

PECULIAR CUSTOMS OF THE QUAKERS.

CHAPTER III.

SECTION I.

Language—Quakers differ in their language from others—the first alteration made by George Fox of thou for you—this change had been suggested by Erasmus and Luther—sufferings of the Quakers in consequence of adapting this change—a work published in their defence—this presented to King Charles and others—other works on the subject by Barclay and Penn—in these the word thou shewn to be proper in all languages—you to be a mark of flattery—the latter idea corroborated by Harwell, Maresius, Godeau, Erasmus.

As the Quakers are distinguishable from their fellow-citizens by their dress, as was amply shewn in a former chapter, so they are no less distinguishable from them by the peculiarities of their language.

George Fox seemed to look at every custom with the eye of a reformer. The language of the country, as used in his own times, struck him as having many censurable defects. Many of the expressions, then in use, appeared to him to contain gross flattery, others to be idolatrous, others to be false representatives of the ideas they were intended to convey. Now he considered that christianity required truth, and he believed therefore that he and his followers, who professed to be christians in word and deed, and to follow the christian pattern in all things, as far as it could be found, were called upon to depart from all the censurable modes of speech, as much as they were from any of the customs of the world, which Christianity had deemed objectionable. And so weightily did these improprieties in his own language lie upon his mind, that he conceived himself to have had an especial commission to correct them.

The first alteration, which he adopted, was in the use of the pronoun *thou*. The pronoun *you*, which grammarians had fixed to be of the plural number, was then occasionally used, but less than it is now, in addressing an individual. George Fox therefore adopted *thou* in its place on this occasion, leaving the word *you* to be used only where two or more individuals were addressed.

George Fox however was not the first of the religious writers, who had noticed the improper use of the pronoun *you*. Erasmus employed a treatise in shewing the propriety of thou when addressed to a single person, and in ridiculing the use of *you* on the same occasion. Martin Luther also took great pains to expunge the word *you* from the station which it occupied, and to put *thou* in its place. In his *Ludus*, he ridicules the use of the former by the, following invented sentence, "*Magister, Vos estis iratus?*" This is as absurd, as if he had said in English "gentlemen art thou angry"?

But though George Fox was not the first to recommend the substitution of *thou* for *you*, he was the first to reduce this amended use of it to practice. This he did in his own person, wherever he went, and in all the works which he published. All his followers did the same. And, from his time to the present, the pronoun *thou* has come down so prominent in the speech of the Society, that a Quaker is generally known by it at the present day.

The reader would hardly believe, if historical facts did not prove it, how much noise the introduction or rather the amended use of this little particle, as reduced to practice by George Fox, made in the world, and how much ill usage it occasioned the early Quakers. Many magistrates, before whom they were carried in the early times of their institution, occasioned their sufferings to be greater merely on this account. They were often abused and beaten by others, and sometimes put in danger of their lives. It was a common question put to a Quaker in those days, who addressed a great man in this new and simple manner, "why you ill bred clown do you *thou* me?" The rich and mighty of those times thought themselves degraded by this mode of address, as reducing them from a plural magnitude to a singular, or individual, or simple station in life. "The use of *thou*, says George Fox, was a sore cut to proud flesh, and those who sought self-honour."

George Fox, finding that both he and his followers were thus subject to much persecution on this account, thought it right the world should know, that, in using this little particle which had given so much offence, the Quakers were only doing what every grammarian ought to do, if he followed his own rules. Accordingly a Quaker-work was produced, which was written to shew that in all languages *thou* was the proper and usual form of speech to a single person, and *you* to more than one. This was exemplified by instances, taken out of the scriptures, and out of books of teaching in about thirty languages. Two Quakers of the names of John Stubbs and Benjamin Furley, took great pains in compiling it: and some additions were made to it by George Fox himself, who was then a prisoner in Lancaster castle.

This work, as soon as it was published, was presented to King Charles the second, and to his council. Copies of it were also sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and to each of the universities. The King delivered his sentiments upon it so far as to say, that *thou* was undoubtedly the proper language of all nations. The Archbishop of Canterbury, when he was asked what he thought of it, is described to have been so much at a stand, that he could not tell what to say. The book was afterwards bought by many. It is said to have spread conviction, wherever it went. Hence it had the effect of lessening the prejudices of some, so that the Quakers were never afterwards treated, on this account, in the same rugged manner as they had been before.

But though this book procured the Quakers an amelioration of treatment on the amended use of the expression *thou*, there were individuals in the Society, who thought they ought to put their defence on a better foundation, by stating all the reasons, for there were many besides those in this book, which had induced them to differ from their fellow citizens on this subject. This was done both by Robert Barclay and William Penn in works, which defended other principles of the Quakers, and other peculiarities in their language.

One of the arguments, by which the use of the pronoun *thou* was defended, was the same as that, on which it had been defended by Stubbs and Furley, that is, its strict conformity with grammar. The translators of the Bible had invariably used it. The liturgy had been compiled on the same principle. All addresses made by English Christians in their private prayers to the Supreme Being, were made in the language of *thou*, and not of *you*. And this was done, because the rules of the English grammar warranted the expression, and because any other mode of expression would have been a violation of these rules.

But the great argument (to omit all others) which Penn and Barclay insisted upon for the change of *you*, was that the pronoun *thou*, in addressing an individual, had been anciently in use, but that it had been deserted for *you* for no other purpose, than that of flattery to men; and that this dereliction of it was growing greater and greater, upon the same principle, in their own times. Hence as christians, who were not to puff up the fleshly creature, it became them to return to the ancient and grammatical use of the pronoun *thou*, and to reject this growing fashion of the world. "The word *you*, says William Penn, was first ascribed in the way of flattery, to proud Popes and Emperors, imitating the heathens vain homage to their gods, thereby ascribing a plural honour to a single person; as if one Pope had been made up of many gods, and one Emperor of many men; for which reason *you*, only to be addressed to many, became first spoken to one. It seemed the word *thou* looked like too lean and thin a respect; and therefore some, bigger than they should be, would have a style suitable to their own ambition."

It will be difficult for those, who now use the word *you* constantly to a single person, and who, in such use of it, never attach any idea of flattery to it, to conceive how it ever could have had the origin ascribed to it, or, what is more extraordinary, how men could believe themselves to be exalted, when others applied to them the word *you* instead of *thou*. But history affords abundant evidence of the fact.

It is well known that Caligula ordered himself to be worshipped as a god. Domitian, after him, gave similar orders with respect to himself. In process of time the very statues of the emperors began to be worshipped. One blasphemous innovation prepared the way for another. The title of *Pontifex Maximus* gave way at length for those of *Eternity*, *Divinity*, and the like. Coeval with these appellations was the change of the word *thou* for *you*, and upon the same principles. These changes, however, were not so disagreeable, as they might be expected to have been, to the proud Romans; for while they gratified the pride of their emperors by these appellations, they made their despotism, in their own conceit, more tolerable to themselves. That one man should be lord over many thousand Romans, who were the masters of the world was in itself a degrading thought. But they consoled themselves by the haughty consideration, that they were yielding obedience, not to man, but to an incarnate demon or good genius, or especial envoy from heaven. They considered also the emperor as an office, and as an office, including and representing many other offices, and hence considering him as a man in the plural number, they had less objection to address him in a plural manner.

The Quakers, in behalf of their assertions on this subject, quote the opinions of several learned men, and of those in particular, who, from the nature of their respective writings, had occasion to look into the origin and construction of the words and expressions of language.

Howell, in his epistle to the nobility of England before his French and English Dictionary, takes notice, "that both in France, and in other nations, the word *thou* was used in speaking of one, but by succession of time, when the Roman commonwealth grew into an empire, the courtiers began to magnify the emperor, as being furnished with power to confer dignities and offices, using the word *you*, yea, and deifying him with more remarkable titles, concerning which matter we read in the epistles of Symmachus to the emperors Theodosius and Valentinian, where he useth these forms of speaking, *Vestra Æternitas, vestrum numen, vestra serenitas, vestra Clementia*, that is, *your*, and not *thy* Eternity, Godhead, Serenity, Clemency. So that the word *you* in the plural number, together with the other titles and appellations of honour, seem to have taken their rise from despotic government, which afterwards, by degrees, came to be derived to private persons." He says also in his *History of France*, that "in ancient times, the peasants addressed their kings by the appellation of *thou*, but that pride and flattery first put inferiors upon paying a plural respect to the single person of every superior, and superiors upon receiving it."

John Maresius, of the French Academy, in the preface to his *Clovis*, speaks much to the same effect. "Let none wonder, says he, that the word *thou* is used in this work to princes and princesses, for we use the same to God, and of old the same was used to Alexanders, Caesars, queens, and empresses. The use of the word *you*, when only base flatteries of men of later ages, to whom it seemed good to use the plural number to one person, that he may imagine himself alone to be equal to many others in dignity and worth, from whence it came at last to persons of lower quality."

Godeau, in his preface to the translation of the New Testament, makes an apology for differing from the customs of the times in the use of *thou*, and intimates that *you* was substituted for it, as a word of superior respect. "I had rather, says he, faithfully keep to the express words of Paul, than exactly follow the polished style of our tongue. Therefore I always use that form of calling God in the singular number not in the plural, and therefore I say rather *thou* than *you*. I confess indeed, that the civility and custom of this word, requires him to be honored after that manner. But it is likewise on the contrary true, that the original tongue of the New Testament hath nothing common with such manners and civility, so that not one of these many old versions we have doth observe it. Let not men believe, that we give not respect enough to God, in that we call him by the word *thou*, which is nevertheless far otherwise. For I seem to myself (may be by the effect of custom) more to honor his divine majesty, in calling him after this manner, than if I should call him after the manner of men, who are so delicate in their forms of speech."

Erasmus also in the treatise, which he wrote on the impropriety of substituting *you* for *thou*, when a person addresses an individual, states that this strange substitution originated wholly in the flattery of men.

SECTION II.

Other alterations in the language of the Quakers—they address one another by the title of *Friends*—and others by the title of *Friends* and *Neighbours*, or by their common names—the use of *sir* and *madam* abolished—also of *master* or *mister*—and of *humble servant*—also of titles of honor—reasons of this abolition—example of Jesus Christ.

Another alteration, that took place in the language of the Quakers, was the expunging of all expressions from their vocabulary, which were either superfluous, or of the same flattering tendency as the former.

In addressing one another, either personally or by letter, they made use of the word *Friend*, to signify the bond of their own union, and the character, which man, under the christian dispensation, was bound to exhibit in his dealings with his fellow-man. They addressed each other also, and spoke of each other, by their real names. If a man's name was *John*, they called him *John*; they talked to him as *John*, and added only his sir-name to distinguish him from others.

In their intercourse with the world they adopted the same mode of speech: for they addressed individuals either by their plain names, or they made use of the appellations of *Friends* or *Neighbours*.

They rejected the words *sir* or *madam*, as then in use. This they did, because they considered them like the word *you*, as remnants of ancient flattery, derived from the papal and anti-christian ages; and because these words still continued to be considered as titles of flattery, that puffed up people in their own times. Howell, who was before quoted on the pronoun *thou*, is usually quoted by the Quakers on this occasion also. He states in his history, that "*sir* and *madam* were originally names given to none, but the king, his brother, and their wives, both in France and England. Yet now the ploughman in France is called *sir* and his wife *madam*; and men of ordinary trades in England *sir*, and their wives *dame*, which is the legal title of a lady, and is the same as *madam* in French. So prevalent hath pride and flattery been in all ages, the one to give, and the other to receive respect"

The Quakers banished also the word *master*, or *mister* as it is now pronounced, from their language, either when they spoke concerning any one, or addressed any one by letter. To have used the word *master* to a person, who was no master over them, would have been, they considered, to have indicated a needless servility, and to have given a false picture of their own situation, as well as of those addressed.

Upon the same or similar principles they hesitated to subscribe themselves as the *humble* or *obedient servants* of any one, as is now usual, at the bottom of their letters. "Horrid apostacy, says Barclay, for it is notorious that the use of these compliments implies not any design of service." This expression in particular they reprobated for another reason. It was one of those, which had followed the last degree of impious services and

expressions, which had poured in after the statues of the emperors had been worshipped, after the titles of *Eternity* and *Divinity* had been ushered in, and after thou had been exchanged for you, and it had taken a certain station, and flourished among these. Good christians, however, had endeavoured to keep themselves clear of such inconsistencies Casaubon has preserved a letter of Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in which he rebukes Sulpicius Severus for having subscribed himself "his humble servant." A part of the letter runs thus.[39] "Take heed hereafter, how thou, being from a servant called unto liberty, dost subscribe thyself servant to one, who is thy brother and fellow servant: for it is a sinful flattery, not a testament of humility, to pay those honours to a man and to a sinner, which are due to the one Lord, one Master, and one God."

[Footnote 39: Paulinus flourished in the year 460. He is reported by Paulus Diacenus to have been an exemplary christian. Among other acts he is stated to have expended all his revenues in the redemption of christian captives; and, at last, when he had nothing left in his purse, to have pawned his own person in favour of a widow's son. The barbarians, says the same author, struck with this act of unparalleled devotion to the cause of the unfortunate, released him, and many prisoners with him without ransom.]

The Quakers also banished from the use of their Society all those modes of expression, which were considered as marks or designations of honour among men. Hence, in addressing any peer of the realm, they never used the common formula of "my lord," for though the peer in question might justly be the lord over many possessions, and tenants, and servants, yet he was no lord over their heritages or persons. Neither did they ever use the terms *excellency*, or *grace*, or *honour*, upon similar occasions. They considered that the bestowing of these titles might bring them under the necessity of uttering what might be occasionally false. "For the persons, says Barclay, obtaining these titles, either by election or hereditarily, may frequently be found to have nothing really in them deserving them, or answering to them, as some, to whom it is said *your excellency* may have nothing of excellency in them, and he, who is called your grace, may be an enemy to grace, and he, who is called your honour, may be base and ignoble." They considered also, that they might be setting up the creature, by giving him the titles of the creator, so that he might think more highly of himself than he ought, and more degradingly than he ought, of the rest of the human race.

But, independently of these moral considerations, they rejected these titles, because they believed, that Jesus Christ had set them an example by his own declarations and conduct on a certain occasion. When a person addressed him by the name of *good master*, he was rebuked as having done an improper thing. [40] "Why, says our Saviour, callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." This censure they believe to have been passed upon him, because Jesus Christ knew, that when he addressed him by this title, he addressed him, not in his divine nature or capacity, but only as a man.

[Footnote 40: Matt. xix. 17.]

But Jesus Christ not only refused to receive such titles of distinction himself in his human nature, but on another occasion exhorted his followers to shun them also. They were not to be like the Scribes and Pharisees, who wished for high and eminent distinctions, that is, to be called Rabbi Rabbi of men; but says he, "be[41] ye not called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren;" and he makes the desire which he discovered in the Jews, of seeking after worldly instead of heavenly honours, to be one cause of their infidelity towards Christ,[42] for that such could not believe, as received honour from one another, and sought not the honour, which cometh from God only; that is, that those persons, who courted earthly honours, could not have that humility of mind, that spirit that was to be of no reputation in the world, which was essential to those, who wished to become the followers of Christ.

These considerations, both those of a moral nature, and those of the example of Jesus Christ, weighed so much with the early Quakers, that they made no exceptions even in favour of those of royal dignity, or of the rulers of their own land. George Fox wrote several letters to great men. He wrote twice to the king of Poland, three or four times to Oliver Cromwell, and several times to Charles the second; but he addressed them in no other manner than by their plain names, or by simple titles, expressive of their situations as rulers or kings.[43]

These several alterations, which took place in the language of the early Quakers, were adopted by their several successors, and are in force in the Society at the present day.

SECTION III.

Other alterations in the language—the names of the days and months altered—reasons for this change—the word *saint* disused—various new phrases introduced.

Another alteration, which took place in the language of the Quakers was the disuse of the common names of the days of the week, and of those of the months of the year.

The names of the days were considered to be of heathen origin. *Sunday* had been so called by the Saxons, because it was the day, on which they sacrificed to the sun. *Monday* on which they sacrificed to the moon. *Tuesday* to the god Tuisco. *Wednesday* to the god Woden. *Thursday* to the god Thor, and so on. Now when the Quakers considered that

[Footnote 41: Matt xxiii. 8.]

[Footnote 42: John. v. 44.]

[Footnote 43: The Quakers never refuse the legal titles in the superscription or direction of their letter. They would direct to the king, as *king*: to a peer according to his rank, either as a *duke*, *marquis*, *earl*, *viscount*, or *baron*: to a clergyman, not as *reverend*, but as *clerk*.]

Jehovah had forbidden the Israelites to make mention even of the names of other gods, they thought it inconsistent in Christians to continue to use the names of heathen idols for the common divisions of their time, so that these names must be almost always in their mouths. They thought too, that they were paying an homage, in continuing the use of them, that bordered on idolatry. They considered also as neither *Monday*, nor *Tuesday*, nor any other of these days, were days, in which these sacrifices were now offered, they were using words, which conveyed false notions of things. Hence they determined upon the disuse of these words, and to put other names in their stead. The numerical way of naming the days seemed to them to be the most rational, and the most innocent. They called therefore *Sunday* the First Day, *Monday* the Second, *Tuesday* the Third, and soon to *Saturday*, which was of course the Seventh. They used no other names but these, either in their conversation, or in their letters.

Upon the same principles they altered the names of the months also. These, such as *March* and *June*, which had been so named by the ancient Romans, because they were sacred to Mars and Juno, were exploded, because they seemed in the use of them to be expressive of a kind of idolatrous homage. Others again were exploded, because they were not the representatives of the truth. *September*, for example, means the [44] *seventh month from the storms*. It took this seventh station in the calendar of Romulus, and it designated there its own station as well as the reason of its name. But when it [45] lost its place in the calendar by the alteration of the style in England, it lost its meaning. It became no representative of its station, nor any representative of the truth. For it still continues to signify the seventh month, whereas it is made to represent, or to stand in the place of, the ninth. The Quakers therefore banished from their language the ancient names of the months, and as they thought they could not do better than they had done in the case of the days, they placed numerical in their stead. They called *January* the First Month, *February* the Second, *March* the Third, and so on to *December*, which they called the Twelfth. Thus the Quaker calendar was made up by numerical distinctions, which have continued to the present day.

Another alteration, which took place very generally in the language of the Quakers, was the rejection of the word *saint*, when they spoke either of the apostles, or of the primitive fathers. The papal authority had canonized these. This they considered to be an act of idolatry, and they thought they should be giving a sanction to superstition, if they continued the use of such a title, either in their speech or writings. After this various other alterations took place according as individuals among them thought it right to expunge old expressions, and to substitute new; and these alterations were adopted by the rest, as they had an opinion of those who used them, or as they felt the propriety of doing it. Hence new phrases came into use, different from those which were used by the world on the same

[Footnote 44: *Septem ab imbribus.*]

[Footnote 45: This was in the year 1752, prior to this time the year began on the 25th of March: and therefore September stood in the English as in the Roman calendar. The early Quakers, however, as we find by a minute in 1697, had then made these alterations; but when the new style was introduced, they published their reasons for having done so.]

occasions; and these were gradually spread, till they became incorporated into the language of the Society. Of these the following examples may suffice.

It is not usual with Quakers to use the words *lucky* or *fortunate*, in the way in which many others do. If a Quaker had been out on a journey, and had experienced a number of fine days, he would never say that he had been *lucky in his weather*. In the same manner if a Quaker had recovered from an indisposition, he would never say, in speaking of the circumstance, that he had *fortunately recovered*, but he would say, that he had *recovered*, and "that it was a favour." Luck, chance, or fortune, are allowed by the Quakers to have no power in the settlement of human affairs.

It is not usual with Quakers to *beg ten thousand pardons*, as some of the world do, for any little mistake. A Quaker generally on such an occasion asks a persons excuse.

The Quakers never make use of the expression "christian name." This name is called christian by the world, because it is the name given to children in baptism, or in other words, when they are christened, or when they are initiated as christians. But the Quakers are never baptised. They have no belief that water-baptism can make a christian, or that it is any true mark of membership with the christian church. Hence a man's *christian name* is called by them his *first name*, because it is the first of the two, or of any other number of names, that may belong to him.

The Quakers, on meeting a person, never say "good morrow," because all days are equally good. Nor in parting with a person at night, do they say "good evening," for a similar reason, but they make use of the expression of "farewell."

I might proceed, till I made a little vocabulary of Quaker-expressions; but this is not necessary, and it is not at all consistent with my design. I shall therefore only observe, that it is expected of Quakers, that they should use the language of the Society; that they should substitute *thou* for *you*; that they should discard all flattering titles and expressions; and that they should adopt the numerical, instead of the heathen names, of the days and months. George Fox gave the example himself in all these instances. Those of the Society, who depart from this usage, are said by the Quakers to depart from "the plain language."

SECTION IV.

Great objections by the world against the preceding alterations by the Quakers—first against the use of *thou* for *you*—*you* said to be no longer a mark of flattery—the use of it is said to be connected often with false Grammar—Custom said to give it, like a noun of number, a singular as well as plural Meaning—Consideration of these objections.

There will be no difficulty in imagining, if the Quakers have found fault with the words and expressions adopted by others, and these the great majority of the world, that the world will scrutinize, and find fault with, those of the Quakers in return. This in fact has turned

out to be the case.—And I know of no subject, except that of dress, where the world have been more lavish of their censures, than in that before us.

When the Quakers first appeared as a religious community, many objections were thrown but against the peculiarities of their language. These were noticed by Robert Barclay and William Penn. But, since that time, other objections have been started. But as these have not been published (for they remain where they have usually been, in the mouths of living persons) Quaker writers have not felt themselves called upon to attempt to answer them. These objections, however, of both descriptions, I shall notice in the present place.

As the change of the pronoun *thou* for *you* was the first article, that I brought forward on the subject of the language of the Quakers, I shall begin with the objections, that are usually started against it.

"Singularity, it is said, should always be avoided, if it can be done with a clear conscience. The Quakers might have had honest scruples against *you* for *thou*, when *you* was a mark of flattery. But they can have no reasonable scruples now, and therefore they should cease to be singular, for the word *you* is clearly no mark of flattery at the present day. However improper it might once have been, it is now an innocent synonyme."

"The use again of the word *thou* for *you*, as insisted upon by the Quakers, leads them frequently into false grammar. 'Thee knowest,' and terms like these, are not unusual in Quaker mouths. Now the Quakers, though they defended the word *thou* for *you* on the notion, that they ought not to accustom their lips to flattery, defended it also strenuously on the notion, that they were strictly adhering to grammar-rules. But all such terms as 'thee knowest,' and others of a similar kind, must recoil upon themselves as incorrect, and as censurable, even upon their own ground."

"The word *you* again may be considered as a singular, as well as a plural expression. The world use it in this manner. And who are the makers of language, but the world? Words change their meaning, as the leaves their colour in autumn, and custom has always been found powerful enough to give authority for a change."

With respect to these objections, it may be observed, that the word *you* has certainly so far lost its meaning, as to be no longer a mark of flattery. The Quakers also are occasionally found in the use of the ungrammatical expressions that have been brought against them. And unquestionably, except they mean to give up the grammatical part of the defence by Penn and Barclay, these ought to be done away. That *you*, however, is of the singular number, is not quite so clear. For while *thou* is used in the singular number in the Bible, and in the liturgy, and in the prayers of individuals, and while it is the language, as it is, of a great portion of the inhabitants of the northern part of the kingdom, it will be a standing monument against the usurpation and mutilated dominion of *you*.

SECTION V.

Secondly against the words *Friend* and *Neighbour*, as used by the Quakers—Quakers also said to be wrong in their disuse of titles—for the use of these is sanctioned by St. Luke and St. Paul—answer of Barclay to the latter assertion—this answer not generally deemed satisfactory—observations upon the subject in dispute.

The subject, that comes next in order, will be that of the objections, that are usually made against certain terms used by the Quakers, and against their disuse of titles of honour, as sanctioned by the world.

On the use of the words *Friend* and *Neighbour* it is usually observed, that these are too limited in their meaning, to be always, if used promiscuously, representatives of the truth. If the Quakers are so nice, that they will use no expression, that is not precisely true, they should invent additional terms, which should express the relative condition of those, with whom they converse. The word *Friend* denotes esteem, and the word *Neighbour* proximity of dwelling. But all the persons, to whom the Quakers address themselves, are not persons, whom they love and respect, or who are the inhabitants of the same neighbourhood with themselves. There is, it is said, as much untruth in calling a man *Friend*, or *Neighbour*, who is not so, as *excellency*, in whom there may be nothing that is excellent.

The Quakers, in reply to this, would observe, that they use the word *Friend*, as significative of their own union, and, when they speak to others, as significative of their Christian relation to one another. In the same sense they use the word *Neighbour*. Jesus Christ, when the lawyer asked him who was his neighbour, gave him a short[46] history of the Samaritan, who fell among thieves; from which he suggested on inference, that the term *neighbour* was not confined to those, who lived near one another, or belonged to the same sect, but that it might extend to those, who lived at a distance, and to the Samaritan equally with the Jew. In the same manner he considered all men as[47] brethren. That is, they were thus scripturally related to one another.

Another objection which has been raised against the Quakers on this part of the subject, is levelled against their disuse of the titles of honour of the world. St. Luke, it has been said, makes use of the terms *most excellent*, when he addresses Theophilus, and St. Paul of the words *most noble*, when he addresses Festus. Now the teachers and promulgators of christianity would never have given these titles, if they had not been allowable by the gospel.

[Footnote 46: Luke x. 39.]

[Footnote 47: Matt, xxiii. 8.]

As this last argument was used in the time of Barclay, he has noticed it in his celebrated apology.—"Since Luke, says he, wrote by the dictates of the infallible spirit of God, I think it will not be doubted but Theophilus did deserve it, as being really endued with that virtue; in which case we shall not condemn those, who do it by the same rule. But it is not proved, that Luke gave Theophilus this title, as that which was inherent to him, either by his father, or by any patent Theophilus had obtained from any of the princes of the earth, or that he would have given it to him, in case he had not been truly excellent; and without this be proved, which never can, there can nothing hence be deduced against us. The like may be said of that of Paul to Festus, whom he would not have called such, if he had not been truly noble; as indeed he was, in that he suffered him to be heard in his own cause, and would not give way to the fury of the Jews against him. It was not because of any outward title bestowed upon Festus, that he so called him, else he would have given the same compilation to his predecessor Felix, who had the same office, but being a covetous man we find he gives him no such title."

This is the answer of Barclay. It has not however been deemed quite satisfactory by the world. It has been observed that one good action will never give a man a right to a general title. This is undoubtedly an observation of some weight. But it must be contended on the other hand, that both Luke and Paul must have been apprised that the religion, they were so strenuous in propagating, required every man to speak the truth. They must have been apprised also, that it inculcated humility of mind. And it is probable therefore that they would never have bestowed titles upon men, which should have been false in their application, or productive of vanity and pride. St. Luke could not be otherwise than aware of the answer of Jesus Christ, when he rebuked the person for giving him the title of good, because he was one of the evangelists, who[48] recorded it, and St. Paul could not have been otherwise than aware of it also, on account of his intimacy with St. Luke, as well as from other causes.

Neither has this answer been considered as satisfactory for another reason. It has been presumed that the expressions of *excellent* and of *noble* were established titles of rank, and if an evangelist and an apostle used them, they could not be objectionable if used by others. But let us admit for a moment, that they were titles of rank. How happens it that St. Paul, when he was before Festus, and not in a judicial capacity (for he had been reserved for Caesar's tribunal) should have given him this epithet of *noble*; and that, when summoned before Felix, and this in a judicial capacity, he should have omitted it? This application of it to the one and not to the other, either implies that it was no title, or, if it was a title as we have supposed, that St. Paul had some reason for this partial use of it. And in this case, no better reason can be given, than that suggested by Barclay. St. Paul knew that Festus had done his duty. He knew, on the other hand, the abandoned character of Felix. The latter was then living, as Josephus relates, in open adultery with Drusilla, who had been married to Azis, and brought away from her husband by the help of Simon a Magician; and this circumstance probably gave occasion to Paul to dwell upon temperance, or continence as

[Footnote 48: Luke xviii, 18.]

the word might be rendered, among other subjects, when he made Felix tremble. But, besides this, he must have known the general character of a man, of whom Tacitus complained, that "his government was distinguished by[49] servility and every species of cruelty and lust."—

If therefore the epithet of *noble* was an established title for those Romans, who held the government of Judea, the giving of it to one, and the omission of it to the other, would probably shew the discrimination of St. Paul as a Christian, that he had no objection to give it, where it could be applied with truth, but that he refused it, when it was not applicable to the living character.

But that the expression of *excellent* or of *noble* was any title at all, there is no evidence to shew. And first, let us examine the word, which was used upon this occasion. The [50]original Greek word has no meaning as a title in any Lexicon that I have seen. It relates both to personal and civil power, and in a secondary sense, to the strength and disposition of the mind. It occurs but in four places in the New Testament. In two of these it is translated *excellent* and in the others *noble*. But Gilbert Wakefield, one of our best scholars has expunged the word *noble*, and substituted *excellent* throughout. Indeed of all the meanings of this word *noble* is the least proper. No judgment therefore can be pronounced in favour of a title by any analysis of the word.

Let us now examine it as used by St. Luke. And here almost every consideration makes against it, as an established title. In the first place, the wisest commentators do not know who Theophilus was. It has been supposed by many learned fathers, such as Epephanus, Salvian, and others, that St. Luke, in addressing his gospel to Theophilus, addressed it as the words, "excellent Theophilus" import, to every "firm lover of God," or, if St. Luke uses the style of [51]Athanasius, to "every good Christian." But on a supposition that Theophilus had been a living character, and a man in power, the use of the epithet is against it as a title of rank; because St. Luke gives it to Theophilus in the beginning of his gospel, and does not give it to him, when he addresses him in the Acts. If therefore he had addressed him in this manner, because *excellent* was his proper title, on one occasion, it would have been a kind of legal, and at any rate a disrespectful omission, not to have given it to him on the other. With respect to the term *noble* as used by St. Paul to Festus, the sense of it must be determined by general as well as by particular considerations. There are two circumstances, which at the first sight make in favour of it as a title,[52]Lysias addresses his letter to the "most excellent Felix," and the orator [53]Tertullus says, "we except it always and in all places most noble Felix!" But there must be some drawback from the latter circumstance, as an argument of weight. There is reason to suppose that this expression was used by Tertullus, as a piece of flattery, to compass the death of Paul; for it is of a piece with the other expressions which he used, when he talked of the worthy deeds done by the providence of so detestable a wretch, as Felix. And it will always be an objection to *noble* as a legal title, that St. Paul gave it to one governor, and omitted it to another, except he did it

[Footnote 49: "*Per omnem Saevitiam et Libidinem jus regium servili ingenio exercuit.*"]

[Footnote 50: [Greek: *kralistos*]]

for the reasons, that have been before described. To this it may be added, that legal titles of *eminence* were not then, as at this time of day, in use. Agrippa had no other, or at least Paul gave him no other title, than that of *king*. If Porcius Festus had been descended from a Patrician, or had had the statues of his ancestors, he might, on these accounts, be said to have been of a noble family. But we know, that nobody on this account, would have addressed him as *noble* in those days, either by speech or letter. The first Roman, who was ever honoured with a legal title, as a title of distinction, was Octavius, upon whom the senate, but a few years before the birth of Paul, had conferred the name of *Augustus*. But no procurator of a province took this title. Neither does it appear that the circumstance gave birth to inferior titles to those in inferior offices in the government. And indeed on the title *Augustus* it may be observed, that though it followed the successors of Octavius, it was but sparingly used, being mostly used on medals, monumental pillars, and in public acts of the state. Pliny, in his letters to Trajan, though reputed an excellent prince, addressed him as only *sir* or *master*, and he wrote many years after the death of Paul. Athenagoras, in addressing his book, in times posterior to these, to the emperors M. Aurelius Antoninus, and L. Aurelius Commodus, addresses them only by the title of "great princes." In short titles were not in use. They did not creep in, so as to be commonly used, till after the statues of the emperors had begun to be worshipped by the military as a legal and accustomed homage. The terms *Eternity* and *Divinity* with others were then ushered in, but these were confined wholly to the emperors themselves. In the time of Constantine we find the title of *Illustrious*. This was given to those princes, who had distinguished themselves in war, but it was not continued to their descendants. In process of time, however, it became more common, and the son of every prince began to be called *Illustrious*.

SECTION VI.

Thirdly against the alteration of the names of the days and months—people, it is said do not necessarily pay homage to Idols, who continue in the use of the ancient names—if the Quaker principles also were generally adopted on this subject, language would be thrown into confusion—Quakers also, by attempting to steer clear of Idolatry, fall into it—replies of the Quakers to these objections.

The next objections for consideration, which are made against the language of the Quakers, are those which relate to their alteration of the names of the days and the months. These objections are commonly made, when the language of the Quakers becomes a subject of conversation with the world.

[Footnote 51: [Greek: *makarios*] and [Greek: *philochrisos*] are substituted by Athanasius for the word *christian*.]

[Footnote 52: Acts, xxiii, 26.]

[Footnote 53: Acts, xxiv. 3.]

"There is great absurdity, it is said, in supposing, that persons pay any respect to heathen idols, who retain the use of the ancient names of the divisions of time. How many thousands are there, who know nothing of their origin? The common people of the country know none of the reasons, why the months, and the days are called as they are. The middle classes are mostly ignorant of the same. Those, who are well informed on the subject, never once think, when they mention the months and days, on the reason of the rise of their names. Indeed the almost hourly use of those names secures the oblivion of their origin. Who, when he speaks of Wednesday and Thursday, thinks that these were the days sacred to Woden and Thor? but there can be no idolatry, where there is no intention to idolize."

"Great weakness, it is said again, is manifested by the Quakers, in quarrelling with a few words in the language, and in living at peace with others, which are equally objectionable. Every reason, it is said, must be a weak one, which is not universal. But if some of the reasons, given by the Quakers, were universally applied, they would throw language into as much confusion as the builders of Babel. The word *Smith* for example, which is the common name of many families, ought to be objected to by this rule, if the person, to whom it belongs, happens to be a carpenter. And the word carpenter which is likewise a family-name, ought to be objected to, if the person so called should happen to be a smith. And, in this case, men would be obliged to draw lots for numbers, and to be called by the numerical ticket, which they should draw."

"It is objected again to the Quakers, that, by attempting to steer clear of idolatry, they fall into it. The Quakers are considered to be genuine idolaters, in this case. The blind pagan imagined a moral being, either heavenly or infernal, to inhere in a log of wood or a block of stone. The Quakers, in like manner, imagine a moral being, truth or falsehood, to exist in a lifeless word, and this independently of the sense in which it is spoken, and in which it is known that it will be understood. What is this, it is said, but a species of idolatry and a degrading superstition?"

The Quakers would reply to these observations, first, that they do not charge others with idolatry, in the use of these names, who know nothing of their origin, or who feel no impropriety in their use.

Secondly, that if the principle, upon which they found their alterations in language, cannot, on account of existing circumstances, be followed in all cases, there is no reason, why it should not be followed, where it can. In the names of men it would be impossible to adopt it. Old people are going off, and young people are coming up, and people of all descriptions are themselves changing, and a change of names to suit every person's condition, and qualification, would be impossible.

Thirdly, that they pay no more homage or obeisance to words, than the obeisance of truth. There is always a propriety in truth, and an impropriety in falsehood. And in proportion as the names of things accord with their essences, qualities, properties, character, and the like, they are more or less proper. September, for example, is not an

appropriate name, if its meaning be enquired into, for the month which it represents: but the Ninth Month is, and the latter appellation will stand the test of the strictest enquiry.

They would say again that this, as well as the other alterations in their language has had a moral influence on the Society, and has been productive of moral good. In the same manner as the dress, which they received from their ancestors has operated as a guardian, or preservative of virtue, so has the language which they received from them also. The language has made the world overseers of the conduct of the Society. A Quaker is known by his language as much as by his dress. It operates, by discovering him, as a check upon his actions. It keeps him also, like the dress distinct from others. And the Quakers believe, that they can never keep up their Christian discipline, except they keep clear of the spirit of the world. Hence it has been considered as of great importance to keep up the plain language; and this importance has been further manifested by circumstances, that have taken place within the pale of the Society. For in the same manner as those, who begin to depart from the simplicity of dress, are generally in the way to go off among the world, so are those who depart from the simplicity of the language. Each deviation is a sign of a temper for desertion. Each deviation brings them in appearance nearer to the world. But the nearer they resemble the world in this respect, the more they are found to mix with it. They are of course the more likely to be seduced from the wholesome prohibitions of the Society. The language therefore of the Quakers has grown up insensibly as a wall of partition, which could not now, it is contended, be taken away without endangering the innocence of their youth.

SECTION VII.

Advantages and disadvantages of the system of the Quaker, language—disadvantages are that it may lead to superstition—and hypocrisy—advantages are that it excludes flattery—is founded upon truth—promotes truth, and correctness in the expression of ideas—observation of Hobbes—would be the most perfect model for a universal calendar—the use or disuse of this system may either of them be made useful to morality.

I have now given to the reader the objections, that are usually made to the alterations, which the Quakers have introduced into the language of the country, as well as the replies, which the Quakers would make to these objections. I shall solicit the continuance of his patience a little longer, or till I have made a few remarks of my own upon this subject.

It certainly becomes people, who introduce great peculiarities into their system, to be careful, that they are well founded, and to consider how far they may bring their minds into bondage, or what moral effects they may produce on their diameter in a course of time.

On the reformed language of the Quakers it may be observed, that both advantages and disadvantages may follow according to the due or undue estimation in which individuals may hold it.

If individuals should lay too great a stress upon language, that is, if they should carry their prejudices so far against outward and lifeless words, that they should not dare to pronounce them, and this as a matter of religion, they are certainly in the way of becoming superstitious, and of losing the dignified independence of their minds.

If again they should put an undue estimate upon language, so as to consider it as a criterion of religious purity, they may be encouraging the growth of hypocrisy within their own precincts. For if the use of this reformed language be considered as an essential of religion, that is, if men are highly thought of in proportion as they conform to it rigidly, it may be a covering to many to neglect the weightier matters of righteousness; at least the fulfilling of such minor duties may shield them from the suspicion of neglecting the greater; and if they should be reported as erring in the latter case, their crime would be less credited under their observance of these minutiae of the law.

These effects are likely to result to the Society, if the peculiarities of their language be insisted on beyond their due bounds. But, on the other hand, it must be confessed, that advantages are likely to follow from the same system, which are of great importance in themselves, and which may be set off as a counterbalance to the disadvantages described.

The Quakers may say, and this with the greatest truth, "we have never cringed or stooped below the dignity of men. We have never been guilty of base flattery; we have never been instrumental in raising the creature, with whom we have conversed, above his condition, so that in the imagination of his own consequence, he should lose sight of his dependence on the Supreme Being, or treat his fellow-men, because they should happen to be below him, as worms or reptiles of the earth."

They may say also that the system of their language originated in the purest motives, and that it is founded on the sacred basis of truth.

It may be said also, that the habits of caution which the different peculiarities in their language have introduced and interwoven into their constitution, have taught them particularly to respect the truth, and to aim at it in all their expressions whether in speech or letters, and that it has given them a peculiar correctness in the expression of their ideas, which they would scarcely have had by means of the ordinary education of the world. Hobbes says[54] "*animadvertite, quam sit ab improprietate verborum pronum hominibus prolabi in errores circa res,*" or "how prone men are to fall into errors about things, when they use improper expressions." The converse of this proposition may be observed to be true with respect to the Quakers, or it may be observed, that the study of proper expressions has given them correct conceptions of things, and has had an influence in favor of truth. There are no people, though the common notion may be otherwise, who speak so accurately as the Quakers, or whose letters, if examined on any subject, would be so free from any double meaning, so little liable to be mistaken, and so easy to be understood.

[Footnote 54: *Hobbesii Examen. et Emend. Hod. Math. P. 55.* Edit. Amstel.]

It may be observed also on the language of the Quakers, that is, on that part of it, which relates to the alteration of the names of the months and days, that this alteration would form the most perfect model for a universal calendar of any that has yet appeared in the world. The French nation chose to alter their calendar, and, to make it useful to husbandry, they designated their months, so that they should be representatives of the different seasons of the year. They called them snowy, and windy, and harvest, and vintage-months, and the like. But in so large a territory, as that of France, these new designations were not the representatives of the truth. The northern and southern parts were not alike in their climate. Much less could these designations speak the truth for other parts of the world: whereas numerical appellations might be adopted with truth, and be attended with usefulness to all the nations of the world, who divided their time in the same manner.

On the latter subject of the names of the days and months, the alteration of which is considered as the most objectionable by the world, I shall only observe, that, if the Quakers have religious scruples concerning them, it is their duty to persevere in the disuse of them. Those of the world, on the other hand, who have no such scruples, are under no obligation to follow their example. And in the same manner as the Quakers convert the disuse of these ancient terms to the improvement of their moral character, so those of the world may convert the use of them to a moral purpose. Man is a reasonable, and moral being, and capable of moral improvement; and this improvement may be made to proceed from apparently worthless causes. If we were to find crosses or other Roman-Catholic relics fixed in the walls of our places of worship, why should we displace them? Why should we not rather suffer them to remain, to put us in mind of the necessity of thankfulness for the reformation in our religion? If again we were to find an altar, which had been sacred to Moloc, but which had been turned into a stepping stone, to help the aged and infirm upon their horses, why should we destroy it? Might it not be made useful to our morality, as far as it could be made to excite sorrow for the past and gratitude for the present? And in the same manner might it not be edifying to retain the use of the ancient names of the days and months? Might not thankful feelings be excited in our hearts, that the crime of idolatry had ceased among us, and that the only remnant of it was a useful signature of the times? In fact, if it be the tendency of the corrupt part of our nature to render innocent things vicious, it is, on the other hand, in the essence of our nature, to render vicious things in process of time innocent; so that the remnants of idolatry and superstition may be made subservient to the moral improvement of mankind.