

**A HISTORY
OF THE PROTESTANT
REFORMATION**

LETTER ONE



By William Cobbett

1824

**A HISTORY
OF THE
PROTESTANT "REFORMATION"
IN
ENGLAND AND IRELAND**

**Showing how that event has impoverished and degraded
the main
body of the People in those Countries**

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

Addressed to all sensible and just Englishmen

BY WILLIAM COBBETT.

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A HISTORY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

LETTER I INTRODUCTION

Kensington, 29th November 1824
By William Cobbett

My Friends,

1. We have recently seen a rescript from the King to the Bishops, the object of which was to cause them to call upon their Clergy, to cause collections of money to be made in the several parishes throughout England, for the purpose of promoting what is called the "religious education" of the people. The Bishops, in conveying their instructions, on this subject! To their Clergy, direct them to send the money thus collected to a Mr. Joshua Watson, in London, who, it seems, is the Treasurer of this religious education concern, and who is, or lately was, a wine and spirit dealer, in Mincing-lane, Fenchurch-street.

This same Mr. Watson. is also the head man of a society, called the "Society for promoting Christian Knowledge" The present Bishop of Winchester, in his first charge to the Clergy of his diocese, says, that this society is the "correct expounder of evangelical truth, and firm supporter, of the. Established Church;" and he accordingly strongly recommends, that;the publications put forth by this society be put into the hands of the scholars of those schools to promote which, the above-mentioned collections were made by royal authority.

2. We shall further on, have an opportunity of asking what sort of a Clergy this must be, who, while they swallow, in England and Ireland, about eight millions a year, call upon their parishioners for money to be sent to a wine and spirit merchant, that he may' cause the children of the country to have a "religious education" But, not to stop, at present, for this purpose, pray observe, my friends, that this society for "promoting Christian knowledge" is continually putting forth publications the object of which, is to make the people of England believe, that the Catholic religion is idolatrous and damnable;" and that of course, the one-third part of the whole of our fellow-subjects are idolaters, and are destined to eternal perdition, and that they, of course, ought not to enjoy the same rights that we Protestants enjoy. These calumniators know well that this same Catholic religion was, for nine hundred years, the only Christian religion known to our forefathers.

This is a fact which they cannot disguise from intelligent persons and, therefore, they, like the Protestant Clergy, are constantly applauding the change which took place about two hundred years ago, and which change goes by the name of the **REFORMATION**.

3. Before we proceed further, let us clearly understand the meaning of these words: Catholic, Protestant, and Reformation. Catholic means universal and the religion which takes this epithet, was called universal, because all Christian people of every nation acknowledged it to be the only true religion, and because they all acknowledge one and the same head of the Church; and this was the POPE, who, though generally resided at Rome, was the head of the Church of England, in France, in Spain and in short, in every part of the world where the Christian religion was professed. But, there came a time, when some nations, or, rather, parts of some nations, cast off the authority of the Pope, and, of course, no longer acknowledged him as the head of the Christian Church. These nations, or parts of nations, declared, or protested, against the authority of their former head, and also against the doctrines of that Church, which, until now, had been the only Christian Church. They, therefore, called themselves Protestors, or Protestants; and this is now the appellation given to all who are not Catholics. As to the word Reformation, it means, an alteration for the better; and it would have been hard indeed if the makers of this great alteration could not have contrived to give it a good name.

4. Now, my friends, a fair and honest inquiry will teach us, that this was an alteration greatly for the worse; that the "Reformation," as it is called, was engendered in beastly lust, brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy, and cherished and fed by plunder, devastation, and by rivers of innocent English and Irish blood; and that, as to its more remote consequences, they are, some of them, now before us, in that misery, that beggary, that nakedness, that hunger, that everlasting wrangling and spite, which now stare us in the face and stun our ears at every turn, and which the "Reformation" has given us in exchange for the ease and happiness and harmony and Christian charity, enjoyed so abundantly, and for so many ages, by our Catholic forefathers.

5. Were there, for the entering on this inquiry, no motive other than that of a bare love of justice that motive alone would, I hope, be sufficient with the far greater part of Englishmen. But, besides this abstract motive, there is another of great and pressing practical importance. A full third part of our fellow subjects are still Catholics; and when we consider, that the principles of the "Reformation" are put forward as the ground for excluding them from their civil rights, and also as the ground for treating them in a manner the most scornful, spiteful and cruel; when we consider, that it is not in human nature for men to endure such treatment, without wishing for, and without seeking, opportunities for taking vengeance; when we consider the present formidable attitude of foreign nations, naturally our foes, and how necessary it is that we should all be cordially united, in order to preserve the independence of our country; when we consider, that such union is utterly impossible as long as one third part of the people are treated as outcasts, because, and only because, they have, in spite of two hundred years of persecutions unparalleled, adhered to the religion of their and of our fathers: when we consider these things, that fair and honest inquiry, on which a bare love of justice might well induce us to enter, presses itself upon us as a duty which we owe to ourselves, our children, and our country.

6. If you will follow me in this inquiry, I will first show you how this thing called the "Reformation" began; what it arose out of and then I will show you its progress, how it marched on, plundering, devastating inflicting torments on the people, and shedding their innocent blood. I will trace it downward through all its stages, until I show you its natural result, in the schemes of Parson Malthus, in the Oundle Plan of Lord John Russell's recommending, in the present misery indescribable of the labouring classes in England and Ireland, and in that odious and detestable system, which has made Jews and paper-money makers the real owners of a large part of the estates in this kingdom.

7. But, before I enter on this series of deeds and of consequences, it is necessary to offer you some observations of a more general nature, and calculated to make us doubt, at least, of the truth of what we have heard against the Catholic religion. Our minds have been so completely filled with the abuse of this religion, that, at first, we can hardly bring ourselves to listen to any thing said in defence of it, or, an apology for it.

Those whom you will, by and by, find possession of the spoils of the Catholic Church, and, indeed of those of the Catholic nobles and gentlemen, not forgetting those of the poor these persons have always had the strongest possible motive for causing the people to be brought up in the belief, that the Catholic religion was, and something to inspire us with horror. From our very infancy on the knees of our mothers, we have been taught to believe that to be a Catholic was to be a false, cruel, and bloody wretch; and popery and slavery have been rung in our ears, till, whether we looked on the Catholics in their private or their public capacity, we have inevitably come to the conclusion, that they were every thing that was vicious and vile.

8. But you may say, why should any body, and particularly our countrymen, take such pains to deceive us? Why should they, for so many years, take the trouble to write and publish books of all sizes, from big folios down to half penny tracts, in order to make us think ill of this Catholic religion? Now, my friends, take an instance in answer this way. The immense property of the Catholic Church in Ireland, in which, mind, the poor had a share, taken from the Catholics and given to the Protestant Bishops and Parsons. These have never been able to change to religion of the main body of the people of that country and there these Bishops and Parsons are enjoying these immense revenues without having scarcely any flocks. This produces great discontents, makes the country continually a state of ferment, causes enormous expenses to England and exposes the whole kingdom to great danger in case of war. Now, if those who enjoy these revenues, and the close connexions in this country, had not made us believe that there was something very bad, wicked and hostile in the Catholic religion should we not, long ago, have asked why they put us to all this expense for keeping that religion down? They never told us, and they never tell us, that this Catholic religion was the only religion known to our own forefathers for nine hundred years.

If they had told us this, we should have said, that it could not possibly have been so very bad a religion, and that it would be better to leave the Irish people still to enjoy it; and that, since there were scarcely any Protestant flocks, it would be better for us all, if the Church revenues were to go again to the original.

9. Ah! my friends! here we have the real motive for all the abuse, all the hideous calumnies that have been heaped upon the Catholic religion, and upon all that numerous body of our fellow-subjects who adhere to that ancient faith.

When you think of the power of this motive, you will not be surprised that the great and incessant pains that have been faked to deceive us. Even the Scripture itself has been perverted in order to blacken the Catholics. In books of all sizes read from the pulpit of every church, we have been taught from our infancy, that the "beast, the man of sin, and the scarlet whore?" mentioned in the Revelations, were James which God himself had given to the Pope; and we have all been taught to believe of the Catholic Church, that her worship was "idolatrous," and that her doctrines were "damnable."

10. Now let us put a plain question or two to ourselves, and to these our teachers; and we shall quickly be able to form a just estimate of the modesty, sincerity, and consistency of these revilers of the Catholic religion. They will not, because they cannot, deny, that this religion was the ONLY CHRISTIAN religion in the world for fifteen hundred years after the death of Christ. They may say, indeed, that for the first three hundred years there was no Pope seated at Rome. But, help, for twelve hundred years there had been; and, during that period, all the nations of Europe, and some part, of America, had become Christian, and all acknowledged the Pope as their head in religious matters; and, in short, there was no other Christian Church known in the world, nor had any other ever been thought of.

Can we believe, then, that Christ, who died to save sinners, who sent forth his gospel as the means of their salvation, would have suffered false Christian religion, and no other than a fake Christian religion, to be known amongst men all this while? Will these modest assailants of the faith of

their and our "ancestors assert to our faces, that, for twelve hundred years at least, there were no true Christians in the world?

Will they tell us, that Christ, who promised to be with the teachers of his word to the end of the world, wholly left them, and gave up hundreds upon hundreds of millions of people to be led in darkness to their eternal perdition by one whom his inspired followers had denominated the "man of sin and the scarlet whore"? Will they, indeed, dare to tell us, that Christ gave up the world wholly to the "Antichrist" for twelve hundred years? Yet this they must do they must thus stand forward with bold and unblushing blasphemy; or they must confess themselves guilty of the most atrocious calumny against the Catholic religion.

11. Then, coming nearer home, and closer to our own bosoms, our ancestors became Christians about six hundred years after the death of Christ. And how did they become Christians? Who first pronounced the name of Christ to this land? Who converted the English from paganism to Christianity? Some Protestant saint, doubtless, warm from a victory like that of Skibbereen? Oh, no! The work was begun, continued, and ended by the Popes, one of whom sent over some Monks (of whom we shall see more by and by), who settled at Canterbury, and from whose beginnings the Christian religion spread, like the grain of mustard seed, rapidly over the land. Whatever, therefore, any other part of the world might have known of Christianity before the Pope became the settled and acknowledged head of the Church, England, at any rate, never had known of any Christian religion other than that at the head of which was the Pope; and in this religion, with the Pope at its head, England continued to be firmly fixed for nine hundred years.

12. What, then will our kind teachers tell us, that it was the "scarlet whore" and "Antichrist" who brought the glad tidings of the gospel into England! Will they tell us, too, that all the millions and hundreds of millions of English people, who died during those nine hundred years, expired without the smallest chance of salvation? Will they tell us, that all our fathers, who first built our churches, and whose flesh and bones form the earth for many feet deep in all the church-yards; will they tell us, that all these are now howling in the regions of the damned?

Nature beats at our bosom, and bids us shudder at the impious, the horrid thought! Yet, this, even this, these presumptuous men must tell us; or they must confess their base calumny, in calling the Pope "Antichrist," and the Catholic worship "idolatrous" and its doctrines "damnable."

13. But, coming to the present time, the days in which we ourselves live; if we look round the world, we shall find that now, even now, about nine-tenths of all those who profess to be Christians are Catholics, What, then has Christ suffered "Antichrist" to reign almost wholly uninterrupted even unto this day? Has Christ made the Protestant Church? Did he suggest the "Reformation"?

And does he, after all, then, suffer the followers of "Antichrist" to out-number his own followers, nine to one? But, in this view of the matter, how lucky have been the Clergy of our Protestant Church, established by law! Her flock does not, if fairly counted, contain one five-hundredth part of the number of those who are Catholics; while, observe her Clergy receive more, not only than all the Clergy of all the Catholic nations, but more than all the Clergy of all the Christian people in the world, Catholics and Protestants are put together! She calls herself a Church "by law established."

She never omits this part of her tide. She calls herself "holy" "godly," and a good deal besides. She calls her ministers "reverend" and her worship and doctrines "evangelical" She talks very much about her reliance for support upon her "founder" for she calls him Christ; but, in stating her claims and her qualities, she never fails to conclude with, "by LAW established." This "law," however, sometimes wants the bayonet to enforce it; and her tithes are not un-frequently collected by the help of soldiers, under the command of her ministers, whom the law has made Justices of the Peace!

14. To return; are we to believe, then, that Christ has, even unto this day, abandoned nine-tenths of the people of Europe to "Antichrist"? Are we to believe, that, if this "Law-established" religion had been the religion of Christ, and the Catholic religion that of "Antichrist:" if this had been the case, are we to believe, that the "law established religion", that our "holy religion," as George Rose used to call it, while his grasping paw was deep in our purses; if this had been the case, are we to believe that the "law-established" religion, that the "holy religion" of John Bowles, the Dutch Commissioner; are we to believe, that that "holy religion" (the fruits of which we behold in those worthy sons of the church, Vital Christianity and Jocelyn Roden) would, at the end of two hundred years, have been able to count only one member for about every five hundred members (taking all Christendom together) of that Church against which the "law" Church protested and still protests?

15. Away, then, my friends, with this foul abuse of the Catholic religion, which, after all, is the religion of about nine-tenths of all the Christians in the world. Away with this shameful calumny, the sole object of which is, and always has been, to secure a quiet possession of the spoils of the Catholic Church, and of the poor; for, we shall, by-and-by, clearly see how the poor were despoiled at the same time that the Church was.

16. But, there remains to be noticed, in this place, an instance or two of the consistency of these revilers of the Catholic Church and faith. We shall, in due time, see how the Protestants, the moment they began their Reformation they were split up into dozens and scores of sects, each condemning the other to eternal flames. But, I will here speak only of the "Church of England," as it is called, "by law established." Now, we know very well, that we, who belong to this Protestant Church, believe, or profess to believe, that the New Testament, as printed and distributed amongst us, contains the true and genuine "word of God:" that it contains the "words of eternal life" that it points out to us the means, and the only means, by which we can possibly be saved from everlasting ire.

This is what we believe. Now, how did we come by this New Testament? Who gave us this real and genuine word of God?" From whom did we receive these words of eternal life?" Come, Joshua Watson, wine and spirit merchant, and teacher of religion to the people of England: come, Joshua, answer these questions?

They are questions of great importance; because, if this be the book, and the only book, which contains instructions relative to the means of saving our souls, it is manifest, that it is a matter of deep interest to us, who it was that this book came from to us, through what channel we received it, and what proof we have of its authenticity.

17. Joshua Watson I Alas! wine and spirit merchant, who. art at the head of a Society "Sat promoting Christian Knowledge" which Society the Bishop of Winchester call the "correct expounder of evangelical truth, and the firm supporter" of the law-established Church: Oh I Joshua, teacher of religion to the people of England, who pay six or eight millions a year to the Parsons who employ thee to do this teaching: Oh I Joshua, what a shocking thing it is, that we Protestants should have received this New Testament; this real and genuine "word of God;" these "words of eternal life" this book that points out to us the means, and the only means, of salvation: what a shocking fact, that we should have received this book from that Pope and that Catholic Church, to make us believe that the first of whom is the whore of Babylon, and that the worship of the last is idolatrous" and her doctrines damnable, you, Joshua, and your Society for "promoting Christian Knowledge" are now, at this very moment, publishing and pushing into circulation less than seventeen different books and tracts!

18. After the death of Christ, there was a long space of time before the gospel was put into any thing like its present shape. It was preached in several countries, and churches were established

in those countries, long before the written gospel was known much of, or, at least, long before It was made use of as a guide to the Christian churches.

At the end of about four hundred years, the written gospels were laid before a council of the Catholic Church, of which the Pope was the head. But, there were several gospels besides those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John! Several other of the apostles, or early disciples, had written gospels. All these, long after the death of the authors, were, as I have just said, laid before a council of the Catholic Church; and that council determined which of the gospels were genuine and which not. It retained the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; it determined that these four should be received and believe" in, and that all the rest should be rejected.

19. So that here Joshua Watson's Society is without; any other gospel; without any other word of God; without any guide to eternal life; without any other than that which, that Society, as well as all the rest of us, have received from a church, which that Society calls "idolatrous" and the head of which it calls "the beast, the man of sin, the" scarlet whore, and Antichrist "To a pretty state, then, do we reduce ourselves by giving in to this foul-mouthed calumny against the Catholic Church: to a, pretty state do" we reduce ourselves by our tame and stupid listening to those who calumniate the Catholic Church, because they live on the spoils of it.

To a pretty state do we come, when we, still listen to these calumniators, proclaim to the world, that our only hope of salvation rests on promises contained in a book, which we have received from the Scarlet Whore, and of the authenticity of which we have no voucher other than that Scarlet Whore and that Church, whose worship is "idolatrous" and whose doctrines are "damnable"!

20. This is pretty complete; but still this, which applies to all Protestants, is not enough of inconsistency to satisfy the law-Church of England. That Church has a Liturgy in great part made up of the Catholic service; but, there are the two creeds, the Nicene and Athanasian.

The first was composed and promulgated by a Council of the Catholic Church and the Pope; and, the second was adopted, and ordered to be used, by another Council of that Church, with the Pope at its head. Must not a Parson of the law-Church be pretty impudent, then, to call the Pope "Antichrist," and to call the Catholic Church "idolatrous?" Pretty impudent, indeed; but we do not, even yet, see the grossest inconsistency of all.

21. To our law-Church Prayer-Book there is a Calendar prefixed, and, in this Calendar there are, under different days of the year, certain names of holy men and women. Their names are put here in order that their anniversaries may be attended to, and religiously attended to, by the people. Now, who are those holy persons?

Some Protestant Saints, to be sure? Not one! What, not saint Luther, nor saint Cranmer, nor saint Edward the Sixth, nor the "VIRGIN" saint Elizabeth? Not a soul of them; but, a whole list of Popes, Catholic Bishops, and Catholic holy persons, female as well as male. Several virgins; "j but not the "VIRGIN Queen;" nor any one of the Protestant race. At first sight, this seems odd; for, this Calendar was made by Act of Parliament. But, the truth is, it was necessary to preserve some of the names, so long revered by the people, in order to keep them in better humour, and to lead them by degrees into the new religion.

At any rate, here is the Prayer-Book, holding up for our respect and reverence a whole list of Popes and of other persons belonging to the Catholic Church, while those who teach us to read and to repeat the contents of this same Prayer-Book, are incessantly dinning in our ears, that the Popes have all been "Antichrists", and that their Church was, and is, idolatrous in its worship and damnable in its doctrines!

22. Judge Bayley (one of the present twelve Judges) has, I "have heard, written a Commentary on the Common Prayer-Book, I should like to know what the Judge says about these Catholic Saints (and no Others) being placed in this Protestant Calendar. We shall, in due time, see the curious way in which this Prayer-Book was first made, and how it was new-modelled from time to time. But, here it is now, even to this day, with the Catholic Saints in the Calendar, whence it seems, that, even down to the reign of Charles II., when the last "improvement" was made in it, there had not appeared any Protestant Saint to supply the place of the old Catholic ones.

23. But, there is still a dilemma for these revilers of the Catholic religion. (We swear on the four Evangelists) And these, mind, we get from the Pope and a Council of the Catholic Church. So that, if the Pope be "Anti-christ," that is to say, if those who have taught us to abuse and abhor the Catholics; if those be not the falsest and most malignant wretches that ever breathed, here are we swearing upon a book handed down to us by "Antichrist"? And, as if the inconsistencies and absurdities springing out of this Protestant calumny were to have no end, that "Christianity" which the judges say, "is part and parcel of the law of the land;" that Christianity is no other than what is taught in this same New Testament. Take the New Testament away, and there is not a particle of this "part and parcel" left. What is our situation; what a figure does this part and parcel of the law of the land make, with a dozen of persons in gaol for offending against it; what a figure does it make, if we adopt the abuse and falsehood of the revilers of the Catholic Church. What a figure does that "part and parcel" make, if we follow our teachers; if we follow Joshua Watson's Society; if we follow every brawler from ever pub in the country, and say that the Pope (from whom we got the "part and parcel") is "Antichrist" and the "scarlet whore"!

24. Enough! Aye, and much more than enough to make the moral repent of having so long been the dupes of the crafty and selfish rivalries of the religion of our fathers. Were there ever presumption, impudence, inconsistency and inequality equal to those of which we have just taken a view?

When we then open our eyes and look into the matter, we are astonished at and ashamed of, our credulity; and, this more especially when we reflect, that the far greater part of us have suffered ourselves to be misled by men not possessing a tenth part of our own capacity; by a set of low minded, greedy creatures; but, indefatigable; never losing sight of the spoil; and, day after day, and year after year, close at the ears of the people from their very childhood, din, din, din, incessantly, until from mere habit the monstrous lie got sucked in for gospel truth. Had the lie been attended with no consequences, it might have been merely laughed at, as all men of sense laugh at the old silly lie about the late King having "made the Judges independent of the Crown." But, there have been consequences, and those most dreadful.

By the means of the great Protestant lie, the Catholics and Protestants have been kept in a constant state of hostile feeling towards each other ; and both, but particularly the former, have been, in one shape or another, oppressed and plundered, for ages, with impunity to the oppressors and plunderers.

25. Having now shown, that the censure heaped on the religion of our forefathers is not only unjust, but absurd, and monstrous; having shown that there could be no good reason for altering the religion of England from Catholic to Protestant; having exposed the vile and selfish calumniators, and duly prepared the mind of every just person for that fair and honest inquiry, of which I spoke in paragraph 4: having done this, I should now enter on that inquiry, and show, in the first place, how this "Reformation," as it is called, was engendered by beastly lust;" but, there is yet one topic to be touched on in this preliminary Number of my little Work.

26. Truth has, with regard to this subject, made great progress in the public mind, in England, within the last dozen years. Men are not now to be carried away by the cry of "No-Popery," and the "Church in danger". Parson Hay, at Manchester, Parson Dent, at Northalerton, and their like all over the country, have greatly enlightened us. Parson Morrit, at Skibbereen, has done great

good in this work of enlightening. Nor must we forget a Right Reverend Protestant Father in God, who certainly did more in the opening of eyes than any Bishop that I ever before heard of. So that it is now by no means rare to hear Protestants allow, that, as to faith, as to morals, as to salvation, the Catholic religion is quite good enough; and, a very large part of the people of England are forward to declare, that the Catholics have been most barbarously treated, and that it is time that they had justice done them.

27. But, with all these just notions, there exists, amongst Protestants in general, an opinion, that the Catholic religion is unfavourable to civil liberty, and also unfavourable to the producing and the exerting of genius and talent. As to the former, I shall, in the course of this work, find a suitable place for proving, by the melancholy experience of this country, that a total want of civil liberty was unknown in England, as long as its religion was Catholic and, that the moment it lost the protection of the Pope, its kings and nobles became horrid tyrants, and its people the most abject and most ill-treated of slaves. This I shall prove in due time and place; and I beg you, my friends, to bear in mind, that I pledge myself to this proof.

28. And now to the other charge against the Catholic religion; namely, that it is unfavourable to the producing of genius and talent, and to the causing of them to be exerted. I am going, in a minute, to prove, that this charge is not only false, but ridiculously and most stupidly false; but, before I do this, let me observe, that this charge comes from the same source with all the other charges against the Catholics. "Monkish ignorance and superstition" is a phrase that you find in every Protestant historian, from the reign of the "VIRGIN" Elizabeth to the present hour. It has, with time, become a sort of magpie-saying, like "glorious revolution," "happy constitution," "good old king" "envy of surrounding nations," and the like. But there has always, false as the notion will presently be proved to be, there has always been a very sufficient motive for inculcating it. Blackstone, for instance, in his Commentaries "on the Laws of England, never lets slip an opportunity to rail against "Monkish ignorance and superstition."

Blackstone was no fool. At the very time when he was writing these Commentaries, and reading them to the students at Oxford, he was, and he knew it, **LIVING** upon the spoils of the Catholic Church, and the spoils of the Catholic gentry, and also of the poor! He knew that well. He knew that, if every one had had his due, he would not have been fattening where he was. He knew, besides, that all who heard his lectures were aware of the spoils that he was wallowing in. These considerations were quite sufficient to induce him to abuse the Catholic Church, and to affect to look back with contempt to Catholic times.

29. For cool, placid, unruffled impudence, there have been no people in the world to equal the "Reformation" gentry; and Blackstone seems to have inherited this quality in a direct line from some altar-robber of the reign of that sweet young Protestant saint, Edward the Sixth. If Blackstone had not actually felt the spoils of the Catholics sticking to his ribs, he would have recollected, that all those things, which he was eulogizing, Magna Charta, trial by jury, the offices of sheriff, justice of the peace, constable, and all the rest of it, arose in days of "monkish ignorance and superstition." If his head had not been rendered muddy by his gormandizing on the spoils of the Catholic Church, he would have remembered, that Fortescue, and that that greatest of all our lawyers, Lyttleton, were born, bred, lived and died in the days of "monkish ignorance and superstition."

But, did not this Blackstone know, that the very roof, under which he was abusing our Catholic fathers, was made by these forefathers? Did he not, when he looked up to that roof, or, when he beheld any of those noble buildings, which, in defiance of time, still tell us what those forefathers were; did he not, when he beheld any of these, feel that he was a pigmy in mind, compared with "those whom he had the impudence to abuse?"

30. When we hear some Jew, or Orange-man, or parson-justice, or Jocelyn saint, talk about "monkish ignorance and superstition," we turn from him with silent contempt: but, Blackstone

is to be treated in another manner. It was at Oxford where he wrote, and when he was reading, his Commentaries. He well knew, that the foundations for learning at Oxford were laid, and brought to perfection, not only in monkish times, but, in a great part, by monks. He knew, that the Abbeys were public schools for education, each of them having one or more persons set apart to instruct the youth of the neighbourhood, without any expense to the parents. He knew, that each of the greater monasteries had a peculiar residence in the universities; and, whereas there were, in those times, nearly **THREE HUNDRED HALLS** and **PRIVATE SCHOOLS** at Oxford, besides the colleges, there were not above **EIGHT** remaining towards the middle of the 17th century. (*Phillip's Life of Cardinal Pole, Part I.* p. 220). That is to say, in about a hundred years after the enlightening "Reformation" began. At this time (1824) there are, I am informed, only **FIVE** Halls remaining, and not a single school.

31. I shall, in another place, have to show more fully the folly, and, indeed, the baseness, of railing against the monastic institutions generally; but, I must here confine myself to this charge against the Catholic religion, of being unfavourable to genius, talent, and, in short, to the powers of the mind. It is a strange notion; and one can hardly hear it mentioned without suspecting, that, some how or other, there is plunder at the bottom of the apparently nothing but stupid idea. Those who put forward this piece of rare impudence do not favour us with reasons for believing that the Catholic religion has any such tendency. They content themselves with the bare assertion, not supposing that it admits of any thing like disproof. They look upon it as assertion against assertion; and, in a question which depends on mere hardness of mouth, they know that their triumph is secure. But, this is a question that does admit of proof and very good proof too. The "Reformation" in England, was pretty nearly completed by the year 1600. By that time all the "monkish ignorance and superstition" were swept away. The monasteries were all pretty nearly knocked down, young Saint Edward's people had robbed all the altars, and the "**VIRGIN**" Queen had put the "finishing hand to the pillage. So that all was, in 1600, become as Protestant as heart could wish. Very well; the kingdom of France remained buried in "monkish ignorance and superstition" until the year 1787: that is to say, 187 years after happy England stood in a blaze of Protestant light! Now, then, if we carefully examine into the number of men remarkable for great powers of mind, men famed for their knowledge or genius; if we carefully examine into the number of such men produced by France in these 187 years, and the number of such men produced by England; Scotland and Ireland, during the same period; if we do this, we shall get at a pretty good foundation for judging of the effects of the two religions with regard to their influence or knowledge, genius, and what is generally called learning.

32. "Oh, no!" exclaim the fire-shovels. "France is a great deal bigger, and contains more people, than these Islands; and this is not fair play! Be not be frightened, good fire-shovels. According to your own account, these islands contain twenty-one millions; and the French say, that they have thirty millions. Therefore, when we have got the numbers, we will make an allowance of one third in our favour accordingly. If, for instance, the French have not three famous men to every two of ours, then I must confess, that the law-established Church and its family Muggletonians, Cameronians, Jumpers, Unitarians, Shaking Quakers, and the rest of the Protestant litter, are more favourable to knowledge and genius, than is the Catholic Church.

33. But how are we to ascertain these numbers? Very well. I shall refer to a work which has a place in every good library in the kingdom; I mean, the "Universal, Historical, Critical, and Bibliographical DICTIONARY." This work, which is everywhere received authority as to facts, contains lists of persons of all nations celebrated for their published works. But, then, to have a place in these lists, the person must have been really distinguished; his or her works must have been considered worthy, of universal notice. From these lists I shall take numbers, as before proposed. It will not be necessary to go into all the arts and sciences: eight or nine will be sufficient. It may be as well, perhaps, to take the Italians as well the French; for we all know that they were living in a shocking "monkish ignorance and superstition;" and they, poor, unfortunate and un-plundered souls, are so living unto this very day!

34. Here, then, is the statement; and you have only to observe, that the figures represent the number of persons were famous for the art or science opposite the name of whom the figures re placed. The period is, from the year 1*** to 1787, during which period France was under what You George Rose calls the "dark despotism of the Catholic Church," and what Blackstone calls "monkish ignorance and superstition;" and, during the same period, the Islands were in a blaze of light, sent forth by Luther, Crammer, Knox, and their followers. Here, then, is statement:

	England, Scotland, and Ireland.	France.	Italy.
Writers on Law	6	51	9
Mathematicians	17	52	15
Physicians and Surgeons	13	72	21
Writers on Natural History	6	33	11
Historians	21	139	22
Dramatic Writers	19	66	6
Grammarians	7	42	2
Poets	38	157	34
Painters	5	64	44
	132	676	164

35. Here is that very "SCALE," which a modest Scotch writer spoke of the other day, when he told the public, that, "Throughout Europe, Protestants rank higher in the scale of intellect than Catholics, and that Catholics in the neighbourhood of Protestants are more intellectual than those at a distance from them. This is a fine specimen of upstart Protestant impudence. The above "scale" is, however, a complete answer to it. Allow one-third more to the French on account of their superior populousness, and then there will remain to them 451 to our 132! So that they had, man for man, three and a half times as much intellect as we, though they are buried, all the while, in "monkish ignorance and superstition", and though they had no Protestant neighbours to catch the intellect from!

Even the Italians surpass us in this rivalry for intellect; for, their population is not equal to that of which we boast, and their number of men of mind considerably exceeds that of ours. But, do I not, all this while, misunderstand the matter? And, by intellect, does not the Scotchman mean the capacity to make, not books and pictures, but checks, bills, bonds, exchequer-bills, inimitable notes, and the like. Does he not mean loan-jobbing and stock-jobbing, insurance booking, annuities at ten percent, kite-flying, and all the "intellectual" proceedings of Change Alley; not, by any means, forgetting works like those of **Aslett** and **Fauktleroy**? Ah! in that case, I confess that he is right. On this scale Protestants do rank high indeed! And I should think it next to impossible for a Catholic to live in their neighbourhood without being much more intellectual; that is to say, much more of a Jewish, knave, than if he lived at a distance from them.

36. Here, then, my friends, sensible and just Englishmen I close this introductory Letter. I have shown you how grossly we have been deceived, even from our very infancy; I have shown you, not only the injustice, but the absurdity of the abuse heaped by our interested deluders on the religion, of their and our fathers. I have shown you enough to convince you, that there was no obviously just cause for an alteration in the religion of our country. I have, I dare say, awakened in your minds, a strong desire to know how it came to pass, then, that this alteration was made; and, in the following Letters, it shall be my anxious endeavour fully to gratify this desire. But,

observe, my chief object is to show, that this alteration made the main body of the people poor and miserable, compared with what they were before; that it impoverished and degraded them ; that it banished, at once, that "Old English Hospitality" of which we have since known nothing but the name; and that, in lieu of that hospitality, it gave us pauperism, a thing, the very name of which was never before known in England.

The End of Letter One



The “Five Solas of the Reformation” are Latin slogans used by Protestant Reformers to summarize and proclaim the essential theological distinctives of the Biblical Gospel:

Sola Scriptura, by Scripture alone.

Sola Fide, by faith alone.

Solus Christus, through Christ alone.

Sola Gratia, by grace alone.

Soli Deo Gloria, glory to God alone.



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Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"
(Isaiah 2:3)."**

