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THE
CRAFTSMEN:
A
SERMON,
OR

PARAPHRASE, upon several Verses in the 19th
Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

By THOMAS GORDON, Esq.

NIHIL RERUM MORTALIUM TAM INSTABILE AC
FLUXUM EST, QUAM FAMA POTENTIÆ NON SUA
VI NIXÆ. TACIT.

THE EIGHTH EDITION.

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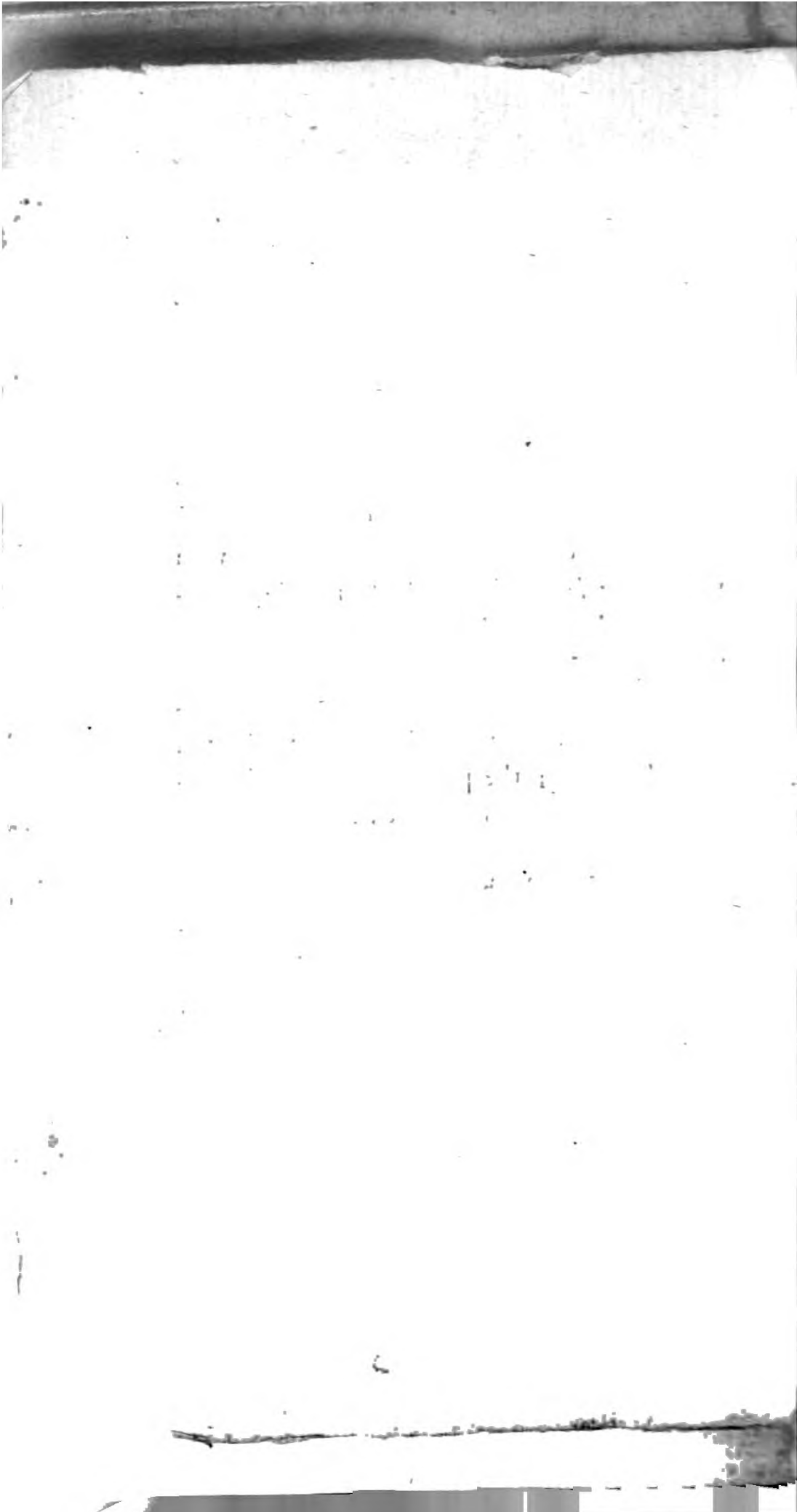
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IT is unnecessary to inform persons at all acquainted with history, that the commencement of the present century was distinguished by the excessive violence with which the *High Church Party* raged; to ridicule and repress that violence, this Sermon was written by THOMAS GORDON, Esq; (an able and eloquent advocate for civil and religious liberty) in the style of the celebrated *Daniel Burges*; the publication was seasonable, and its success was great.

It is presumed, that the re-publication will not be unseasonable at this time, when the "senseless yell" of the Church's danger has been revived; and when that "yell" has had the effect, to raise a mob surpassing all its predecessors, both in the fierceness of its zeal for *High Church*, and its promptitude in executing her wishes.



T H E
C R A F T S M E N.

A

SERMON, or PARAPHRASE, upon several Verses in
the 19th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

I SHALL not this day, my beloved, as the usual manner is, accost you with the scraps of a verse, or only with a whole verse, out of any part of the gospel; which method is often made use of in such places as this, purely to avoid telling what goes before, or comes after; but shall chuse for my text the greatest part of the sixth chapter of the *Acts*: And in discoursing upon this portion of scripture, so fruitful in good instructions and examples, I shall confine myself to the following method:

FIRST, I shall make some general observations upon the behaviour of the apostle *Paul* in his ministry.

SECONDLY, I shall discourse more particularly upon several verses in this chapter: And,

THIRDLY, and lastly, I shall draw, from the whole, some useful and seasonable inferences, and then conclude.

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I. I SHALL

I. I SHALL make some general observations upon the apostle *Paul*. And first of all, my brethren, it is note-worthy, that *Paul* made the greatest change that ever man did, even from a persecutor to an apostle; two characters as opposite as is that of *Lucifer* to an angel of light. As soon as light from the Lord fell upon him, he no longer breathes *threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*, as he had in fore-time, nor puts in execution the orders he had about him from the high priest, or archbishop of the *Jews*, to bring the first Christians and Dissenters of those days bound to *Jerusalem*. On the contrary, though he was just before an hard-hearted persecutor for the church by law established, on a sudden, he becomes a lover of the saints; and now, *behold he prayeth* & Acts ix. 11.

1st, LET us learn a lesson from hence, dearly beloved, as we go along; namely, that as soon as the fear of the Lord entereth into a man's heart, the sword of persecution droppeth out of his hand. Peace, which is the badge of the gospel, and cruelty, which is the coat of arms of *Satan*, cannot dwell together. *Behold, he prayeth!*

2^{dly}, IT is observable, that when a zealot leaves his party and turns Christian, how very apt the high party are, ungratefully to forget all his former wicked merit, which made him dear to them; and to persecute him for apostatizing into mercy and grace. While *Paul* continued the fiery hail of the godly, the priests held him in high favour, and trusted him with their *ecclesiastical commission*: And for what? *Why, to bring bound to Jerusalem all those of this way*: Of what way? Why,

Why, all that forsook the *established synagogues*, and followed Christ.

3dly, OBSERVE, my brethren, that conscience and non-conformity had the powers of the world against them seventeen hundred years ago. *Paul*, the blasphemer, had a post; but *Paul* the convert, *Paul* the faint, is allowed no toleration; yea, *they watched the gates day and night to kill him*; for, *behold, he prayeth!*

4thly, It is observable from the whole history of *Paul*, that the grace of God makes a man both meek under sufferings, and bold for Christ. Here our convert neither returns the injury, nor slack his pace in planting the gospel; both hard tasks! He risked his life, and laboured in the vineyard, without pay; a rare thing in this our day! when the first motive for overseeing of souls, is so much a year. The apostle drove no bargain about preaching, nor made a market of salvation.

OH! my beloved, how many dignified drones have we in our time, who set up for a likeness to the apostles, without any likeness; who take great sums for mock apostle-ship, when nothing thrives by their ministry, but their bellies! This, my friends, is lamentable, but it is lamentably true.

II. I HASTE now to my second general head, and will discourse particularly upon several verses in this chapter.

I BEGIN with verse the 8th, *And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.*

1st, *And he went into the synagogue.* Observe we here, 1st, my beloved brethren, that as great bigots as the *Jews* were, and as great a Dissenter as *Paul* was, yet they suffered him to preach in their synagogues or churches. He had a clear stage, though perhaps not equal favour. Now think ye, my friends, if the same apostle should come among us here in *London*, at this time, that he would be permitted to preach in his own church, unless he first qualified himself according to the forms and ceremonies of the church of *England* by law established? Or would he, trow ye, get any preferment, that the black dons could hinder him from, in case he persisted to preach what his Master preached before him; namely, that *Christ's kingdom was not of this world?*

2^{dly}, My beloved, we may see here the great point of *Paul's* preaching; *he disputed and persuaded the things concerning the kingdom of God.* Not a word of his own spiritual dominion; not a word of episcopal sovereigns, who were to descend, as it were, from his loins, and who, without his inspiration or miracle, were to succeed him in what he never had; worldly wealth, worldly grandeur, and worldly power; things which always mar the kingdom of God, instead of promoting it; there being no fellowship between Christ and *Belial*.

LET US NOW proceed to the 9th verse, and see what that says; *But when divers were hardened, (observe he says, when divers were hardened) and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.*

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THE priests, no doubt, who traded in ceremonies, and knew nothing of Jesus Christ, or of inward holiness, were nettled at a new religion, which taught men a plain path to heaven, without the incumbrances of sacrifices, or priests, or fopperies; a religion, that had a professed enmity to all secular gain, and all holy trifling.

MARVEL not at it, my brethren; a religion without a hierarchy, and godliness without gain, will never please any set of high priests: Nothing will go down with them but pride and grimace, and the ready penny. Poor *Paul* had nothing about him of all this, nor did he teach a religion that had. All that he brought, was a Christ crucified, and salvation in and through him. *They therefore spake evil of that way before the multitude*; that is, the priests told the people, that *Paul* was an heretic, and his doctrine was schism; but for themselves, they had antiquity and the fathers on their side, with an orthodox church full of decent types and ceremonies.

THERE needed no more to prevent the apostle from doing any good among them: *So he departed from them.* This was all the punishment he inflicted on them, and this was enough. He who had the Holy Ghost, could have inflicted death or misery on them; but it was opposite to the genius of his religion, which allows spiritual pastors to feed their flocks, but not force them, nor to punish them, if they refuse to feed. If a man has not a mind to be saved, he has the worst of it himself; and what is it to the priests? as master *Selden* well remarketh.

THIS, my brethren, was the primitive excommunication. If you could work no good upon a man; or
if

if that man worked mischief to you, or gave you scandal; why you would not keep company with him. But to give him to the devil, because he was already going to the devil of himself, is to be a minister of Christ the backward way. Besides, there was no need of it. The apostle, in my text, neither curses these unbelieving high-church-men, *who hardened themselves* against him, nor censures them, nor fines them; all which he who had the power of miracles, could have done, had he liked it. He barely *departed from them*. And if he did not damn them for the sake of their souls, so neither did he surrender them to *Beelzebub* for the sake of their money. He demanded not a grey groat of them; so far was he from telling them, *Gentlemen, I am your spiritual prince, pray pay me my revenues*. Paul was a witness of the resurrection, a disinterested witness, and claimed no dues; though others since do in his name, without being real witnesses of the resurrection, or disinterested witnesses of any thing else about it.

Disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. Mark here, my beloved, that both schools and synagogues, or churches, were open to him, though he was but a new comer, and a nonconformist. Mark, moreover, that he barely *disputed*, or *reasoned*. He was a stranger to the doctrine of *compulsion*. He was an apostle, by virtue of whose words and power, all clerical acts are pretended to be done ever since: And yet he himself did none, satisfying himself with saving souls by exhortation, and the assistance of the spirit, which are not *clerical acts*. He was the chief pastor upon earth, and held his commission immediately from God; but he imposed nothing

thing but his advice, reason, and good words, upon those that heard him. He could have forced them (had the spirit so directed) to have swallowed implicitly all that he said; and either destroyed or distressed all who refused. But the Lord Christ, my brethren, in his dealings with human kind, never uses means that are *inhuman*.

HERE you may distinguish the spirit of Christ from the spirit of *high-church*. For trow ye, my friends, that Christ or his apostles ever delegated to weak and passionate men powers and privileges, which, infallible and inspired as they were, they never assumed to themselves? Let us wonder, my brethren, at the impudence of some men in black.

And this continued for the space of two years. Observe, it is not said, that he kept a curate all the while.

LET us go on to some following verses: *And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out from them, v. 11, 12.*

OBSERVE, here are certain signs of a power from God; and they who pretend a power from him, without manifesting the same by certain signs, are certainly cheats and impostors. For a power given by the all-wise God, must be given for some certain end, which will infallibly be brought about. It is not consistent with his wisdom and goodness to give it, and yet leave uncertain that he has given it, when a plain manifestation of it is of the utmost importance to the world, and to the purposes for which it is given. If a man bring not infallible proofs of his power, how shall I know
that

that he has it? Demonstration must go before conviction, and conviction before consent. We cannot embrace for truth, what we take to be a lye. All which will farther appear from the following verses.

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth, ver. 13.

WE may perceive here, that the apostles had apes in their time; fellows who set up for their successors, before they themselves were dead. They were *exorcists* or *conjurors*, so called, I presume, from their pretending to dispossess haunted houses, by the dint of spells and forms of words. They had now got a new *form of words*, and were going to work with them as fast as they could, boasting, no doubt, great things of their own power. And indeed they took a politic method to resemble the apostle, had they succeeded in it; but they miscarried miserably, as will be shewn anon.

But what shall we say of some moderns, (more shameless than these vagabond Jews) who will, right or wrong, be successors to the apostles, without doing any thing that is apostolic, but what every reasonable man may do as well? They shew no signs but those of gracelessness and pride; and do no wonders, but in the luxury of their lives.

And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests which did so, v. 14. More mimickers of miracles! We see the trade was growing sweet, but the sauce proved sour; for the *evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?* An angry and contemptuous question, but full of good sense.

sense. But the worst follows: *And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leapt upon them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.*

1. OBSERVE here, first, That we may easily learn what power men have from God, by their power over the devil. When *Paul* gave the word of command, the devil did not stand shilly-shally, nor pretend to parly with one who was employed as the Lord's general against the *power of darkness*, but was forced to march bag and baggage; and glad, no doubt, that he could troop off in a whole skin.

BUT it is quite otherwise, when interlopers and *Craftsmen*, in hopes to make a penny of *Satan*, pretend to drive him out of his quarters, though they come in the name of the Lord. The devil, in this case, sets up the flag of defiance, and tells them they are scoundrels to their faces. *Who are ye?* Well spoken, *Satan!* They were *vagabonds*, *Jews*, and *priests*, and the devil chastized them accordingly: *They fled out of that house naked and wounded.* The devil got the day, and remained master of the field and the baggage: *He prevailed against them.* They forged a commission, and the Lord Jesus, whose name they abused, would not stand by them.

2. LET us here, *2dly*, my friends, think it no shame to learn a lesson from the devil, and take no man's word, who pretends to command us in matters of faith, and spiritual obedience, though he come in the name of the Lord. Let us examine him first, and try our own strength upon him. *Who are ye?* A pat question, and a proper! Let us, beloved, never lose sight of it, especially when any man would controul our belief. Be not determined by outside shape and colour. A long

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gown.

gown may cover an *exorcist*, but let us peep into his inside, search his life and principles; let us try whether he is an apostle in his heart, and his actions; and if he be not, let us despise him; yea, let us *prevail against him*.

3. OBSERVE, *3dly*, What great and solemn rogueries are carried on in the name of Christ and his apostles; even conjurers and formalists reap their harvest, as it were, with the sickle of the gospel. And if such bold cheats could be practised as it were under this great apostle's nose; what may not be done now he is so far off? How many *exorcists*, how many sons of *Sceva*, trow ye, have we at this time among us, and in this enlightened Protestant country? Great numbers, God wot! yea, great societies. Every man, who, in the name of Christ or *Paul*, claims to himself gain or dominion, is a son of *Sceva*, and can be no guard against the devil, who despises him. Judge ye now what swarms we have!

4. OBSERVE from hence, *4thly* and lastly, The true reason of the great wickedness which is in the world, namely, because we maintain an army against the devil, of whom he standeth not in awe. In the first ages he was driven out of every corner, and now he possesses every corner; for why? they had apostles, and we have *the sons of Sceva*.

And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds, v. 18. that is, many who had been deluded and misled by these reverend deceivers, were now undeceived.

And many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burnt them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver, v. 19.

How

How fertile must the world then have been in mysterious and conjuring books? What systems of nonsense and knavery must have been here! What glosses, commentaries, and riddles! For we may be sure, my beloved, these were not books of useful knowledge and learning, or books that taught virtue and morality, since such, without doubt, the apostle would have preserved: But they were juggling and conjuring books, such as contained heathen traditions, with false miracles, and false doctrines, and were probably full of metaphysical distinctions, and the controversial divinity of those days; such as bundles of foolish sermons, pagan systems, articles of their faith, formularies, lying mysteries, cabalistical nonsense, and the high church pamphlets of that age; all opposite to the divine truths uttered by *Paul*.

So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed, v. 20. Take notice here, men and brethren, that the ready way to make the word of God grow and prevail, was to burn all the priests books. Oh, my beloved, that our eyes were also opened! What fuel should we have for bonfires!

NOTHING occurs remarkable between this and the 23d verse, which tells us, that *the same time there arose no small stir about that way*. And then follows the reason, v. 24, 25, 26, 27. *For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen, whom he called together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth: Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and*

turned away much people, saying, That they be no gods which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

A NOTABLE speech, and a fair confession! He kept a shop for the Deity, and got a world of money by this godly trade; and rather than lose it, he will oppose Christianity, and maintain his craft against Jesus Christ.

THIS mechanical priest, and his brethren, retainers to *Diana*, had lost many kind customers by *Paul's* preaching; their holy gear began to lie upon their hands; folks eyes were opened, and the cheat was disclosed: Upon which the Reverend Dr. *Demetrius*, and the whole convocation of priests and craftsmen, resolve to accuse the apostle as *an enemy to the church*, and an underminer of its *rights and interests*. *Sirs*, says Mr. Prolocutor, *ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.* “ Now if this *Paul* goes on to persuade people, as he does, that all our gain is built on deceit, and that our trade is of human institution, our function will fall into contempt, and we into beggary.”

ALL this was artfully addressed to the interest and avarice of his brother craftsmen, who sharing the benefit of the cheat, and living plentifully upon ecclesiastical revenues of the established church of *Diana*, had motives sufficient to engage them in the defence of the *fid* church and cheat.

Now he has a knack for catching the bigots, by telling them, what *danger* there was of the *church*; and lest the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised,
and

and her magnificence be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipped. What pity it was, that so pure and primitive a church, and the most orthodox and best constituted church in all Asia, should be in such piteous danger!

1. OBSERVE here, first, dearly beloved, what false knaves, and godless infidels, these priestly crew were. If they believed, that their mistress, the goddess, who had indeed the best accustomed church in all Asia, was as great as they pretended her to be, why did they mistrust her power to protect her own grandeur, and defend herself? Especially against a single man, whom they represented as an enemy to the gods and their church, and who was consequently the more easy to be defeated or destroyed? But if they knew her unable to defend her divinity, and support her church, with them, her priests, and tradesmen; then were they in reality cheats and unbelievers, though outwardly grave and zealous votaries.

2. TAKE notice, in the 2d place, of the wide difference there is between these high priests church, and the Bible church! The priests church being a trading church, and money being her end, and grimace her ware, which were the source of their authority and reverence; whatever enlightened the people, marred the market of the priests. *By this craft we have our wealth:* “While we can by bawling and lying put off our trumpery for religion, it will always sell well; otherwise, it will not be worth a groat; let us contend for our trumpery, and cry, *The Church!*” Accordingly we find the auditory in the next verse actually practising the advice given them by this high-church preacher,

preacher, and roaring for *Diana of Ephesus*; or, which is the same thing, *For the Church*. *By this craft we have our wealth.*

THIS, my friends, was the spirit of the priests church, so opposite to that of the *Bible church*; which being founded upon a rock, fears neither rain, nor storms, nor dissenters, nor false brethren; yea, she is founded upon a rock, *which rock is Christ*; and whoever trusts in him, and believes the scripture, cannot think his church in danger. Indeed, if his church is founded upon hoods, and caps, and cringes, and forms, and filthy lucre, he may well dread the judgment of God, and the reason of man; for they are both against him and his *dowdy*, and his church will totter as soon as ever common sense takes it by the collar. By fearing for the superstructure, he owns the foundation to be sandy. *By this craft we have our wealth.*

THESE *craftsmen* keep a rout about the danger of their church. Why, my brethren, it ought to be in danger, like a sorry bundle of inventions and gim-cracks, as it was. But for the pure, the primitive church of Christ, *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. Yea, the *craftsmen* shall not prevail against it, who are the forest enemies which it ever had—*It is founded upon a rock*. Paul does not once complain in all the New Testament, that *his church* was in danger, nor does any other of the apostles or evangelists. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever*. What say our *craftsmen* to this? Either they know it not, or believe it not. Paul, whenever he mentions dangers or *perils*, in his *epistles*, means perils to his own person: Nor did he, by his own person,

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son, ever in all his life, mean the church. But *Paul* had the spirit of God; he was no *craftsman*.

WE, my beloved, who are Christians, trust to the veracity of God, that he will for ever defend the holy revelation that he has given us. Let us, on our part, treat it as becomes its dignity and omnipotent author. Let us not turn our religion into a play, nor dishonour it with baubles, as the manner of the popish *craftsmen* is, who convert their churches into puppet-shews and music-meetings; and then, when they are laughed at, cry they are in danger. Pretty fellows! to raise our mirth whether we will or no, and then make us choak ourselves to keep it in. *Their craft is in danger to be set at nought.* They know its value, and quake lest other people should know it too. Oh the impudence of *craftsmen!* how boldly they mock God, and in his name pick pockets!

3. LET us observe, 3dly, my brethren, that the Christian religion, which prevailed against all the powers of the world, cannot be in danger from all the powers of the world: And every church may be in danger but a Christian church. Let us praise the Lord, my Christian friends, that our church is safe.

PROCEED we now to the 28th verse: *And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

1. WE may remark here, 1st, my friends, the violent effects of a hot sermon, however absurd and villainous. Here is Dr. *Demetrius*, whose craft was all his religion, lugs heaven into a dispute about his trade, and tacks the salvation of his hearers to the gain which he made of his shrines; yet this awakened no indignation in the
seduced.

seduced and ill-judging auditory ; but strait they *were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians: The Church! the Church!*

zdy, We may remark that ignorance is the mother of zeal. *They were full of wrath.* For what? Why for *Diana of Ephesus*. A god created by a stone-cutter ; an insensible piece of rock, guarded by a band of priests ; who, hard as it was, picked a fine livelihood out of it. But *Paul* had opened some mens eyes, and the loaves began to come in but slowly. This enraged the *craftsmen*, and they enraged the people. The priests lost customers, and the people lost their senses. Such is the power of delusion over dark and slavish minds ! Let but the priest point at a wind-mill; and cry the church is falling, his congregation will venture their brains to stop the sails. What a rare army does zeal raise, when religion and reason do not spoil the muster, or stop their march ?

THE next is the 29th verse ; *And the whole city was filled with confusion ; and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.*

And the whole city was filled with confusion. Who doubts it, when *Church* was the cry, and the *Priests* had begun it? Give them but their way, and allow them but to assert their own claims, they will quickly turn all things, human and divine, topsy-turvy. Here is a whole city thrown into confusion, purely because a branch of the priestly trade, infamous, forged, and irreligious, was like to fall before the word of God preached by *Paul*.

1st, THIS shews, first, that there is nothing so lying, and so vile, that they will not justify. They knew that their church was a creature of their own composing; that the worship performed in it was burlesque worship, contrived by themselves, and paid to a senseless image; and they knew, that the whole was an impudent delusion, framed by human invention. And yet, you see, my beloved, how they raise heaven and earth in defence of their forgeries and superstitions. Not a tittle will they part with, not a shrine, not a ceremony. No, rather than this, they publish lies, they deceive the people, they decry sober piety, they raise a sedition, and confound all things. *By this craft we have our wealth.*

2. BEHOLD here, 2^{dly}, the different behaviour of truth and falsehood! or, in other words, of *Paul* and the *craftsmen*! When men contend for truth, they do it calmly, because they are sure, that it will support itself. But error, conscious of its weak foundation, flies instantly, for support, to rage and oppression. *Paul* reasons peaceably and powerfully; *Demetrius* deceives, scolds, and raises a mob. But I defy the craftsmen to shew me one mob of *Paul's* raising in all the New Testament.

THE apostle wanted no mob; he neither blended politics nor gain with his doctrine; he had no factious designs; he meddled not with human affairs; he taught peace, and he practised it; he had no grimace to support; no mock reverence to acquire or defend; he abhorred pious fraud, and exposed it; he shewed the people the manifest truths of the gospel, and of reason, and that presently opened their eyes to see the impious delu-

delusions and bold impositions, of the reigning priests; and hence began the rage of Dr. *Demetrius* and his mob.

3. FROM this you may learn, 3dly, my friends, that one man, with truth on his side, is enough to frighten a whole army, yea, a whole hierarchy of craftsmen, and to defeat them, if he has but a fair hearing. You see also the graceless methods that red-hot high priests take, to confute such a man: First, they dress him up as an atheist, and an enemy to the church, and then set the mob upon him; for the law was not against *Paul*, as we shall see presently, and yet they meant to destroy *Paul* against law. An implacable tribe! No power can satisfy them, that has either mercy in it, or bounds to it: Craft is their calling, and lies, and violence, the tools of their trade.

OH, my Christian friends! what wolves are men, yea, what wolves are priests, when they have hardened themselves against the grace of God? Without meekness and peace there can be no such thing as the fear of the Lord: Witness Dr. *Demetrius*, and those that are like him. Let us pray for their amendment, that it would please the Lord to take away their reprobate mind.

And having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

GAIUS and ARISTARCHUS, Dissenters, to be sure, and non-conformist preachers! *Men of Macedonia*; foreigners too, ever the aversion of high-church! *Paul's companions in travel*. How! bare companions? Methinks that is something familiar, unless perhaps they were

were lords archbishops of some country, where they did not reside. But *Paul*, you see, had no spiritual pride, nor received his fellow-christians upon the knee, as some who pretend to be his successors at *Rome*, and elsewhere, do in our days.

THEY rushed with one accord into the theatre. Ay, they had got their prey, a brace of *noncons*, and carried them into the play-house to bait them. What hooping and hallooing, I warrant ye, about the two godly Christians! How many fanatics, think ye, they were called, and disturbers of the peace of *Diana's* high-church? Doubtless they were charged with writing books and papers against *Diana's* clergy, and the established gew-gaws; and perhaps *Paul* was suspected for having a hand in them, and some of his epittles were produced to make good the charge. Well! here they are, the priests their accusers, the mob their judges, and truth their crime! Men and wickedness are still the same; we have seen the like in our times.

And when *Paul* would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not, v. 30. Here is, on one hand, the boldness of a man, who has God for his guide; and on the other, the prudence of men, who knew the mercy of priests and mobs. And therefore certain of the chief of *Asia*, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre, v. 31.

THE 32d verse is pregnant with instruction: Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

S. ms

Some cried one thing and some another. The true genius of a rabble, led by their priests and their passions, against peace and against religion! They are for the church, *Diana's* church, it is true; and show it by rage and noise: But they are under no rules, except the general one taught them by the *craftsmen*, namely, to be fierce for the church against the apostle; for the rest, every man is his own master, and every man will be heard first.

A RARE picture of our present mob, headed by one of themselves in a gown; I mean, our *modern Demetrius*. I think the man is no great *craftsman*; but he has got *Diana* in his head, and he himself is in the head of the rabble: But, as to the point of understanding, we may throw him and his rabble together into one short prayer, and cry with our blessed Lord, when the *Jewish* priests were putting him to death, for bearing witness against their carnal inventions, their hypocrisy, and their cruelty; *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

The assembly was confused. There was no order, no reason, no moderation among them. The very type of our high-church mob again; *And the more part knew not wherefore they were come together*: that is, though, as I said before, they came determined to do mischief, yet they were at a loss what species of it to go about, till their general, the priest, gave them the word. Oh, my beloved, let us lament the horrible state of those poor unregenerate souls, whose pastors feed them with poison instead of the food of life, and teach them rage instead of religion. Take warning, sirs, I say unto you;

you, take warning; beware of *Diana*, and her *craftsmen*; and cleave to your Bibles, as you love your souls.

And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews (the believing Jews) putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with his hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. But when they knew, that he was a Jew, (that is, a believing Jew) all with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians! v. 33, 34.

Was there ever such a couple of twin-cases as theirs and ours! Verily, our high-church bigots and ragamuffins are the undoubted descendants of *Diana's Tories* at *Ephesus* sixteen hundred years ago. Nor is the breed one whit mended; they are still the black-guard of the craftsmen, blind, outrageous, and loud.

We too, my brethren, would, like the good *Alexander* in my text, make our defence unto the people; and they will not hear us. Pray mark the different manner of our disputing from theirs, and the contrary arguments we use; *we* appeal to the *Bible*; *they* cry *the Church!* and answer the word of the Lord with a brickbat: Oh horrible!

Great is Diana of the Ephesians! High-church for ever! and it is likely they swore to it. This was the cry for the space of two hours. Poor souls! it was all that they could say, and all that their priests had taught them to say, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!* Was ever church more pithily defended! Certainly the *craftsmen* of our days have learned their logic from their *Ephesian* predecessors. *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!* I have heard a sermon a full hour long upon the same subject, and yet not more said, nor better.

C

You

You have already, my beloved, heard two speeches, one from the *craftsmen*, and the other from the mob. Dr. *Demetrius*, being in the chair, tells his brethren of the trade, that *by this craft* (observe, by this craft!) *they had their wealth*. This is the first part of his sermon; and in troth, he puts the best leg foremost, and uses his strongest argument first: He fairly puts the stress of his faith upon the *ready rhino*, and in the very dawn of his discourse, shews himself to be orthodox. I dare say, the whole convocation was convinced. He has, however, a rare gudgeon behind for the mob; and what should that be, trow ye, but a charge of heresy against *Paul*? The apostle had the assurance to publish, forsooth, that *they be no gods which are made with hands*: Terrible atheism against the established divinity! and you see what a bitter spirit it raised.

THIS, my friends, was the priest's speech or sermon: Now hear the mob's speech once more; for it is a rarity; as we say in *Berkshire*. Why they cried out till their throats were jaded, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*; and lugged a couple of painful dissenting ministers into the *bear-garden*, where I am sorry we must leave them to the mercy of high-church men.

Now, my Christian friends, you shall hear a third speech, which by its honesty, moderation, and good sense, will refresh you after all the knavery and impudence in the *craftsmen*, and all this sottishness and fury in the people.

And when the town-clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there, that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down

down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly: For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: Let them implead one another, v. 35, 36, 37, 38.

THIS is the speech of a layman, and a lawyer! Think ye not, my friends, that he was a low-church man? I wot he was.

Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against. Right, Mr. Town-Clerk! their dowdy image was established by law; and if it had been a broom-stick, it would have had the priest on its side, must have been worshipped: *Where the carcase is, there will the ravens be gathered together.*

Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. So they would, if the priests had let them alone. But the craftsmen had goaded their sides with the cry of the church, till the poor reprobates were stark mad.

What man is there, that knoweth not &c. Why, every body knew, that Madam Diana's palace at Ephesus had more superstition and Peter pence paid to it, and consequently had a greater swarm of chaplains, than all the divinity-shops in Asia besides. She had men and money of her side. What! could not all this secure her? No; her bully-boys were afraid of Jesus Christ, and two or three dissenting teachers, his servants.

And the image which fell down from Jupiter. Fell down from Jupiter! what great liars some priests are, my beloved! They will needs fetch all their fables,

and filthy ware, out of heaven itself; and yet who has less interest there? Their very ballads and rarec-shews are fathered upon divine right. Oh sirs, the brazen front of some men! The town-clerk here conforms himself to their manner of speaking: But, take my word for it, the man knew better.

The image which fell down from Jupiter. As I was just now saying, all the priests lumber comes from God; and yet they are scared out of their wits, lest men should take it from them; as if God could not defend his own gifts and institutions. This preposterous conduct bewrays them. Either they believe not in God; or know that they belie him: Both cases, my brethren, are very common. *Whosoever feareth the Lord, need not fear what man can do unto him.*

MR. TOWN-CLERK proceeds: *For ya have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddesses.*

WELL urged, "If the men are innocent, why do ye abuse them? if they preach false doctrine, why do ye not confute them? If they come not to your established church, why do ye not convince them, that they ought to come? Or, because ye cannot answer them, do ye therefore mob them? It is plain, that the honest men have neither stolen any of your madam's consecrated trinkets, nor called her whore."

Wherefore, if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: Let them implead one another.

BETTER still! This is reasoning now; a practice which the craftsmen do not care for; the arm of flesh is their best argument, and at that too they are generally
laid

laid in the dirt. "Gentlemen, (says the town-clerk)
 "it is evident, that ye distrust your cause, by not
 "trusting the merits of it to the law. All external
 "advantages are for you; ye have most friends, and
 "most money; and let me tell you too, gentlemen,
 "ye have most assurance; else I should never have
 "found you here bawling for your church, and break-
 "ing the law, and, to your eternal scandal, besetting
 "with your numbers a few harmless men, whose only
 "arms lie in the innocence of their lives, and in the
 "force of what they say. If you are vanquished at
 "these weapons, have the honesty to own it, or for
 "shame be silent. If these men, gentlemen, speak
 "against the law, why punish ye them not by the
 "law? But if ye have no law against them, neither
 "have they any transgression."

WHAT answer, trow ye, did the *craftsmen*, or their
 calves, the multitude, make to this? Why, verily,
 such an answer, I guess, as they are wont to make to
 us every day: I suppose they damned him for a whig,
 and so got drunk, and went home.

OH, my friends, the deplorable condition of men
 that are out of Christ! And such are they who take
 their religion from the *craftsmen*. The worshippers of
Diana would have been as outrageous for one of her
 beagles, had the *craftsmen* told them, that the beagle
 came down from *Jupiter*. My brethren, let us cleave
 to our Bibles; yea, I say unto you, let us cleave to our
 Bibles.

III. I COME now to my third and last general head,
 namely, to end my discourse with a short word of ap-
 plication; having, as I went along, anticipated myself,

and made several observations which would else have arisen partly here.

THE great inference I shall make is, that *craftsmen*, or *high-church men*, are at odds with conscience and truth, and afraid of them. And indeed, to do them justice, though, in relation to God and religion, there is no believing what they say; yet, whenever they reason from their own interests, they reason well: *By this craft we have our wealth.* As to their flourish about *Diana*, and her *high-church*, it has not, in point of argument, common sense in it. All they assert is, that all *Asia* worshipped her; as if, because *Diana* was then uppermost, therefore Jesus Christ ought to have been kept undermost. They could not stand *Paul's* logic; he appealed to facts, he appealed to reason, he appealed to conscience.

THEY therefore (that is, *Diana's high-priests*, or the *overseers* of her *fopperies*, and *fingers* of her *gain*) form a design to oppress a man whom they could not answer. There was no bearing it, that men should be conducted in their religion by inward conviction, and the grace of God, and not by them, who had no advantage from either, for the support of their impositions.

BESIDE, if all external trumpery and grimace in religion were certainly ridiculous and vain, as the Christian religion certainly teaches; if postures, cringes, shrines, music, and the like bodily devotion, were so far from signifying any thing, that they were a certain and pernicious contradiction to the simple institution of Jesus, whose will was fulfilled by believing in him, and living well; then were the *craftsmen* like to be but

little revered, and to have but little custom for their shrines, and their small wares. A priest dressed up in an antic coat, and making mouths before a dead image, would make a merry figure before the people, instead of an awful one, as formerly; and in the midst of all their holy hubbub and solemnity, a Christian need but ask them one short question, *Who required these things at your hand?* and they were confounded.

WHAT do they do therefore in this case? Do they defend the church-gear by reason, or by reason confute *Paul*? No: *Paul* asserted, that *they be no gods which are made with hands*; the most self-evident truth that ever was asserted by any man. They cannot answer it; nor yet will they own themselves in the wrong; but they will punish the apostle for being in the right. Well, in order to do this, do they go to law with him? Not that neither: *Paul* and his companions had offended no law: They were peaceable men, they were loyal subjects, and good livers: They were contenders for virtue and piety; and they had not uttered a syllable against *Diana's* idol, but what resulted from the eternal truths which they delivered.

WHAT course then do the *craftsmen* take with them? Why, a very extraordinary one in itself, but very common with them; even the course of unprecedented power and oppression. They were chargeable with no legal crime: All their offence was, that they enraged the *craftsmen*, by opening the gospel day-light upon the dark minds of the misled multitude. They therefore shew their rage, and have the innocent men seized, and deprived of their liberty, without the shadow of any legal process against them. Nay, it does not appear,

pear, that they had yet found a name for the crime that they alledged; but the men were confined at random, and probably *put to great charges*.

THIS shews their spirit; and that priestly rage will be gratified over the belly of truth, of innocence, of humanity, of law, and of religion itself. It cannot brook the least good office done to human kind; all its absurdities are sacred; and yet nothing is sacred enough to mollify or restrain it, ever unforgiving, ever gnashing its teeth. Truth will perpetually be its foe, and therefore it will perpetually be in a flame.

AND this shews too the amiableness of an opposite spirit; I mean, the amiable spirit of the gospel. Where did ever our blessed Saviour, who held all power in heaven and earth, and could command legions of angels; where, or when did he, in the midst of dangers, opposition, and abuses, ever oppress or punish even his unbelieving and implacable enemies? Where did ever *Paul*, who had the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost, and who had the power and assistance of miracles; where and when did ever he shew any resentment to his bitterest foes among the *Jeus*, or his most idolatrous gainsayers among the *Gentiles*?

AND what account is to be given for this diametrical opposition between these two spirits; I mean, the spirit of the gospel, and the spirit of high priests? Why, none but this, that Christ and his apostles fought no empire but over wickedness and error, by the sole means of grace, gentleness, and persuasion; and they who have opposite ends to serve, must bring them about by delusion, violence, and force. This, I will maintain, is a certain criterion to mark out truth and falsehood,

hood, and true and false teachers: And I defy all the priests upon earth to shew, that the internal religion of Jesus wants, for its stay, or its advancement, the external influence of worldly power. It was always purest, and flourished most when all human power was against it. Slaves and hypocrites may be made by it; but religion rejoices in liberty and sincerity.

WHEN men are angry in defence of their opinions, and oppress for their sake; let them not belye Christ, and say, it is for him: But let their passions be made to answer for what nothing but their passions can produce. Why must ambition, avarice, and revenge, be fathered upon religion, which abhors them all? Why must bitterness and cruelty be laid at the door of the father of mercies? *Pudet hæc opprobria nobis, &c.*

WE cannot bear such violence offered to our reason, and our language, as any longer to hear things called by wrong and unnatural names; or to see barbarous and impious actions varnished over with holy colours, and godly pretences. It gets the better of our patience, and is an affront to our religion. We cannot find *Christ* in the actions of *Belial*; nor can we see the *holy man* in the oppressor. They that would resemble *Jesus Christ*, must do as he did, and not do what he never did; and they who will in any case follow the religious measures taken here by the idolaters of *Diana*, in the case of *Paul*, must forego their title to Christianity, and argue as these idolaters did, *By this craft we have our wealth*: And then the religion of the New Testament will not be profaned in their quarrel.

BUT why seize *Paul*, or any body that belonged to him? Is one man such a terror to many, that he must
be

be punished before it appears that he deserved any punishment at all, and before he is heard? Or is it dangerous to hear him? And are they afraid of his defence in a legal trial, as much as of his preaching, and of his reasoning?

It is plain, that downright oppression, that is, power without law, was the whole scope of their proceedings, and revenge their only motive. It is plain, that *Paul* was not running away: His whole business was to publish truth; he was at *Ephesus* on purpose; he did it every day; he preached in public; he taught in their synagogues, he disputed in their schools. And he did all this so publicly and so effectually, that the *arch-craftsman* charges him with having *persuaded and turned away much people*. Ay, that griped; his reasoning prevailed, and the craft was in danger.

Let us now, my beloved, mark the very different situation of *Paul* and his adversaries; they were in possession of an established church, and all its revenues, and of the superstition of the people, who run mad for the church at the pleasure of the priest. The law, no doubt, was partial to them, being made by men of their own religion; and the judges and magistrates were all of the same. The people were of opinion, that their church was of divine institution, and that heaven was on their side. The philosophers, and all they who governed their schools, and had the education of youth, were of that church, being every one heathens, except perhaps a few, who judged for themselves, and could distinguish natural religion, instituted by God, from the absurd medley of rituals, invented by the priests. The Christian religion was as yet but

in its infancy. In short, the *craftsmen* governed all things; earth was in their possession, and heaven they pretended was their champion.

HERE are securities and advantages enough to put truth out of countenance, had truth been amongst them. In reality, she wants not so many: But falsehood can never have enough. The *crafts* knew this, and shewed that they did so, by their outrageous behaviour.

LET us now view *Paul*, and see what terrible arms he bears, that are so frightful to the *craftsmen*; he was a stranger, he was a dissenter; he had no equipage to dazzle peoples eyes; no pompous garments to win their reverence, nor wealth to bribe their affections; he sought no popularity, by indulging men in their vices, or encouraging them in their errors. In short, all the numerous advantages of his adversaries, the priests, were so many obstacles and disadvantages to him, the apostle. To conclude, he had only truth on his side; which rendered him an over-match for all the priests then in the world. All the privilege, all the advantage, which he desired, was a fair hearing. This, it seems, he had obtained of the town; and it had its effect. Here was his crime, and here began the priestly fury, the fiercest, and most brutish of all others.

SHAMELESS men! Was it not enough, that reason and religion were both against you; and that you would neither be profelytes to them yourselves, nor suffer, with your wills, that others should; but must you likewise be proclaiming *their* invincible power, and your own imbecillity and nakedness, by virulently
using

using direct, undisguised force, to stop their mouths? What impudence! What folly!

WHAT! you that boast your conformity to the law, and your establishment by the law! you that were the possessors of all scholarship! that were proprietors of the arts and sciences, and of the great endowments given for their support! you that instruct the young and the old, and controuled the consciences of both! you that were the sacred administrators of religion! you that shut and opened heaven and hell! you that were the privy-counsellors of the gods! In the name of amazement what could undermine you; what could annoy you? Or, if you are not hurt yourselves, why do you oppress others? By this method you do but shew your cloven feet: *Jesus we know, and Paul we know; but who are ye?*

F I N I S.

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F I N I S.