

A LETTER To a FRIEND.

My dear FRIEND,

IT is a lamentable Truth, that whenever the Gospel is preach'd with such Power and Purity as to shake the strong Holds of Satan, and rouse a World lying securely in Wickedness; then those who ought, and seem'd to be Pillars of God's House, and Religion's only Friends, do always make the most violent Opposition, against it. The Church of God has always had its Ebbings and Flowings; sometimes flourishing and again declining; and whoever will look into the History of it, with any Care and Attention, will be oblig'd to grant the Truth of the following Observations among many others. *First*, that, in whatever State it was, there was always such People, such Priests. If the Church was in a declining State (and sometimes there was hardly Faith to be found on the Earth) in such Times the Priests were all of a Piece with the People, alike Secure and Blind; neither could it ordinarily be otherwise, because the
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Priests too must be taken out of the same Lump, the same way leavened. And *Secondly*, we may observe, that whenever God would reform his Church and revive his People, he always did something extraordinary; he rais'd up some eminent Men to Alarm the World of their Danger; and to these gave Qualifications suited to the Circumstances the Church was in. *Thirdly*, we may observe, that these were always opposed and rejected, by that Set of Priests who were then established when a Reformation began: It was the Builders, who always set at nought the Chief Corner Stone. No wonder then, that a rushing mighty Wind should make their House reel and totter, and fall to the Ground. Thus the false Prophets persecuted the true Ones; and the Scribes and Pharisees who sat in *Moses* his Seat, persecuted our Saviour and his Apostles; and from the very Beginning of the World, to this Day, the Observations will hold good. *Fourthly*, we may observe, that Pride and Interest always hinder'd the Generality of these Ecclesiasticks from Embracing CHRIST; they would not humble themselves so far as to own their Ignorance or Prejudice;

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judice; and their Interests made them always strive to stir up the People against Christ and his Gospel, that so they might keep them on their own Side; and thus, by insensible Degrees, they have stopp'd their Ears and shut their Eyes, and would neither see nor hear; and have still, alas! turn'd away much People from the Lord, being neither willing to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor yet to suffer those who were entering to go in. Hence, have they been judicially harden'd of God, and become his bitterest Enemies. But *Fifthly*, we may observe, that the very Methods they've us'd to Suppress the People of God, those very Methods has God, in his Wisdom, made use of to raise his People higher, and to confound those who devis'd them. The very Athes of the Martyrs have become the Seed of the Church. But *Sixthly*, we may also observe, that the Propnets, and Christ, and his Apostles, and all other eminent Reformers, in Order to promote the Gospel, have always dash'd the Credit of a carnal Set of Teachers, that so the People might be free from one great Prejudice which they labour'd under, that

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that is, the bold Contradictions of their own Teachers, in whose Favour they are apt to be blindly prepossess'd. And *Lastly*, we may observe, that the common People do generally hear Christ gladly, to the great Dissatisfaction of the Scribes and Pharisees: *Have any of the Rulers or Pharisees believ'd on him? No, but this People who know not the Law are accus'd.*

Now in order to run a Parallel, between past and present Times, I will take it for granted, that the World has long been very secure; there has been little Stir among Professors about the State of their Souls; few groaning under a Sense of their Sins; few broken Reeds or Smoaking Flax; few seeking after Jesus, but only seeking after Ordinances in a lifeless formal Manner: Now God is pleas'd to send the Comforter into the World, to convince it of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment. And now a stiff-necked and rebellious People do always resist the Holy Ghost, as their Predecessors, the Scribes and Pharisees, and their Adherents did formerly, so they do now. The Scribes and Pharisees, who were Office Bearers in Christ's Church, gave him the worst Treatment, stir'd up the People against him,

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him, call'd him a Deceiver, said he had a Devil, and was beside himself; and would account for all his Miracles from Spells and Charms; went about to ensnare him in his Words; had they come with a sincere Desire of Information, this had been well, but they came to trap him, with captious, ensnaring Questions, that they might have wherewith to accuse him; they said he spoke Blasphemy, and would not let the People hear him; that he was for making himself a temporal Kingdom; would not submit to their Church Government, nor walk according to the Traditions of the Fathers. How did they bespatter his Character! No doubt their Pulpits were fill'd with Invectives against him. And what was the Reason of this Bitter Outcry against Christ? Why, he called the Scribes and Pharisees a Pack of Hypocrites, to their Faces; told the People to beware of them and their Doctrines: He kept aloof from them, and damn'd them, for their rotten Performances, Prayers, Fasting and Alms. This, this was what provok'd their Spleen, and did what their Malice; because of this, they said, he spoke against the Law of God, which commanded the Performance of them.

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O ! the babbling ignorant Priests, that would seem so great Friends to Holiness; and under a Disguise of Religion deceive the People who do not understand the Gospel ! Thus the Scribes and Pharisees and their Allies, have always, either ignorantly or willfully mistaken Christ, and stumbled at that Stumbling Stone, that Rock of Offence, and have been broken as many as have fallen upon it; but that is not all, for while they lie unrecovered, the same Stone will fall on them, and grind them to Powder. Alas ! how many of their Successors do pray for the Day of the Lord, and yet know it not now when it is come : Wo to them, for the Day of the Lord is to them Darknes, and not Light, full of Stumbling Blocks and Offences, and not at all according to their Liking. How do they cavil at this and that; for the natural Man, receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness to him, and he cannot possibly know them, because they are spiritually discerned : The meanest Believer knows more of these Things than the most learned faithless Rabbi : For why, the one has felt and experienced them, and the other has only heard of them. And
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when the roused World begins to stand aghast, being powerfully convinced by God's Spirit of their miserable State, and are made to cry out under their Burden, then carnal Souls, who have never felt these Things, do imagin that Priest and People are beside themselves; and will tell you, this is all the Power of Fancy, the Passions and Affections a little mov'd; which might be done to as good Purposes by an old *Quaker* Wife, or an Actor of Tragedies; and some are so bold as to call it a Work of the Devil. And as for Mr. *Whitefield* and the *Tennents*, they are disorderly Brethren, do not walk according to the Traditions of the Elders, (i. e. when they perceive them to have a Tendency to hinder the Progress of Christ's Gospel) they go about to get the Applause of the World, and to make themselves a Party; their Doctrines are unsound, because they damn their formal Prayers and speak against carnal Ministers, and warn the People to take Care of them; they talk of Assurance of God's Love, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, as the Privilege of all Believers : They talk of the Necessity of deep Convictions, and amuse the People with some new Notions and Modes ;

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Modes; and a great deal of Stuff to this Purpose, which I need not wait now to confute: Nay more, to compleat an ugly Character, they are called by some, wandering Stars, blazing Comets, that will appear for awhile in Brightness, and then Vanish into Smoke: Are not these the Devil's Advocates and Pleaders of his Cause! whose Spirit comes from them?

Now, I would gladly learn from these diabolical Reasoners, (be they Ministers or People) whether it be the Devil's Custom to set the World in an Up: roar about the State of their Souls? I used to think and say, that when *the strong Man armed keeps the House,* all his Goods are at Peace; but, if what they say be true, I must change my Opinion of Satan, and think he is grown a Penitent Reformer. And if the Power of Fancy is so great, as to convince the World powerfully of Sin, to make them feel its Burden as they never did before, to make them cry fervently and importunately Night and Day to God for Mercy; to fill their Hearts with strong Desires after Jesus, and make him precious to their Souls, altogether lovely and desirable, the cheifest a-
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mong ten Thousand; to make them restless and unsatisfied until they find Jesus, their Souls best beloved; and nothing will quiet or please them but some Token of his special Love and pardoning Grace to their own Souls; if it makes them leave their Water-Pots, and Worldly Concerns, their former Pursuits, and all their Darling Pleasures and Profits, and flock to hear the true Doctrines of the Gospel preach'd and press'd warmly and Powerfully, and solemnly apply'd; to hear Doctrines so directly contrary to their natural Desires of Peace and Ease and Security; to hear themselves condemned; their dreadful doom display'd; their former peaceful Hopes destroy'd and cut down; to hear Sermons that search them to the quick; that scorch their Conscience, and distress them to the utmost Degree; that makes them cry out in the Bitterness of their Souls, *What shall we do to be saved?* Now, I say, if this be not the Work of God, but only a fanciful Delusion, then farewell Reason and Common Sense! then, my Soul, thou art no longer able to distinguish between Light and Darkness! Virtue and Vice, Holiness and Wickedness are Empty Names,

Names, and lie wholly confus'd an undistinguished Mixture, an inseparable Heap! Then farewell all our Knowledge! farewell Scripture Promises and sacred History! all are Deceit, Delusions, enthusiastick Notions: Then it might be the Power of a warm Imagination, that caus'd three Thousand convicted Souls to cry out, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* Then I will confess that an old *Quaker* Wife, or an expert Tragedian, may, by their Craft, work up the Passions and Affections of their Hearers, so far as to make them go Weeping, and Mourning as they go, enquiring the way to *Zion*, with their Faces thitherward; and may convince the World of Sin, of Righteousness, and Judgment so powerfully, that we cannot distinguish between them, and the Workings of God's Spirit. I do not in the least doubt, but those who commanded the Apostles not to preach in the Name of Jesus, did strive to persuade the People that those three Thousand who cried out, were got into a whimsical, fanciful, enthusiastick Fit, and would come to themselves again; that this was a sudden Commotion of the Passions and Affections; and Possibly

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some reverend Scribe might tell the Members of the Synagogue, that he had seen or heard of an Assembly of *Pagans* as much melted as that, by hearing an eloquent and warm Speech from *Cicero* the *Roman* Orator; and concluded firmly, that this was not to be taken any Notice of. Oh Ministers of Satan! Enemies of all Righteousness! who thus, like *Elimas*, do seek to turn the People away from the Faith! Are there yet Masters in *Israel* who have no Knowledge of a wounded Spirit! Why do they talk so ignorantly, so maliciously of the Work of God on his People's Hearts! When they talk of Convictions, they seem to mean nothing but an ineffectual dry Conviction; a Conviction of the Understanding that never affects the Heart. They cannot hear of People crying out under them; no, this is Nonsense: Let them search the Records of *Scotland's* Reformation, and they will find, that some have fallen dead, and fainted, and cried out under God's powerful Workings. What will they understand, by the Commandment coming and slaying a Person, by breaking up the fallow Ground, renting the Heart, wounding the Spirit, by being weary, labouring

labouring and heavy laden ? Is all this without feeling ? They can talk of the Duties of Holiness, and will propose Rewards, and tell the Happiness of Heaven : They can declaim against gross Out Breakings, and Damn the profiting Doers to devouring Flames ; but the Devil cares not how much they Preach thus, if they never reach the Heart, if a Match with Christ be not attained. Do they discover the hidden Corners of the Heart, and confound the self-deceiving Hypocrite, and unmask the carnal Professor ? Do they lay his Heart open to his own view, that he goes away self-condemned : If this were closely done, we should have had more News of wounded Spirits. If I had time I would set these Things in a clearer Light ; but I must hasten to a Conclusion.

I have heard Mr. *Whitefield's* Character is falsly and maliciously bespatter'd ; that he is represented as a vain Fellow, a Self-seeker, Proud, a Deceiver of the People ; that he is getting Money to purchase an Estate to himself, and the like ; or something that will bear the same Sense : I will only observe, that Mr. *Whitefield* is very sure of God's eternal Love, and is not afraid that even he

he shall be ashamed of his Hope. Let those then, who thus revile him, first consider, whether they can confute his Evidences of God's Favour, or whether they have as good themselves ; if none of these can be done, let them be disregarded, as Persons that do harm to the Lord's Prophets, and touch his Anointed. His Behaviour may be set in an ugly ridiculous Light ; but the World knows the Gravity, Humility Undisguis'dness, Heavenlynefs, Meekness, Self-denial, Temperance, and Modesty, that appear plainly in all his Conduct. He is bold as a Lion in his Master's Cause, and bids Defiance to Earth and Hell, to Devils and wicked Men. He is zealous, lively and diligent, which cannot be denied ; and his Doctrine sound, which cannot be condemned, unless by those who would cavil at Words, not attending to the Strain of his Sermons : (I will not condemn any one that would come in the Spirit of Meekness, in a fit Season, to be inform'd of what they doubt of.)

But what nettles some of them most, and makes them catch at any Pretext to quarrel with Mr. *Whitefield*, is his preaching against carnal Ministers, and confounding

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confounding their Manner of Teaching, and Doctrines, and telling the People to beware of them, as his Master did; forasmuch as they are but only Wolves, tho' they may have Sheeps Cloathing. I know not what blind Fatality it is, that makes any of them show a Dislike to this Doctrine: Are they afraid that they shall be found to be the carnal Teachers? Does their Conscience apply it to them? If so, they might make a better Improvement of it, than to quarrel with it: If not, why are they offended at it? why do they not join in it? why do some of them preach, that it's no matter whether a Minister of the Gospel be graceless or gracious? Now, Sir, I leave you to judge, whether the Parallel will not run much better between those who oppose the Work of God, and the ancient Scribes and Pharisees. and their Adherents, than between Mr. *Whitefield* and an old *Quaker* Wife, or a dissembling Tragedian. — I do not aim what I have said, against any but those Ministers and People, who oppose the Work of God, and speak contemptuously of it; who Mock and Deride poor convinced Souls, that are not able to bear the Load of

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a deeply wounded Spirit, but are forc'd to cry out in the Bitterness of their Souls, whenever God opens their Eyes, to see their miserable, their damnable Condition, in order to make them fly to Jesus, the Redeemer of a perishing World. He it is, that will bind up their broken, wounded Hearts, that will heal their Souls, and forgive their Sins, and save them from 'em. He it is, that will put a New Song in their Mouths, even Praises to the God of their Salvation, and Hosannas to the Son of *David*. They shall eternally rejoice, when the profane, laughing, mocking World shall eternally mourn. Let Despisers come and behold, and wonder and perish. They may, indeed, occasion much Tribulation to the Saints here on Earth, but can never climb to Heaven to disturb them there.

Sir, you may make what Use you please of these Lines, I profess them to be the fixed Sentiments of my Soul, and am ready to defend them, oppose them who will: Forasmuch as I firmly beleive, that neither my Station, or Youth, or any other Thing, can possibly excuse me, if I should refuse to ap-

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reap to Day for God's Cause; to stand
 up for the Lord against the y Mighty,
 of whatever Rank, Age, or Station they
 be. But, if I have written any thing
 that is unjustifiable, when I am convinced
 of it, I will not be ashamed to acknow-
 ledge to the World, that I was in an
 Error. — If any Man will be offended,
 and drawn away from Christ, I cannot
 help it; I pray that God may open
 his Eyes.

I am, Sir, Yours, &c.

SAMUEL FINLY.

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