you the complete order of a church? Then your very situation, both in regard to the concerns of your union among yourselves, and your opposition to your common adversaries, will shew you a great propriety in many passages of the New Testament, that you could not otherwise well perceive; because it would realize to you the situation of the first churches, and gradually lead you into the same views that filled the minds of the apostles when they wrote to the churches. You will then find no
 occasion

occasion for the common way of preaching to faints and finners; for you will soon find the faints of the parish to be the greatest enemies to you, and to the gospel maintained by you. But if you think of faints in the same sense with Paul, it will be found, that the doctrine fittest to heal the conscience of the greatest finner is the best food for them; for holiness consists in the love of that very doctrine. Wishing you then all comfort in your becoming a brother and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, I am,

DEAR SIR,

May 6, 1763.

Yours, &c.