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A LETTER

TO THE AUTHOR OF

“THE ENTHUSIASM OF METHODISTS AND PAPISTS COMPARED.”

*Agedum! Pauca accipe contra.**—HOR.

SIR,

1. IN your late pamphlets you have undertaken to prove, that Mr. Whitefield and I are gross enthusiasts; and that our “whole conduct is but a counterpart of the most wild fanaticisms of the most abominable communion in its most corrupt ages.” (*Preface*, p. 3.)

You endeavour to support this charge against us by quotations from our own writings, compared with quotations from celebrated writers of the Romish communion.

2. It lies upon me to answer for one. But I must not burden you with too long an answer; lest, “for want either of leisure or inclination,” (*ibid.* p. 5,) you should not give this, any more than my other tracts, a reading. In order therefore to spare both you and myself, I shall consider only your First Part; and that as briefly as possible. Accordingly, I shall not meddle with your other quotations; but, leaving them to whom they may concern, shall only examine whether those you have made from my writings prove the charge of enthusiasm or no.

This I conceive will be abundantly sufficient to decide the question between you and me. If these do prove the charge, I am cast; if they do not, if they are the words of truth and soberness, it will be an objection of no real weight against sentiments just in themselves, though they should also be found in the writings of Papists; yea, of Mahometans or Pagans.

* Thus translated by Boseawen:—

“Now hear what briefly I reply.”—ERR.

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3. Let the eight pages you borrow stand as they are. I presume they will do neither good nor harm. In the tenth you say, "The Methodists act on the same plan with the Papists; not, perhaps, from compact and design; but a similar configuration and texture of brain, or the fumes of imagination, producing similar effects. From a commiseration of horror, arising from the grievous corruptions of the world, perhaps from a real motive of sincere piety, they both set out with warm pretences to a reformation." Sir, this is an uncommon thought,—that sincere piety should arise from the "configuration and texture of the brain!" as well as, that "pretences to a reformation" should spring from "a real motive of sincere piety!"

4. You go on: "Both commonly begin their adventures with field-preaching." (*Enthusiasm, &c.*, p. 11.) Sir, do you condemn field-preaching *toto genere*, as evil in itself? Have a care! or you (I should say, the gentleman that assists you) will speak a little too plain, and betray the real motives of his sincere antipathy to the people called Methodists.

Or do you condemn the preaching on Hannam-Mount, in particular, to the colliers of Kingswood? If you doubt whether this has done any real good, it is a very easy thing to be informed. And I leave it with all impartial men, whether the good which has in fact been done by preaching there, and which could not possibly have been done any other way, does not abundantly "justify the irregularity of it." (Page 15.)

5. But you think I am herein inconsistent with myself. For I say, "The uncommonness is the very circumstance that recommends it." (I mean, that recommended it to the colliers in Kingswood.) And yet I said, but a page or two before, "We are not suffered to preach in the churches; else we should prefer them to any places whatsoever."

Sir, I still aver both the one and the other. I do prefer the preaching in a church when I am suffered: And yet, when I am not, the wise providence of God overrules this very circumstance for good; many coming to hear, because of the uncommonness of the thing, who would otherwise not have heard at all.

6. Your Second charge is, that I "abuse the Clergy, throw out so much gall of bitterness against them, and impute this black art of calumny to the Spirit and power given from God." (Page 15.)

Sir, I plead Not Guilty to the whole charge. And you have

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not cited one line to support it. But if you could support it, what is this to the point in hand? I presume calumny is not enthusiasm. Perhaps you will say, "But it is something as bad." True; but it is nothing to the purpose: Even the imputing this to the Spirit of God, as you here represent it, is an instance of art, not of enthusiasm.

7. You charge me, Thirdly, with "putting on a sanctified appearance, in order to draw followers, by a demure look, precise behaviour, and other marks of external piety. For which reason," you say, "Mr. Wesley made and renewed that noble resolution, not willingly to indulge himself in the least levity of behaviour, or in laughter, no, not for a moment; to speak no word not tending to the glory of God, and not a tittle of worldly things." (Pages 18, 19.)

Sir, you miss the mark again. If this "sanctified appearance was put on to draw followers," if it was for "this reason" (as you flatly affirm it was) that "Mr. Wesley made and renewed that noble resolution;" (it was made eleven or twelve years before, about the time of my removal to Lincoln College;) then it can be no instance of enthusiasm, and so does not fall within the design of your present work; unless your title-page does not belong to your book; for that confines you to the enthusiasm of the Methodists.

8. But to consider this point in another view: You accuse me of "putting on a sanctified appearance, a demure look, precise behaviour, and other marks of external piety." How are you assured, Sir, this was barely external, and that it was a bare appearance of sanctity? You affirm this as from personal knowledge. Was you then acquainted with me three or four and twenty years ago? "He made and renewed that noble resolution," in order to "draw followers." Sir, how do you know that? Are you in God's place, that you take upon you to be the searcher of hearts? "That noble resolution, not willingly to indulge himself in the least levity of behaviour." Sir, I acquit you of having any concern in this matter. But I appeal to all who have the love of God in their hearts, whether this is not a rational, scriptural resolution, worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.—"Or in laughter, no, not for a moment." No, nor ought I to indulge it at all; if I am conscious to myself, it hurts my soul. In which let every man judge for himself. "To speak no word not tending to the glory

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of God." A peculiar instance of enthusiasm this! "And not a tittle of worldly things." The words immediately following are, "Others may, nay, must. But what is that to me?" (words which, in justice, you ought to have inserted,) who was then entirely disengaged from worldly business of every kind. Notwithstanding which, I have often since engaged therein, when the order of Providence plainly required it.

9. Though I did not design to meddle with them, yet I must here take notice of three of your instances of Popish enthusiasm. The First is, that "Mechtildis tortured herself for having spo en an idle word." (Page 19.) (The point of comparison lies, not in torturing herself, but in her doing it on such an occasion.) The Second, that "not a word fell from St. Katherine of Sienna, that was not religious and holy." The Third, that "the lips of Magdalen di Pazzi were never opened but to chant the praises of God." I would to God the comparison between the Methodists and Papists would hold in this respect! yea, that you and all the Clergy in England were guilty of just such enthusiasm!

10. You cite as a Fourth instance of my enthusiasm, that I say, "A Methodist (a real Christian) cannot adorn himself, on any pretence, with gold or costly apparel." (Page 21.) If this be enthusiasm, let the Apostle look to it. His words are clear and express. If you can find a pretence to set them aside, do. I cannot; nor do I desire it.

11. My seeming contempt of money," (page 26,) you urge as a Fifth instance of enthusiasm. Sir, I understand you. You was obliged to call it *seeming*, lest you should yourself confute the allegation brought in your title-page. But if it be only *seeming*, whatever it prove besides, it cannot prove that I am an enthusiast.

12. Hitherto you have succeeded extremely ill. You have brought five accusations against me; and have not been able to make one good. However, you are resolved to throw dirt enough, that some may stick. So you are next to prove upon me, "a restless impatience and insatiable thirst of travelling, and undertaking dangerous voyages, for the conversion of infidels; together with a declared contempt of all dangera, pains, and sufferings; and the designing, loving, and praying for ill usage, persecution, martyrdom, death, and hell." (Page 27.)

In order to prove this uncommon charge, you produce four

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scraps of sentences, (page 31,) which you mark as my words, though, as they stand in your book, they are neither sense nor grammar. But you do not refer to the page, or even the treatise, where any one of them may be found. Sir, it is well you hide your name, or you would be obliged to hide your face from every man of candour or even common humanity.

13. "Sometimes indeed," you say, "Mr. Wesley complains of the scoffs both of the great vulgar and the small;" (page 32;) to prove which, you disjoint and murder (as your manner is) another of my sentences. "But at other times the note is changed, and 'till he is despised, no man is in a state of salvation.'" *The note is changed!* How so? When did I say otherwise than I do at this day, viz., "that none are children of God but those who are hated or despised by the children of the devil?"

I must beg you, Sir, in your Third Part to inform your reader, that, whenever any solecism or mangled sentences appear in the quotations from my writings, they are not chargeable upon me; that if the sense be mine, (which is not always; sometimes you do me too much honour, even in this,) yet I lay no claim to the manner of expression; the English is all your own.

14. "Corporal severities or mortification by tormenting the flesh," (page 31,) is the next thing you charge upon me. Almost two sentences you bring in proof of this. The one, "Our bed being wet," (it was in a storm at sea,) "I laid me down on the floor, and slept sound till morning; and I believe I shall not find it needful to go to bed, as it is called, any more." But whether I do or not, how will you prove, that my motive is, to "gain a reputation for sanctity?" I desire (if it be not too great a favour) a little evidence for this.

The other fragment of a sentence speaks "of bearing cold on the naked head, rain and wind, frost and snow." (Page 32.) True; but not as matter of "mortification, by tormenting the flesh." Nothing less. These things are not spoken of there as voluntary instances of mortification; (you yourself know perfectly well, they are not, only you make free with your friend;) but as some of the unavoidable inconveniences which attend preaching in the open air.

Therefore you need not be so "sure that the Apostle condemns that *αφειδια σωματος*, 'not sparing the body,' as useless and superstitious; and that it is a false show of humility."

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(Page 33.) Humility is entirely out of the question, as well as chastity, in the case of hardships endured (but not properly chosen) out of love to the souls for which Christ died.

15. You add a word or two of my "ardent desire of going to hell," which, you think, I "adopted from the Jesuit Nieremberg." (Page 34.) Sir, I know not the man. I am wholly a stranger both to his person and to his doctrine. But if this is his doctrine, I disclaim it from my heart. I ardently desire, that both you and I may go to heaven.

But "Mr. Wesley says, 'A poor old man decided the question of disinterested love. He said, I do not care what place I am in. Let God put me where he will, or do with me what he will, so I may set forth his honour and glory.'" (Page 35.)

He did so. And what then? Do these words imply "an ardent desire of going to hell?" I do not suppose the going to hell ever entered into his thoughts. Nor has it any place in my notion of disinterested love. How you may understand that term, I know not.

But you will prove I have this desire, whether I will or no. You are sure this was my "original meaning," (page 36,) in the words cited by Mr. Church,

"Doom, if thou canst, to endless pain,
Or drive me from thy face."

"God's power or justice," you say, "must be intended; because he speaks of God's love in the very next lines,

'But if thy stronger love constrains,
Let me be saved by grace.'"

Sir, I will tell you a secret. Those lines are not mine. However, I will once more venture to defend them, and to aver, that your consequence is good for nothing: "If this love is spoken of in the latter lines, then it is not in the former." No! Why not? I take it to be spoken of in both. The plain meaning of which is, "If thou art not love, I am content to perish. But if thou art, let me find the effects thereof; let me be saved by grace."

16. You next accuse me of maintaining a stoical insensibility. This objection, also, you borrow from Mr. Church. You ought likewise to have taken notice, that I had answered it, and openly disowned that doctrine; I mean, according to the rules of common justice. But that is not your failing.

17. Part of your thirty-ninth page runs thus: "With respect

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to all this patient enduring hardships, &c., it has been remarked by learned authors, that 'some persons, by constitutional temper, have been fond of bearing the worst that could befall them; that others, from a sturdy humour, and the force of education, have made light of the most exquisite tortures; that when enthusiasm comes in, in aid of this natural or acquired sturdiness, and men fancy they are upon God's work, and entitled to his rewards, they are immediately all on fire for rushing into sufferings and pain.'

I take knowledge of your having faithfully abridged—your own book, shall I say, or the learned Dr. Middleton's? But what is it you are endeavouring to prove?

*Quorsum hæc tam putida tendant? **

The paragraph seems to point at me. But the plain, natural tendency of it is, to invalidate that great argument for Christianity which is drawn from the constancy of the martyrs. Have you not here also spoken a little too plain? Had you not better have kept the mask on a little longer?

Indeed, you lamely add, "The solid and just comforts which a true martyr receives from above are groundlessly applied to the counterfeit." But this is not enough even to save appearances.

18. You subjoin a truly surprising thought: "It may moreover be observed, that both ancient and modern enthusiasts always take care to secure some advantage by their sufferings." (Page 40.) O rare enthusiasts! So they are not such fools neither as they are vulgarly supposed to be. This is just of a piece with the "cunning epileptic demoniacs," in your other performance. And do not you think, (if you would but speak all that is in your heart, and let us into the whole secret,) that there was a compact, likewise, between Bishop Hooper and his executioner, as well as between the ventriloquist and the exorcist?

But what "advantage do they take care to secure?" a good salary? a handsome fortune? No; quite another matter; "free communications with God, and fuller manifestations of his goodness." (*Ibid.*) I dare say, you do not envy them, no

* Thus translated from the Latin of Horace by Francis:—

"Whither tends

This putid stuff?"—EDIT.

more than you do those "self-interested enthusiasts" of old who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection."

19. You proceed to prove my enthusiasm from my notions of conversion. And here great allowances are to be made, because you are talking of things quite out of your sphere; you are got into an unknown world! Yet you still talk as magisterially as if you was only running down the Fathers of the primitive Church.

And, First, you say, I "represent conversion as sudden and instantaneous." (*Ibid.*) Soft and fair! Do you know what conversion is? (A term, indeed, which I very rarely use, because it rarely occurs in the New Testament.) "Yes; it is to 'start up perfect men at once.'" (Page 41.) Indeed, Sir, it is not. A man is usually converted long before he is a perfect man. It is probable most of those Ephesians to whom St. Paul directed his Epistle were converted. Yet they were not "come" (few, if any) "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

20. I do not, Sir, indeed, I do not undertake to make you understand these things. I am not so vain as to think it is in my power. It is the utmost of my hope to convince you, or, at least, those who read your works, that you understand just nothing about them.

To put this out of dispute, you go on: "Thus faith and being born of God are said to be an instantaneous work, at once, and in a moment, as lightning. Justification, the same as regeneration, and having a lively faith, this always in a moment." (*Ibid.*) I know not which to admire most, the English or the sense, which you here father upon me; but, in truth, it is all your own; I do not thus confound faith and being born of God. I always speak of them as different things; it is you that thus jumble them together. It is you who discover justification also to be the same as regeneration, and having a lively faith. I take them to be three different things; so different as not ever to come under one genus. And yet it is true, that each of these, "as far as I know," is at first experienced suddenly; although two of them (I leave you to find out which) gradually increase from that hour.

21. "After these sudden conversions," say you, "they receive their assurances of salvation." (Page 43.) Sir, Mr. Bedford's

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ignorance in charging this doctrine upon me might be involuntary, and I am persuaded was real. But yours cannot be so. It must be voluntary; if it is not rather affected. For you had before you, while you wrote, the very tract wherein I corrected Mr. Bedford's mistake, and explicitly declared, "The assurance whereof I speak is not an assurance of salvation." And the very passages you cite from me prove the same; every one of which (as you yourself know in your own conscience) relates wholly and solely to present pardon, not to future salvation.

Of Christian perfection (page 45) I shall not say anything to you, till you have learned a little heathen honesty.

22. That this is a lesson you have not yet learned, appears, also, from your following section; wherein you roundly affirm, "Whatever they think, say, or do," (that is, the Methodists, according to their own account,) "is from God. And whatever opposeth is from the devil." I doubt not but Mr. Church believed this to be true when he asserted it. But this is no plea for you; who, having read the answer to Mr. Church, still assert what you know to be false.

"Here we have," say you, "the true spirit and very essence of enthusiasm, which sets men above carnal reasoning, and all conviction of plain Scripture." (Page 49.) It may, or may not; that is nothing to me. I am not above either reason or Scripture. To either of these I am ready to submit. But I cannot receive scurrilous invective, instead of Scripture; nor pay the same regard to low buffoonery, as to clear and cogent reasons.

23. With your two following pages I have nothing to do. But in the fifty-second I read as follows: "'A Methodist,' says Mr. Wesley, 'went to receive the sacrament; when God was pleased to let him see a crucified Saviour.'" Very well; and what is this brought to prove? Why, (1.) That I am an enthusiast: (2.) That I "encourage the notion of the real, corporal presence, in the sacrifice of the mass." How so? Why, "this is as good an argument for transubstantiation as several produced by Bellarmine." (Page 57.) Very likely it may; and as good as several produced by you for the enthusiasm of the Methodists.

24. In that "seraphic rhapsody of divine love," as you term it, which you condemn in the lump, as rant and madness, there are several scriptural expressions, both from the

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Old and New Testament. At first I imagined you did not know them ; those being books which you did not seem to be much acquainted with. But upon laying circumstances together, I rather suppose you was glad of so handsome an opportunity to make as if you aimed at me, that you might have a home stroke at some of those old enthusiasts.

25. The next words which you cite from me, as a proof of my enthusiasm, are, "The power of God was in an unusual manner present." (Page 61.) I mean, many found an unusual degree of that peace, joy, and love, which St. Paul terms, "the fruit of the Spirit." And all these, in conformity to his doctrine, I ascribe to the power of God. I know you, in conformity to your principles, ascribe them to the power of nature. But I still believe, according to the old, scriptural hypothesis, that whenever, in hearing the word of God, men are filled with peace and love, God "confirms that word by the Holy Ghost given unto those that hear it."

26. As a further proof of my enthusiasm you mention "special directions, mission, and calls by immediate revelation." (Page 67.) For an instance of which, you cite those words, "I know, and am assured, that God sent forth his light and his truth." I did know this. But do I say, "by immediate revelation?" Not a tittle about it. This is your own ingenious improvement upon my words.

"However, it was by a special direction. For your own words in the same paragraph are, 'From the direction I received from God this day, touching an affair of the greatest importance.'" (Pages 68, 69.)

What, are these words in the same paragraph with those, "I know and am assured, God sent forth his light and his truth?" Why then do you tear the paragraph in two, and put part in your sixty-seventh, part in your sixty-eighth and sixty-ninth pages? O, for a plain reason,—to make it look like two instances of enthusiasm, otherwise it could have made but one at the most.

But you cannot make out one, till you have proved that these directions were by immediate revelation. I never affirmed they were. I now affirm they were not. Now, Sir, make your best of them.

You add, "Let me mention a few directions coming by way of command: Mr. Wesley says, 'I came to Mr. Delamotte's, where I expected a cool reception; but God had pre-

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pared the way before me.'” (Page 69.) What, by a command to Mr. Delamotte? Who told you so? Not I, nor any one else, only your own fruitful imagination.

27. Your next discovery is more curious still: That “itinerants order what they want at a public-house, and then tell the landlord that he will be damned if he takes anything of them.” (Page 69.)

I was beating my brain to find out what itinerant this should be; as I could not but imagine, some silly man or other, probably styling himself a Methodist, must somewhere or other have given some ground for a story so punctually delivered. In the midst of this, a letter from Cornwall informed me, it was I: I myself was the very man, and acquainted me with the place, and the person to whom I said it. But as there are some particulars in that letter (sent without a name) which I did not well understand, I transcribe a few words of it, in hopes that the author will give me fuller information:—

“As to the Bishop’s declaring what the landlord of Mitchel says, in respect to your behaviour, I do not at all wonder at the story.” *The Bishop’s declaring!* Whom can he mean? Surely not the Right Reverend Dr. George Lavington, Lord Bishop of Exeter! When, or to whom, did he declare it? at Truro in Cornwall? or in Plymouth, at his Visitation? to all the Clergy who were assembled before God to receive his pastoral instructions? His Lordship of Exeter must certainly have more regard to the dignity of the episcopal office!

28. But to proceed: I was not “offended with the Moravians” for warning men “against mixing nature with grace;” (page 71;) but for their doing it in such a manner as tended to destroy all the work of grace in their souls. I did not blame the thing itself, but their manner of doing it; and this you know perfectly well: But with you, truth must always give way to wit. At all events, you must have your jest.

29. Had you had any regard to truth, or any desire to represent things as they really are, when you repeated Mr. Church’s objection concerning lots, you would have acknowledged that I have answered it at large. When you have replied to that answer, I may add a word more.

30. You are sadly at a loss under the article of *ecstasies* and *raptures*, to glean up anything that will serve your purpose. At last, from ten or twelve tracts, you pick out two

lines; and those the same you had mentioned before: "My soul was got up into the holy mount. I had no thought of coming down again into the body." And truly you might as well have let these alone; for if by "ecstasy" you mean *trance*, here is no account of any such; but only of one "re-joicing" in God "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

With the "girl of seven years old" (page 77) I have nothing to do; though you honestly tack that relation to the other, in order to make me accountable for both. But all is fair toward a Methodist.

31. What I assert concerning Peter Wright (page 79) is this: (1.) That he gave me that relation. (Whether I believed it or no, I did not say.) (2.) That he died within a month after. Now, Sir, give us a cast of your office. From these two propositions extract a proof of my being an enthusiast.

You may full as easily prove it from these, as from the words you quote next: "God does now give remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and often in dreams and visions of God." "But afterwards," you say, "I speak more distrustfully." (Page 79.) Indeed I do not; but I guard against enthusiasm in those words, part of which you have recited. The whole paragraph runs thus:—

"From those words, 'Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God,' I told them they were not to judge of the spirit whereby any one spoke, either by appearances, or by common report, or by their own inward feelings; no, nor by any dreams, visions, or revelations, supposed to be made to their souls, any more than by their tears, or any involuntary effects wrought upon their bodies. I warned them, all these were in themselves of a doubtful, disputable nature; they might be from God, and they might not; and were therefore not simply to be relied on, any more than simply to be condemned, but to be tried by a farther rule; to be brought to the only certain test, the law and the testimony." Sir, can you show them a better way?

32. The last proof that you produce of my enthusiasm, is, my "talking of the great work which God is now beginning to work upon earth." (Page 80.) I own the fact. I do talk of such a work. But I deny the consequence: For if God has begun a great work, then the saying He has, is no enthusiasm.

To bring sinners to repentance, to save them from their

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sins, is allowed by all to be the work of God. Yea, and to save one sinner is a great work of God ; much more to save many.

But many sinners are saved from their sins at this day, in London, in Bristol, in Kingswood, in Cornwall, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in Whitehaven, in many other parts of England, in Wales, in Ireland, in Scotland, upon the continent of Europe, in Asia, and in America. This I term "a great work of God ;" so great as I have not read of for several ages.

You ask, how I know so great a work is wrought now—"by inspiration?" No; but by common sense. I know it by the evidence of my own eyes and ears. I have seen a considerable part of it; and I have abundant testimony, such as excludes all possible doubt, for what I have not seen.

33. But you are so far from acknowledging anything of this, as to conclude, in full triumph, that "this new dispensation is a composition of enthusiasm, superstition, and imposture." (Page 81.) It is not clear what you mean by a new dispensation. But the clear and undeniable fact stands thus: A few years ago, Great Britain and Ireland were covered with vice from sea to sea. Very little of even the form of religion was left; and still less of the power of it. Out of this darkness God commanded light to shine. In a short space He called thousands of sinners to repentance. They were not only reformed from their outward vices, but likewise changed in their dispositions and tempers; "filled with a serious, sober sense of true religion," with love to God and all mankind, with an holy faith, producing good works of every kind, works both of piety and mercy.

What could the god of this world do in such a case, to prevent the spreading of this "serious, sober religion?" The same that he has done from the beginning of the world. To hinder the light of those whom God hath thus changed, from shining before men, he gave them all in general a nick-name; he called them Methodists. And this name, as insignificant as it was in itself, effectually answered his intention. For by this means, that light was soon obscured by prejudice, which could not be withstood by Scripture or reason. By the odious and ridiculous ideas affixed to that name, they were condemned in the gross, without ever being heard. So that now

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any scribbler, with a middling share of low wit, not incumbered with good nature or modesty, may raise a laugh on those whom he cannot confute, and run them down whom he dares not look in the face. By this means even a Comparer of Methodists and Papists may blaspheme the great work of God, not only without blame, but with applause; at least from readers of his own stamp. But it is high time, Sir, you should leave your skulking-place. Come out, and let us look each other in the face. I have little leisure, and less inclination, for controversy. Yet I promise, if you will set your name to your Third Part, I will answer all that shall concern me, in that, as well as the preceding. Till then

I remain, Sir,
Your friend and well-wisher,
JOHN WESLEY.

CANTERBURY,
February 1, 1749-50.

POSTSCRIPT.

WHEN you come to relate those "horrid and shocking things," there may be a danger you are not aware of. Even you yourself may fall (as little as you intend or suspect it) into seriousness. And I am afraid, if once you put off your fool's coat, if you stand naked before cool and sober reason, you yourself may appear as inconsiderable a creature, to use your own phrase, "as if your name was Perronet."

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