

LETTER TO A CLERGYMAN.

REVEREND SIR,

TULLAMORE, *May 4, 1748.*

I HAVE at present neither leisure nor inclination to enter into a formal controversy; but you will give me leave just to offer a few loose hints relating to the subject of last night's conversation:—

1. Seeing life and health are things of so great importance, it is, without question, highly expedient that Physicians should have all possible advantages of learning and education.

2. That trial should be made of them, by competent judges, before they practise publicly.

3. That after such trial, they be authorized to practise by those who are empowered to convey that authority.

4. And that, while they are preserving the lives of others, they should have what is sufficient to sustain their own.

5. But supposing a gentleman, bred at the University in Dublin, with all the advantages of education, after he has undergone all the usual trials, and then been regularly authorized to practise:

6. Suppose, I say, this Physician settles at —, for some years, and yet makes no cures at all; but, after trying his skill on five hundred persons, cannot show that he has healed one; many of his patients dying under his hands, and the rest remaining just as they were before he came:

7. Will you condemn a man who, having some little skill in physic, and a tender compassion for those who are sick or dying all around him, cures many of those, without fee or reward, whom the Doctor *could* not cure?

8. At least *did* not, (which is the same thing as to the case in hand,) were it only for this reason, because he did not go to them, and they would not come to him?

9. Will you condemn him because he has not learning, or has not had an University education?

What then? He cures those whom the man of learning and education cannot cure!

10. Will you object, that he is no Physician, nor has any authority to practise?

I cannot come into your opinion. I think, *Medicus est qui medetur*, "He is a Physician who heals;" and that every man has authority to save the life of a dying man.

But if you only mean, he has no authority to take fees, I contend not; for he takes none at all.

11. Nay, and I am afraid it will hold, on the other hand, *Medicus non est qui non medetur*; I am afraid, if we use propriety of speech, "he is no Physician who works no cure."

12. "O, but he has taken his degree of Doctor of Physic, and therefore has authority."

Authority to do what? "Why, to heal all the sick that will employ him." But (to wave the case of those who will not employ him; and would you have even their lives thrown away?) he does not heal those that do employ him. He that was sick before, is sick still; or else he is gone hence, and is no more seen.

Therefore, his authority is not worth a rush; for it serves not the end for which it was given.

13. And surely he has no authority to kill them, by hindering another from saving their lives!

14. If he either attempts or desires to hinder him, if he condemns or dislikes him for it, it is plain to all thinking men, he regards his own fees more than the lives of his patients.

II. Now to apply: 1. Seeing life everlasting, and holiness, or health of soul, are things of so great importance, it is highly expedient that Ministers, being Physicians of the soul, should have all advantages of education and learning.

2. That full trial should be made of them in all respects, and that by the most competent judges, before they enter on the public exercise of their office, the saving souls from death.

3. That after such trial, they be authorized to exercise that office by those who are empowered to convey that authority. (I believe Bishops are empowered to do this, and have been so from the apostolic age.)

4. And that those whose souls they save ought, meantime, to provide them what is needful for the body.

5. But suppose a gentleman bred at the University in Dublin, with all the advantages of education, after he has undergone the usual trials, and been regularly authorized to save souls from death :

6. Suppose, I say, this Minister settles at —, for some years, and yet saves no soul at all, saves no sinners from their sins ; but after he has preached all this time to five or six hundred persons, cannot show that he has converted one from the error of his ways ; many of his parishioners dying as they lived, and the rest remaining just as they were before he came :

7. Will you condemn a man, who, having compassion on dying souls, and some knowledge of the gospel of Christ, without any temporal reward, saves them from their sins whom the Minister *could* not save ?

8. At least *did* not ; nor ever was likely to do it ; for he did not go to them, and they would not come to him.

9. Will you condemn such a Preacher because he has not earning, or has not had an University education ?

What then ? He saves those sinners from their sins whom the man of learning and education cannot save.

A peasant being brought before the College of Physicians, at Paris, a learned Doctor accosted him, “ What, friend, do you pretend to prescribe to people that have agues ? Dost thou know what an ague is ? ”

He replied, “ Yes, Sir ; an ague is what I can cure, and you cannot.”

10. Will you object, “ But he is no Minister, nor has any authority to save souls ? ”

I must beg leave to dissent from you in this. I think he is a true, evangelical Minister, *διακονος*, “ servant ” of Christ and his Church, who *ουτω διακονει*, “ so ministers,” as to save souls from death, to reclaim sinners from their sins ; and that every Christian, if he is able to do it, has authority to save a dying soul.

But if you only mean, “ He has no authority to take tithes,” I grant it. He takes none : As he has freely received, so he freely gives.

11. But, to carry the matter a little farther : I am afraid it will hold, on the other hand, with regard to the soul as well as the

body, *Medicus non est qui non medetur.** I am afraid, reasonable men will be much inclined to think, he that save^s no souls is no Minister of Christ.

12. "O, but he is ordained, and therefore has authority."

Authority to do what? "To save all the souls that will put themselves under his care." True; but (to wave the case of them that will not; and would you desire that even those should perish?) he does not, in fact, save them that are under his care: Therefore, what end does his authority serve? He that was a drunkard is a drunkard still. The same is true of the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the common swearer. This is the best of the case; for many have died in their iniquity, and their blood will God require at the watchman's hand.

13. For surely he has no authority to murder souls, either by his neglect, by his smooth, if not false, doctrine, or by hindering another from plucking them out of the fire, and bringing them to life everlasting.

14. If he either attempts or desires to hinder him, if he condemns or is displeased with him for it, how great reason is there to fear that he regards his own profit more than the salvation of souls! I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your affectionate brother,

JOHN WESLEY

* He is not a Physician who effects no cures.—EDIT.