

# A FEW PLAIN WORDS BY WAY OF QUERY AND INFORMATION; TO THE TEACHERS AND PEOPLE OF THE NATION

By George Fox

Friend,—You who are called a teacher of these people, of the ways of God, how many have you brought into the ways of God? Or are you even in the ways yourself? How many have you brought out of evil ways, or are you yourself out of the evil ways? Will you not preach peace to them that curse, swear; that are drunkards, adulterers, idolaters, envious, strikers, and covetous, mockers; such as follow pleasures, and live wantonly upon the earth, and liars, cozeners and cheaters, while they put [provide you money for food] into your mouth? Will not you preach peace to such as these are before mentioned? Will not these people serve you to put into your mouth? Did not the prophets and apostles cry against such who taught the people for covetousness, and made merchandize of them through it, and feigned words and speeches, deceived the hearts of the simple? that such serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies; who mind earthly things. Did the people do well or ill, in holding up these teachers which the prophet reproveth? Might not the teachers say, (who taught for filthy lucre), it was sad times when the apostles came to draw the people from them, and to reprove them who taught for filthy lucre? As now the cry is among you, who have taught for filthy lucre, that have preached peace to people while they have put into your mouths, but now they do not put into your mouths, against whom you prepare war, not peace, and cry, sad times. Mic 3:5. Where is the man that divines for money now? Where is the man that prophesies for money now? Did not Micah cry against such? Do you think there no one of Micah's spirit to bear testimony against such as preach for hire, and divine for money, and preach peace to people, while they put into their mouths? Do you think there is no one of this spirit, to cry against these things? Where is the man now that preaches for hire, that seeks for his gain from his quarter; as a greedy dumb dog, who can never have enough? Isaiah did well in crying against such? Isaiah 56. Did the people do well in spending their money for that which was not bread, and their labor for that which does not satisfy? Did they do well that took their money for that which was not bread, and made people run after that which did not satisfy? Did Isaiah do well in reproveth such, or poorly? Are there in our age those that are as greedy dumb dogs, who seek for their gain from their quarter, that makes the people spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which does not satisfy? Do you think there is none in our age of Isaiah's spirit,

raised up to cry against such? Where is the priest that rules by their means, and the people love to have it so; which is a horrible thing committed in the land, for which cause will God's soul be avenged, on such a nation? Do you not think that God's soul will be avenged on this nation for such a horrible filthy thing as this is committed in the land? Did (and do) the priests do well in bearing rule by their means? Did (and do) the people do well in loving to have it so? Did Jeremiah do well in crying against those things, or those that are in Jeremiah's spirit, against them where these things are found? Did the shepherds do well that taught for the fleece, from whose mouth the Lord said he would gather them that have been made a prey upon in the cloudy and dark day? Is it not the cloudy and dark day now, that the shepherds make a prey upon the people from whose mouths the Lord will gather his people? Will not these shepherds be offended then, and say it is a bad time, that now they cannot get the fleece? Is this the time that the clouds and darkness is going away? Did Ezekiel do well in declaring against such, that made a prey upon the sheep in the cloudy and dark day, when they wandered from mountain to mountain? Do they err who are in Ezekiel's spirit now, that cry against such that make a prey upon the sheep for the fleece in the cloudy and dark day, where the sheep are wandering from mountain to mountain, and think that some mountains are greener than others, and fresher, on which is better feeding, that hear the sheep are grown on their barren mountains? Therefore must not the promise of God be fulfilled, "that he will seek his sheep, and gather them where they have been scattered," and feed them himself. Ezek. 34:11-15. Therefore, now is the cry and the call to come off from the barren mountains, and to feed not among the thorns. Did the Pharisees do well in loving to be called of men masters, in getting the chief rooms at feasts, and greetings in the markets? Do not you err in following the Pharisees in these steps, seeing Christ forbids these things? If it is well, do not you err in not saying, Mr. Paul, Mr. Peter, Mr. John, Mr. Mark, Mr. Timothy, Mr. Titus, Mr. Matthew, etc?\*

\*In the 17th Century, *Mr.* was the address to someone of importance, but not a Sir, or a Lord. By the 18th Century, *Mr.* had changed to become the address of all classes, and was even occasionally used in a derogative manner. So while the title was given for respect in George Fox's time, it has changed to become without any recognition of respect to class; therefore it is no longer an error to address someone as *Mr.* Today flattering titles would be *Dr., Reverend, Pastor, Father, etc.*

Did the common-prayer men [Episcopalians] do well in putting the papists [Roman Catholics] out of the mass-houses, and so call it their church? Did the Presbyterians do well in putting the common-prayer men out of the same mass-house, and call it their church; and so likewise the independents [Calvinists who

chose their own ministers]? Did not the papists say, "The gates of hell should not prevail against their church, [which they thought was the rock, the revelation of Christ to an individual]?" Have not you all done wrong in telling the people the old mass-house is the church; when as the apostle said, "The church was in God," 2 Thes 1:1? Did the papists do wrong in selling their mass by the hour-glass? Do you do well that sell your prayers and preachings by the hour-glass, and when the glass is run, the time is spent neighbors? As much as to say, you have your measure and bargain, give me my due, that the pope my father gave me? For Christ and his apostles made no such provision for me, but sent his ministers without a bag [for money], and would not allow them to preach for filthy lucre; surely is not this the hard master? But is not this the man that hid his talent, that said so; he that must be bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness, and his talent taken from him? was tithes, midsummer-dues, Easter-reckonings, glebelands,\* peter-pence, clerks'-wages, preaching over the dead for money, marrying people, christening children for money; [all these are the pope's provision], he invented for you, and his dregs you drink, that lay in the bottom of his old bottle. Are not you popish-minded, and Jesuit-affected, you who uphold [continue to practice] these things?

\*The lands owned by the individual parish "church," were named *glebelands*, and were leased out by the church to be farmed; the lease income went directly to the hired hands of the "church." These glebelands still exist today, and are passionately defended by the clergy of the Episcopal sect.

Were not all these times, as Christ-mass, Michael-mass, Lamb-mass, Candle-mass, and all these days named by the saints' names, and all these naming of the steeple-houses, the old mass-houses and colleges, the pope's doing? Did he do well in doing these creations, or wrong? If he did well, then why do cry you against the pope, who is your teacher, and call him the whore [of Babylon]; is not this ill-breeding? Did the apostles give all these names [to the days and times] before mentioned? If so, show us the scripture.

Were the scriptures given forth so that men could make a trade of [teaching and quoting] them; or were they given forth so that men would read them, believe them, and come into the spiritual state of which they speak? Do you have the same spirit and power the prophets and apostles had; you who call yourselves teachers? If not, how can you sow spiritual things? How can you plant vineyards? How can you get flocks? How can you thresh in hope, and plough in hope; but instead plough in vain, and thresh in vain, and make wildernesses. How can you but turn against the true flock that gives the milk, for you are not in the power and the spirit the prophets and apostles were in? Did the beast, dragon, false prophet, antichrist, mystery Babylon, the false church, the tongues they set upon; did they have the same spirit and power that has killed the prophets, martyrs, and saints, and those that have kept the testimony of Jesus

since the apostles' days, unto this day? Have these been in the same spirit and power the apostles were in? Again, did those have the same spirit and power that the apostles had; those that have their jails, houses of correction, inquisitions, to hold up their church, worship, religion, ministry, and maintenance? Seeing the apostle said, "Their weapons were not carnal, but spiritual, and they did not wrestle with flesh and blood." Therefore are not the other things before mentioned, the dregs that came out of the pope's old bottle, like unto that which came out of the Jews' old bottle, against Christ and his disciples, and John Baptist? For did they ever put any to death for not putting into the priest's mouth? Did they fine or imprison any for not putting off the hat? Did they plunder or rifle the houses of people for not repairing their temple, and paying the clerk for saying *amen*, and bringing a cushion, and hanging a priest's pulpit; as you have done now, for not mending the old mass-house, not paying the clerk that turns the glass, and says *amen*, and lays the cushion, and hangs the priest's pulpit. Were all these the dregs of the pope's old bottle, or from the spirit of glory that rested on the apostles? Did the prophet do well that prophesied to the people for handfuls of barley, and pieces of bread? Were the people wise that gave barley and bread to them? Did Ezekiel do wrong in crying against such; was it not a bad time, they might say, when Ezekiel cried against them that prophesied for handfuls of barley, and pieces of bread? *Ezek. 13:9*. And will the priests prophesy now without shocks and cocks of barley, wheat, peas, and beans, \* midsummer-dues, glebelands, Easter-reckonings, augmentations, etc. Is not this more oppressive than for handfuls o-barley, or pieces of bread? and do not they now cry bad times, because the spirit of Ezekiel is raised to bear testimony against these things?

\*In the 17th Century, the priests insisted on collecting 1/10 of all the crops produced in their assigned geographic coverage [parish].

Might not the Jews say, it was a bad time when the apostles went to bring the people off from the priest, off the tithe, off the temple, and that Stephen said, "The most high dwells not there?" Did the apostle do well in doing so? If so, then have you not done wrong by your setting up temples, tithes, and priests, since the apostles' days, which God never commanded, and which were invented by you; who cry now, it is bad times, because people are brought off your inventions by the power of God? Did the apostle do wrong in bringing the Gentiles off their temples which they had invented? Might not the Gentiles cry then, it was a bad time, as you do now; just as the Jews called the apostle a pestilent fellow, a sower of sedition? Do you think the Jews would not say that it was a bad time, as you do now; you who stick in your popish inventions, which have been invented after the apostles' days; for which you have no scripture; and which now are cried against by those that come into the power of God? Did the prophets, Christ, and apostles do well in saying that the children of the Lord should be taught of the Lord; and the kingdom of heaven was within people; and

the word was within them, and the anointing was within them, to teach them; and the law was to be put into their hearts, and their minds, that they need not say one to another, know the Lord; and the light that shined in their hearts, was to give them the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ; and those who had not the spirit of Christ, were none of his. Have not you done wrong by denying this, saying that say, that you, or no one else has the same spirit and power as the prophets and apostles had, neither shall the things before mentioned be looked for in our days? Have not you done wrong in keeping people always learning [but never coming to the Truth], so that they may be always paying, while you have not brought a single person to the condition the apostles were in, so that they need none to teach them to know the Lord.

Are you innocent? Are you innocent, O you teachers, (answer before the Lord), of all the imprisoning, and persecuting, and shedding of the blood of the innocent, which is shed in this your day?

Come all you gentry, (so called), of all sorts, does not your manners and breeding stand in capping, doffing hats, and scraping, bowing, and curtseying, and speaking the improper language, *you* to a single person, as, *your worship, your majesty, your lordship, your honor, your highness, your grace, your holiness, reverend, brother*; and such like titles.

All honor, all praise, all reverence, all holiness, all majesty, all dominion is due, and peculiarly ascribed, and ought to be given to God alone, who is God over all the unbelievers, who give and receive honor one of another, for how can you believe, who receive honor one of another?

Rejoice you inhabitants of the earth.

***George Fox***