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A
PERSONAL TESTIMONY
TO THE TRUTHFULNESS
OF
C. H. SPURGEON'S WITNESS
CONCERNING THE EVANGELICAL CLERGY
AND THE
ERRORS OF THE PRAYER BOOK.

BY
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Of Torquay,
ONCE A CLERGYMAN OF THE (SO-CALLED) CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

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LETTER.

BELOVED BROTHER IN THE LORD JESUS,
C. H. SPURGEON,

It was only yesterday that I was able to procure a copy of your discourse from Mark xvi. 15, 16, at Newington, June 5th last. I had previously read a letter addressed to you by the Hon. Baptist Noel, as published in the *Record*, and I feel pressed in the Spirit to address a few lines to you, expressing my whole heart's rejoicing in, and thanksgiving to God for your faithful exposure of the false anti-christian doctrines contained in the Catechism of the Church of England, as also your denunciation of the wicked performance styled Baptism in the Prayer Book of the State religion. The *peculiar* wickedness thereof being that it is all done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as if derived immediately from the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereas it is *certainly* "cunning craftiness, handling the word of God deceitfully," and one of the blinds

whereby the god of this age darkens the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

It is moreover, as you most faithfully and graphically set forth, a most grievous and solemn evil when this form of man's devising (a mixture of folly and profanity) is practised and carried out by a company of God's dear children, who, themselves standing in Christ, who is the grace and truth of God—themselves cognizant that this ceremony, once practised upon their own childhood, affected them not, but that they have since been saved by grace through faith, will yet bow down to this Dagon of man's constructing, and yield up practically by this performance all the glory of Christ in his cross and blood-shedding, in his grave and resurrection from the dead, to the efficacy of water consecrated by a so-called priest, and the dogma of human traditions.

O my brother, is it not also remarkable that the men who were concocting this form denied grace altogether, bringing in a law of works, so stultifying themselves by making this new born child of God, this member of Christ's body, this inheritor of the kingdom, a debtor to do the whole law himself or be damned!

But I need say no more on this head, I merely write to cheer you in this testimony which God has enabled you to give, by my expression of sympathy with *all you have said*. I would also desire my brethren, the Evangelical ministers as we call them, in this worldly Establishment, not to be angry with you for your faithfulness, not to be wrathful at the portrait you have drawn of their position.

It is a *truthful portrait*: it is a faithful photograph. How many are there who become disgusted at their own likeness! still it may not be the less faithfully

drawn. I stand before you and plead guilty to all you have said, yet I would say to you, brother, in scanning my former practice, bear with me. *Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked, and we cannot know them; and in how many ways this deceitful heart still acts within us, after we are really born again, to mar our walk and make our ways crooked without our perceiving it, God knoweth, and we confess it is so.* In 1824 God saved me and called me by his grace, blotting out my heinous sins in the blood of his dear Son, or rather causing me to see they were all judged and blotted out, and he quickened me in the life of his dear Son as raised to his right hand. I felt a strong desire to devote myself to the gospel of God. My faith was as simple and true as it is now, indeed I would I could feel now so thoroughly devoted to the service of Christ as then. I was a young Christian, not well instructed at all in Paul's ways in Christ; but I was led by the writings of Christians, and the customs of those around me; indeed, where could we find simple, unalloyed Christianity flourishing? everything was marred and had received another stamp from the carnal wisdom that doth so everywhere prevail. My Christian friends were all in the Establishment. We all perceived the falseness of the Catechism and the Baptismal Service, etc., yet I thought there was no other way to get a door for preaching the gospel than by ordination in the Establishment. I was then at Oxford. I prepared myself. I was ordained first deacon, then *priest*. I *was shocked* as the so-called bishop pretended to convey to me the Holy Ghost, and give ME power to remit and retain sins (see the Ordination Service); *I knew all that was wrong, nay, was a lie, but thought there was no other way of getting liberty before men to preach the blessed gospel.* I was appointed to a LIVING in British Guiana. I married a sister in the Lord and went

forth, both of us through grace burning with zeal to teach Jesus to the slaves, and ready to suffer or to die for the Lord Jesus. The so-called Bishop of Barbadoes appointed a Christian minister to act for him in inducting me formally to my parish as rector. Then, and not before, was I fully aware of all I had to declare before I could be inducted. *My assent and consent to all things contained, etc.* "I could not do it, I did not assent to many, yea, to very much of what was there enjoined." "But you *must say* so openly." Must! what, must lie?" "Yes, or go home again, and give up the prospect of usefulness here." "Then I must go home again." "Then another, and most likely an unconverted man, will take your place, and these thousands of poor heathen slaves will not have the gospel. Just make these statements, they are only formal, and you will have the door of the gospel opened to you." I was staggered. Then did my senior in the Christian faith bring before me my own father, a Christian clergyman, and a whole army of godly persons, such as Mr. Noel brings now before you, as my examples, who all gave their assent and consent in words, though not in heart. Well, thought I, when I was a wicked, worldly man, I would have died rather than openly say what I did not mean, and must I do so now in order to preach the gospel? "Well, cannot you have reservations in your mind, and mean you assent and consent to all that is scriptural and right?" So, dear brother, I yielded, but with a bad conscience. I was installed, and I returned to my Christian wife, saying, "I am rector of this parish; I have now a field for labour in the gospel, but I am a *liar*." I could never shake this off from my conscience. We gave ourselves to the work. I never *taught the Catechism* or allowed it in the parish. I did not baptize the children of unconverted persons. I often left out parts of the Baptismal Service. I never

read the whole of the burial service over the unconverted dead. Indeed, I never used the Prayer Book when I could help it. But in all this I was dishonest. I had *promised* to use it and obey the Rubrick. This made me *unhappy*, yet God did marvellously bless me in the conversion of sinners both white and black. I never received to communion any but believers in the remission of their sins. I more and more was led of God to follow the Scriptures of the apostles, and more and more consequently diverged from the Prayer Book.

I expected the so-called bishop to drive me away, but no, he would not, he treated me more and more kindly. I had about six hundred pounds per annum. I spent much of it in building and supporting schools and erecting chapels, in fact the Lord was very gracious in keeping up my love and zeal. At last I could bear it no longer; I was altogether dishonest. At first in telling lies to obtain my position, and then in breaking my promises to man in order to obey God, at the same time receiving man's pay on condition that I kept my word with him, which I did not, because I *must obey God*. Well, how was I to get out of this? Give up my false position as the servant of man and become *bona fide* the servant of God! This, after eleven years and-a-half of wrong-doing and right-doing, *mingled*, I did, I resigned my position. I gave up my salary which I received from the Government, with thanks for their liberality. I resigned my position as clergyman in the English Establishment, and having thrown overboard everything that was not of Christ and his Word, I remained among the saints, preaching and teaching the gospel as God gave me ability. I joined no sect, but received all God's children. We worshipped as brethren in Christ, and accepted all ministry we could acknowledge as of the Spirit. Thus

thrown more truly upon the Word only, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost, seeing we had no examples to follow, and taking the name of Christians only, we were led to give up the figment of Infant Baptism, while *all the Christians* there baptize infants; and thus for twenty-six years have I been preserved, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

All that you have set forth and depicted in your discourse *I* have been *breast high in*, in the guilt of it and shame of it! God brought me out of it, yet he was certainly with me when in it. I was very happy in Jesus all the time, and felt devoted to his service. I was able to own and love my brethren, Dissenters and Wesleyans, and succour them also. I never loved the saints more than I did then. Yet I do agree with you, that I perpetrated a gross piece of immorality, when I gave my solemn assent and consent to what I did not believe, or consider true and right in my heart. I lied before God and man. I have long since confessed it to God. Yet at the time my heart was so deceitful as to lay over the sin a sort of covering and balm, that by my declaration, though false, I had obtained an opening to serve Christ in his gospel, and be used for the salvation of many. While therefore, dear brother, you must not retract one word from the statement you have made in that discourse, you must still bear with and pray for our dear brethren who are so entangled in the system they have been brought up in, and who appearing to themselves as used of God, cannot see their way out of it. Dear brother, you have never been in their position! You might have been. You think not. Nay, but had you been converted in the system, trained up in it, lived on upon what *may be had in it*, the *whole Scriptures*, and *many spiritual privileges*, and some *grace* articles to comfort your

conscience, and much Christian communion with many true saints—you might have learnt to ignore those evils which stand out before our eyes now *so prominently*, that we wonder how any godly man could ever have walked in such a Christ-dishonouring system. I saw much more the evil when looking back at the charnel-house out of which I had escaped.

Dear brother, the great evil of the English Establishment is, that it is, the world. Yes, it is simply *the world*, of which the apostle says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Their religious system is considered one compartment of the kingdom, therefore our Queen is head over it, and the Parliament regulateth its form of worship, discipline, and prayers. They must therefore constitute the whole nation Christian: but to be a Christian you must be born again; but if you follow Christ's words you cannot be born of God but through faith. But you cannot make the whole nation believe. They must therefore have some other method of becoming Christians. Thus sprinkling babies answereth the purpose, and the Cross of Christ being ignored, the world without the Cross of Christ, without death and resurrection, constitutes itself Christian. This is the religion of what we call Christendom—a spurious Christianity! The mystery of the kingdom during this dispensation. The corrupted kingdom of God leavened with the three leavens of the Pharisee, Sadducee, and Herod, well described by you in page 370 of your discourse on "Let us go forth." *The national religion!* "It tolerates evangelical truth in her communion, but lovingly embraces *Puseyism*, or Pharisees, and finds room for infidels," or Sadducees, and falls in with and fosters pride, and carnal luxuries, and pleasures, and splendour in the flesh. In the midst of this, *locally*, the Church or Bride of Christ is; but she

is not *of it*. Her life is hid with Christ in God; and the members which compose her as Christ's body must be showing forth that life here in separation from the world and its principles.

All that we see around us the apostles have warned us of, as you know much better than I do. St. Paul, John, and Jude have all spoken plainly. "They are sensual, not having the Spirit," saith the latter. O, would that our dear brethren everywhere would stand out from the doctrines and ordinances of men, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, as co-heirs with the Son of God, and waiting for Him! Things will not be better, but wax worse and worse. I rejoice, however, when I perceive you stirred up to bear testimony against the falsehood, and for the truth, against all antichrists, and for the rightful claims of the Son of God. It is just the question now as it has been from the beginning, Satan or Christ? Cain or Abel? and the great crisis is approaching when Satan shall be overthrown. May we be found faithful, confessing to Jesus Christ in this adulterous generation, then owned and confessed by him when he comes in his own glory as the Son of Man, in his Father's as the Son of God, and of the holy angels, the messengers of his power!

Now, dear brother, stand fast for the truth, but pray for your brethren earnestly! Speak of our or their errors boldly, solemnly, unsparingly in the name of God! but to our or their hearts lovingly, earnestly, and graciously, considering thyself lest thou also should be tempted. I pray God that your bold dividing words may be to them as a mirror held by God before their minds to show them what they are doing, and where they are; that instead of hearing Spurgeon declaiming, they may hear the still small voice of God saying, "What *doest thou* here, Elijah?"

Now perhaps, dear brother, you may ask, Who are you, and wherefore do you intermeddle with this matter?" I answer, "Is there not a cause?" I heard thy voice crying in the city, "Remember the claims of Christ the Saviour!" and I came to thy side. Unknown to thee in name or face, and never having myself ever heard or seen thee, I could not help writing for the truth's sake that is in us, and shall be with us for ever.

I am, therefore, in Him,

Your sincere Friend

and Brother in the Lord,

LEONARD STRONG.

Brampton, Torquay, August 22nd, 1864.

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