15.

# THE QUERIST.

## NOT BISHOP BERKELY.



[REPUBLISHED FROM THE GLASGOW COURIER.]

QUERY 1. Whether, if intrusion be an evil, the people are not the sufferers from it? And whether they who suffer are not they who should complain? And whether the clergy, who are not the sufferers, should be the chief complainers?

2. Whether a large portion of the Non-intrusion clergy have not been themselves intruded? And whether it is decent in them so loudly to condemn that of which they are daily enjoying the fruits?

3. Whether it is becoming in them who were *called* by only some half-score or dozen persons, to maintain that the pastoral relation cannot be formed without the consent of the people?

4. Whether good ministers can be intruded? And whether bad ones are not always intruded, however much the people may desire them?

5. Whether Moses and all the Prophets, whom the members of the ancient Church refused to receive, were guilty of *intrusion*, because they thrust themselves upon an *unwilling* and *reclaiming* people? And whether the false prophets had not a harmonious call from the people? And whether, when Jesus Christ came unto his own, his own did not refuse to receive him?

6. Whether people never hate most that which they need most? And whether that preaching which touches their besetting sins is not that which will be most useful to them? And whether they are likely to relish this most?

7. Whether the settling of an able and holy man was ever found, on the whole, to injure the spiritual interests of any people, how much soever they might dislike him at the first?

8. Whether the clergy, by having the absolute power of licensing persons to preach, have not the means of preventing all real intrusion?

9. Whether the clergy, who are so set against intrusion, should license men of whom they know almost nothing? And whether they should license persons whom they account fools or blackguards? And whether it is a duty to license any one whom it is a sin to ordain?

10. Whether every *real* objection against a presentee may not be stated in words? And whether those objections which cannot be expressed can be of any great magnitude?

11. Whether they, who maintain that the people may have good and solid objections which they cannot express, do not hold the people to be children or fools?

12. Whether they, who are not able to say *why* they dislike or object to a presentee, can be very well qualified to judge regarding his abilities?

13. Whether, if the bare dislike of the majority is sufficient ground to hinder a minister being ordained, the same dislike should not be sufficient

reason for turning him about his business *after* he has been ordained? And whether the people's judgment respecting a man of whom they have had experience be not entitled to more weight than their opinion regarding one of whom they know almost nothing?

14. Whether the instruction of the people be not almost the whole business of a minister? And whether, if the people are sufficient judges of his ability to instruct them, they be not sufficient judges of his qualification to be their minister? And whether, after this point is decided, anything of consequence be left for the Church Courts to do?

15. Whether this theory of the people's bare will should not relieve the Church Courts of their functions in this matter entirely?

16. Whether the distinction between those communicants who are male heads of families, and all other communicants, is revealed in the Old or New Testament? And whether there is any reason to believe that the wisdom of every congregation resides exclusively in the former?

17. Whether *intrusion* be ever defined, or condemned, or mentioned in the New Testament or the Old? And whether, if it be an evil, and of such magnitude, this silence is not very mysterious and unaccountable?

18. Whether *contentions* and *schisms* be not forbidden in the New Testament? And whether they who foment schisms and contentions, to prevent intrusion, do not do a great and unquestionable evil to hinder a doubtful or small evil?

19. Whether the infallibility of the General Assembly be anywhere distinctly asserted in the New Testament? And whether, therefore, people may not doubt it without peril of condemnation?

20. Whether the infallibility of the General Assembly be much more clearly proved than that of the Pope? And whether their condemning all who question it may not give ground to suspect that neither party is well-convinced of their high pretensions?

21. Whether, if the General Assembly be infallible, we might not have expected the New Testament would have said so? And whether it be not strange that none of the Apostles should ever have mentioned either the General Assembly or its infallibility?

22. Whether the General Assembly should not work miracles to prove its infallibility? And whether, in the meantime, it should pronounce all reprobates who doubt it?

23. Whether, when the clergy resist the law of the land, saying, they "must obey God rather than man," they do not mean they must obey the General Assembly rather than the Civil Courts? And whether, when they say this, they do not ascribe to the General Assembly the wisdom and authority of God, and to the Civil Courts the ignorance and wickedness of man?

24. Whether they who claim divine right and infallibility have not generally been impostors and tyrants?

25. Whether the General Assembly and the clergy be not the same? And when the clergy affirm, "We must obey God," *i. e.*, the General Assembly, "rather than man," *i. e.*, the Civil Courts, whether they do not mean, "We must obey nobody but ourselves?"

26. Whether the General Assembly was always infallible since its commencement, or whether its infallibility began when it was delivered of the Veto Act in 1834? And whether its infallibility since then be better proved than before?

27. Whether the General Assembly was infallible in former times when it burned witches, fomented rebellion, and both taught persecution, and bound itself by a solemn oath to persecute all who differed from it in opinion?

28. Whether the infallibility of the General Assembly do not belong to its members, individually as well as collectively, or at least to those of them who compose the majority? And whether this country be not highly favoured, which has such a host of *infallibles* to direct its spiritual affairs?

29. Whether it is their infallibility which renders the clergy so arrogant and impatient of contradiction? And whether they who are infallible have not a right to be believed and obeyed? And whether it be not impious in any one to question this?

30. Whether, seeing the General Assembly, very few of whose members have ever studied law, understands the law so much better than the Judges, the General Assembly must not have derived its skill from inspiration? And whether it be possible otherwise to account for that phenomenon?

31. Whether *spiritual independence* do not mean liberty in a Church to do whatever it pleases in spiritual matters? And whether *doctrine* is not a purely spiritual matter? And whether the clergy of the Church of Scotland have liberty or right to preach whatever doctrines they please?

32. Whether any Established Church, having bound itself to a Confession of Faith, which it cannot alter of itself, has any independence as to the matter of doctrine? And whether, having judged itself warranted to give up its spiritual independence in the momentous affair of doctrine, it is not ridiculous to raise a clamour about independence in some inferior matters, and which are not purely spiritual?

33. Whether this proceeding do not resemble the conduct of the Pharisees, who "strained out a gnat, and swallowed a camel?"

34. Whether, if the General Assembly and the Civil Courts must each decide for themselves, the present controversy may not be prolonged for ever? And whether it be not a matter of necessity that *one* of them should finally decide?

35. Whether it be more reasonable that the Civil Courts, which *are not* parties in this cause, or the Church Courts, which *are* parties, should be the final judges respecting it? And whether people are generally impartial judges in their own cause?

36. Whether the General Assembly, a popular meeting, composed for the most part of men not well-informed, agitated by party spirit, and under the dictation of party leaders, be much better qualified to decide difficult and nice questions respecting the meaning of the Legislature in establishing the Church, than the grave and learned Judges, whom long practice has rendered familiar with such matters, and whose decisions are pronounced after patient hearing of parties, and deliberate investigation?

37. Whether the New Testament, which contains many condemnations of contention, strife, schism, and so many solemn warnings against these, has not altogether omitted any warning against the encroachments of the Civil Power on the Church? And whether they should be pronounced heretics and Erastians who suppose *that* is a more heinous sin, and a greater danger, against which so much is said in the New Testament, than that against which no word is there spoken?

38. Whether any of the great corruptions of Christianity have arisen from the encroachment of the Civil Power? Whether, on the contrary,

most of those corruptions, and the worst of them, have not sprung from the ambition and avarice of the clergy? And whether the Papal usurpation itself did not take its first rise from the grant of an independent jurisdiction made to the clergy by the Roman Emperors?

39. Whether, if its spiritual independence invest the General Assembly with the right to give to the people a veto on presentees without the concurrence of the civil authority, that spiritual independence do not give to the General Assembly the right to take it from the people (suppose it granted them by the State) whenever the Assembly pleased, and whether the State and the people consented or not?

40. Whether the doctrine of spiritual independence would not serve the Church Courts, if so disposed, to deprive *the people* of their rights and privileges, as well as patrons and presentees of theirs?

41. Whether it was not the doctrine and practice of spiritual independence which deprived the people of the cup in the Sacrament—of having public prayers offered in a known tongue—and of all right of private judgment in religious matters? And whether the doctrine, which has served for such purposes in times past, might not serve for others equally bad in the time to come?

42. Whether those Governments are utterly to be reprobated which, as in England, reformed the Church in spite of the clergy? And whether, if the State in England had not interfered with the spiritual independence of the Church, England would not probably have been a Popish country till this day? And whether an interference, which delivered the people from Latin prayers, the confessional, and ghostly tyranny, and which gave them the Bible, was a mortal sin?

43. Whether the Confession of Faith does not hold that the Civil Magistrate "*hath authority*, and it is *his duty*, not only to call Synods, and to be present in them, but *to provide* that *whatsoever is transacted* in them be according to the mind of God?"—Ch. xxiii. 3.

44. Whether an Established Church, determined to assert its spiritual independence, is not like a woman resolved to have as much liberty and independence after she is married as she had when she was single?

45. Whether those people, who are helping the Church Courts to assert their independence, are not diligent in aiding others to acquire power, by which they may enslave themselves whenever they please?

46. Whether, when the clergy preach Non-intrusion sermons, they should not find Non-intrusion texts? Whether, when they preach sermons for which no appropriate texts can be found, they are preaching God's Word? And whether it is allowable to make texts speak of Non-intrusion and spiritual independence, which speak of no such things?

47. Whether we should go to church to confess other people's sins or our own? Whether it is right to preach and pray against our enemies? Whether repentance and humiliation consist in calling other people sinners, and applauding ourselves? And whether we ought to vilify those who differ from us, under pretence of bewailing them?

48. Whether the preaching of the Gospel be not the proper business of the clergy? Whether those of them who occupy themselves chiefly in a different employment have not deserted their calling? And whether, instead of *ministers of the Gospel*, they should not call themselves *ministers of Non-intrusion?*

49. Whether the Apostles have not been very careful to warn the clergy

against indulging in "doubtful disputations," "in foolish and unlearned questions," "in vain babblings;" and whether it be not written, "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men?"

50. Whether the following sentiment, from the writings of an eminently pious and zealous minister, be not worthy of serious consideration—"Behold my servant whom I have chosen: he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets"—"How lovely is this meekness of Christ! how worthy to be imitated in his ministers! their ministry not being a ministry of pride, contention, imperiousness, and violence, but of humility, peace, mildness, and moderation?"

51. Whether the clergy have not, at various times, been the authors of incalculable evils to the Christian Church, by representing unimportant or doubtful questions as of vital moment; and persuading the people they were contending for the truth of God, when they were only upholding the private fancies of their teachers?

52. Whether most bitter contentions, out of which have sprung lasting and fatal schisms, have not been caused by the quarrels of the clergy, touching points which are of no consequence, or which cannot be determined; such as—On what day Easter should be kept?—Whether persons who had been baptised by heretics should be baptised again?—Whether the bread used in the Sacrament should be leavened?—Whether the Virgin Mary was always a virgin?—Whether the body of Christ is present in the Sacrament *consubstantially*, or *spiritually*, or *metaphorically?* and many others?—And whether the divisions, occasioned by those vain janglings, do not continue, some of them, to this day? Whether, also, those questions did not appear to the disputants as momentous as Non-intrusion does to us? And whether, then, all who ventured to dissent from the zealous clergy were not denounced by them as enemies of Christ?

53. Whether Gregory and Innocent did not affirm, and, perhaps, think, they were contending for Christ's crown, when they were fighting for their own supremacy? Whether good men, since, may not sometimes have fallen into the same mistake?

54. Whether it be a mark of wisdom to be very positive about very doubtful matters, and to expend most of our zeal on things which, at the most, are not essential?

55. Whether the proper business of clergymen is not "to turn the sinner from the error of his way, and to save his soul alive?" Whether the apostle Paul has not comprehended their duties in three words—*reprove, rebuke, exhort?* Whether they have not perfect liberty to do all these things? And whether the usefulness of the clergy has not been infinitely more impeded by their own contentions and quarrels, than by any civil laws or decisions whatever?

56. Whether there be not much reason to apprehend that the controversy which now sets people by the ears has, in great measure, sprung from an immoderate delight in hearing themselves speak, which has infected many of the clergy?

57. Whether many persons are not much more zealous for Non-intrusion and spiritual independence, than they ever appeared to be for the Gospel? And whether, if the zeal and time which have been consumed in asserting those opinions had been employed in preaching the Gospel, the result would not probably have been more beneficial?

58. Whether, when thousands of people are perishing for lack of knowledge on every side, dying in ignorance of almost the very name of Jesus Christ, it would not be much more laudable in the clergy to occupy themselves in endeavouring to instruct and reform those wretched creatures, than consuming whole days and nights together disputing in Church Courts, or perambulating the country, disturbing the people, and vilifying those ministers who are quietly attending to their own business?

59. Whether, if any one should talk of upholding the Church by swords and guns, or of animating Chartism to burn the parish churches, or of bringing down the Highlanders to defend the Church, or of Kings or Queens losing their heads for opposing the Church, they would teach the same Gospel which Jesus Christ inculcated, when he said, "Put up thy sword into the sheath; they that take the sword shall perish by the sword"?

60. Whether the proper weapons of a Christian, and of a Christian church, are not faith, patience, meekness, and prayer? Whether plotting, intriguing, agitating, calumniating, are not carnal weapons? And whether, if any of the clergy should employ these, they would be entitled to distinguish themselves by the name of the Evangelical Party?

61. Whether it would be decent in ministers of the Gospel to "speak evil of dignities," and "to teach men so"? Whether the Apostles taught them to do this, or did so themselves?

62. Whether it might not be prudent in the people to read with their own eyes, and learn for themselves, what the religion they profess requires of them, and not take their faith and duty so implicitly from their ministers —at least till they have proved their infallibility? And whether, if they did so, a great many people might not discover that the clergy had used them as the Pharisees treated the Jews—"teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"?

63. Whether the proceedings of the clergy be not rapidly bringing religion into contempt with a large portion of the people?

64. Whether a commercial traveller, while yet he travels in his employer's name, drives his gig, and receives his pay, should use all possible means to prevent his employer's customers continuing their orders? And whether the said traveller should not quit his employer's service before he begins to seduce his customers?

65. Whether the *headship of Christ*, and the headship of the General Assembly, be exactly the same? Whether people may not believe the first of these, and yet, without presumption, dispute the second? Whether, in all this controversy, these two different things have not been studiously confounded? And whether it be perfectly fair to blind and puzzle plain people with so gross a fallacy?

66. Whether Ecclesiastical Councils and Assemblies, claiming for themselves the authority of Christ, and under cover of his *headship*, have not frequently and grossly resisted that authority which they pretended for their actings? Whether they have not often branded the truth of God as *heresy*, and condemned its teachers as *heretics* and *enemies of God?* And whether the doctrine, that Christ is Head of his Church, has not, in innumerable instances, been alleged to justify whatever the men who called themselves His ministers chose to perpetrate?

67. Whether any one has a right to act in the Queen's name, and to pretend the Queen's authority, unless he can show the Queen's warrant

expressly to that effect? And whether it be not very strange that men should persist in claiming to act in Christ's name, and to possess His authority, and should maintain that *His* supremacy is *theirs*, and yet should be able to produce no clear or express warrant, in all the New Testament, to that purpose?

68. Whether, in Dissenting Churches, the people who pay the clergy do not, on that account, exercise a powerful control over them? Whether the clergy in Established Churches, not being paid by the people, are not thereby exempted, in great degree, from the control of the people? And whether, if the State should consent to denude itself of all power to interfere with them whatever they might do, the clergy of Established Churches would not possess full liberty to do whatever they pleased?

69. Whether it would be prudent to allow the clergy to act without any possibility of interference either from the people or the State? And whether, if thus unrestrained, they might not prove very troublesome, or even dangerous?

70. Whether if spiritual independence were secured to the clergy by law —since *preaching* is a spiritual matter—they might not preach scandal, calumny, sedition, or rebellion, under the protection of the statutes? And whether, in the history of this country, such abuses of the pulpit have not been frequently defended under the plea of spiritual independence?

71. Whether that most important and useful body of men do not sometimes need to be kept to their own proper business? Whether the constant habit of speaking without contradiction has not inspired many of them with an extravagant opinion of their own wisdom, and a propensity to meddle in affairs which they do not well understand, and with which they have no peculiar concern? Whether they have never resented the conduct of those among themselves who refused "to preach to the times," preferring to *preach of eternity?* Whether, under pretence of religion and the interests of the Church, they have not sometimes virtually usurped the civil government of nations? And whether they ever undertook that business without grossly mismanaging it?

72. Whether it be not very wonderful that the zealous clergy, who, a few years ago, were such immoveable *Tories*, and so well disposed to preach, on all occasions, that every soul must be subject to the "higher powers," should, all of a sudden, have grown so zealous for liberty, and such denouncers of oppression? Whether the reason is that men bear other people's real evils much more patiently than their own imaginary grievances? And whether it is decent to respect the Government of our country only while it favours our party? And whether a good man should revile the judges whenever they don't give sentence in his favour?

73. Whether the Voluntary system, which many of the clergy now applaud as able to do almost everything, was not lately denounced by the same persons as able to do almost nothing? Whether this change of opinion, just when they were likely to need the voluntary support of their followers, has not a very suspicious appearance? And whether, after this, those men can decently pretend to be infallible?

74. Whether the Church of England, which now is denounced as an Erastian and state-ridden slave, and almost a synagogue of Satan, was not, during the Voluntary controversy, and afterwards, when additional endowments were sought, affectionately styled "the sister church," and "a noble

institution"? And whether it is decent to flatter a man and pay him many compliments when we need his help, and as soon as our end is served, to abuse and revile him?

75. Whether the scheme of a great man, who proposes to maintain "the Free Church of Scotland" by a penny-a-week subscription, does not much resemble his scheme for supporting all the poor by voluntary contributions? And whether these, and most of the other schemes of that eminent and excellent person, do not betray a very strong imagination, and a very weak judgment?

76. Whether the spiritual despotism which is driving so many of the clergy into the Free Church, may not be expected to shake its rod over them when they are in it? Whether the goat in the fable should not have considered before he leapt into the pit with the fox, how he might get out again if he did not like his quarters? And whether it is prudent to venture into danger with those who are much more cunning than ourselves?

77. Whether the freedom of the Free Church will not probably consist in its ministers being free of a livelihood, and free to follow some honest occupation of a worldly kind, and free to confess that they had thrown away the means of supporting their families, and of being useful in the church, by becoming the tools of two or three men, who have grown tyrants because *they* consented to become slaves? And whether Presbyterian Popes be much more tolerable than the Romish Pope?

78. Whether it might not be prudent in the people, before seceding with their ministers from the Church of Scotland, to wait till they see whether those who come in their places are not as good men and as good ministers as the others?

79. Whether it be safe or wise in any one to bind himself to support a Church, which, for aught he can tell, may have more and greater blemishes and abuses than that he is prepared to leave? And whether such kind of bonds and engagements have not frequently proved snares for men's consciences, and occasions of perjury?

80. Whether any one should be reckoned a martyr but one who suffers for truths which are both important and unquestionable? And whether they who profess their determination to suffer for opinions which cannot be clearly proved either by Scripture or reason, and which, at best, are only of inferior importance, should not, instead of being applauded as martyrs, be rather pitied for their folly and obstinacy?

81. Whether any one should think himself entitled to the praise of martyrdom before he has suffered anything at all, or highly applaud himself for a deed which he has not yet done? And whether very questionable characters have not sometimes boasted, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts"?—2 Kings x. 16, 29.

---

GLASGOW: JAMES MACLEHOSE, BUCHANAN STREET.