

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A

PRESBYTERIAN

AND A

“FRIEND.”

BY THE

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“Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.”

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DIALOGUE.

Presbyterian. Friend Thomas, I was glad to see you at our church on last Sabbath evening—I think you were never there before. How did you like our young preacher?

Friend. Neighbour John, I am not fond of being catechized. I went on the evening of First-day, to the meeting, because I was told that the preacher intended to speak of our deceased friend Jeremy Jones, a neighbour I much esteemed. But in regard to this, I was disappointed. And as to the matter of the young man's discourse, it was well enough; but to tell thee the truth, neighbour, I have a strong dislike of these hireling preachers, who make a traffic of the truth of God.

P. Is not the labourer worthy of his hire? If any man spends his time and strength in serving you, is it not reasonable that you should support him?

F. The Bible tells us that none should be induced to seek the ministry for the love of filthy lucre; that what we receive freely, we should give freely.

P. I agree with you, friend, that it is wicked for any one to be moved to preach by

the love of money; but that very text shows that it was common in the days of the apostles, to receive remuneration for preaching; otherwise, there would have been no temptation to seek that office from the love of filthy lucre. I agree with you, also, that the miraculous gifts of healing, conferred on the apostles, were to be exercised freely, and not sold for money. We know that Simon Magus was declared to be in "the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity," because he thought these miraculous gifts could be bought with money. But when the apostles were sent out at first by our Lord, and he said, "Freely ye have received, freely give," he intended that the people to whom they were sent should support them; for he commanded them to take no money, nor any clothing, but what they had on; and the reason assigned is, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." As they could not live without food, and were not permitted to take money in their purse to buy, they must have been supported by the people among whom they laboured.

F. But Paul refused to receive any thing for his preaching, and supported himself by the labour of his own hands.

P. When Paul came to Corinth, there was no Christian church there, and he could not expect to be supported in preaching the

gospel by the heathen; therefore he resorted to working at the trade of tent-making, which he had learned in his youth.

F. But, afterwards when there was a numerous church gathered at Corinth, Paul refused to receive any thing from them for his labours.

P. His refusing to receive any pecuniary compensation for his labours at Corinth, was not owing to any opinion that that was unlawful in itself; but he pursued this course for prudential reasons, on account of certain false teachers, who had come in among the people, and who were endeavouring to lessen the influence of the apostle. That this is a true statement, appears from what he says when speaking on this very subject. "Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service." (2 Cor. xi. 7, 8.) Accordingly, he expresses warmly his gratitude to the church at Philippi, because they had, above others, been attentive to the supply of his necessities. "Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and

receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity!" (Phil. iv. 14—16.)

F. Why, then, did not Paul explicitly declare, that the preachers of the gospel ought to be supported by the people?

P. Friend Thomas, I really thought that you were more familiar with the writings of Paul, than to ask such a question. The very thing which you require has been done. There is not a truth more clearly taught, nor a duty more expressly inculcated in the New Testament.

F. Point me to the passage; for it has escaped my notice, or slipped from my memory.

P. I have a New Testament with me, and I will read it to you from the ix. chap. of first Corinthians. "Who goeth a warfare at any time, at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man, or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing that we shall reap

your carnal things? Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple: and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

F. I remember the passage now, since thou hast recited it. But our people do not take it literally; but suppose that Paul is speaking of the spiritual blessings which they enjoy who preach the gospel.

P. It is impossible, friend, that they should be right in their interpretation, for Paul calls the things which religious teachers received from the people whom they served, "carnal things;" that is, things which relate to the sustenance and comfort of the body. But what Paul says of himself demonstrates, that they were not spiritual blessings of which he speaks, unless you would suppose that he had no experience of grace. For he says, expressly, "Nevertheless, we have not used this power; but suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." And again, "But I have used none of these things, neither have I written these things that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void." (1 Cor. ix. 12, 15.)

F. I am unable to explain this matter

now; but I will consult the elders of our meeting, and ascertain how they dispose of this passage. I am sure they must have some method of interpreting it, consistently with our sentiments.

P. My good friend, I do not think that you need go to any one to explain these words. The meaning is as plain as it could possibly be made. In this case, you should judge for yourself. I know it is a cross to depart from that religion in which we have been brought up; but it is the interest of every one to forsake error, when discovered, and to prize the truth as the most precious jewel. "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

But, friend Thomas, I wish to ask you one question. Is it not the custom in your society to defray the expenses of travelling preachers when they are poor?

F. It is, and this is necessary to enable these public friends, when moved, to go forth and visit places distant from their home. This we do not consider in the light of *hire* for preaching, but merely as necessary to enable these public friends to travel, as they cannot live on air. But our public friends, who are accustomed to speak in our meetings, never receive any thing for their services.

P. Very well. You may call this contribution to travelling friends by what name you please; but the principle is the very

same as that adopted by us. We do not pay our ministers for dispensing the word; but we support them, that they may have it in their power to preach the gospel; and as to what you observe in regard to such as preach in their own meeting, I am fully of opinion that they should receive nothing for their services; because they employ no part of their time in preparation. But our ministers are required to spend much money in preparing for the ministry—frequently their whole patrimony; and they are expected to spend much time in studying the Scriptures and preparing their discourses. Your preachers can follow their secular pursuits without interruption; but ours must devote their lives to study and to pastoral duties; so that they cannot and ought not to engage in worldly business. The apostle Paul has given them a rule, which, without sin, they cannot neglect.

F. What rule is that?

P. I will read it to you out of his first epistle to Timothy. (iv. 13—16.) “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. Meditate upon these things. Give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for

in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." Now if any man devotes his whole time and talents to the instruction of a congregation, nothing can be more equitable, than that they should furnish him and his family with a decent support.

F. Well, neighbour, I will think more about this matter; but there are other things in which thou differest from the Friends, which I do not think thou canst defend; at least to my satisfaction.

P. I know that I am liable to error, as well as others; and all I can say is, that as soon as I am convinced that any tenet of mine is contrary to reason or the word of God, I will renounce it; for my earnest desire is to be found walking in the truth. Mention then, what it is in my creed, which you think cannot be defended.

F. I had reference to those external ceremonies which thy church retains and practises. I mean baptism and the Lord's supper; which ordinances might have suited a dispensation of figures and shadows; but which seem to me altogether unsuitable to the spiritual dispensation of the gospel.

P. The ordinances to which you refer, would be mere will-worship, if not appointed by Christ, whose commandments we are bound to obey. We reject every ceremony for which we have not a "Thus saith the Lord." But

if he commands us to observe any external ceremonies, then it is undoubtedly our duty to comply, for we are bound to keep all his commandments.

F. The ceremonial law is abrogated, and all these external institutions, like shadows, have passed away, since Christ, the substance, is come. In my opinion these outward forms are unprofitable, and have been the occasion of much contention, and of much superstition. And as mere bodily exercise can profit little, it is the part of wisdom to lay all such things aside, and rather attend to the inner man, and to the motions of the Spirit prompting us to seek communion with the Father of our spirits.

P. No doubt an undue dependence may be placed on external ordinances, and men may attend hypocritically on these outward forms, when the heart is far from God; but while we are in the body, we need some external rites of worship, that we may glorify God with our bodies as well as with our spirits. (1 Cor. vi. 20.) Even in Paradise, God gave to man in innocence, certain external objects, connected with his religion. There was the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, and also the tree of life. Besides, when God had finished all his works of creation, he sanctified the seventh day; that is, set it apart from a

common to a holy use. And as soon as man had fallen, sacrifices were instituted: and from time to time, other ceremonies, most of which had a prospective aspect: they pointed to Christ, the Redeemer, and to his glorious work. When Christ came and suffered on the cross the typical ceremonies were of course no longer needed. The body having appeared, the shadows became useless. But there was nothing in the new dispensation which rendered it unsuitable to appoint a few simple, striking institutions, which might serve as emblems of spiritual blessings, seals of God's covenant, and memorials of important events, and which might serve as modes of external worship. But I admit, that if Christ has not instituted these ceremonies, it would be impious in us to attend on them. Christ is King, and makes his own laws, which it is our duty to obey, of whatever kind they may be. I think, friend, that you will not deny, that we ought to obey all the commandments of Christ.

F. Certainly not. All I want is to be convinced that Christ requires such services at our hands. My opinion, however, is, that if any such ordinances were observed by Christ and his apostles, it was only in compliance with Jewish prejudices. We know, that Paul circumcised Timothy: and that he made a vow, and shaved his head, at Cen-

chrea, and went into the temple at Jerusalem, and passed through a course of purification. Now, would any man infer from these actions of the apostle, that these ceremonies were binding on us; or that it would be right for us to follow his example in these things?

P. What you say has force, as it relates to Jewish ceremonies; but, if Christ has commanded certain positive duties to his disciples, entirely distinct from the Mosaic rites, and having a spiritual end, we cannot be at liberty to dispense with these, unless we can prove that they were intended to be temporary.

When our Lord was about to leave the world after his resurrection, he said, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." To be sure, water is not mentioned; but it would not be ingenuous to found an objection on that omission. No other than water baptism was administered, or could be administered by the apostles, in the name of the sacred Trinity. No doubt it was premised that Christ should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire; but that baptism was internal, and not to be administered by man, nor in the name of the Trinity. When the three thousand converts, on the day of Pentecost, were exhorted by

Peter to be baptized, it was that they might receive the Holy Ghost; that is, be endued with his miraculous gifts. And when Cornelius and his family were baptized, water is expressly mentioned. "Who can forbid water?" said Peter. And when Paul was baptized, he was exhorted by Ananias to "arise and be baptized and wash away his sins;" and from that day to this, baptism has been practised in every age and in every section of the Christian Church, with the exception of the society of Friends and a few others. And that the ordinance was intended to be perpetual, is evident from the Saviour's promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" — with you in preaching and baptizing. What Paul says, when he thanks God that he had baptized few of the Corinthians, shows that it was not spiritual baptism to which he referred, but water baptism. If Christ intended water baptism to be a temporary ordinance, he has left no hint of his will on record; and the whole Church in all ages, has fallen into a grievous mistake.

F. Let me now hear what thou hast next to say in favour of the Lord's supper, as a standing ordinance.

P. It is my candid opinion, that all that is necessary to convince an impartial mind, of the binding obligation of this sacrament,

is a careful consideration of what the sacred Scriptures teach on this subject. It has been a matter of astonishment to me, that serious inquirers among the Friends could avoid seeing that this is an ordinance of Christ, and a very delightful privilege, which Christians have always greatly prized, and which will be perpetual in the Church.

F. Well, neighbour, I have read the New Testament from the beginning to the end, as often as almost any one, and I was never convinced that these ordinances, or sacraments as thou callest them, were binding on me. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." It would be sin in me to partake of that bread and wine; for Paul saith, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And I assure thee, I have no faith in this thing.

P. Our believing a thing does not make it true; nor does our disbelieving it make it false. I do not doubt but that you sincerely believe as you say; but, friend, you will pardon me for thinking, that when you read the New Testament, your eyes were hood-winked by the prejudices of your education. Permit me, therefore, to direct your attention to some texts of Scripture which have a bearing on this subject.

F. Well, neighbour John, thou mayest; but I tell thee beforehand, that I do not think thou wilt ever convince me that I ought, as a

religious ceremony, to eat a bit of bread, and take a sup of wine. There is no religion in this. Religion is in the heart, and not in outward ceremonies.

P. It is very probable that we shall both be, when our conference is ended, just where we were when we began. But still it is a duty which we owe one to another, to communicate what we believe to be truth to our neighbour. As to what you say, that religion has its seat in the heart, I believe it; but, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "Out of the heart are the issues of life." If God has commanded us to perform this external act of eating bread and drinking wine, you cannot deny that we ought to obey him. Whatever he commands is right, whether we can see the reason of it or not; and we have no right to judge of the reasonableness of his commands. Now, he has said, "Do this in remembrance of me;" that is, eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of me. It is a thing easy to be performed, and we ought to comply with this injunction of our dying Lord.

F. Neighbour, let me tell thee that thou dost run too fast to a conclusion; thou oughtest to prove, that that commandment is binding on us. Remember it was addressed to the twelve disciples more than eighteen hundred years ago, and nothing is said about

doing this often. If they did it once, they obeyed the Lord's commandment. And not a word is said respecting its observance by those who were to come after them.

P. I confess, if this were the only text on the subject, I might find it difficult to prove what you require. But I will now refer you to another passage, which contains full proof of both the things for which you demand proof.

F. If thou canst do this, it will be more than I have ever seen done yet. Come, I am anxious to hear what thou hast to say.

P. I will again read out of my New Testament the passage to which I refer. It is found in xi. chap. of 1 Cor. Paul says, "For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you; that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup." Now, Paul received his instructions immediately from the risen Saviour; and with the gospel, he received this ordinance, to be communicated to the churches which he should gather. And that it was not to be, like baptism, observed but once, is evident from the words "as oft as ye drink it," from which it may be inferred,

that it was an ordinance to be often celebrated.

F. But still, this does not prove that this practice was to be continued through all ages; and that it is now binding on us.

P. The constant understanding and practice of the Christian Church unto this time, ought to satisfy us, that it was intended to be a standing ordinance, especially as nothing is said to lead to the idea that it was to cease. And this is the most reasonable construction, when we consider that Christians now have as much reason to remember Christ's death as those who lived in the apostle's days.

F. I thought from thy positive manner of speaking, that thou hadst some more express testimony for the continuance of this ceremony through all ages.

P. I was just about to adduce the text which proves it, from the same chapter already quoted. Paul says, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death *till he come.*" What could be more express? When Christ shall come in his glory, he will find some of his disciples occupied in thus remembering him. And it is a memorial calculated to keep up a lively remembrance of the death of the Redeemer, and is adapted to our nature; for how often do departing friends

leave some token of remembrance to those left behind! It is good to remember our best Friend; and this ordinance assists in calling him to mind.

F. Thy church, neighbour, has another practice, which is very offensive to our people. I mean the singing of psalms and hymns, set to artificial music. It is a strange conceit, that God, who is a pure Spirit, can take delight in hearing these musical sounds. It is something akin to the notions of some heathen, who believed that their gods were refreshed with food set before them, and regaled with the savour of meats, and the odour of incense.

P. No opinion of the society of Friends is more unaccountable to me than their prejudice against sacred music, in the worship of God. In the other ordinances to which they are opposed, there is of the nature of ceremony and positive institution; but in this case they set themselves in opposition to a natural expression of our feelings. Music of some kind is found among all nations, ancient and modern, and is undoubtedly a natural expression of lively emotions.

F. Nature does not teach us to sing in artificial measure and tune; but merely to emit such sounds as correspond with our feelings at the moment.

P. If certain tones of voice are natural

expressions of certain emotions of the mind, surely there can be nothing evil in the regulation of these sounds, and reducing them to systems; so that a number of persons may unite in the same song of praise to God. And if singing tones are prompted by the constitution which God has given us, there is nothing unreasonable in supposing, that if the emotions of love and gratitude in the soul are pleasing to God, the expression of these feelings by appropriate sounds, cannot be offensive to him. The Scripture teaches, that we should "present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service." And again, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body and spirit, which are God's." Now it is written, "He that offereth praise, glorifieth me." How can we offer our bodies a sacrifice, but by presenting them before God in reverential and humble acts of worship, as we are taught in Heb. xiii. 15? "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, THE FRUIT OF OUR LIPS, giving thanks to his name.

F. Well, I must confess, that the practice is not at all edifying to me. It has a trifling and puerile appearance, to see a whole congregation or a select choir, chasing one another by artificial sounds, and in such

tunes often, as seem better suited for idle people to dance after, than to aid devotion in public worship.

P. Friend, you confound two things which should be kept distinct; unsuitable and improper tunes, with the propriety of using sacred music of any kind. I have heard prayers offered with a very unbecoming tone; but that does not prove that it is not proper to use the voice in prayer. I admit that there is often a want of good taste in the selection of tunes, and that this part of worship is often performed in a very unsatisfactory manner. But we have many good tunes, and praise may be offered by a whole congregation with elevated feeling and delightful solemnity.

F. What dost thou say of instrumental music in the worship of God, for I observe that it is being introduced in many of your churches?

P. I shall not enter on the discussion of that subject at present, because it forms no part of our system, and it is not adopted by most of our churches; but singing we hold to be an imperative duty on all Christians, and it is a grand defect in your meetings that the sound of praise is never heard there.

F. Neighbour John, thou dost rather surprise me, by asserting that singing is a commanded duty. I thought that at most it was

a matter of option, for every one to adopt or reject, according to his taste and inclination.

P. Friend Thomas, it grieves me to find that you make duty so much a matter of feeling and taste, and so seldom refer to the Holy Scriptures, to ascertain the mind of the Lord. If there were no positive command to sing the praises of God, the thing would be lawful, for nature prompts men of all countries to its performance under strong emotions of gratitude. Thus Miriam and her company sang at the deliverance at the Red Sea. And the sons of the prophets, when under the divine *afflatus*, sang and played on instruments.

F. What was done under the Old Testament, in the worship of the tabernacle and temple, is no more a rule for us, than the command to offer a sacrifice or burn incense.

P. There is a great difference. Praising God with the voice, I have proved to be a moral and not a ceremonial duty. It is therefore proper in every age, and under every dispensation. But I will undertake to prove from the New Testament, that singing in the worship of God is a commanded duty.

F. Do this, and it will be to the purpose; but I have not yet seen such a command, often as I have read the New Testament.

P. Prejudice often blinds our eyes, so that we see not in Scripture what is plainly

set down there. Have you not read, that Christ and his disciples, after the Passover, went out and sang a hymn? Have you not read that the angels sang a glorious anthem at the birth of Christ? Have you not read, how Paul and Silas sang praises in the prison at Philippi, at midnight, and the prisoners heard them?

F. All this does not amount to a command for us to sing.

P. Well, I will give it to you in the words of Paul, in his epistle to the Colossians, (iii. 16,) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, *singing* with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

I do not know what your society will do when they arrive at heaven; for there the redeemed sing a new song, which none others can learn: "To Him that loved us and washed us in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." If we expect to join in the praises of heaven, we should begin our song here upon earth.

F. I trust that if we shall ever be so happy as to reach heaven, we shall be prepared to join in all the sublime services of that glorious place. But the question is, not what we shall do in heaven, but what God requires of us here. And in regard to this

I agree with thee, that, prejudice aside, we should impartially and diligently seek to know the Divine will. I confess that some things which thou hast brought forward, do, in some measure, shake my confidence in my former opinions; and I am determined to give the subject an honest investigation, and to follow the light of truth whithersoever it may lead.

P. Permit me before we part, to put you in mind of the necessity of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Without his guidance, we are almost sure to err. And this is in accordance with the principles of your Society, who profess in all their religious acts to follow the promptings of this Divine Monitor. The only point of difference between you and us, touching this matter, is that while you expect this guidance, without the word, we believe that it is afforded only through the Holy Scriptures.

May that effectual Teacher make us both wise to salvation!

F. So let it be!

THE END.