

**THE END**  
OF  
**RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY,**  
IN A  
**FRIENDLY CORRESPONDENCE**  
BETWEEN  
**A RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF PROTESTANTS,**  
AND  
**A ROMAN CATHOLIC DIVINE.**

IN THREE PARTS.

**PART I. ON THE RULE OF FAITH; OR, THE METHOD OF FINDING OUT  
THE TRUE RELIGION.**

**PART II. ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRUE CHURCH.**

**PART III. ON RECTIFYING MISTAKES CONCERNING THE CATHOLIC  
CHURCH.**

**BY THE RT. REV. JOHN MILNER,**

**D. D. V. A. F. S. A. LONDON, AND CATH. ACAD. ROME.**

*Addressed to the Rt. Rev. Dr. BURGESS, Lord Bishop of St. David's, in  
Answer to his Lordship's PROTESTANT'S CATECHISM.*

**TO WHICH IS ADDED THE AUTHOR'S POSTSCRIPT.**

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“ Let those treat you harshly, who are not acquainted with the difficulty of attaining to truth and avoiding error. Let those treat you harshly, who know not how hard it is to get rid of old prejudices. Let those treat you harshly, who have not learned how very hard it is to purify the interior eye and render it capable of contemplating the sun of the soul, truth. But as to us: we are far from this disposition towards persons who are separated from us, not by errors of their own invention, but by being entangled in those of others. We are so far from this disposition that we pray to God, that, in refuting the false opinions of those, whom you follow, not from malice, but imprudence, he would bestow upon us that spirit of peace, which feels no other sentiment than charity, no other interest than that of Jesus Christ, no other wish but for your salvation.” *St. Austin, Doctor of the Church, A. D. 400, contra Ep. Fund. c. i. c. ii.*

“ There are many other things which keep me in the bosom of the Catholic Church. The agreement of different people and nations keeps me there. The authority established by Miracles, nourished by hope, increased by charity, and confirmed by antiquity, keeps me there. The succession of bishops in the See of St. Peter, the apostles, (to whom our Lord, after his resurrection, committed his sheep, to be fed) down to the present bishop, keeps me there. Finally, the very name of CATHOLIC, which, among so many heresies, this church alone possesses, keeps me there.” *St. Augustin, Doctor of the Church, A. D. 400, contra Epis. Fundam. c. 4.*

“ It is a shame to charge men with what they are not guilty of, in order to make the breach wider, already too wide.” *Dr. Montague, bishop of Norwich. Invoc. of Saints, p. 60.*

“ Let them not lead people by the nose to believe they can prove their supposition, that the Pope is Antichrist, and the Papists idolaters, when they cannot.” *Dr. Herbert Thorndike, prebendary of Westminster. Just Weights and Measures, p. 11.*

“ The object of their (the Catholics) adoration of the B. Sacrament is the only true and eternal God, hypostatically joined with his holy humanity, which humanity they believe actually present under the veil of the sacramental signs: and if they thought him not present, they are so far from worshipping the bread in this case, that themselves profess it to be idolatry to do so.” *Dr. Jeremy Taylor, bishop of Down. Liberty of prophesying,*  
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# ADDRESS.

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND  
LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

MY LORD,

THE following Letters, with some others belonging to the same series, were written in the latter part of the year 1801, and the first months of 1802, though they have since that time been revised, and, in some respects, altered. They grew out of the controversy, which the principal writer of them was obliged to sustain against an eminent author, a prebendary of the cathedral, and the chancellor of the diocese of Winchester, who had personally challenged him to the field of argument, in a book, called *Reflections on Popery*. That controversy having made some noise in the public, and even in the house of parliament, particularly in the upper house, where the lord chancellor,\* and a predecessor of your lordship, then the light and glory of the established church,† expressed opposite opinions on the issue of it, certain powerful personages expressed an earnest wish for its termination. For this purpose, the usual method of silencing authors was at first resolved upon with respect to the writer, and a Catholic gentleman of name, still living, was commissioned to sound him on the business: but, in conclusion, it was thought most advisable to employ the influence which the prelate alluded to had so justly acquired over him. This method succeeded; and, accordingly, these Letters, which, otherwise, would have been published fifteen years ago, have slept in silence ever since.

I trust your lordship will not be the person to ask me, why the Letters, after having been so long suppressed, now appear? — You are witness, my lord, of the increased and increasing virulence of the press against Catholics; and this, in many instances, directed by no ignoble or profane hands. Abundant proofs of this will be seen in the following work. For the present, it is sufficient to mention, that one of your most venerable colleagues publishes and re-publishes, that we stand

\* The Right Hon. the Earl of Loughborough.

† The Right Rev. Dr. Horsely, successively bishop of St. David's, Rochester, and St. Asaph's.

convicted of *idolatry, blasphemy, and sacrilege*. Another proclaims to the clergy, assembled in Synod, that we are *enemies of all law, human and divine*. More than one of them has charged us with the guilt of that Anti-Christian conspiracy on the continent, of which we were exclusively the victims. This dignitary accuses us of *Antinomianism*; that maintains our religion to be *fit only for persons weak in body and in mind*. In short, we seldom find ourselves, or our religion, mentioned in modern sermons, or other theological works, unaccompanied with the epithets of *superstitious, idolatrous, impious, disloyal, perfidious, and sanguinary*. One of the theologues alluded to, who, like many others, has gained promotion by the fervour of his NO POPERY zeal, has exalted his tone to the pitch of proclaiming that our religion is *calculated for the meridian of hell!!*—Thus solemnly, and almost continually, charged before the tribunal of the public, with crimes against society and our country, no less than against religion, and yet conscious, all the while, of our entire innocence, it is not only lawful, but also a duty, which we owe to our fellow-subjects and ourselves, to repel these charges, by proving that there was *reason, and religion, and loyalty, and good faith* among Christians, before Luther quarrelled with Leo X., and Henry VIII. fell in love with Ann Bullen, and that, if we ourselves have not yet been persuaded by the arguments, either of the monk or the monarch, to relinquish the faith originally preached in this island, above 1300 years before their time, we are, at least, possessed of *common sense, virtuous principles, and unattained loyalty*.

The writer might assign another reason for making the present publication; namely, the number and acrimony of his own public opponents on subjects of religion. To say nothing of the groundless charges, by word of mouth, of certain privileged personages the following writers are some of those who have published books, pamphlets, essays, or notes against him, on subjects of a religious nature; the deans of Winchester and Peterborough; chancellor Sturges; prebendary Poulter; the doctors Hoadly, Ash, Ryan, Ledwich, Le Mesurier,\* and Elrington; Sir Rich-

\* To one only objection of his adversaries, the writer wishes here to give an answer, that of having *quoted falsely*; which, however, has been advanced by very few of them, and is confined, as far as he knows, to two instances. The first of these, is, that the writer, in his *History of Winchester*, vol. i. p. 61, "quotes Gildas, for the exploits of king Arthur, who never once mentions his name." This objection was first started by Dr. O'Conor, in his *Columbanus*, was borrowed from him, by the Rev. Mr. Le Mesurier in his *Bampton Lectures*, and was adopted from the latter by the Rev. Mr. Grier, in his *Answer to Ward's Errata*.—After all, this pretended *forger*

ard Musgrave, John Reeves, Esq.; the Reverend Messrs Williamson, Bazeley, Churton, Grier, and Roberts; besides numerous anonymous riflemen in the Gentleman's Magazine, the Monthly Magazine, the Anti-Jacobin Review, the Protestant Advocate, the Antibiblion, and other periodical works, including newspapers. By some of these he has been challenged into the field of controversy, and when he did not appear there, he has been posted as a coward.

A still more cogent reason, my lord, for the appearance of this work, which was heretofore suppressed, at the desire of a former bishop of St. David's, has been furnished by his present successor, in the work the latter has lately published, called THE PROTESTANT'S CATECHISM. This is no ordinary effusion of NO POPERY zeal. It was not called for by the increase of the ancient religion in his lordship's diocese, which teems with Methodist jumpers, to the danger of his cathedral and parish churches being left quite empty; while not one Catholic family, is, perhaps, to be found in it. It was not provoked by any late attempt on the established church, or on Protestantism in general; as the bishop does not pretend that such thing has taken place. Nevertheless he comes forward in his Episcopal mitre, bearing in his hands a new *Protestant Catechism*, to be learnt by Protestants of every description, which teaches them to *hate and persecute* their elder brethren, the authors of their Christianity and civilization! In fact, this Christian bishop, begins and ends his *Protestant Catechism*, with a quotation from a Puritan regicide, declaring, that "*Popery is not to be tolerated, either in public or in private, and that it must be thought how to remove it, and hinder the growth thereof.*" adding, "if they say, that, by removing their idols we violate their consciences, we have *no warrant to regard conscience, which is not grounded on Scripture.*"\* This, your lordship

*of the writer*, will be found, on consulting the passage referred to above, to be nothing else but a *blunder of his critics*; since it will appear that he quotes William, of Malmsbury, for the exploits of Arthur and Gildas, barely for the year in which one of them, the battle of Mons Badonicus, took place! The second accusation of this nature, was inserted by one of the above named writers, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, namely, that the writer had advanced, *without any historical authority*, that James I. used to call November 5, "*Cecil's holiday.*" In answer to this charge, he gave notice in the next number of the Magazine, that he had sent up to the editor's office, as he had done, there to remain, during a month, for public inspection, lord Castlemain's *Catholique Apology*, which contains the fact, and the authorities on which it is advanced.—The writer is far from claiming inerrancy, but he should despise himself, if he, knowingly, published any falsehood, or hesitated to retract any one that he was proved to have fallen into.

\* Milton's prose works, v. l. 4. The prose writings of this secretary of

mus know, is the genuine cant of a Mar-Preate Independent: the same cant which brought Laud, and Charles I. to the block the same cant which overthrew the church and state in the grand rebellion. But what chiefly concerns my present purpose in this, the bishop's twice repeated quotation from Milton, is to observe that it breathes the whole persecuting spirit of the sixteenth century, and calls for the fines and forfeitures, dungeons and halters, and knives, of Elizabeth's reign, against the devoted Catholics; since, it is evident, that the *idolatry of Popery*, as it is termed, exercised *in private*, cannot be removed without such persecuting and sanguinary measures. The same thing is plain from the nature of the different legal offences which the Right Rev. prelate lays to their charge. In one place, he accuses the Catholics of England and Ireland, that is to say, more than a quarter of his majesty's European subjects, of "acknowledging the jurisdiction of the Pope, in *defiance of the laws*, and of the *allegiance due to their rightful sovereign*:" though he well knows, that they have abjured the Pope's jurisdiction in *all civil and temporal cases*, which is all that the king, lords and commons required of them, in their Acts of 1791 and 1793. Again, the prelate describes their opposition to the *veto* (though equally

the Long parliament are execrable, for their regicide and anti-prelatic principles, as his poetry is super-excellent for its sublimity and sweetness. Four other English authors are brought forward, by the bishops of St. David's, to justify that persecution of Catholics, which he recommends. The first of these is the Socinian Locke, who will not allow of Catholics being *tolerated*, on the demonstrated false pretext, that they cannot tolerate other Christians. The true cause was, that his hands being stained by the blood of twenty innocent Catholics, who were immolated by the sanguinary policy of his master Shaftsbury, in Oates' infamous plot, he was obliged to find a pretext for excluding them from the legal toleration, which he stood in need of himself.—Bishop Hoadly, who had no religion at all of his own, would not allow the Catholics to enjoy theirs, because, he says: "no oaths and solemn assurances, no regard to truth, justice, or honor, can restrain them." This is the hypocritical plea for intolerance, of a man who was in the constant habit of violating all his oaths and engagements to a church which had raised him to rank and fortune, and who systematically pursued its degradation, into his own anti-Christian Socinianism, by professed *deceit* and *treachery*, as will be seen in the Letters.—Blackstone, being a crown lawyer, and writing when the penal laws were in force, could not but defend them: but, judge as he was, and writing at the above mentioned time, he, in the passage following that quoted by Dr. Burgess, expressed a hope, that the time "was not distant, when the fears of a Pretender having vanished, and the influence of the Pope becoming feeble, the rigorous edicts against the Catholics would be revised," b. iv. c. 4.; which event, accordingly, soon took place. As to Burke, the last author whom the bishop quotes against Catholic emancipation, it is evident, from his speech at Bristol, his letter to lord Kenmare, and the whole tenor of his conduct, that he was not only a warm friend, but, in some degree, a martyr to it.

opposed in the appointment of their respective pastors by al. Protestant dissenters, who constitute more than another fourth part of his majesty's subjects,) as "*treasonable by statute,*" p. 35. Now, every one knows that the legal punishment of a subject, acting in *defiance of his allegiance*, and contracting the guilt of *treason*, is nothing less than *death*. Nay, so much bent on the persecution of Catholics is this modern bishop, as to arraign parliament itself as guilty of a *breach of the Constitution*, by the latter of the above mentioned tolerating Acts; where he says: "If the elective franchise be really *inconsistent with the Constitutional Statutes* of the revolution, *it ought to be repealed*, like all other concessions, that are *injurious to loyalty and religion*."—He adds, "But it does not follow that because parliament had been *guilty of one act of prodigality*, that it should, therefore, like a thoughtless and *unprincipled spendthrift*, plunge itself into inextricable ruin," pp. 53, 54. Thus, my lord, though the prelate alluded to, after advertising, in his table of contents, A CONCLUSION, showing "the means of co-operating with the laws for preventing the danger and increase of Popery," when he comes to the proper place for inserting it, apologizes for *deferring its publication*, as "being connected with the *credit of the ecclesiastical establishment*," yet, we see as clearly, from the substance and drift of the *Protestant's Catechism*, what his Conclusion is, as if he had actually published it; namely, he would have the whole code of penal laws, with all their incapacities, fines, imprisonment, hanging, drawing, and quartering, re-enacted, to prevent even the *private practice of idolatry*; and he would have the bishops, clergy, churchwardens, and constables, employed in enforcing them, according to the forms of Inquisition, prescribed by the Canons of 1597, 1603, and 1640.

Before the writer passes from the present subject of loyalty and the laws, to others more congenial with his studies, and those of the prelate, he wishes to submit to your lordship's reflection two or three questions connected with it. First: Is it strictly legal, even for a lord of parliament, and is it edifying for a bishop, to instruct the public, especially in these days of insubordination and commotion, that the reigning king, and the two houses of parliament, have acted against the Constitutional Statutes, by affording religious relief to a large and loyal portion of British subjects; as king William, George I. and George II. had afforded it to other portions of them? We all know what outcries are continually raised about violating the Constitution, and we know what effect these are intended to produce: now if a turbulent populace are made to believe that the present

legislature has acted *illegally* and *unconstitutionally* in some of its acts, is there no danger that they may form the same notion concerning some of its other acts, which are peculiarly obnoxious to them, and that they may rank these among the *Fictitious Statutes*, as this prelate terms the *Acts of Parliament* of three former reigns?—Secondly: The writer wishes to ask your lordship, whether or no you think it is for the peace and safety of the sister isle, to alarm the bulk of its inhabitants with the threat of their being dispossessed of the elective franchise, which they have now enjoyed for a quarter of a century? In like manner, is it conducive to this important end, for a person of his lordship's character and consequence to assure this people, that the Pope's jurisdiction, and England's dominion over them, "were introduced into Ireland by the mercenary compact of the Pope and Henry II." p. 24, "founded on a fiction of the grossest kind, the pretended donation of Constantine," p. v. though, by the bye, this was never once mentioned or hinted at by either of the parties?—Lastly: The writer would be glad to be informed by your lordship, whether it is for the advantage of the established church so highly to extol John Wickliffe, who maintained that clergymen ought to have no sort of temporal possessions? And is it for the security of the state to hold up lord Cobham as "a great and good man, and the martyr of Protestantism," p. vii.\*, who was convicted in the King's Bench, and in open parliament, of raising an insurrection of twenty thousand men, for the purpose of killing the king and his brother, and the lords spiritual and temporal, and who was executed for the same, merely because he was a *Wickliffite*? How innocent was colonel Despard, compared with sir John Oldcastle, called lord Cobham!

The writer has spoken of the object of the publication which has lately appeared, under the name of a Rt. Rev. bishop of the established church: he now proceeds to say something of its contents.

It professes to be **THE PROTESTANT'S CATECHISM**. From this title, most people will suppose it to be *an elementary book, for the instruction of Protestants of every description, in the doctrine and morality taught by Jesus Christ*: but not a word can the writer find in it about Christ, or God, or any *doctrinal* matter whatever: except that, "They, who do not hold the worship of the church of Rome to be idolatrous, are not Protestants, whatever they may profess to be," p. 46.; which is a sentence of excommunication against many of the brightes

\* See Walsingham's *Historia Major*. Knighton Leicest. Collier's *Eccles. Hist. Stow*, &c.



lights and chief ornaments of the bishop's own church. Nor does this novel Catechism contain any moral or practical lesson; except that, "Every member of parliament's conscience is pledged against the Catholic claims;" and, what has been mentioned before, that as "Popery is idolatrous, it is *not to be tolerated* either in public or in *private*," and that "it must be now thought how to remove it," p. 3. Had the Catechism appeared without a name, it might be supposed to be a posthumous work of lord George Gordon; but, had its origin been traced to the mountains of Wales, it would certainly be attributed to some itinerant Jumper, rather than to a successor of St. Dubritius and St. David. What, however, chiefly distinguishes *The Protestant Catechism* from other *No Popery* publications, is, not so much the strength of its acrimony, as the boldness of its paradoxes. These, for the most part, stand in contradiction to all ancient records and modern authors, Protestant as well as Catholic being supported by the bare word of the bishop of St. David's; and what is still more extraordinary, they sometimes stand in contradiction to the word of the bishop of St. David's himself; resting in this case, on the word of Dr. Thomas Burgess, I purpose exhibiting a few of the paradoxes I refer to.

The great and fundamental paradox of the Right Rev. *Catechist* is, that Protestantism subsisted many hundred years *before Popery*; at the same time that he makes its essence consist in a *renunciation of, and opposition to, Popery!* for his lordship lectures his Protestant pupils in the following manner: "Question. What is Protestantism? Answer. The abjuration of Popery and the exclusion of Papists from all power, ecclesiastical and civil." p. 12. "Question. What is Popery? Answer. The religion of the church of Rome, so called because the church of Rome is subject to the jurisdiction of the Pope." p. 11. "Question. When was this jurisdiction assumed over the whole church? Answer. At the beginning of the seventh century." p. 15. The writer does not here refute the various errors of the Right Rev. bishop on these heads; this refutation will be found in the following letters; he barely exhibits one of the bishop's leading paradoxes. It may be here stated as another very favourite paradox of the prelate, since he has maintained it in a former work, that, because Venantius Fortunatus, a poet of the sixth century, sings, that "the *stylus*, or writings of St. Paul, had run east, west, north and south, and passed into Britain and the remote Thule," and because Theodoret, and author of the fifth century, says, that "St. Paul brought salvation to the islands in the sea," (namely, Malta and Sicily, *Acts* xxviii.) it

follows that the British church was *founded* by St. Paul! p. 19. This paradox might be stated and even granted, for any thing it makes in favour of the bishop's object, which is to invalidate the supremacy of saint Peter. For it matters not which apostle founded this church or that church, while it is evident from the words of Christ, in St. Matthew, c. xvi. v. 18, and in other texts, and from the concurring testimony of the fathers, and all antiquity, that Christ built the whole church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, he himself being the chief corner stone, so as still to ground it, next after himself, on the *Rock*, Peter.† This will be found demonstrated in the following work, Letter xlvi. A third paradox of the prelatic *Catechist* is this: Having undertaken to prove that "The church of Rome was founded by St. Paul," p. 13, no less than the church of Britain, he attempts to draw an argument *from their different discipline* in the observance of Easter; that the latter was "independent" of the former, p. 23. Hence it would follow that St. Paul established *one* discipline, that which the prelate himself now follows, at Rome; and *another*, "that of the church of Ephesus, and the eastern churches, in Britain," p. 17. The truth is, his lordship has quite bewildered himself in the ancient controversy about the right time of keeping Easter. He will learn, however, from the following letters, that the British church originally agreed with that of Rome, in this, no less than in the other points, as the emperor Constantine expressly declares in his letter on that subject,‡ and as farther appears by the Acts of the Council of Arles, which the British bishops, there present, joined with the rest in subscribing. And when, after the Saxon invasion, the British churches got into a wrong computation, they did not follow that of the Asiatic Quarto-decimans, but always kept Easter-day on a Sunday, differing from the practice of the continent only once in seven years. A fourth paradox of the Catechism maker, is, that, admitting, as he does, the existence of our christian king, Lucius, in the second century, he, never-

\* The falsity of this inference and the weakness and unfairness of the bishop's arguments on the whole subject, have been well exposed by an able and learned writer, the Rev. John Lingard, in his *Examination of Certain Opinions advanced by the Rev. Dr. Burgess, &c.* 1813. Syers, Manchester; Keating & Brown, London

† The Right Rev. prelate seems to have been forced out of his former cavil concerning the difference of gender between Πέτρος and Πέτρα in the text, Matt. xvi. by a learned colleague of his [Landaff from remote ages was a thorn in the side of Menevia] who has shown him that Christ did not speak Greek but Syriac, and on this occasion, made use of the word *Cephas*, *Rock*, which admits of no variation of genders.

‡ Euseb. Vit. Constant. L. iii. c. 19.

theless, rejects his conversion by the missionaries of Pope Eleutherius, Paganus and Duvianus, as "a mere Romish fiction, and a monkish fable," p. 23: notwithstanding both facts rest on exactly the same authority, namely, that of all the original writers, British, Saxon, English, Roman, and Gallic.\* A fifth paradox of the bishop's, is, that "The British churches were Protestant before they were Popish," p. 23; "six centuries elapsed before Popery had any footing in this island," p. 28; and that "the British bishops showed their independence of the Pope's authority by rejecting the overtures of Austin, and by refusing to acknowledge any authority but that of their own metropolitan," p. 24. And yet it is demonstrated that the British bishops were present, not only at the Councils of Arles and Nice, which acknowledged the Pope's authority, but also at that of Sardica in Illyrium, held in 347,† where the right of appeal to the Pope in all ecclesiastical causes, from every part of the world, was confirmed.‡ It is equally certain, that in the former part of the following century, Pope Celestine sent St. Paladius to convert the Scots, St. Patrick to convert the Irish, and St. Germanus to reclaim such Britons as had fallen into the Pelagian heresy.§ Each of these facts is expressly affirmed by a contemporary author of the highest character, St. Prosper; and the last mentioned fact is conformable to the British records, which represent this foreign bishop, as exercising high acts of jurisdiction in Britain, which he never could have exercised but in virtue of the Papal supremacy, of which he and his companion, St. Lupus, bishop of Treves, were the delegates; such as consecrating bishops in different parts of the island, and constituting St. Dubritius archbishop of the *Right Side of it*, or of Wales.¶ But how many other proofs of the dependency of the ancient

\* Nennius' Hist. Briton. c. xviii. Girald. Camb. De Jur. Menev. P. ii Angl. Sac. p. 541. Silvest. Girald. Camb. Descript. c. xviii. The Ancien. Register of Landaff, quod Teilo vocatur. Angl. Sacra, vol. ii. Gildas Historicus, quoted by Rudborn. Gafrid Monumet. Ven. Bede, L. i. c. 4. The Saxon Chronicle. Gul. Malm. Antiq. Glaston. Martyr. Rom. Raderus, &c. &c.

† St. Athan. Apolog. 2. See also Usher. ‡ Can. iii.

§ St. Prosper. "Papa Celestinus Germanum Antisidorensem Episcopum, VICE SUA mittit, et deturbatis hæreticis, Britannos ad Catholicam fidem dirigit," Chron. ad An. 429. See also Archbish. Usher. De Brit. Eccl. Prim.

¶ "Postquam prædicti Seniores (Germanus et Lupus) Pelagianam hæresim extirpaverant; Episcopos in pluribus locis Britannia: Insula: consecraverunt. Super omnes autem Britannos dextralis partis Britannia: B Dubritium, summum Doctorem, a Rege et ab omni parochia electum, Archiepiscopum consecraverunt." Ex Antiq. Eccl. Landav. Registro. Angl. Sacr. P. ii p. 667.

British church on the See of Rome, has not our episcopal antiquary met with, in his own favorite author and predecessor Giraldus Cambrensis,\* especially where the latter gives an account of his pleading before the Pope for the Archiepiscopal dignity of St. David's, which the latter asserted was formerly decorated even with the *Pallium*, the mark of Papal legatine jurisdiction; till one of his predecessors, Sampson as he asserted, flying into Britany, transferred it to Dol? He maintained, however, that, excepting the use of the *Pallium*, the church of St. David possessed the whole metropolitanical dignity, and was "subject to no other church *except that of Rome*, and to that *immediately.*"† The modern prelate does but add to the wonder of his learned readers by appealing to the conference between St. Austin, Pope Gregory's missionary and legate in England, and the Welsh bishops, A. D. 502, and to the latters "rejecting the overtures" of the former, in proof of their "rejecting the Pope's authority," p. 24. For, wha. were these overtures? They were these three: that they, the Welsh bishops, would keep Easter at the right time; that they would adopt the Roman ritual in the administration of baptism; and that they would join with the Roman missionaries in preaching the word of God to the Pagan English.‡ This last overture demonstrates, that neither on the two former points, nor on any other point, and least of all on that of the Pope's supremacy, was there, in the opinion of St. Austin, any difference, of essential consequence, between his doctrine and that of the Welsh bishops. For, if there had been such a difference, and especially if they had denied the supremacy of his master, the Pope, would he have invited, and even pressed them, to join with him in preaching the gospel to his new and increasing flock in England? As well may we believe that a faithful shepherd would collect together, and turn into his fold, a number of hungry wolves! It

\* The New Biographical Dictionary divides Silvester Giraldus Cambrensis into two different persons, whereas, it is plain, from this author's Description of Wales, p. 882, Edit. Cambden, that these three names belong to one and the same author.

† "Usque ad Anglorum Regem Henricum I. totam Metropolitanam dignitatem, præter usum Pallii, Ecclesia Menevensis obtinuit; nulli Ecclesiæ prorsus, nisi Romanæ tantum, et illi immediate, sicut nec Ecclesia Scotica, subjectionem debens." De Jur. Menev. Ecc. Angl. Sac P. ii. p. 541.—The rival See of Landaff bears equal testimony to the supremacy of Rome "Sicut Romana Ecclesia excedit dignitatem omnium Ecclesiarum Catholicæ fidei, ita Ecclesia illa Landavia excedit omnes Ecclesias totius dextralis Britannicæ." Ex Antiq. Regist. Landav. Angl. Sac. P. ii. p. 669

‡ "Ut genti Anglorum una vobiscum prædicetis verbum Domini." Bec. Eccl. Hist. L. ii. c. 2.

is true they then said they would not receive St. Augustin for their *archbishop* \* but neither did he nor the Pope require them to do so ; nor is the vindication of the rights of an ancient church at any time, a denial of the Pope's general supremacy. So far from this, within two years from the holding of that conference, we find Oudoceus, bishop of Landaff, going to Canterbury to receive consecration from the same St. Austin, and we find him received, on his return into Wales, by the king, princess, clergy and people, with the highest honor.† We have, moreover, the testimony of the above quoted British register, that the bishops of Landaff, from this period, were always subject and obedient to the archbishop of Canterbury, who was at all times the Pope's legate. The Right Rev. bishop's argument to prove that the Irish church was not, anciently, in communion with the church of Rome, namely, because it was in communion with the British bishops, p. 24, is as great a paradox as any of the above mentioned ; since it has been proved that the British bishops themselves were always in communion with the church of Rome. Of the same description are the assertions, that no legate was appointed by the Pope in Ireland " before Gillebert, in the twelfth century," and that " the Pope's jurisdiction was first introduced into Ireland by the mercenary compact of the Pope and Henry II." p. 25. To expose the inconsistency of these assertions nothing more is necessary than to consult the *Antiquities* of Usher himself, on whose authority they are said to be grounded. This Protestant archbishop then testifies from ancient records, which he cites, that, first St. Palladius, and after him St. Patrick, was sent into Ireland by Pope Celestine, to convert its inhabitants from Pagan idolatry ; the former in 431, the latter in 432 that St. Patrick, " having established the church of Ireland; an ordained bishops and priests throughout the whole island, went to Rome, in 462, where he procured from Pope Hilary, the confirmation of whatever he had done in Ireland, together with the Pallium, and the title of *Pope's legate*;"‡ that in 540 the celebrated St. Finan, of Clonard, having spent seven years at Rome, and being consecrated bishop, returned into Ireland, where he instituted schools and convents, one of which contained three thousand monks.§ It appears from the same annalist, that in 580, the renowned St. Columban passed from Ireland to the continent, where he was protected by different bishops and princes, for his orthodoxy and piety, and even by the Popes

\* Bed. Eccl. Hist. L. ii. c. 2.

† Vita Oudocei, quoted by Godwin De Præsul, and Usher.

‡ Usher's Antiq. Index Chronol.

§ Usher Primord.

themselves, with whom he corresponded ; that in 630, a deputation was sent from Ireland, of learned and holy men, "to the fountain of their baptism, like children to their mother,"\* namely to the apostolic See of Rome, to consult with it on matters of religion ; that among these was St. Lasrean, who was consecrated bishop by Pope Honorius, and appointed his *legate in Ireland* ; † that in 640, Tomianus, and four other bishops, being still anxious about the right observance of Easter, and about the Pelagian heresy, wrote to consult Pope Severinus, and that they received an answer to their letter from his successors, Pope John — Numerous other testimonies, not only of the *communio* of the church of Ireland, with that of Rome, but also of its *acknowledging the Pope's supremacy*, may be collected from Usher, Ware, and other Protestant, no less than from the original Catholic, writers, down to the very time of Gillebert, bishop of Limerick, whom the Catechist admits to have been the Pope's legate in Ireland. This happened, according to Usher, in 1130, twenty-five years before the date of what the Catechist calls "the mercenary compact of the Pope and Henry II. by which," he says, "the Pope's jurisdiction was *first* introduced into Ireland," and forty years before the latter invaded Ireland ; which island, after all, as every child knows, he invaded, not as the executor of Pope Adrian's legacy, but as the ally of the dethroned king, Dermot.

In speaking of the beginning and progress of the religion of our own ancestors, the English, it might be expected the Right Rev. Catechist would have paid more attention to truth and consistency than he has done with respect to the foregoing more obscure histories. This, however, is not the case. But, previously to the writer's entering on this particular subject, he wishes to observe what is more fully demonstrated in the following work, that the Catechist totally misrepresents our apostle, Pope Gregory the Great, as having "reprobated the spiritual supremacy," and also "his successor Boniface as being the first Pope to assume it," p. 16. In short, the question, at issue, is not concerning the *title*, but the *power* of a head bishop : which power, as it will appear below, no Pope exercised more frequently or extensively than "the learned and virtuous St. Gregory," to use the prelate's own epithets. His lordship does not deny that our

\* Usher.

† Gillebert was succeeded in the legatine office by St. Ma'nachy, who, by special authority, erected the See of Tuam into an archbishopric. After his death Cardinal Papario was sent by Pope Eugenius III. into Ireland, namely, in 1151, with four Palliums for the four archbishops, &c. So false is the prelate's account of the origin of the Pope's jurisdiction in Ireland !

ancestors, the Anglo-Saxons, were converted to Christianity by "the Pope's missionaries," p. 28, namely, by St. Austin and his companions, sent hither by the above-mentioned Pope Gregory, in 597; nor does he contradict the account of our venerable historian, Bede, who describes the whole jurisdiction and discipline of our church, as being regulated by that Pope and his successors. Still the prelate most paradoxically denies that "the Pope ever exercised jurisdiction in England or Ireland, except during the four centuries before the Reformation!" p. 11; and he maintains, in particular, that "the Anglo-Saxon churches differed from the church of Rome in their objection to image worshiping, the invocation of saints, transubstantiation, and other errors," p. 28. Here are two paradoxes to be refuted; one concerning the *spiritual power*, the other concerning the *doctrine* of the See of Rome. With respect to the former: is it not a fact, my lord, known to every ecclesiastical antiquary, that each one of our primates, from St. Austin down to Stigand, exclusively, who was deposed soon after the conquest, either went to Rome to fetch, or had transmitted to him from Rome, the emblem and jurisdiction of legatine authority, by which he held and exercised the power of a metropolitan over his suffragan bishops? An original author, Radulph Diceto, exhibits a succinct but clear demonstration of this, in a series of all the archbishops, and a list of the different Popes, from whom the former respectively received the Pallium. Did not St. Wilfrid, archbishop of York, appeal to the Pope from the uncanonical sequestration of his diocese by the primate Theodore? Did not Offa, the powerful Mercian king, engage Pope Adrian to transfer six suffragan bishoprics from the See of Canterbury to that of Lichfield, constituting it, at the same time, an archbishopric? A hundred other instances of the exercise of the Pope's ecclesiastical jurisdiction in England, previously to the conquest, could be produced, if they were wanted.—As to the pretended difference between the *doctrine* of the Anglo-Saxons and the church of Rome, the Catechist was bound to inform his readers when it took place; and who were the authors of it; that is, who first persuaded the whole English nation to reject the religion they had been taught by their apostles, Pope Gregory and his missionaries; and whether this change was effected by slow degrees, or all of a sudden.\* If so absurd a paradox, as the above-mentioned, re-

\* To make some brief confutation of each of the Catechist's alleged differences between the Anglo-Saxon church and that of Rome: Bege testifies, that when St. Austin and his fellow missionaries preached the gospel to king Ethelbert, they carried a cross for their ensign, with a painted pic-

quired a serious refutation, it might be stated that, in 616, bishop Melitus, who afterwards became primate, went to Rome to obtain the Pope's confirmation of certain regulations which had been made in England, that he subscribed to the Acts of an Episcopal Synod, then held in that city, which Acts he brought back with him to England,\* and that, in 680, St. Wilfrid, going to Rome, to prosecute his appeal, was present at a council of one hundred and twenty-five Bishops, where, "In the name of all the churches in the north part of Britain, Ireland, and the nations of the Scots and Picts, he made open profession of the true Catholic faith, confirming it also by his subscription.†

Other paradoxes of the Right Rev. prelate, relating to matters of a later date, are these, that Pope Adrian IV. grounded his right to give away Ireland on "the forged donation of Constantine," though he never once alluded to it, but assigned quite other grounds for what he did; and that "the Pope now owes the whole of his temporal and spiritual power on the continent, to this gross fiction, and the Decretal Epistles," p. v. Alas! what must the learned Catholics of the continent, who were the first to detect these literary frauds of the eighth century, and to trace them to the place of their birth in Lower Germany, think of the literature of this country, when they hear a bishop, and a member of our learned societies, telling them that they would not acknowledge the Pope to be prince of Rome or head of the church, were it not for those spurious pieces! A similar paradox is, that "The Popish bishops and Popish clergy were the real authors of the *fictitious statutes* (Acts of Parliament) of Richard II. Henry IV. and Henry V." against the Lollards, though they neither did, nor were permitted to interfere in those Acts; and though it is notorious from all contemporary history, that these severe edicts were occasioned by what that anarchical faction had done, and threatened to do. They had, under the command of Wat Tyler, and John Ball, a Wickliffite priest

ture of Christ, L. i. c. 25. Will. Malmsb. mentions that, among other pious images, preserved at Glastonbury, were those of Christ and his apostles, made of silver and given by king Ina. De Antiq. Glaston. We learn from Archbishop Cuthred's letter to Lullus, successor of St. Boniface, bishop and martyr of Mentz, that a Synod of Anglo-Saxon bishops had chosen this saint, and St. Gregory, and St. Austin, to be their "patrons and intercessors." Inter Epist. Bonif. That our ancestors believed in transubstantiation, is clear, from Osbern's relation of archbishop Odo's rendering this visible. Angl. Sac. P. ii. p. 82. One of his successors, Lanfrank, was the principal defender of this doctrine against Berengarius. It may be added, that the original faith concerning purgatory, the mass, and perhaps every other controverted point, can be proved from Bede's History alone.

\* Bede, L. ii. c. 4.

† Ibid, L. v. c. 20.



actually put to death, v public execution, the lord chancellor, the lord treasurer, and the lord chief justice, of England: and they had *threatened* to kill the king, the lords spiritual and temporal, and all the *pen and ink-horn-men*, as they called the lawyers; as also to put down all the clergy, except the begging friars, and to divide among themselves all their lands and property.\* Such were the levellers of the fifteenth century, whom a modern bishop eulogizes.—The following are theological paradoxes, being such as will infallibly non-plus every *regular* student in divinity. 1st. “The apostles were not bishops,” p. 15. By the same rule bishops are not priests.—2dly. “To retain the *obsolete language* of ancient Rome, in prayer, is an error,” p. 39.—3dly. The Irish were guilty of “a *heresy of discipline*!” p. 60.

But the political paradoxes, my lord, of this new Catechism are still more inexplicable than the theological ones. The first of them, which I shall mention, is contained in the following question and answer. “Q. What is it excludes Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans from our churches, and from parliament? A. Religion,” p. 44.—Your lordship will permit the writer to observe, in the first place, that it is impossible either for the simple catechumens of Wales, or even for the learned reviewers of England, to gather from this passage, whether the Rt. Rev. prelate means to say, that it is the religion of *Pagans, Jews, and Turks*, or that of *Protestants*, which excludes the former from parliament, for example: nevertheless, the passage, taken either way, is perfectly paradoxical. For can that prelate, or any one else, cite a precept of the Vedam, or the Talmud, or the Koran, which prohibits its respective votaries from sitting and voting in the British parliament, if they can get entrance into it? Or can he show any thing in *Protestantism* (which he defines to be “The abjuration of Popery, and the exclusion of Papists from all power, ecclesiastical or civil”) that prevents a man, who publicly proclaims Mahomet, or who publicly denies Jesus Christ, or who publicly worships the obscene and blood-stained idol Juggernaut, from being a member of either house of the legislature? No, my lord, there is no one article in any one of those religions, if they may be called so, which excludes them from our parliament; the only condition for rendering them fit and worthy to enter into it, and becoming legislators, being their *calling God to witness*, that “there is no transubstantiation in the mass,” and that

\* Hist. Major T. Walsingham, Knighton De Event. Angl. Collier's Eccl. Hist.

“the *worship of the Virgin Mary* and the saints, as practised in the church of Rome, (upon both which points the worshippers of Juggernaut and English Protestants are, for the most part, equally well instructed,) are *Idolatrous*!——A second political paradox in this Catechism is, that “the inviolable covenants of the two unions show the injustice and unconstitutional nature of the Roman Catholic claims,” p. viii. This, my lord, is equally incomprehensible; since the act of union with Scotland neither mentions these claims, nor alludes to them; and since that of the union with Ireland expressly admits the principle of their being conceded, and prepares the minds of men for their actual concession; as it is therein enacted, that “Members of the united parliament shall take and subscribe the usual oaths and declarations UNTIL THE SAID PARLIAMENT SHALL OTHERWISE PROVIDE.” Art. IV.—The last of these paradoxes, which the writer will extract from the incomprehensible Catechism, is the following. It teaches, at page 35, that “Not to consent to the *veto*, is not to acknowledge the *king's supremacy*, which it is *treasonable*, by statute, to oppose.” And immediately after, at p. 36, it teaches that “*the veto*, or the king's nomination, is *unprotestant* and *illegal*: to which the bishop adds, in the words of his friend, Mr. Sharp; “it is highly improper and even *illegal* for the crown of England to accept the power of the proposed *veto*; or to have any concern in the appointment of unreformed bishops,” p. 56. Can any one, my lord reconcile these opposite doctrines? To the plain sense of the writer it appears, that if it be *illegal* for his majesty to accept of the *veto*, it would be *criminal* in the Catholics to offer it to him. so far from its being *treasonable* to refuse giving.”

#### MY LORD BISHOP.

The wise man has said, in the Sacred Text, of making many books there is no end, Eccles. xii. 12.; and we are certain, from reason and experience, that, least of all, will there be an end of making books, and disputing on subjects of religion, with respect to those who have no fixed rule, or none but a false one, for deciding on religious controversies, or who suffer worldly interest, pride, or the prejudices of education, to take place of the sincerity, humility and piety, which ought to guide them in a matter of such infinite moment. The writer trusts that in the first part of the following Letters, he has shown the rule appointed by Christ, for clearly discerning the truths he has revealed, and which conducts to the same end; that he has, in his second part, clearly pointed out Christ's true church, which cannot but teach

*nis true doctrine.* With men of *good will* who follow either of these ways in the uprightness and fervour of their souls, a satisfactory end to their religious discussions and doubts will quickly be found. But who can subdue or soften the above mentioned passions and prejudices? No one, certainly, but God alone; and, as the greater part of mankind is notoriously under their influence, the writer is so far from expecting to make these persons proselytes to his demonstrations, that he has prepared his mind for the opposition and obloquy which he is sure to experience from them. He is aware, that most statesmen, and other great personages, regard religion merely as a political engine for managing the population, and therefore wish to keep one as well as the other as quiet as possible. On this principle, had they been counsellors to king Ethelbert, they would have persuaded him to banish St. Austin, and to continue the worship of Thor and Woden. The multitude, in this age of infidelity and dissipation, nauseate religious inquiries and instructions; and, when they must hear them, like the Jews of old; *they say to the seer, see not; and to the prophet, prophesy not to us right things: speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits*, Isai. xxx. 10. The critics and reviewers are, for the most part, as *smooth*, in this respect, as the prophets: if they lead the public opinion in matters of less consequence, they follow it in those of greater. —But whatever *excuse* there may be for the inconsistency of other men, in religious matters, there would, evidently, be none for persons of your lordship's and the writer's profession and situation, should they, for their temporal advantage, or their prejudices, mislead others in a matter of eternal consequence. Such conduct would be hypocritical, and doubly perfidious and ruinous. It would be *perfidious* to the individuals so misguided, and to the church or sect which they profess to serve; since nothing can injure that so much, as the appearance of insincerity and human passions in its official defenders. Accordingly it will be seen, in the following work, that the most fruitful source of conversions to the Catholic church, are the detected calumnies and misrepresentations of her bitterest enemies. Such conduct would also be utterly *ruinous*; first, to its immediate victims; and secondly, to the persons of your lordship's and the writer's profession and character. In fact, my lord, if, as Christ assures us, at the great day of universal trial, some of the arraigned will *rise up in judgment* against others, *and condemn them* for their peculiar guilt, *Matt. xii. 41.*; how heavy a condemnation will poor bewildered souls call down upon those faithless guides who have led them astray! Or rather, how severe a vengeance will

the *Good Shepherd* himself (then also the Judge of the living and the dead) *who hath laid down his life for his sheep*, take of those hirelings, who have not only *left his sheep to be caught and scattered by the wolf*, but have themselves *killed and destroyed them!* John x.

For all these important motives, let us, my lord, dismiss every selfish interest, human respect, and prejudice from our minds, in the discussion of religious subjects, and follow *truth*, whithersoever she leads us, with the utmost sincerity and ardour of our souls. The writer of this, for his part, disgusted, as he is, at seeing the most serious and sacred of all subjects become a mere field of exercise for the talents, the learning, and the passions of different writers, and averse as he is, from taking a part in such contests, nevertheless holds himself bound, not only to *render an account of the hope that is in him, to every one who asketh it of him*, in the sincerity of an upright heart, but also to yield the palm to your lordship thankfully and publicly, should you be able to prove (not, however, by extravagant and unsupported assertions, but by sound and convincing theological arguments) that the rule of faith, which he maintains, is not the one appointed by Christ and his apostles, for guiding Christians into all truth; or that the church to which he adheres, has not exclusively those marks of the true church, which your lordship ascribes to it, in the creeds you repeat, equally with the writer. Until one or other of these points is proved, he will hold himself bound to stick close both to the rule and the church, in spite of calumny, misrepresentation, ridicule, clamour, and persecution, and to maintain, in opposition to your lordship, that there is no just cause for either making or continuing any penal laws against the professors of the original faith.

The writer has the honour to remain, my lord,

Your lordship's obedient servant,

J M. D. D

W——, May 3, 1813.

THE END  
OF  
RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

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LETTER I.

From JAMES BROWN, Esq. to the Rev. J. M. D. D. F. S. A

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INTRODUCTION.

*New Cottage, near Cressage, Salop, Oct. 13. 1801.*

REVEREND SIR,

I SHOULD need an ample apology for the liberty I take, in thus addressing you without having the honour of your acquaintance, and still more for the heavy task I am endeavouring to impose upon you, if I did not consider your public character, as a pastor of your religion, and as a writer in defence of it, and likewise your personal character for benevolence, which has been described to me by a gentleman of your communion, Mr. J. C—ne, who is well acquainted with us both. Having mentioned this, I need only add, that I write to you in the name of a society of serious and worthy Christians, in different persuasions, to which I myself belong, who are as desirous as I am, to receive satisfaction from you, on certain doubts, which your late work, in answer to Dr. Sturges, has suggested to us.\*

However, in making this request of our society to you, it seems proper, Reverend sir, that I should bring you acquainted with the nature of it, by way of convincing you, that it is not unworthy of the attention, which I am desirous you should pay to it. We consist ther. of above twenty persons, including the ladies, who, living at some distance from any considerable town, meet together once a week, generally at my habitation of New Cottage, not so much for our amusement and refection, as for the improvement of our minds, by reading the best publications of the day, which I can procure from my London bookseller, and sometimes an original essay written by one of the company.

\* *Letters to a Prebendary, in answer to Reflections on Popery, by the Rev. Dr. Sturges, Prebendary and Chancellor of Winchester.*

I have signified that many of us are of different religious persuasions: this will be seen more distinctly from the following account of our members. Among these I must mention, in the first place, our above named learned and worthy rector, Dr. Carey. He is, of course, of the church of England; but like most others of his learned and dignified brethren, in these times, he is of that free, and as it is called, liberal turn of mind, as to explain away the mysteries and a great many of its other articles, which, in my younger days, were considered essential to it. Mr. and Mrs. Topham, are Methodists of the Predestinarian and Antipomian class, while Mr. and Mrs. Askew are mitigated Arminian Methodists, of Wesley's connection. Mr. and Mrs. Rankin are honest Quakers. Mr. Barker and his children term themselves *Rational Dissenters*, being of the old Presbyterian lineage, which is now almost universally gone into Socinianism. I, for my part, glory in being a staunch member of our happy establishment, which has kept the golden mean among the contending sects, and which I am fully persuaded, approaches nearer to the purity of the apostolic church, than any other which has existed since the age of it. Mrs. Brown professes an equal attachment to the church; yet, being of an inquisitive and ardent mind, she cannot refrain from frequenting the meetings, and even supporting the missions of those self-created apostles, who are undermining this church on every side, and who are no where more active than in our sequestered valley.

With these differences among us, on the most interesting of all subjects, we cannot help having frequent religious controversies: but reason and charity enable us to manage these without any breach of either good manners or good will to each other. Indeed, I believe that we are, one and all, possessed of an unfeigned respect and cordial love for Christians of every description, one only excepted. Must I name it on the present occasion?—Yes, I must; in order to fulfil my commission in a proper manner. It is then the church that you, Rev. sir, belong to; which, if any credit is due to the eminent divines, whose works we are in the habit of reading, and more particularly to the illustrious bishop Porteus, in his celebrated and standing work, called *A BRIEF CONFUTATION OF THE ERRORS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME, extracted from archbishop Secker's V. SERMONS AGAINST POPERY*,\* is such a mass of absur-

\* The Normian professor of divinity, in the university of Cambridge speaking of this work, says, "The refutation of the Popish errors is now reduced into a small compass by archbishop Secker and bishop Porteus." — *Lectures in Divinity, Vol. IV. p. 71.*

dity, bigotry, superstition, idolatry, and immorality, that, to say we respect and love those who obstinately adhere to it, as we do other Christians, would seem a compromise of reason, Scripture, and virtuous feeling.

And yet even of this church, we have formed a less revolting idea, in some particulars, than we did formerly. This has happened, from our having just read over your controversial work against Dr. Sturges, called *LETTERS TO A PREBENDARY*, to which our attention was directed by the notice taken of it in the houses of parliament, and particularly by the very unexpected compliment paid to it, by that ornament of our church, bishop Horsley. We admit then (at least I, for my part, admit) that you have refuted the most odious of the charges brought against your religion, namely, that it is, necessarily, and, upon principle, intolerant and sanguinary, requiring its members to persecute, with fire and sword, all persons of a different creed from their own, when this is in their power. You have also proved that Papists may be good subjects to a Protestant sovereign; and you have shown, by an interesting historical detail, that the Roman Catholics of this kingdom have been conspicuous for their loyalty, from the time of Elizabeth, down to the present time. Still most of the absurd and anti-Scriptural doctrines and practices, alluded to above, relating to the worship of saints and images, to transubstantiation and the half communion, to purgatory, and shutting up the Bible, with others of the same nature, you have not, to my recollection, so much as attempted to defend. In a word, I write to you, Rev. sir, on the present occasion, in the name of our respectable society, to ask you whether you fairly give up these doctrines and practices of Popery, as untenable, or otherwise, whether you will condescend to interchange a few letters with me on the subject of them, for the satisfaction of me and my friends, and with the sole view of mutually discovering and communicating religious truths. We remark that you say, in your first letter to Dr. Sturges: "Should I have occasion to make another reply to you, I will try if it be not possible to put the whole question at issue between us, into such a shape as shall remove the danger of irritation on both sides, and still enable us, if we are mutually so disposed, to agree together in the acknowledgment of the same religious truths." If you still think that this is possible, for God's sake and your neighbours' sake, delay not to undertake it. The plan embraces every advantage we wish for, and excludes every evil we deprecate. You shall manage the discussion in your own way, and we will give you as little interruption as possible.--

Two of the essays above alluded to, with which our worthy rector lately furnished us, I, with your permission, enclose, to convince you that genius and sacred literature are cultivated round the Wrekin, and on the banks of the Severn.

I remain, Rev. Sir, with great respect,

Your faithful and obedient servant,

JAMES BROWN.

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## ESSAY I.

### ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, AND OF NATURAL RELIGION.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL CAREY, LL. D.

FORESEEING that my health will not permit me, for a considerable time, to meet my respected friends at New Cottage, I comply with the request, which several of them have made me, in sending them in writing, my ideas on the two noblest subjects which can occupy the mind of man; *the existence of God, and the truth of Christianity*. In doing this, I profess not to make new discoveries, but barely to state certain arguments, which I collected in my youth, from the learned Hugo Grotius, our judicious Clark, and other advocates of natural and revealed religion. I offer no apology for adopting the words of Scripture, in arguing with persons who are supposed not to admit its authority, when these express my meaning as fully as any others can do.

The first argument for the existence of God, is thus expressed by the royal prophet: *Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, not we ourselves.* Ps. c. 3. In fact, when I ask myself that question, which every reflecting man must sometimes ask himself: *How came I into this state of existence? Who has bestowed upon me the being which I enjoy?* I am forced to answer: *It is not I that made myself*; and each of my forefathers, if asked the same question, must have returned the same answer. In like manner, if I interrogate the several beings with which I am surrounded, the earth, the air, the water, the stars, the moon, the sun, each of them, as an ancient father says, will answer me, in its turn: *It was not I that made you; I, like you, am a creature of yesterday, as incapable of giving existence to you, as I am of giving it to myself.* In short, however often each of us repeats the question: *How came I hither? Who has made me what I am?* we shall never find a rational answer



to them, till we come to acknowledge that there is an *eternal, necessary self-existent Being*, the author of all contingent beings, which is no other than GOD. It is this *necessity of being*, this *self-existence*, which constitutes the nature of God, and from which all his other perfections flow. Hence when he deigned to reveal himself, on the flaming mountain of Horeb, to the holy legislator of his chosen people, being asked by this prophet, *what was his proper name?* he answered: I AM THAT I AM *Exod. iii. 14.* This is as much as to say: *I alone exist of my self: all others are created beings, which exist by my will.*

From this attribute of *self-existence*, all the other perfections of the Deity, eternity, immensity, omnipotence, omniscience, holiness, justice, mercy, and bounty, each in an infinite degree, necessarily flow, because there is nothing to limit his existence and attributes, and because whatever perfection is found in any created being, must, like its existence, have been derived from this universal source.

This proof of the existence of God, though demonstrative and self-evident to reflecting beings, is, nevertheless, we have reason to fear, lost on a great proportion of our fellow creatures; because they hardly reflect at all; or at least, never consider, *who made them, or what they were made for*; but that other proof which results from the magnificence, the beauty, and the harmony of the creation, as it falls under the senses, so it cannot be thought to escape the attention of the most stupid or savage of rational beings. The starry heavens, the fulminating clouds, the boundless ocean, the variegated earth, the organized human body, all these, and many other phenomena of nature, must strike the mind of the untutored savage, no less than that of the studious philosopher, with a conviction that there is an infinitely powerful, wise and bountiful Being, who is the author of these things; though, doubtless, the latter, in proportion as he sees more clearly and extensively than the former, the properties and economy of different parts of the creation, possesses a stronger physical evidence, as it is called, of the existence of the great Creator. In fact, if the Pagan physician, Galen,\* from the imperfect knowledge which he possessed of the structure of the human body, found himself compelled to acknowledge the existence of an infinitely wise and beneficent Being, to make it such as it is, what would he not have said, had he been acquainted with the circulation of the blood, and the uses and harmony of the arteries, veins, and lacteals! If the philosophical orator, Tully, discovered and enlarged on the same truth, from the little

\* De Usu Partium.

knowledge of astronomy which he possessed,\* what strains of eloquence would he not have poured forth upon it, had he been acquainted with the discoveries of Galileo and Newton, relative to the magnitude and distances of the stars, the motions of the planets and comets! Yes, all nature proclaims that there is a Being, who is *wise in heart and mighty in strength : who doth great things and past finding out ; yea, wonders without number :—who stretcheth out the north over the empty places, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.—The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof.—Lo ! these are a part of his ways ; but how little a portion is heard of him ! The thunder of his power who can understand !* Job. ix.—xxvi.

The proofs, however, of God's existence, which can least be evaded, are those which come immediately home to a man's own heart ; convincing him, with the same evidence he has of his own existence, that there is an all-seeing, infinitely just, and infinitely bountiful Master above, who is witness of all his actions and words, and of his very thoughts. For whence arises the heart-felt pleasure which the good man feels on resisting a secret temptation to sin, or in performing an act of beneficence, though in the utmost secrecy ? Why does he raise his countenance to heaven, with devotion, and why is he then prepared to meet death with cheerful hope, unless it be that his conscience tells him of a munificent rewarder of virtue, the spectator of what he does ? And why does the most hardened sinner, tremble and falter in his limbs, and at his heart, when he commits his most secret sins of theft, vengeance, or impurity ? Why, especially does he sink into agonies or horror and despair at the approach of death, unless it be that he is deeply convinced of the constant presence of an all-seeing witness, and of an infinitely holy, powerful, and just Judge, *into whose hands it is a terrible thing to fall—In vain does he say : Darkness encompasseth me and the wall cover me : no one seeth : of whom am I afraid ?—for his conscience tells him that, The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun beholding round about all the ways of men.* Eccles. xxiii. 26, 28

This last argument, in particular, is so obvious and convincing, that I cannot bring myself to believe there ever was a human being, of sound sense, who was really an Atheist. Those persons who have tried to work themselves into a persuasion that there is no God, will generally be found, both in ancient and modern times, to be of the most profligate manners, who, dreading to meet him as their Judge, try to persuade themselves that he does not exist. This has been observed by St. Austin.

\* De Natura Deorum, l. ii.

who says : " No man denies the existence of God, but such a one whose interest it is that there should be no God." Yet even they who pretend to disbelieve the existence of a Supreme Being, in the broad day-light, and among their profligate companions, in the darkness and solitude of the night, and, still more under the apprehension of death, fail not to confess it ; as Seneca, I think, has somewhere observed.\*

*A son heareth his father, and a servant his master,* says the prophet Malachi. *If then I be a father, where is mine honour and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts,* i. 6. In a word : it is impossible to believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, our Creator, our Lord, and our Judge, without being conscious, at the same time, of our obligation to worship him exteriorly and interiorly, to fear him, to love him, and to obey him. This constitutes *natural religion* : by the observance of which the ancient patriarchs, together with Melchisedec, Job, and, we trust, very many other virtuous and religious persons of different ages and countries, have been acceptable to God, in this life, and have attained to everlasting bliss, in the other ; still we must confess, with deep sorrow, that the number of such persons has been small, compared with those of every age and nation, who, as St. Paul says, *When they knew God, glorified him not as God ; neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations ; and their foolish hearts were darkened ;—who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever more.* Rom. i. 21, 25.

SAMUEL CAREY.

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## ESSAY II.

### ON THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

BY THE REV. SAMUEL CAREY, LL. D.

THOUGH the light of nature is abundantly sufficient, as I trust I have shown in my former essay, to prove the existence of God, and the duty of worshipping and serving him, yet this was not the only light that was communicated to mankind in the

\* It is proper here to observe, that a large proportion of the boasting Atheists who signalized their impiety during the late French revolution, when they came to die, acknowledged that their irreligion had been affected, and that they never doubted, in their hearts, of the existence of God and the truths of Christianity. Among these were Boulanger, La Metrie, Collet d'Herbois, Egalité duke of Orleans, &c.

first ages of the world concerning these matters, since many things relating to them were revealed by God to the patriarchs and, through them, to their contemporaries and descendants. At length this knowledge was almost universally obliterated from the minds of men, and the light of reason itself was sc clouded by the boundless indulgence of their passions, that they seemed, every where, sunk almost to a level with the brute creation. Even the most polished nations, the Greeks and the Romans, blushed not at unnatural lusts, and boasted of the most horrid cruelties. Plutarch describes the celebrated Grecian sages, Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Cebes, &c. as indulging freely in the former\* and every one knows that the chief amusement of the Roman people, was to behold their fellow creatures murdering one another in the amphitheatres, sometimes by hundreds and thousands at a time. But the depravity and impiety of the ancient Pagans, and I may say the same of those of modern times, appears chiefly in their religious doctrines and worship. What an absurd and disgusting rabble of pretended deities, marked with every crime that disgraces the worst of mortals, lust, envy, hatred and cruelty, did not the above named refined nations worship, and that, in several instances, by the imitation of their crimes! Plato allows of drunkenness in honour of the gods: Aristotle admits of indecent representations of them. How many temples were every where erected, and prostitutes consecrated to the worship of Venus? † And how generally were human sacrifices offered up in honour of Moloch, Saturn, Thor, Diana, Woden, and other pretended gods, or rather real demons, by almost every Pagan nation, Greek and barbarian, and among the rest by the ancient Britons, inhabitants of this island! It is true, some few sages of antiquity, by listening to the dictates of nature and reason, saw into the absurdity of the popular religion, and discovered the existence and attributes of the true God; but then how unsteady and imperfect was their belief, even in this point! and when *they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor give him thanks, but became vain in their thoughts.* Rom. i. 21. In short, they were so bewildered on the whole subject of religion, that Socrates, the wisest of them all, declared it "impossible for men to discover this, unless the Deity himself deigned to reveal it to them." ‡ Indeed it was an effort of mercy,

\* De Isid. et. Osirid. Even the refined Cicero and Virgil did not blush at these iniamies.

† Strabo tells us, that there were a thousand prostitutes attached to the temple of Venus at Corinth. The Athenians attributed the preservation of their city to the prayers of its prostitutes : Plato Dialog. Alcibiad

worthy the great and good God, to make such a revelation of himself, and of his acceptable worship, to poor, benighted, and degraded man. This he did, first, in favour of a poor, afflicted captive tribe on the banks of the Nile, the Israelites, whom he led from thence into the country of their ancestors, and raised up to be a powerful nation, by a series of astonishing miracles instructing and confirming them in the knowledge and worship of himself by his different prophets. He afterwards did the same thing in favour of all the people of the earth, and to a far greater extent, by the promised Messiah, and his apostles. It is to this latter divine legation I shall here confine my arguments: though indeed, the one confirms the other; since Christ and the apostles continually bear testimony to the mission of Moses.

All history, then, and tradition prove that in the reign of Tiberius, the second Roman emperor after Julius Cæsar, an extraordinary personage, Jesus Christ, appeared in Palestine, teaching a new system of religion and morality, far more sublime and perfect than any which the Pagan philosophers, or even than the Hebrew prophets, had inculcated. He confirmed the truths of natural religion and of the Mosaic revelation; but then he vastly extended their sphere, by the communication of many heavenly mysteries, concerning the nature of the one true God, his economy in redeeming man by his own vicarious sufferings, the restoration and future immortality of our bodies, and the final decisive trial we are to undergo before him, our destined Judge. He enforced the obligation of loving our heavenly Father, above all things, of praying to him continually, and of referring all our thoughts, words, and actions to his divine honour. He insisted on the necessity of denying, not one or other of our passions, as the philosophers had done, who, as Tertullian says, *drove out one nail with another*; but the whole collection of them, disorderly and vitiated as they are, since the fall of our first parent. In opposition to our innate avarice, pride, and love of pleasure; he opened his mission by teaching that, *blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are the meek; blessed are they that mourn, &c*. With respect to our fellow creatures; teaching, as he did, every virtue, he singled out fraternal charity for his peculiar and characteristic precept; requiring that his disciples should love one another as they love themselves, and even as he himself has loved them; he who laid down his life for them! and he extended the obligation of this precept to our enemies, equally with our friends.

Nor was the morality of Jesus a mere speculative system of precepts, like the systems of the philosophers: it was of a prac

cal nature, and he himself confirmed, by his example, every virtue which he inculcated, and more particularly the hardest of all others to reduce to practice, the love of our enemies. Christ had *gone about*, as the Sacred Text expresses it, *doing good to all*, Acts x. 38. and evil to no one. He had cured the sick of Judea and the neighbouring countries, had given sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and even life to the dead; but above all things, he had enlightened the minds of his hearers with the knowledge of pure and sublime truths, capable of leading them to present and future happiness; yet was he every where calumniated and persecuted, till at length, his inveterate enemies fulfilled their malice against him by nailing him to a cross, thereon to expire, by lengthened torments. Not content with this, they came before his gibbet, deriding him in his agony with insulting words and gestures. What, now, is the return which the author of Christianity makes for such unexampled barbarity? He excuses the authors of it! He prays for them! *Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do!* Luke xxiii. 34. No wonder this proof of supernatural charity should have staggered the most hardened infidels; one of whom confesses that, "if Socrates has died like a philosopher, Jesus alone has died like a God!"\* The precepts and the example of the master have not been lost upon his disciples.—These have ever been distinguished by their practice of virtue, and, particularly, by their charity and forgiveness of injuries. The first of them who laid down his life for Christ, St. Stephen, while the Jews were stoning him to death, prayed thus, with his last voice, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!* Acts vii. 59.

Having considered the several systems of paganism, which have prevailed, and that still prevail, in different parts of the world, both as to belief and practice, together with the speculations of the wisest infidel philosophers concerning them; and having contemplated, on the other hand, the doctrine of the New Testament on both of them, namely, theory and practice, I would ask any candid believer, where he thought Jesus Christ could have acquired the idea of so sublime, so pure, so efficacious a religion as Christianity is, especially when compared with the others above alluded to? Could he have acquired it in the workshop of a poor artisan of Nazareth, or among the fishermen of the lake of Genezareth? Then, how could he and his poor unlettered apostles succeed in propagating this religion, as they did throughout the world in opposition to all the talents and power of phi-

\* Rousseau Emile.

osophers and princes, and all the passions of all mankind? No other answers can be given to these questions, than that the religion itself has been *divinely revealed*, and that it has been *divinely assisted*, in its progress throughout the world.

In addition to this *internal evidence* of Christianity, as it is called, there are *external proofs*, which must not be passed over. Christ, on various occasions, appealed to the miracles which he wrought, in confirmation of his doctrine and mission; miracles public and indisputable, which, from the testimony of Pilate himself, were placed on the records of the Roman empire,\* and which were not denied by the most determined enemies of Christianity, such as Celsus, Porphyrius, and Julian, the apostate. Among these miracles, there is one of so extraordinary a nature, as to render it quite unnecessary to mention any others, and which, therefore, is always appealed to by the apostles, as the grand proof of the gospel they preached: I mean the *resurrection of Christ from the dead*; to which must be added its circumstances, namely, that he raised himself to life *by his own power* without the intervention of any living person; and that he did this *in conformity with his prediction, at the time, which he had appointed for this event, and in defiance of the efforts of his enemies*, to detain his body in the sepulchre. To elude the evidence resulting from this unexampled prodigy, one or other of the following assertions must be maintained, either that the *disciples were deceived* in believing him to be risen from the dead, or that *they combine to deceive the world* into a belief of that imposition. — Now it cannot be credited, that they themselves were deceived in this matter, being many in number, and having the testimony of their eyes, in seeing their master repeatedly, during forty days; of their ears, in hearing his voice; and one, the most incredulous among them of *his feeling in touching his person and probing his wounds*; nor can it be believed that they *conspired to propagate an unavailing falsehood* of this nature throughout the nations of the earth, namely, that a person, put to death in Judea, had risen again to life, without any prospect to themselves *for this world*, but that of persecution, torments, and a cruel death, which they successively endured, as did their numerous disciples after them, in testimony of this fact; or, *for the other world*, but the vengeance of the God of truth.

Next to the miracles, wrought by Christ, is the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies concerning him, in proof of the religion taught by him. To mention a few of these; he was born *just after the sceptre had departed from the tribe of Juda*. Gen. xlix

\* Tertul. in Apolog.

10. ; at the *end of seventy-two weeks* of years from the restoration of Jerusalem. *Dan.* ix. 24 ; while the *second temple* of Jerusalem was *in being*, *Hagg.* ii. 7. He was born in *Bethlehem*, *Mic.* v. 2. ; worked the identical *miracles foretold of him*, *Isai* xxxv. 5. He was *sold* by his perfidious disciple for *thirty pieces of silver*, which were laid out in the *purchase of a potter's field*, *Zach.* xi. 13. He was *scourged, spit upon*, *Isai.* l. 6. ; placed *among malefactors*, *Isai.* xxxiii. 12. His *hands and feet were transfixed* with nails, *Ps.* xxii. 16. ; and his *side was opened* with a spear, *Zach.* xii. 10. Finally, he *died, was buried with honour*, *Isai.* liii. 9. ; and *rose again to life without experiencing corruption*. *Ps.* xvi. 10. The sworn enemies of Christ, the Jews, were, during many hundred years before his coming, and still are in possession of the Scriptures, containing these and many other predictions concerning him, which were strictly fulfilled.

The very existence, and, other circumstances respecting this extraordinary people, the Jews, are so many arguments in proof of Christianity. They have now subsisted, as a distinct people, for more than four thousand years, during which they have again and again been subdued, harassed, and almost extirpated. Their mighty conquerors, the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Macedonians, the Syrians, and the Romans, have, in their turns, ceased to exist and can no where be found as distinct nations : while the Jews exist in great numbers, and are known in every part of the world. How can this be accounted for ? Why has God preserved them alone, amongst the ancient nations of the earth ? The truth is, they are still the subject of prophecy, with respect to both the Old and New Testament. They exist as monuments of God's wrath against them ; as witnesses to the truth of the Scriptures which condemn them ; and as the destined subjects of his final mercy before the end of the world. They are to be found in every quarter of the globe ; but in the condition which their great legislator Moses threatened them with, if they forsook the Lord, namely, that he would *remove them into all the kingdoms of the earth.* *Deut.* xxviii. 25. That they should become *an astonishment and a by-word, among all nations,* *ibid.* 37. That they should *find no ease, neither should the sole of their foot have rest,* *ibid.* 65. Finally, they are every where seen, but carrying, written on their foreheads, the curse which they pronounced on themselves in rejecting their Messiah : *his blood be upon us and upon our children.* *Mat.* xxvii. 25. Still is this extraordinary people preserved, to be, in the end, converted, and to find mercy. *Rom.* xi. 25, &c.



## LETTER II.

TO JAMES BROWN, Esq. &amp;c.

## PRELIMINARIES.

Winton, October 20, 180

DEAR SIR,

YOU certainly want no apology for writing to me on the subject of your letter. For if, as St. Peter inculcates, each Christian ought to be *ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him*, 1 Pet. iii. 15. how inexcusable would a person of my ministry and commission be, who am *a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise*; Rom. i. 14. were I unwilling to give the utmost satisfaction in my power, respecting the Catholic religion, to any human being whose inquiries appear to proceed from a serious and candid mind, desirous of discovering and embracing religious truth, such as I must believe yours to be. And yet this disposition is exceedingly rare among Christians. Infinitely the greater part of them, in choosing a system of religion, or in adhering to one, are guided by motives of interest, worldly honour, or convenience. These inducements not only rouse their worst passions, but also blind their judgment; so as to create hideous phantoms to their intellectual eyes, and to hinder them from seeing the most conspicuous objects which stand before them. To such inconsistent Christians, nothing proves so irritating as the attempt to disabuse them of their errors, except the success of it, by putting it out of their power to defend them any longer. These are they; and O! how infinite is their number! of whom Christ says, *they love darkness rather than light*, John iii. 16.; and who say to the prophets, *Prophecy not unto us right things: speak unto us smooth things*. Isai. xxx. 10. They form to themselves a *false conscience*, as the Jews did, when they murdered their Messiah, Acts iii. 17.: and as he himself foretold many others would do, in murdering his disciples. John xvi. 2. I cannot help saying that I myself have experienced something of this spirit, in my religious discussions with persons who have been loudest in professing their candour and charity. Hence, I make no doubt that, if the elucidation which you call for at my hands, for your numerous society, should happen, by any means to become public, that I shall have to *eat the bread of affliction, and drink the water of tribulation*, 1 Kings xxii. 17. for this

discharge of my duty, perhaps for the remainder of my life. But, as the apostle writes, *none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear to me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus.* ACTS xx. 24.

It remains, sir, to settle the conditions of our correspondence. What I propose is, that, in the first place, we should mutually, and indeed all of us who are concerned in this friendly controversy, be at perfect liberty, to speak, without offence to any one, of doctrines, practices, and persons, as we judge best for the discovery of truth: secondly, that we should be disposed, in common, as far as poor human nature will permit, to investigate truth with impartiality; to acknowledge it, when discovered, with candour; and, of course, to renounce every error and unfounded prejudice that may be detected, on any side, whatever it may cost us in so doing. I, for my part, dear sir, here solemnly promise, that I will publicly renounce the religion, of which I am a minister, and will induce as many of my flock, as I may have influence over, to do the same, should it prove to be that "mass of absurdity, bigotry, superstition, idolatry, and immorality," which you, sir, and most Protestants conceive it to be; nay, even if I should not succeed in clearing it of these respective charges. To religious controversy, when originating in its proper motives, a desire of serving God and securing our salvation, I cannot declare myself an enemy, without virtually condemning the conduct of Christ himself, who, on every occasion, arraigned and refuted the errors of the Pharisees: but I cannot conceive any hypocrisy so detestable as that of ascending the pulpit or employing the pen on sacred subjects to serve our temporal interest, our resentment, or our pride, under pretext of promoting or defending religious truth.—To inquirers, in the former predicament, I hold myself a debtor, as I have already said; but the circumstances must be extraordinary to induce me to hold a communication with persons in the latter. Lastly, as you appear, sir, to approve of the plan I spoke of in my first letter to Dr. Sturges, I mean to pursue it on the present occasion. This, however, will necessarily throw back the examination of your charges to a considerable distance as several other important inquiries must precede.

I am, &c.

J. M

## LETTER III.

From JAMES BROWN, Esq. to the Rev. J. M. D. D.

PRELIMINARIES.

*New Cottage, Oct. 30, 1801*

REVEREND SIR,

I HAVE been favoured, in due course, with yours of the 20th instant, which I have communicated to those persons of our society, whom I have had an opportunity of seeing. No circumstance could strike us with greater sorrow, than that you should suffer any inconvenience from your edifying promptness to comply with our well meant request, and we confidently trust that nothing of the kind will take place through our fault. We agree with you, as to the necessity of perfect freedom of speech, where the discovery of important truths is the real object of inquiry. Hence, while we are at liberty to censure many of your popes, and other clergy, Mr. Topham will not be offended with any thing that you can prove against Calvin; nor will Mr. Rankin quarrel with you for exposing the faults of George Fox and James Naylor; nor shall I complain of you for any thing that you can make out against our venerable Latimer or Cranmer; I say the same of doctrines and practices, as of persons. If you are guilty of Idolatry, or we of heresy, we are respectively unfortunate, and the greatest charity we can do, is to point out to each other the danger of our respective situations, to their full extent. Not to renounce error and embrace truth of every kind, when we clearly see it, would be folly; and to neglect doing this, when the question is about religious truth, would be folly and wickedness combined together. Finally, we cheerfully leave you to follow what course you please, and to whatever extent you please, provided you only give us such satisfaction as you can give, on the subjects I mentioned in my former letter,

I am, Rev. Sir, &c. JAMES BROWN.

## LETTER IV.

To JAMES BROWN, Esq. &c.

DISPOSITIONS FOR RELIGIOUS INQUIRY.

DEAR SIR,

THE dispositions which you profess, on the part of your friends, as well as yourself, I own, please me, and animate me

to undertake the task you impose upon me. Nevertheless availing myself of the liberty of speech which, you and your friends allow me, I am forced to observe that there is nothing in which men are more apt to deceive themselves, than in thinking themselves to be free from religious prejudices, and sincere in seeking after, and resolved to embrace and follow the truth of religion, in opposition to their preconceived opinions and worldly interests. How many imitate Pilate, who, when he had asked our Saviour the question, *What is truth?* presently went out of his company, before he could receive an answer to it: *John* xviii. 38. How many others resemble the rich young man, who, having interrogated Christ, *What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?* when this divine master answered him, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give to the poor;—went away sorrowful!* *Matt.* xix. 22. Finally, how many more act like certain presumptuous disciples of our Lord, who when he had propounded to them a mystery beyond their conception, that of the real presence, in these words, *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed:—said, this is a hard saying; who can hear it?—and went back and walked no more with him!* *John* vi. 56 O! if all Christians, of the different sects and opinions, were but possessed of the sincerity, disinterestedness, and earnestness, to serve their God, and save their souls, which a Francis Walsingham, kinsman to the great statesman of that name, a Hugh Paulin Cressy, dean of Laughlin, and prebendary of Windsor, and an Anthony Ulric, duke of Brunswick and Lunenburgh, prove themselves to have been possessed of; the first, in his *Search into Matters of Religion*; the second, in his *Exomologesis, or Motives of Conversion, &c.*; and the last, in his *Fifty Reasons*; how soon would all and every one of our controversies cease, and we be all united in one faith, hope, and charity! I will here transcribe, from the preface to the *Fifty Reasons*, what the illustrious relative of his majesty says, concerning the dispositions, with which he set about inquiring into the grounds and differences of the several systems of Christianity, when he began to entertain doubts concerning the truth of that in which he had been educated; namely, Lutheranism. He says, “First, I earnestly implored the aid and grace of the Holy Ghost, and with all my power begged the light of true faith, from God, the father of lights,” &c. Secondly, I made a strong resolution, by the grace of God, to avoid sin, well knowing that *Wisdom will not enter into a corrupt mind, nor dwell in a body subject to sin,*” *Wisd.* i. 4. “and I am convinced, and was so then, that the reason why so many

are ignorant of the true faith, and do not embrace it, is because they are plunged into several vices, and particularly into carnal sins." Then, "Thirdly, I renounced all sorts of prejudices, whatever they were, which incline men to one religion more than another, which unhappily I might have formerly espoused, and I brought myself to a perfect indifference, so as to be ready to embrace whichever the grace of the Holy Ghost, and the light of reason, should point out to me, without any regard to the advantages and inconveniences, that might attend it in this world." "Lastly, I entered upon this deliberation, and this choice, in the manner I should wish to have done it at the hour of my death, and in a full conviction, that, at the day of judgment, I must give an account to God, why I followed this religion in preference to all the rest." The princely inquirer finishes this account of himself with the following awful reflections: "Man has but one soul, which will be eternally either damned or saved. *What doth it avail a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?* Matt. xvi. 26.—Eternity knows no end. The course of it is perpetual. It is a series of unlimited duration.—There is no comparison between things infinite and those which are not so O! the happiness of the eternity of the saints! O! the wretchedness of the eternity of the damned. One of these two eternities awaits us!"

I remain, Sir, yours, &c. J M.

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## LETTER V.

To JAMES BROWN, Esq.

### METHOD OF FINDING OUT THE TRUE RELIGION.

DEAR SIR,

IT is obvious to common sense, that, in order to find out any hidden thing, or to do any difficult thing, we must first discover, and then follow, the proper method for such purpose. If we do not take the right road to any distant place, it cannot be expected that we should arrive at it. If we get hold of a wrong clue, we shall never extricate ourselves from a labyrinth. Some persons choose their religion as they do their clothes, by fancy. They are pleased, for example, with the talents of a preacher, when presently they adopt his creed. Many adhere to their religious system, merely because they were educated in it, and because it was that of their parents and family; which if it were a reasonable motive for their resolution, would equally excuse

Jews, Turks, and Pagans, for persisting in their respective impiety, and would impeach the preaching of Christ and his apostles! Others glory in their religion, because it is the one established in this their country, so renowned for science, literature and arms: not reflecting that the polished and conquering nations of antiquity, the Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, were left, by the inscrutable judgments of God, *in darkness and the shadow of death*, while a poor oppressed and despised people on the banks of the Jordan, were the only depository of divine truth, and the sole truly enlightened nation. But, far the greater part even of Christians, of every denomination make the business of eternity subservient to that of time, and profess the religion which suits best their interest, their reputation, and their convenience. I trust that none of your respectable society fall under any of these descriptions. They all have or fancy they have, a rational method of discovering religious truth, in other words an adequate *rule of faith*. Before I enter into any disquisition on this all-important controversy, concerning the *right rule of faith*, on which the determination of every other depends, I will lay down three fundamental maxims, the truth of which, I believe, no rational Christian will dispute.

First, *our divine master, Christ, in establishing a religion here on earth, to which all the nations of it were invited, Mat. xviii. 19, left some RULE or method, by which those persons, who sincerely seek for it, may certainly find it.*

Secondly, *this rule or method, must be SECURE and never-failing; so as not to be ever liable to lead a rational, sincere inquirer, into error, impiety, or immorality, of any kind.*

Thirdly, *This rule or method must be UNIVERSAL, that is to say, adapted to the abilities and other circumstances, of all those persons for whom the religion itself was intended; namely the great bulk of mankind.*

By adhering to these undeniable maxims, we shall quickly, dear sir, and clearly, discover the method appointed by Christ, for arriving at the knowledge of the truths which he has taught, in other words, at *the right rule of faith*. Being possessed of this rule, we shall have nothing else, of course, to do than to make use of it, for securely, and, I trust, amicably settling all our controversies. This is the short and satisfactory method of composing religious differences, which I alluded to in my above mentioned letter to Dr. Sturges. To discuss them all separately is an endless task, whereas this method reduces them to a single question

