

REBUKE TO WESLEY
A LETTER
TO THE
REV. MR. JOHN WESLEY;
RELATIVE TO HIS PRETENDED
ABRIDGEMENT
OF
ZANCHIUS ON PREDESTINATION

Augustus Toplady

This edition is now corrected and conforms exactly, both in format and verbatim, to this treatise as presented in *The Complete Works Of Augustus Toplady*.

Note: This letter is further proof of the devilish character of John Wesley, which history is just now beginning to recognize. As this paper demonstrates, John Wesley had severe problems with honesty. After all, anyone who can so arrogantly accuse the Apostle Paul of error - and do so simply by casting a lot - is someone about whom the kindest thing that can be said of him is that he is wickedly deceived. But habitual dishonesty deserves stronger condemnation, and therefore as mighty as John Wesley's exhibition of dishonesty is in this paper, as you will see, it actually pales to insignificance compared to the dishonest way in which John Wesley dealt with George Whitefield and other genuinely born again Christians, who went to extraordinary lengths to help the Iscariot-like and grossly superstitious Wesley throughout his life. I have shuffled Toplady's Preface into an APPENDIX at the very end of this treatise, as the Preface itself is largely irrelevant to the matter at hand, and thus we begin with the content of the letter itself. [Editor: Scott Jones]

Sir,

Possibly the following letter may fall into the hands of some who are unacquainted with the merits of the occasion on which I write. For the information of such, I must premise that, in November, 1769, I published a Two Shilling Pamphlet, entitled *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination stated and asserted: with a preliminary Discourse on the Divine Attributes. Translated, in great measure, from the Latin of Jerom Zanchius*.

Though you are neither mentioned, nor alluded to, throughout the whole book, yet it could hardly be imagined that a treatise apparently tending to lay the axe to the root of those pernicious

doctrines which, for more than thirty years past, you have endeavoured to palm on your credulous followers, with all the sophistry of a Jesuit, and the dictatorial authority of a pope, should long pass without some censure from the hand of a restless Arminian, who has so eagerly endeavoured to distinguish himself as the bellwether of his deluded thousands.

Accordingly, in the month of March, 1770, out sneaks a printed paper (consisting of one sheet, folded into twelve pages; price one penny) entitled, *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination stated and asserted, by the Reverend Mr. A_____ T_____*. Wherein you pretend to give an abridgment of the pamphlet above referred to. But,

1. Why did you not make your abridgment truly public? For an apparent reason that, if possible it might elude my knowledge, and so escape the rod. Born of a stole's embrace, it was needful for the spurious pusillanimous performance to steal its way into the world. It privately crept abroad from the Foundry, the seat of its nativity; it was sold indeed, but sold under the rose; it was carefully circulated in the dark, and the friends of Mr. Wesley were designed to be the sole sphere of its acquaintance. Thus every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deed should be reproved. In such conduct, I can discern much of the jesuit, but nothing of the saint. -- I had to this hour remained unapprised of the secret stab, but for the information received from some of superior integrity to yourself. -- I will put Christianity quite out of the question, and suppose it to have no kind of influence. But should you not at least act as a man of common honour? Come forth openly, sir, in future, like an honest generous assailant; and, from this moment forward, disdain to act the ignoble part of a lurking sly assassin.

2. Why did you not abridge me faithfully and fairly? Why must you lard your ridiculous compendium with additions and interpolations of your own; especially as you took the liberty of prefixing my name to it? Your reasons are obvious. My publication had spread among some of your people: and the longer it continued to diffuse itself, the more you trembled for your Diana. Hence, Demetrius like, you found it needful, by the help of a pious fraud, to prejudice your Ephesians against the doctrines of St. Paul. The book was likely to give the Arminian Babel a shake: therefore, no way so effectual to secure it as by endeavouring to spike the cannon which was planted against it. That you might seem to gratify the curiosity of your partisans, and keep them really hood-winked at the same time, you draw up a flimsy, partial compendium of *Zanchius*: a compendium which exhibits a few detached propositions, placed in the most disadvantageous point of view, and without including any part of the evidence on which they stand.

But this alone was not sufficient to compass the desired end. Unsatisfied with carefully and totally suppressing every proof alleged by *Zanchius* in support of his argument; a false colouring must likewise be superinduced, by inserting a sentence or two now and then of your own foisting in. After which you close the motley piece, with an entire paragraph, forged every word of it by yourself: and conclude all, as you began, with subjoining the initials of my name: to make the

ignorant believe that the whole, with your omissions, additions and alterations, actually came from me. -- An instance of audacity and falsehood hardly to be paralleled!

I am very far from desiring the reader to take my word in proof of the charge alleged against you. As an instance of your want of honour, veracity, and justice, I refer to the following paragraph, **1.** as published by me; and, **2.** as quoted by you.

1. "When all the transactions of providence and grace are wound up in the last day, he (Christ) will then properly sit as judge, and openly publish, and solemnly ratify, if I may so say, his everlasting decrees, by receiving the elect, body and soul into glory: and by passing sentence on the non-elect (not for having done what they could not help, but) for their willful ignorance of divine things and their obstinate unbelief; for their omissions of moral duty, and for their repeated iniquities and transgressions." *Doct. of Abs. Predest.*

2. "In the last day Christ will sit as Judge and openly publish and solemnly ratify his everlasting decrees, by receiving the elect into glory, and by passing sentence on the non-elect (not for having done what they could not help, but) for their willful ignorance of divine things and their obstinate unbelief; for their omissions of moral duty, and for their repeated iniquities and transgressions WHICH THEY COULD NOT HELP." Wesley's Abridgement, p.9.

Whether my view of the doctrine itself be, in fact, right or wrong is no part of the present enquiry: the question is, have you quoted me fairly? Blush, Mr. Wesley, if you are capable of blushing. For once publicly acknowledge yourself to have acted criminally: "*unless,*" to use your own words on another occasion, "*shame and you have shook hands and parted.*"

Your concluding paragraph, which you have the effrontery to palm on the world as mine, runs thus: "**The sum of all this: one in twenty (suppose) of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can. Reader, believe this, or be damned. Witness my hand, A ____ T ____.**" **(1)**

In almost any other case, a similar forgery would transmit the criminal to Virginia or Maryland, if not to Tyburn. If such an opponent can be deemed an honest man, where shall we find a knave? -- What would you think of me, were I infamous enough to abridge any treatise of yours, sprinkle it with interpolations, and conclude it thus: "*Reader, buy this book, or be damned, Witness my hand, John Wesley?*"

And is it thus you contend for victory? are these the weapons of your warfare? Is this bearing down those who differ from you with meekness? Do you call this binding with cords of love? Away, for shame, with such disingenuous artifices. At least, endeavour to conceal that narrow sectarian spirit, which betrays itself more or less in almost every thing you write. Renounce the low serpentine cunning, which puts you on falsifying what you find yourself unable to refute. And, as you regard your character and the cause you espouse, dismiss those dirty subterfuges (the last resources of mean malicious impotence), which degrade the man of parts into a lying sophister, and sink a divine beneath the level of an oyster-woman. Cease to fight like the French,

with old nails and broken glass. Charge fairly and fire as forcibly as you can. But if you persist to employ the weapons of scurrility and falsehood, the splinters will not only recoil on yourself, but you will continue to be posted for a theological coward.

And why should you, of all people in the world, be so very angry with the doctrines of grace? Forget not the days and months that are past. Remember that it once depended on the toss of a shilling, whether you yourself should be a Calvinist or an Arminian. Tails fell uppermost, and you resolved to be an universalist. It was a happy throw which consigned you to the tents of Arminius: for it saved us from the company of a man who, by a kind of religious gambling peculiarly his own, risked his faith on the most contemptible of all lots; and was capable of tossing up for his creed as porters or chairmen toss up for a halfpenny.

I have read of princes and other eminent persons, who, having risen from ignoble life to greatness, took care to have some striking memorials of their former obscurity frequently in their view, by way of a counterpoise to pride, and as a preservative from being exalted above measure. When from the pinnacle of your own importance you look down upon the advocates for free-grace, and consider them as reptiles, to be treated as you please, only recollect the humbling circumstance of which I have just reminded you: and repress the complacent swellings of self-adulation, by some such soliloquy as this: "**I have been in danger myself of believing that St. Paul says true, when he declares that God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. How precious was the shilling, and above all how lucky was the throw, which convinced me of St. Paul's mistake!**" Forgive us if we as implicitly determine our faith by the Scriptures as you determined yours by the fall of the splendid shilling.

But even since this memorable epoch, you have by no means proved yourself that steady Arminian you would have the world believe. Proteus like, you disdain to be shackled and circumscribed by any certain form. Her ladyship of Loretto, though she has a different suit for every day in the year, is *semper eadem*, when compared with the *quondam* fellow of Lincoln College. There are times when you vary as much from your preceding self, as you do at all times from the rest of mankind. Possessed of more than serpentine elability, you cast your slough not once a year, but almost once an hour. Hence your innumerable inconsistencies and flagrant self-contradictions; the jarring of your principles (ever at intestine war with each other), and the incoherence of your religious system. Your scheme of doctrines reminds me of the feet of a certain visionary image, which, as the sacred penman acquaints us, seemed to be composed of iron and clay -- heterogeneous materials which may, indeed be put together, but will never incorporate with each other. Somewhat like the necromantic soup, of which you have probably read in the tragedy of Macbeth; your doctrines may be stirred into a chaotic jumble, but witchcraft itself would strive in vain to bring them in coalition. -- On the contrary, evangelical *TRUTH* knows nothing of this harlequin assemblage. It is not like Joseph's coat of many colours; nor made up of a patch from Donatus, of another from Pelagius, and a third from Arminius: but is invariably simple, uniform, and harmonious; resembling the robe of its adorable Teacher, which was without seam, and woven from the top throughout.

On one occasion you had the candour to own your levity, as to points of faith. I am acquainted with a very respectable person (Mr. J. D.) who, not many years ago, taking the freedom to tell you that "*your prejudices, like armed men, stood with their swords ready drawn, to guard all the passes of conviction, and hew down every truth as fast as it presented itself to your mind;*" you had the unusual honesty to answer, "**Ah! sir! if you knew how distressed I have been what doctrines I should embrace, and how I have been tossed about from system to system, you would think me the most open to conviction, and the least liable to prejudice of any man you ever knew.**" -- This answer did you real honour, for I am persuaded you spoke true. Yet why should you, who have been so remarkably tossed about, take upon you to revile those who have been enabled to stand fast? I hope for your own sake that you will never cease tossing about, until you have gained the harbour of truth: and that, amidst all your manifold shifting from system to system, you will at length be enabled to fix on the only right system, which asserts the lawfulness of God's doing what he will with his own.

I am told the penny-sheet (which occasions this free address), is to be followed, some time hence, by a four-penny pamphlet against *Zanchius*: wherein you are to besiege the doctrine of predestination in form. Commence the siege, and welcome. Open your trenches and plant your batteries. Bring forth your strong arguments and play them off with vigour. I publicly profess, and subscribe my name to it, that if I cannot beat you back, I will freely capitulate and own myself conquered. But remember that if you would do any thing to purpose you must make a regular attack. You must encounter the whole of *Zanchius*, and take his arguments in their regular connection and dependency on each other. You must go through with my preface, which I prefixed to my translation of that great man. Having carried and dismantled the out-work, you must next proceed to demolish the dissertation on the divine attributes: which having destroyed, you are then to assail the citadel; I mean those five stubborn chapters which make up the body of the treatise itself. All the allies or the arguments drawn from Scripture and reason, must likewise be put to the sword. This should you attempt to do in a manner worthy of a scholar and a divine, I shall have no objection (if life and health continue) to measuring swords, or breaking a pike, with you. Controversy properly conducted is a friend to truth, and no enemy to benevolence. When the flint and the steel are in conflict some sparks may issue, which may both warm and enlighten. But I have no notion of encountering a wind-mill in lieu of a giant. If, therefore you come against me (as now) with straws instead of artillery, and with chaff in the room of ammunition, I shall disdain to give you battle: I shall only laugh at you from the ramparts.

Much less, if you descend to your customary resource of false quotations, despicable invective, and unsupported dogmatisms, shall I hold myself obliged again to enter the lists with you. An opponent who thinks to add weight to his arguments by scurrility and abuse, resembles the insane person, who rolled himself in mud, in order to make himself fine. I would no more enter into a formal controversy with such a scribbler, than I would contend for the wall with a chimney-sweeper.

When some of your friends gave out, two or three months before your late doughty publication, that Mr. John (as they call you) was shutting himself up [\(2\)](#), in order to answer the

translator of *Zanchius*; I really imagined that something tolerably respectable was going to make its appearance. But --

Quid dignum tanto tulit hic promissor hiatu?

After the teeming mountain had been shut up a competent time, long enough to have been brought to bed of a Hercules, forth creeps a puny toothless mouse! A mouse of heterogeneous kind: having little more than its head and tail (3) from you; and the main of its body made up of some mangled, castrated citations from *Zanchius*.

Currente rota, cur urceus exit?

If I may judge of the future, by the past, and unless you amend greatly in a short time, your four-penny supplement, when it appears, will be no less inconsiderable than the penny sheet already extant. And, as the mouse is not cheap at a penny, I am very apprehensive the rat, when it ventures out, will be far too dear at a groat.

Hitherto your treatment of *Zanchius* resembles that of some clumsy, bungling anatomist: who in the dissection of an animal dwells much on the larger and more obvious particulars; but quite omits nerves, the lymphatics, the muscles, and the most interesting parts of the complicate machine. Thus, in your piddling extract from the pamphlet, you have thought proper to curtail, you only give a few of the larger outlines; without at all entering into the spirit of the subject, or so much as producing (so far from attempting to refute) any of the turning points, on which the argument depends. Wrench the finest eye that ever shone in a lady's head from its socket, and it will appear frightful and deformed: whereas, in its natural connection, the symmetry and brilliancy, the expressiveness and the beauty, are conspicuous. So it often fares with authors. A detached sentence, artfully misplaced, or unseasonably introduced, maliciously applied, or unfairly cited, may appear to carry an idea the very reverse of its real meaning. But re-place dislocated passage, and its propriety and importance are restored. I would wish every unprejudiced person, into whose hands your abridgment of my translation has fallen, to suspend his judgment concerning it until he sees the translation itself. On comparing the two together, he will at once perceive how candid and honest you are; and what quantity of confidence may be reposed on your integrity as a citer.

When I advert to the unjust and indecent manner in which you attacked the late excellent Mr. Hervey; above all, when I consider how daringly free you have made with the Scriptures themselves, both in your commentaries, and in your alterations of the text itself; I cease to wonder at the audacious licentiousness of your pen respecting me. I should rather wonder if you treated any opponent with equity, or canvassed any subject impartially. Rise but once to this, and I shall both wonder and rejoice.

You give me to understand that I am but "*a young translator?*" Granted. Better however to be a young translator than an old plagiarist. Which of our ancient divines have you not evaporated and spoiled? and then made them speak a language, when dead, which they would have started from, with horror, when alive? (4)

Yet Brutus is an honourable man!

How miserably have you pillaged even my publication? Books, when sent into the world, are no doubt in some sense public property. *Zanchius*, if you chose to buy him, was yours to read; and, if you thought yourself equal to the undertaking, was yours to answer: but he was not yours to mangle. Remember how narrowly you escaped a prosecution some years ago, for pirating the Poems of Dr. Young.

I would wish you to keep your hands from literary picking and stealing. However, if you cannot refrain from this kind of stealth, you can abstain from murdering what you steal. You ought not, with Ahab, to kill as well as take possession: nor, giant like, to strew the area of your den with the bones of such authors as you have seized and slain.

On most occasions you are too prone to set up your own infallible judgment as the very *lapis lydius* of right and wrong. Hence the firebrands, arrows and death, which you hurl at those who presume to vary from the oracles you dictate. Hence -- particularly your illiberal and malevolent spleen against the Protestant dissenters; (5) even though you yourself are, in many respects a dissenter of the worst kind. I would not however by this declaration be understood if I meant to dishonour that respectable body by classing you with them; for you stand alone, and are a dissenter of a cast peculiar to yourself. And yet, like Henry I, you are for making the length of your own arm the standard-measure for everybody else. No wonder therefore that you eminently inherit the fate of Ishmael; that your hand is against every man, and every man's hand against you. Strange! that one who pleads so strenuously for universal love in the Deity should adopt so little of the love for which he pleads! that a person of principles so large should have a heart so narrow! Bigots of every denomination are much the same: and of all vices, bigotry is one of the meanest and most mischievous. Its shriveled, contracted breast leaves no room for the noble virtues to dilate and play. Candour, benevolence, and forbearance, become smothered and extinguished: partly from being cramped littleness of mind, partly from being overwhelmed with intellectual dust. Bigotry is a determined enemy to truth; inasmuch as it essentially interferes with freedom of enquiry, restrains the grand indefeasible right of private judgment, confines our regards to a party, and, by limiting the extent of moderation and mutual good-will, tears up charity by the very roots. In short, bigotry is the very essence of Popery; and too often leads its votaries, before they are aware, into the bosom of that pretended Church, whose doctrines and maxims are the worst corruption of the best religion that ever was. And though this baneful vice is so uncomfortable in itself; so contrary to the genius of the gospel; and so extensively pernicious in its effects; yet is it not as common as it is detestable? May all God's children be enabled to cast it, with the rest of their idols, to the moles and to the bats!

You have obliquely given me a sneering lecture upon "*modesty, self-diffidence, and tenderness*" to opponents: and it must be owned, that the lesson comes with a peculiar grace and quite in character from you. The words sound well: but, like many other prescribers, you say and do not. Else why do you represent me as telling my readers that they must, **"upon pain of damnation believe, that only one person in twenty is elected?"** Why do you introduce me as enjoining them to believe under the same penalty that **"the elect shall be saved, do what they will; and the reprobate damned, do what they can?"** This is a sample indeed of your own modesty, tenderness, and self-diffidence: but God forbid that I should give such dismal proof of mine. I believe and preach that the chosen and ransomed of the Lord are appointed to salvation though sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: and, with regard to the rest, that they will be condemned, not for doing what they can in a moral way, but for not doing what they can: for not believing the gospel report; and for not ordering their conversation according to it.

Let me likewise ask you when or where I ever presumed to ascertain the number of God's elect? Point out the treatise and the page, wherein I assert that only **"one in twenty of mankind are elected."** The book of life is not in your keeping, nor in mine. The Lord, and the Lord only, knoweth them that are his. He alone who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names, calleth also his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out, first from a state of sin into a state of grace, and then into the state of glory. Yet, as the learned and devout Beza expresses himself, *"I shall never blush to abide by that simplicity which the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Scriptures, hath been pleased to adopt:"* **(6)** and it is but too certain that in the Scriptures are such awful passages as these: **Broad is the way and wide is the gate which leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat:** while on the other hand -- **Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it -- Many are called, but few chosen -- Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom -- There is a remnant, according to the election of grace.** Declarations of this tremendous import, instead of furnishing you with fuel for contention, and setting you on a presumptuous and fruitless calculation of the number that shall be saved or lost, should rather bring you on your knees before God, with your hand upon your breast and this cry in your lips: *"Search me, O Lord, and try me; prove me also and examine my thoughts. Shew me to which class I belong. Give me solid proof that my name is in the Lamb's Book of Life, by making it clear to me that I am in the faith."* And ever remember that true faith utterly disclaims all ground of pretension to justification and eternal life, but on the sole footing of God's absolute grace and the Messiah's finished redemption. Pelagianism is for serving the Deity as pope Celestine III is said to have treated the emperor Henry VI. It quite kicks off the crown from the head of Sovereign grace; and makes the will of God bend and truckle and shape itself to the caprice of man. Arminianism, somewhat more specious, but altogether as pernicious, cuts the crown in two, by dividing the praise of salvation between God and man, and fairly runs away with half. On the contrary, that faith which is of divine operation acts like the emperor Charles V when he retired from the throne: it resigns the crown entirely and renounces it for ever, without reserving so much as a single jewel for itself.

Should the Holy Spirit vouchsafe to lead you thus far you will then no longer be ready to object that **"the elect shall be saved, do what they will"** for you will know by heart-felt experience that the converted elect are, and cannot but be, ambitious to perform all those good works in which God hath ordained them to walk; and to act worthy of him who hath graciously and effectually called them to his kingdom and glory.

Your pretended fear of Antinomianism like your real fear of the comet, which was expected to have appeared a few years back, is perfectly idle and chimerical. You publicly testified your apprehensions that the latter would dry up our rivers, and burn up our vegetables if not reduce the earth itself to a cinder. But your prophesies proved to be *"the baseless fabric of a vision;"* and our rivers, trees, and earth remain as they were. -- Nor will the doctrines of grace, experimentally received into the heart, destroy or weaken the obligation of moral virtue. (7) On the contrary they will operate on the practice, not like your scorching comet on our globe, but like the genial beams of the sun, which diffuse gladness, and occasion fruitfulness wherever they arise. Whoever wishes in earnest to lead a new life must first cordially embrace the good old doctrine of salvation by grace alone. -- In short, your own tenet of sinless perfection leads directly to the grossest Antinomianism. I once knew a lady who you had inveigled into your pale, and who in a short space professed herself perfect. Being in her company some time after I pointed out a part of her conduct which to me seemed hardly compatible with a sinless state. Her answer was to this effect: *"You are no competent judge of my behaviour. You are not yourself perfectly sanctified; and therefore see my tempers and actions through a false medium. I may to you seem angry: but my anger is only Christian zeal."* -- I could, moreover mention the names of some of your quondam followers who, from professing themselves sinless, have cast off all appearance of godliness, and are working all manner of iniquity with greediness. If you are in search of Antinomians, truly and justly so called, you must look for them, not among those whom you term Calvinist, but among your own hair-brained perfectionists. (8) Had not you yourself (to remind you of but one instance) a proof of it not very long ago? You formed a scheme of collecting as many perfect ones as you could, to live together under one roof. A number of these flowers were accordingly transplanted from some of your nursery-beds to the hothouse. And a hothouse it soon proved. For would we believe it? the sinless people quarreled in a short time at so violent a rate that you found yourself forced to disband the select regiment. Had you kept them together much longer, that line would have been literally verified in these squabbling members of your Church Militant;

The males pulled noses, and the females caps.

A very small house, I am persuaded, would hold the really perfect upon earth. You might drive them all into a nutshell. But to return.

I cannot dismiss your objection concerning the supposed fewness of God's truly elect people without observing that, how few soever they may appear, and really be in a single generation, and as balanced with the many unrighteous among whom they live below, yet when the whole

number of the Redeemer's jewels is made up -- when the entire harvest of his saints is gathered in -- when his complete mystic body is presented collectively before the throne of His Father; they will amount to an exceeding great multitude which no man can number. On earth the company of the faithful may to us, who know but in part, resemble Elijah's cloud, which, at first, seemed no bigger than a man's hand; whereas, in the day of God, they will be found to overspread the whole heavens. They may appear now, to use Isaiah's phrase, but as two or three berries on the top of a bough, or as four or five in the most fruitful branches thereof; but they shall then be like the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, the height of which reached unto heaven, and the sight of it to the end of all the earth; the leaves thereof were fair and the fruit thereof much. The kingdom of glory will both be more largely and more variously peopled than bigots of all denominations are either able to think, or willing to allow.

Go now, sir, and dazzle the credulous with your mock victory over the supposed reprobation of "nineteen in twenty." Go on to chalk hideous figures on your wainscot; and enjoy the glorious triumph of battering your knuckles in fighting them. But father no more of your hideous figures on me. Do not dress up scare-crows of your own, and then affect to run away from them as mine. I do not expect to be treated by Mr. John Wesley with the candour of a gentleman, or the meekness of a Christian; but I wish him, for his reputation's sake, to write and act with the honesty of a heathen.

You affect to be deemed a minister of the national Church. Why then do you decry her doctrines, and, as far as in you lies, sap her discipline? That you decry her doctrines needs no proof: witness, for example, the wide discrepancy between her decisions and yours on the articles of freewill, justification, predestination, perseverance, and sinless perfection; to say nothing concerning your new-fangled doctrine of the *intermediate state of departed souls*. **(9)**

That you likewise do not overflow with zeal for the discipline **(10)** of the Church of England is manifest, not only from the numerous and intricate regulations, with which you fetter **(11)** your societies, but from the measures you lately pursued, when a foreign mendicant was in England, who went by the name of Erasmus and styled himself bishop of Arcadia. This old gentleman passed for a prelate of the Greek Church; though to me it seems not improbable that he might rather be a member of the Romish. Thus much, however, is certain; that the chaplains of the then Russian ambassador here knew nothing about him: and that to this day, the Greek Church in Amsterdam believed him to have been an impostor. With regard to this person, I take the liberty of putting one or two queries to you.

1. Did you or did you not get him **(12)** to ordain several of your lay preachers according to the manner of what he called the Greek Ritual?
2. Did these lay preachers of yours, or did they not, both dress and officiate as clergymen of the Church of England, in consequence of that ordination? And under the sanction of your own avowed approbation notwithstanding, putting matters at the best they could only be ministers of the Greek Church, and which could give them no legal right to act as ministers of the Church of

England. Nay, did you not repeatedly declare that their ordination was, to all intent and purposes, as valid as your own which you received forty years ago at Oxford?

3. Did you or did you not strongly press this supposed Greek bishop to consecrate you a bishop at large, that you might be invested with a power of ordaining what ministers you pleased to officiate in your societies as clergymen? And did he not refuse to consecrate you, alleging this for his reason -- that according to the canons of the Greek Church more than one bishop must be present to assist at the consecration of a new one?

4. In all this, did you or did you not palpably violate a certain oath which you have repeatedly taken? I mean the oath of supremacy; part of which runs thus:

And I do declare, that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state, or potentate, hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm: so help me God.

Now is not the conferring of orders an act of the highest ecclesiastical power and authority? And was not this man a foreigner? And were not the steps you took a positive acknowledgment of a foreign power and jurisdiction? And was not such acknowledgment a breach of your oath?

It matters not whether Erasmus was in fact an impostor or a genuine Greek bishop. Unless you were very insincere you took him to be what he passed for. If you did not, you were a party to a fraud. Either way, pretend no longer to love the Church of England! you who so lately endeavoured to set up *imperium in imperio!* If you are honest, you will either publicly confess your fault, or for ever throw aside your gown and cassock. You will either return to the service of the Church, or cease to wear her livery. You may think, perhaps, that I make too free in expostulating with you so plainly. And yet, on maturer thought, I question whether you may or not. How can Mr. Wesley, who on all occasions makes so very free with others, be angry with young translators for copying (though at humble distance) so venerable an example? Nor, indeed, ought a person who, beyond even what truth and decency permit, takes so great liberties with the rest of his contemporaries, to wonder if, so far as decency and truth allow, the rest of his contemporaries take as great liberties with him.

You complain, I am told, that the evangelical clergy are leaving no stone unturned "**to raise John Calvin's ghost, in all quarters of the land.**" If you think the doctrines of that eminent and blessed reformer to be formidable as a ghost, you are welcome to do all you can towards laying them. Begin your incantations as soon as you please. The press is open, and you never had a fairer opportunity of trying your strength upon John Calvin than at present. Only take care that you do not, with all your skill in theological magic, get yourself into a circle, out of which you may find it difficult to retreat. And, a little to mitigate your wrath against the raisers of Calvin's ghost, remember that you yourself have been a great ghost-raiser in your time. Who raised the ghosts of John Goodwin, the Arminian regicide; and Thomas Grantham, the Arminian baptist? Who raised

the ghost of Monsieur DeRenty, **(13)** the French Papist; and of many other Romish enthusiasts; by translating their lives into English, for the edification of Protestant readers?

Should you take any notice of this letter, I have three requests to make; or rather, there are three particulars on which I have a right to insist:

- 1. Do not quote unfairly.*
- 2. Do not answer evasively.*
- 3. Do not print clandestinely.*

Canvass the points of doctrine wherein we differ, as strictly as you can. They will stand the test. They scorn disguise. They disdain to sue for quarter. Truth, like our first parents in the state of innocence, can shew herself naked, without being either afraid or ashamed: and he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

May you at last begin to act from this principle, and no longer prostitute your time and talents to the wiredrawing of chicanery, and the circulation of error! I am not insensible of your parts: but alas! what is distinguished ability, if not wedded to integrity? No less just than ingenious is the remark of a learned and noble writer: "**The riches of the mind, like those of fortune, may be employed so perversely as to become a nuisance and a pest, instead of an ornament and support to society.**" **(14)**

I am Yours, &c.,

AUGUSTUS TOPLADY
Westminster, March 26, 1770.

APPENDIX

Preface - Toplady's Rebuke To Wesley

Nine months are now elapsed since the first publication of this letter; in all which time Mr. W. has neither apologized for the misdemeanor which occasioned his hearing from me in this public manner, nor attempted to answer the charges entered against him. Judging, probably, that the former would be too condescending in one who has erected himself into the leader of a sect, and that the latter would prove rather too difficult a task, and involve him in a subsequent train of fresh detections, he has prudently omitted both.

Some of his followers, however, have not been so tamely inactive, on this occasion, as their pastor. Anxious, at once, to palliate his offence and to screen his timidity, several penny and two-penny defenses have successively appeared: wherein the anonymous scribblers wretchedly endeavoured to gather up, and put together, the fragments of a shattered reputation. The very printers, the mid-wives who handed these "*insects of a day*" into public existence, were ashamed to subjoin their names at the bottom of the title pages.

Two lay-preachers, in particular, have feebly taken up the cudgels for their master. Of one I shall say very little, as he writes with some degree of decency. Of the other I shall not say much; for both his talents and his morals sink him far below the dignity of chastisement. This illiterate "*haberdasher of small wares*" entitles his penny effusion, as well as I remember, *A Letter of thanks to the Reverend Mr. Toplady, in the Names of all the hardened Sinners in London and Westminster*. The poor creature, it is plain from his title-page, aims at humour; and yet unhappily for such a design, he is in reality but too literally qualified to act as secretary in chief to the sinners of London and Westminster. For he has given very numerous and ample proofs of his own sinnership, and that there can hardly exist, in those two cities, a more atrocious sinner than himself. I will not pollute this paper with a recital of his crimes. They who know the man are no strangers to his communication. Though a doctrinal Pharisee, his life has, long ago, evinced him a practical Sadducee. Surely, Arminianism is likely to flourish mainly under the auspices of such able and virtuous advocates!

And so much for Mr. Wesley's redoubtable subalterns.

*What image of their fury can we form?
Dullness and rage. A puddle in a storm.*

If my advice carries any weight with them, they will carefully peruse their spelling-books before they make another sally from the press. As to themselves and their refined productions, I mean to take no farther notice of either. I am quite of Mr. Gay's opinion:

To shoot at crows is powder thrown away.

I had almost forgot the monthly reviewers. One word concerning them, and I have done. The two reverend gentlemen who are hired to dissect and characterize whatever comes within the divinity-department, *a calendis ad calendas*, would fain have it, in their superficial strictures on the first edition of this letter, that I am angry with Mr. Wesley. If, by anger, the ingenious animadverters mean a just and becoming disapprobation of Mr. Wesley's lying abridgment, and of the surreptitious manner in which he smuggled it into the world, I acknowledge myself, in this respect, angry. I hope the reverend reviewers will not, in their turn, be angry too, at seeing themselves tacked to the list of Mr. Wesley's allies: since, in their mode of representing my dispute (or, to adopt their own military term, my battle) with that gentleman, they seem to rank themselves in the number of his seconds. The reason is obvious. Mr. W. is a red-hot Arminian: and the sagacious doctors can discern, with half an eye, that Arminianism lies within a bow-shot of Socinianism and Deism. Yet, notwithstanding the alliance is thus not altogether unnatural, why should these two divines, who are, certainly, possessed of abilities which might do honour to human nature, by a narrow, sordid attachment to party, render those abilities less respectable?

Broad Hembury, January, 9 1771.

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) Wesley's Abridgment, p. 12.
- (2) "Dreadful his thunders, while unprinted roar, But when once published, they are heard no more. So distant bug-bears fright: but, nearer draw, The block's a block, and turns to mirth your awe." Dr. Young
- (3) The advertisement, on the back-side of Mr. Wesley's title-page; and his concluding paragraph, p. 12.
- (4) See almost every part of what Mr. Wesley miscalls the Christian Library.
- (5) "How little is the case mended at the meeting! either the teachers are new-light men, denying the Lord that bought them ; or they are predestinarians, and so preach predestination and final perseverance, more or less. Nor is it expedient for any methodist preacher to imitate the dissenters in their manner of praying: either in his tone, or in his language, or in the length of his prayer. Neither should we sing like them, in a slow, drawing manner. We sing swift, both because it saves time, and because it tends to awake and enliven the soul." Mr. Wesley's *Preserv. against Unsettled Notions*, p.245.

How much more civilly, not to say cordially, this gentleman shakes hands with the Papists, let his own words declare -- "Can nothing be done, even allowing us, on both sides, to retain our own opinions, for the softening our hearts towards each other? My dear friend, consider. I am not persuading you to leave or change your religion: but to follow after that fear and love of God without which all religion is vain. I say not a word to you about your opinions or outward manner of worship. We ought, without this endless jangling about opinions, to provoke one another to love and to good works. Let the points wherein we differ stand aside. Here are enough wherein we agree. O brethren, let us not still fall out by the way!" Mr. Wesley's *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, p .4, 8-10.

Far be it from me to charge Mr. Wesley with a fondness for all the grosser parts of Popery. Yet I fear the partition between that Church and him is somewhat thinner than might be wished. Or rather, like the loving Pyramis and Thisbe, they endeavour to remedy the want of a perfect coalition, by kissing each other through a hole in the wall.

- (6) *Me vero istius simplicitatis, quam Sp. S. amplexus est nunquam pudebit.* Beza, in *Matth. ii. 2.*
- (7) Consciousness of guilt and dread of detection frequently put bad men upon entering those accusations against their opponents, which without such a timely precaution, they are justly apprehensive will be charged upon themselves, like the apostate spirits in Milton, who were for turning their own torments into weapons against heaven. Such is the prudent conduct of very many Arminians. Fully aware that their own lives are none of the best, they affect to cry out against Calvinism, as though she was the very mother and nurse of licentiousness. Were she really so, what myriads would desert the standard of Arminius, and flock to the banner of Calvin! But all who are capable of discernment know that the pretended licentious tendency of Calvinism (so called) is no more than idle flourish and empty declamation. Were the doctrines of grace unfavourable to strict morality, we should quickly see them the reigning system of the age. On the contrary, they are therefore at present unfashionable because they make no allowance for the wickedness of the wicked. It is a fundamental axiom with us who abide by the principles of the Reformation, that holiness of heart and life is (not the cause, price or condition, but, which adds infinitely stronger security to the interests of moral virtue) an essential and inseparable part of that very salvation to which the elect were chosen from everlasting. A Calvinist must consequently renounce both the letter and the spirit of his own constitutive principles (i.e. he must cease to be a Calvinist), ere he can consistently degenerate into a sensualist.
- (8) I might with too much justice add that some of Mr. W.'s own lay preachers are indisputably to be numbered among practical Antinomians. These, however, are regarded by their partisans as very excellent men, that have not yet attained to perfection, though they are in a fair way of it. If Mr. Wesley should have the front to deny that any of his preaching mechanics are met of loose lives, I have it in my power to appeal to

facts, which a tenderness for those persons as individuals of mankind, and a concern for the honour of human nature in general, restrain me at present from holding up to public view. Nor would I be thought to hint at these things with pleasurable triumph. I feel too strongly for the interests of Christian obedience, and for the happiness of souls, to exult over the vices of the vicious. But, when men, whose lives would be a disgrace to heathenism; when men, whom Socrates or Seneca would have blushed to own for disciples, take upon them to arraign the doctrines of the Scriptures, and of our established Church, under a pretense of guarding against those immoralities of which they themselves are notorious and noon-day examples, what can such shameless railers expect but to have their own real crimes deservedly exposed!

(9) In Mr. Wesley's first edition of his notes on the New Testament, published in 1755, are the two following assertions, of which even he himself has, perhaps, never given a more striking species of presumption and inconsistency. "Enoch and Elijah are not in heaven, but only in paradise." Note on John iii. 13. "Enoch and Elijah entered at once into the highest degree of glory, without first waiting in paradise." Note on Rev. xix. 20. This it is to be wise above what is written!

(10) Mr. Wesley's re-baptization of some adult persons is another proof of this charge. I could point out by name more than one who have undergone from his hand a reiteration of that sacred ceremony. I shall only at present mention a single instance which I had from the person herself with permission to publish her name at full length, in case Mr. Wesley should deny the fact. Mrs. L.S. now living in Southwark, was baptized in a bathing-tub, in a cellar, by Mr. John Wesley; who at the time, held her down so very long under water, while he deliberately pronounced the words of the administration, that some friends of her's who were present screamed out, from an apprehension that she was actually drowned: and she herself was so far gone that she began to grow insensible, and was lifted out of the water but just time enough to save her life. Yet this is the man who, in the writings which he has published to the world, professes to hold infant baptism, and that by sprinkling, not by immersion! *Quo teneam vultus mutantem Protea nodo?*

(11) The rules of what Mr. Wesley calls Band Societies demonstrate the miserable servitude of those who are admitted into that gossiping club. The whole of these rules would be too tedious to insert. One or two of them, as samples of the rest, may be unacceptable to the reader.

"To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls; with the faults we have committed, in thought, word or deed; and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting."

"To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then ask the rest in order as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations."

Among the questions proposed to such as are candidates for admission into this pretended Sanctum Sanctorum is the following:

"Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak every thing that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?"

The printed account, whence these extracts were taken verbatim, adds, that the five following questions are to be asked at every meeting:

"What known sins have you committed, since our last meeting?"

"What temptations have you met with?"

"How were you delivered?"

"What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?"

"Have you nothing you desire to keep a secret?"

The reader, doubtless, will on this occasion be reminded of the Popish practice of auricular confession. For my own part I make no scruple to acknowledge that that confession, as managed in the Church of Rome, is infinitely preferable to confession as conducted under the auspices of Mr. Wesley. In those countries where Popery is established, confession is made only to one person, and he a priest: who, if he divulges what is made known to him under the character of confessor, is liable by law to suffer death. But, in these Band Societies the most open and unreserved confession is, it seems, made in the hearing of a dozen or twenty old women and boys, who are at liberty to blab out all they hear, without being obnoxious to any penalty at all.

I shall only transcribe from the above account the two following rules imposed on these same societies:

*"To wear no needless ornaments; such as rings, earrings, necklaces, lace, ruffles."
"To use no needless self-indulgencies; such as taking snuff or tobacco: unless prescribed by physicians."*

(12) There is something vastly curious in the letter of orders which this vagrant gave to the persons he pretended to ordain. I once saw an original letter or certificate of this kind, signed by himself. It was written in very mean Greek; and, which added to my persuasion of Erasmus's being an impostor, was drawn up, not in the modern Greek, which the Christians of that Church now use, but in the ancient; and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the words were likewise accented. I read it over twice, and most sincerely wish I had taken a copy of it: but at that time I regarded it only as an article of present curiosity. A friend of mine, however, who improved his opportunity rather better, took a translation of it, which on my after request, he favoured me with; and, upon the strength of memory I can venture to assure the public the version is materially a just one. I believe it to be perfectly so. It runs thus:

"Our measure from the grace, gift and power of the all-holy and life-giving Spirit, given by our Saviour Jesus Christ to His divine and holy apostles, to ordain sub-deacons and deacons; and also to advance to the dignity of a priest!"

"Of this grace which hath descended to our humility, I have ordained sub-deacon and deacon at Snows-fields Chapel, on the 19th day of November, 1784, and at Wells-street Chapel, on the 24th of the same month, priest the reverend Mr. W. according to the rules of the holy apostles, and of our faith. Moreover I have given to him power to minister and teach in all the world the gospel of Jesus Christ, no one forbidding him in the Church of God. Wherefore, for that very purpose, I have made this present letter of recommendation from our humility, and have given it to the ordained Mr. W. for his certificate and security."

"Given and written in London, in Britain, Nov. 24th, 1764."

"Erasmus, Bishop of Arcadia"

I cannot help suspecting that his humility, as he styles himself, is, if the truth was known, nearly related to another certain old gentleman, who no less humbly writes himself servant of the servants of God. His humility of Arcadia, and his holiness of Rome, are, I doubt not, sons of one and the same ecclesiastic mother.

(13) As a specimen of Mr. Wesley's regard to, at least, the minutia of Popery, I shall select a few passages from his Life of this Monsieur De Renty, which now lies before me. The reader will observe that the sentences enclosed with inverted commas are Mr. Wesley's own words --

He speaks favourably of this French Papist, for his regularly "**saying the itinerarium,**" and then "**singing the litanies of our Lord,**" before he set out on any journey; and for taking due care to "**sing the vespers,**" while he was upon the road. Page 3. Among the instances of Monsieur's humility, are reckoned (page 9 and 10) his

not permitting "a cushion to be carried for him" when he went to mass; and his frequent saying "his prayers at the outside of the church." Also his going abroad, to visit a monastery "on foot," and that too "in thawing weather:" nay, he would sometimes "traverse in a manner all Paris," even when "it poured down with rain." And yet, with all this mad humility Mr. de Renty it seems kept a coach of his own. Had he been consistent he would have entirely shorn himself of this supernumerary convenience, by laying down his carriage. But then where would have been the merit of spontaneously traversing all Paris on foot when it poured down with rain? His dutiful demeanour to the priest who had the care of his soul, as its father confessor, is a feature of Mr. de Renty's saintship, on which Mr. Wesley, with peculiar rapture, dwells and dilates. Page 11 -- "A further proof of his humility was his carriage to his director. He did nothing that concerned himself without his conduct. To him he proposed whatever he designed either by speaking or writing, clearly and punctually; desiring his advice, his pleasure, and his blessing upon it: and that with the utmost respect and submission. And, without reply or disputing, he simply and exactly followed his order." This was good Catholic obedience indeed! And no doubt Mr. Wesley had a view in proposing such an example to the imitation of his Protestant followers. Under the article of de Renty's "Self-denial and mortification," we are informed (page 14) that "he made but one meal a day for several years, and always of the worst" provisions he could meet with. He would "often step into a baker's shop" and dine on "a piece of bread and a draught of water." From the same principle of gloomy and unthankful superstition, he would do penance, by "passing the night in a chair," or lying down in his "clothes and boots," or sleeping "on a bench till morning." Being at Pontois "in winter" he desired "the Carmelite nuns not to make a fire, or prepare a bed" for him. He parted with several books (p.16) because they were "richly bound." He "used no gloves in any season; wore no clothes, but plain and close made;" and carried no silver in his pockets, "except for charity." After which detail of austerities, the biographer gravely adds, "I have seen him in his coach with a page and footman." His coach I presume was to carry him on foot when it rained; his page was to hold up his clothes which were plain and close made; and the office of the footman was to reach him his gloves, whereof he wore none in any season. Who could ever have surmised that such a doleful series of mortification and self-denial would end in the fopperies of a coach, a page, and a footman! Mr. de Renty's vanity, which mixed itself with his very austerities, reminds me of what I am told is common in the streets of Paris: where you may see many a blind beggar bawling for alms, in a bag-wig, his hat under his arm, a wooden sword by his side, and paper ruffles adorning the hand that is extended to receive charity. But to return to the hero of the tale. Having had a quarrel with his mother, and the breach being made up, "he was no sooner returned home than he caused Te Deum to be sung," page 24. "He had great respect to holy persons, especially to priests. Whenever he met them, he saluted them with profound humility; and in his travels would alight off his horse to do it." page 33. Nor does Mr. Wesley omit to inform us, p. 39, of Mr. de Renty's regard to such fugitive Papists as had either rendered themselves obnoxious to the laws at home, or preferred begging in France to living under an heretical government in Great Britain. "He was the first that motioned some relief to the poor English, driven by persecution out of their own country." Nor must his very pilgrimages be overlooked. "Going one day to visit the holy place of Montmatre, after his prayers said in the Church, he retired into a desolate part of the mountain, near a little spring. There he kneeled down to prayer: and, that ended, he dined on a piece of bread and a draught of water." Page 45. Would it not have been still more devout not to have dined at all on such holy ground? One day he visited a person who, from a groundless suspicion, had cruelly used his wife. Mr. De Renty accosted him with such soft language that he was "persuaded at length to go to confession, which he had not done in twelve years before." P. 47, 48. Himself, says Mr. Wesley, speaking of Mr. De Renty's last illness, "made his confession almost every day till his death." Page 62.

I dismiss these and many other passages in this obnoxious performance without further remark. Their tendency is self-evident. I shall only add, that, if the reader has a desire to see still more enormous instances of Romish superstition and fanaticism, he will find them in Mr. Wesley's lives of some Spanish Monks (who, more nationally grave, did not imitate the French Ascetic, by retaining their coaches, pages, and footmen), in the last volume, or last but one, of his compilation entitled *The Christian Library*.

(14) *Dialogues of the Dead*. p. 297. Edit. 1765.