

A N

E P I S T L E

To the REVEREND

Mr. JOHN WESLEY,

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Presbyter of the Church of England.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBINSON, in 1755.

And Reprinted in 1785.

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To the REVEREND

Mr. JOHN WESLEY.

MY first and last unalienable Friend,
A Brother's Thoughts with due Regard
attend,
A Brother, still as thy own Soul belov'd,
Who speak to learn, and write to be reprov'd:
Far from the factious undiscerning Crowd,
Distrest I fly to Thee, and *think aloud*;
I tell Thee, wise and faithful as Thou art,
The Fears and Sorrows of a burthen'd Heart,
The Workings of (a blind or heav'nly?) Zeal,
And all my *Fondness for the Church* I tell,
The Church whose Cause I serve, whose Faith
approve,
Whose Altars reverence, and whose Name I love:
But does she still exist in more than Sound?
The Church—alas, where is she to be found?

Not in the Men, however *dignified*,
 Who *wou'd* her Creeds repeal, her Laws deride,
 Her Prayers expunge, her Articles disown,
 And thrust the Filial Godhead from his Throne.
 Vainest of all their antichristian Plea,
 Who cry *The Temple of the Lord are We!*
 'We have the Church, nor will we quit our Hold'—
 Their Hold of what? the Altar? or the Gold?
 The Altars theirs, who will not light the Fire,
 Who spurn the Labour, but accept the Hire,
 Who not for Souls, but their own Bodies care,
 And leave to Underlings the Task of Pray'r?
 As justly might our christen'd Heathens claim,
 Thieves, Drunkards, Whoremongers, the sacred
 Name;
 Or Rabble-rout succeed in their Endeavour
 With *High Church, and Sacheverel for ever!*
 As *Arians* be for Orthodox allow'd,
 For Saints the Sensual, Covetous, and Proud,
 And Satan's Synagogue for the true Church
 of GOD.

Then let the zealous *Orthodox* appear,
 And challenge the contested Character:
 Those, who renounce the whole Dissenting Tribe,
 Creeds, Articles, and Liturgy subscribe;
 Their Parish Church who never once have miss,
 At Schism rail, and hate a *Methodist*;
 "The Company of faithful Souls" are These,
 Who strive to 'stablish their own Righteousness,
 But count the Faith Divine a Mad-man's Dream?
 Howe'er they to themselves may Pillars seem,

Of Christ, and of his Church they make no Part:
They never knew the Saviour in their Heart.

But those who in their Heart have Jesus known,
Believers justified by Faith alone,

Shall we not Them *the* faithful People own?

In whom the Power of Godliness is seen,

Must we not grant The Methodists *The Men*?

No: tho' we granted them from Schism free,

From wild enthusiastic Heresy,

From ev'ry wilful Crime, and moral Blot,

Yet still the Methodists *The Church* are not:

A single Faculty is not the Soul,

A Limb the Body, or a Part the Whole.

Whom then, when ev'ry vain Pretender's cast,

With Truth may we account The Church at last?

' All who have felt, deliver'd from above,

' The holy Faith that works by humble Love,

' All that in pure religious Worship join,

' Led by the Spirit, and the Word divine,

' Duly the Christian Mysteries partake,

' And bow to Governours for Conscience Sake:

In These *the Church of England* I descry,

And vow with *these alone* to live and die.

Yet while I warmly for her Faith contend,

Shall I her Blots and Blemishes defend?

Inventions *added* in a fatal Hour,

Human Appendages of Pomp and Power,

Whatever shines in outward Grandeur great,

I give it up—a *Creature of the State*.

Wide of the Church, as Hell from Heav'n is wide,

The Blaze of Riches, and the Glare of Pride,

The vain Desire to be intitled *Lord*,
The worldly Kingdom, and the princely Sword.

But should the bold usurping Spirit dare
Still higher climb, and sit in Moses' Chair,
Power o'er my Faith and Conscience to maintain,
Shall I submit, and suffer it to reign ?
Call it *the Church*, and Darkness put for Light,
Falshood with Truth confound, and Wrong with
Right ?

No : I dispute the Evil's haughty Claim,
The Spirit of the World be still its Name,
Whatever call'd by Man 'tis purely Evil,
'Tis Babel, Antichrist, and Pope and Devil !

Nor wou'd I e'er disgrace the Church's Cause
By penal Edicts, and compulsive Laws,
(Should wicked Powers, as formerly prevail
'T'exclude her choicest Children from her Pale)
Or force my Brethren in her Forms to join,
As every Jot and Tittle weré divine,
As all her Orders on the Mount were given,
And copied from the Hierarchy of Heaven,
Let Others for the Shape and Colour fight
Of Garments short or long, or black or white ;
Or fairly match'd, in furious Battle join
For and against the Sponsors and the Sign ;
Copes, Hoods, and Surplices *the Church* miscall,
And fiercely run their Heads against *the Wall* ;
Far different Care is mine : o'er Earth to see
Diffas'd her true essential Piety,
To see her lift again her languid Head,
Her lovely Face from ev'ry Wrinkle freed,

Clad

Clad in the simple, pure, primeval Dress,
 And beauteous with internal Holiness,
 Wash'd by the Spirit and the Word from Sin,
 Fair without Spot, and glorious all within.

Alas! how distant now, how desolate,
 Our fallen Zion, in her captive State!
 Deserted by her Friends, and laugh'd to Scorn,
 By inbred Foes, and bosom Vipers torn,
 With Grief I mark their rancorous Despight;
 With Horror hear the clam'rous *Edomite*;
 ' Down with her to the Ground, who fiercely cries,
 ' No more to lift her Head, no more to rise!
 ' Down with her to the Pit, to Tophet doom
 ' A Church emerging from the Dregs of *Rome*!
 ' Can there in such a Church Salvation be?
 ' Can any Good come out of Popery?' }
 Ye moderate Dissenters—come and see!

See us, when from the Papal Fire we came,
 Ye frozen Sects, and warm you at the Flame,
 Where for the Truth our Host of Martyrs stood,
 And clapp'd their Hands, and seal'd it with their
 Blood!

Behold Elijah's fiery Steeds appear,
 Discern the Chariot of *our* Israel near!
 That flaming Car, for whom doth it come down?
 The Spouse of Christ?—Or Whore of Babylon?
 For Martyrs, by the Scarlet Whore pursu'd
 Thro' Racks and Fires, into the Arms of God:
 These are the Church of Christ, by Torture driv'n
 To Thrones triumphant with their Friends in
 Heav'n;

The Church of Christ (let all the Nations own)
The Church of Christ *and England*—is but One!

Yet vainly of our Ancestors we boast,
We who their Faith and Purity have lost,
Degenerate Branches from a noble Seed,
Corrupt, apostatiz'd, and doubly dead:
Will GOD in such a Church his Work revive!
It cannot be that these dry Bones should live.

But who to teach Almighty Grace shall dare?
How far to suffer, and how long to spare?
Shall Man's bold Hand our Candlestick remove,
Or cut us off from our Redeemer's Love?
Shall Man presume to say, 'There is no Hope:
'GOD *must* forsake, for *We* have giv'n her up:
'To save a Church so near the Gates of Hell,
'This is a Thing—with God impossible!'

And yet this Thing impossible is done,
The Lord *hath* made his Power and Mercy known,
Strangely reviv'd our long forgotten Hope,
And brought out of their Graves his People up.
Soon as we prophesied in Jesu's Name,
The Noise, the Shaking, and the Spirit came!
The Bones spontaneous to each other cleav'd,
The Dead in Sin his powerful Word receiv'd,
And felt the quickning Breath of GOD, and liv'd. }
Dead Souls to all the Life of Faith restor'd,
(The House of Israel now) confess the Lord,
His People and his Church, out of their Graves
They rise and testify that Jesus saves,
That Jesus gives the multiplied Increase,
While One becomes a thousand Witnesses.

Nor

Nor can it seem to Souls already freed
 Incredible, that GOD should wake the Dead,
 Should farther still exert his saving Power,
 And call, and quicken twice ten thousand more,
 Till our whole Church a mighty Host becomes,
 And owns the Lord, the Opener of their Tombs.

Servant of GOD, my Yoke-fellow and Friend,
 If GOD by *us* to the *dry Bones* could send,
 By *us* out of their Graves his People raise,
 By *us* display the Wonders of his Grace,
 Why should we doubt his Zeal to carry on
 By abler Instruments the Work begun,
 To build our Temple that in Ruins lay,
 And reconvert a Nation in a Day,
 To bring our Sion forth, as Gold refin'd,
 With all his Saints in closest Union join'd
 A Friend, a Nursing-mother to Mankind?

Surely the Time is come, for GOD to rise,
 And turn upon our Church his glorious Eyes,
 To shew her all the Riches of his Grace,
 And make her throughout all the Earth a Praise :
 For O ! his Servants think upon her Stones,
 And in their Hearts his pleading Spirit groans :
 It pitieth them to see her in the Dust,
 Her Lamp extinguish'd, and her Gospel lost :
 Lost—till the Lord, the great Restorer came,
 Extinguish'd—till his Breath reviv'd the Flame ;
 His Arm descending lifted up the Sign,
 His Light appearing bad her *rise and shine*,
 Bad her glad Children bless the heavenly Ray,
 And shout the Prospect of a Gospel-day.

Meanest

Meanest and least of all her Sons, may I
 Unite with theirs my Faith and Sympathy !
 Meanest, and least — yet can I never rest,
 Or quench the Flame enkindled in my Breast :
 Whether a Spark of Nature's fond Desire,
 That warms my Heart, and sets my Soul on fire,
 Or a pure Ray from you bright Throne above,
 That melts my yearning Bowels into Love ;
 Even as Life, it still remains the same,
 My fervent Zeal for our Jerusalem ;
 Stronger than Death, and permanent as true,
 And purer Love, it *seems*, than Nature ever knew,

For her, whom her apostate Sons despise,
 I offer up my Life in Sacrifice,
 My Life in cherishing a Parent spend,
 Fond of my Charge, and faithful to the End :
 Not by the Bonds of sordid Interest ty'd,
 Not gain'd by Wealth or Honours to her Side,
 But by a *double Birth* her Servant born :
 Vile for her Sake, expos'd to general Scorn,
 Thrust out as from her Pale, I gladly roam,
 Banish myself to bring her Wanderers home.
 While the lost Sheep of Israel's House I seek,
 By Bigots branded for a Schismatick,
 By real Schismaticks disown'd, decry'd,
 As a blind Bigot on the Church's Side :
 Yet well content, so I my Love may shew,
 My friendly Love, to be esteem'd her Foe,
 Foe to her Order, Governors, and Rules :
 The Song of Drunkards, and the Sport of Fools ;

Or,

Or, what my Soul doth as Hell Fire reject,
A Pope—a Count—and Leader of a Sect.

Partner of my Reproach, who justly claim
The larger Portion of the glorious Shame,
My Pattern in the Work and Cause divine,
Say is thy Heart as *bigotted* as mine?

Wilt Thou with me in the Old Church remain,
And share her Weal or Woe, her Loss, her Gain,
Spend in her Service thy last Drop of Blood,
And die—to build the Temple of our God;

Thy Answer is in more than Words express,
I read it through the Window in thy Breast;
In every Action of thy Life I see
Thy faithful Love, and filial Piety.

To save a sinking Church, Thou dost not spare
Thyself, but lavish all thy Life for her:
For Zion Sake Thou wilt not hold thy Peace,
That she may grow, impatient to decrease,
To rush into thy Grave that she may rise,
And mount with all her Children to the Skies.

What then remains for us on Earth to do,
But labour on with Jesus in our View,
Who bids us kindly for his Patients care,
Calls us the Burthen of his Church to bear,
To feed his Flock, and nothing seek beside,
And nothing know, but Jesus crucify'd.

When first sent forth to minister the Word,
Say, did we preach ourselves, or Christ the Lord?
Was it our Aim Disciples to collect,
To raise a Party, or to found a Sect?

No :

No ; but to spread the Power of Jesus' Name,
 Repair the Walls of our Jerufalem,
 Revive the Piety of antient Days,
 And fill the Earth with our Redeemer's Praise,
 Still let us steadily purfue our End,
 And only for the Faith divine contend,
 Superior to the Charms of Power and Fame,
 Perfiſt thro' Life, invariably the ſame :
 And if indulg'd our Heart's Deſire to ſee,
 Jeruſalem in full Proſperity,
 To priſtine Faith, and Purity reſtor'd ;
 How ſhall we bleſs our good redeeming Lord,
 Gladly into his Hands our Children give,
 Securely in their Mother's Boſom leave,
 With calm Delight accept our late Release,
 Reſign our Charge to GOD, and then depart in Peace!

F I N I S.