

‘Do I respect men or God in my persuasions?’ All these expositions are unsatisfactory. If you keep strictly to the primitive meaning of the word, the only sense the clause will bear, is that given by our translators; but then it is obviously inappropriate to the subject. The truth, however, is, that though ‘persuade’ is by far the most ordinary meaning of the word which occurs here, it is not its only meaning. It means also to ‘conciliate,’ to ‘court favour.’¹ In this sense it occurs in Matth. xxviii. 14; Acts xii. 20: “Having made Blastus the king’s chamberlain their friend;”² 2 Mac. iv. 45. When Menelaus, the Jewish high priest, found himself convicted of his crimes, he promised Ptolemy a large sum of money to “pacify”—to propitiate—“the king.”³ The word seems employed with a similar meaning, 1 John iii. 19,—We “shall assure our hearts before Him.” Le Clerc seems to think that in all such cases there is an ellipsis. That this is its meaning here there can scarcely be a doubt. ‘For do I seek the approbation or favour of men or of God? or do I seek to please men?’ These interrogations are plainly equivalent to a strong denial. ‘I seek God’s approbation, not man’s. I am no time-server, no man-pleaser, as I have been represented.’

The apostle appeals to his conduct as a proof that the desire of pleasing men was not his regulating principle,—“If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” These words have very commonly been understood as expressing the following sentiment: ‘The man whose master-principle is a wish to please men, cannot be a consistent servant of Christ.’ It has been considered as a particular application of our Lord’s general maxim, “No man can serve two masters.”⁴ In this way the words, which viewed by themselves are well fitted to convey this sentiment, express a truth of the last importance, to be seriously weighed by all, especially by those who are ministers of religion. The man, whom fear of human resentment or desire of human favour can induce to keep back any part of the truth, or pervert any part of the truth, is altogether unworthy of the name of a minister of Christ. There are truths which ought to

¹ “*πείθειν* is here = *ἀρέσκειν*, which follows.”—OLSHAUSEN. ² *πείσαντες*.

³ *πείσαι τὸν βασιλέα*. Jos. Antiq. iv. 6, 5; vi. 5, 6; viii. 10, 3.

⁴ *πείσομεν τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν*.

⁵ Matth. vi. 24.

be told, and which cannot be told without displeasing some men; but then they cannot be concealed without displeasing Christ; and certainly he is not a faithful servant of Christ who, in a case of this kind, can be silent. But this does not seem to be the apostle's idea here. It would not serve his purpose. His adversaries would have said, 'We have no objection to that conclusion; that is just what we say—you are not a servant of Christ.' Besides, in this way of explaining the phrase, the word "yet"¹ loses its force. The meaning seems to be this—'If I were *now* a man-pleaser, as I once was, I would not be a servant of Christ.' Paul was once very ambitious to secure the favour of his countrymen; and, to obtain it, he took his place in the foremost ranks of the persecutors of Christianity. His exertions to obtain human favour were successful, and he stood high in the estimation of his countrymen. 'Now,' says the apostle, 'were worldly ambition *now* my leading principle, as it once was, I should not be a servant of Jesus Christ. The course I have chosen is not the path to worldly honour. Whatever I may be seeking, it is obvious I am not seeking to please men.'² It is a happy circumstance if a Christian minister, when slanderously reported of, can fearlessly appeal to the tenor of his life, and leave the decision with those who know him best.

¹ ἔτι.

² "Ἐὶ γὰρ τοῦτο ἐσπούδαζον (ἀρίσκειν ἀνθρώποις) οὐκ ἂν ἀπέστην τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν καὶ προσήλθον τῷ Χριστῷ, οὐκ ἂν κατεφρόνησα συγγενῶν, φίλων, δόξης τσαύτης, καὶ εἰλόμην διωγμούς καὶ κινδύνους καὶ ἀτιμίας."—THEOPHYLACT. "Non defecissem ab œconomia Mosaica, non renuntiassem omnibus commodis externis, non me dedissem tot tantisque periculis in propaganda Christiana religione, mitiorem prætulissem sortem ac conditionem."—JASPIS.