

**A HISTORY  
OF THE PROTESTANT  
REFORMATION**

**LETTER FOUR**



**By William Cobbett**

**1825**

**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 IV**

**Horrid Tyranny. Butchery of the Countess of Salisbury  
Celibacy Of the Clergy. Bishops of Winchester  
Hume's Charges and Bishop Tanner's Answer**

**By William Cobbett**

**Kensington, 28th February, 1825**

**My FRIENDS,**

**111.** We have seen, then, that the "Reformation" was engendered in beastly lust, brought forth in hypocrisy and perfidy, and we have had some specimens of the acts by which it caused innocent blood to be shed. We shall now, in this Letter and the next, see how it devastated and plundered the country, what poverty and misery it produced, and how it laid the sure foundation for that pauperism, that disgraceful immorality, that fearful prevalence of crimes of all sorts, which now so strongly mark the character of this nation, which was formerly the land of virtue and of plenty.

**112.** When, in paragraph 97, we left the King and Cranmer at their bloody work, we had come to the year 1536, and to the 27<sup>th</sup> year of the King's reign. In the year 1528, an act had been passed to exempt the King from paying any sum of money that he might have borrowed; another act followed this, for a similar purpose; and thus thousands of persons were ruined. His new Queen, Jane Seymour, brought him, in 1537, a son who was afterwards King, under the title of Edward VI; but the mother died in child-birth, and, according to Sir Richard Baker, had her body ripped up to preserve the child! In this great "Reformation" man all was of a piece: all was consistent: he seemed never to have any compassion for the suffering of any human being; and this is a characteristic which **WHITAKER** gives to his daughter Elizabeth.

**113.** Having a son for a successor, he, with his Parliament, enacted, in 1537, that Mary and Elizabeth, his two daughters, were bastards, and that, in case of a want of lawful issue, the King should be enabled, by letters patent, or by his last will, to give the crown to whom soever he pleased! To cap the whole, to complete a series of acts of tyranny such as was never before heard of, it was enacted in 1537, and in the 28th year of his reign, that except in cases of mere private right, "the King's Proclamations should be of the same force as Acts of Parliament. Thus, then, all law and justice were laid prostrate at the feet of a single man, and that man a man with whom

law was a mockery, on whom the name of justice was a libel, and to whom mercy was wholly unknown.

**114.** It is easy to imagine that no man's property or life could have security with power like this in the hands such a man. Magna Charta had been trampled under foot from the moment that the Pope's supremacy was assailed. The famous act of Edward the Third, for the security of the people against unfounded charges of high treason was wholly set aside. Numerous things were made high treason, which were never before thought criminal at all. The trials were, for a long while, a mere mockery; and at last, they were altogether, in many cases, laid aside and the accused were condemned to death, not only without being arraigned and heard in their defence; but, numerous cases, without being apprised of the crimes, pretended crimes for which they were executed. We heard of Deys of Algiers and of Beys of Tunis; but, never have heard of them, even in the most exaggerated accounts, deeds to be, in point of injustice and cruelty, compared with those of this man, whom **BURNETT** calls, "the firstborn son of the English Reformation," The objects of his bloody cruelty generally were, as they naturally would be, chosen from amongst the most virtuous of his subjects; because from them such a man had the most to dread. Of these his axe hewed down whole families and circles of friends. He spared neither sex nor age, if the parties possessed, or were suspected of possessing, that integrity which made them disapprove of his deeds. To look awry excited his suspicion, and his suspicion was death. England, before his bloody reign, so happy, so free, knowing so little crimes as to present to the judges of assize scarcely three criminals in a county in a year, now saw upwards of sixty thousand persons shut up in her jails at one and the same time. The purlieus of the court of this first-born son of a "Reformation" were a great human slaughter-house, his people, deserted by their natural leaders who had been bribed by plunder, or the hope of plunder, were the terrified and trembling flock, while he, the master-butcher, fat and jocose, sat in his palace issuing orders for the slaughter, while his High Priest, Cranmer, stood ready to sanction and to sanctify all his deeds.

**115.** A detail of these butcheries could only disgust and weary the reader. One instance, however, must not be omitted namely, the slaughtering of the relations, and particularly the mother, of **CARDINAL POLE**. The Cardinal, who had when very young, and before the King's first divorce had been agitated, been a great favourite with the King, and had pursued his studies and travels on the Continent at the King's expense, disapproved of the divorce, and to all the Acts that followed it; and, though called home by the King, he refused to obey. He was a man of great learning, talent and virtue, and his opinions had great weight in England. His mother, the Countess of Salisbury, was descended from the Plantagenets, and was the last living descendant of that long race of English Kings. So that the Cardinal, who had been by the Pope raised to that dignity on account of his great learning and eminent virtue was, thus, a relation of the King, as his mother was of course, and she was, too, the closest of all his relations. But, the Cardinal was opposed to the King's proceedings; and that was enough to excite and put in motion the deadly vengeance of the latter. Many were the arts that he made use of, and great in amount was the treasure of his people that he expended, in order to bring the Cardinal's person within his grasp and, these having failed, he resolved to wreak his ruthless vengeance on his kindred and his aged mother. She was charged by the base **Thomas Cromwell** (of whom we shall soon see enough) with having persuaded her tenants not to read the new translations of the Bible, and also with having received bulls from Rome which, the accuser said were found at **COURDRAY HOUSE**, her seat in Sussex. Cromwell also showed a banner which had, he said, been used by certain rebels in the North, and which he said he found in her house. All this was, however, so very barefaced, that it was impossible to think of a trial. The judges were then asked, whether the parliament could not attain her; that is to say, condemn her, without giving her a hearing? The judges said, that it was a dangerous matter; that they could not, in their courts, act in this manner, and that they thought the parliament never would. But, being asked, whether, if the parliament were to do it, it would remain good in law, they answered in the affirmative. That was enough. A bill was brought in, and thus was the Countess, together with the Marchioness of Exeter and two gentlemen, relations of the Cardinal, condemned to death. The two latter were execrated, the Marchioness was pardoned, and the Countess shut up in prison as a sort of hostage for the conduct

of her son. In a few months, however, an insurrection having broken out on account of the tyrannical acts, the king chose to suspect, that the rebels had been instigated by Cardinal Pole, And, forth he dragged his mother to the scaffold. She, who was upwards of seventy years of age, though worn down in body by her imprisonment, maintained to the last a true sense of her character and noble descent. When bidden to lay her head upon the block: "No," answered she, "my head shall never bow to tyranny: it never committed treason and, if you will have it, you must get it as you can." The executioner struck at her neck with his axe, and, as she ran about the scaffold with her grey locks hanging down her shoulders and breast, he pursued, giving her repeated chops, till at, last, he brought her down!

**116.** Is it a scene in Turkey or in Tripoli that we are contemplating? No; but, in England, where **MAGNA CHARTA** had been so lately in force, where nothing could have been done contrary to law; but where all power, ecclesiastics as well as law, being placed in the hands of one man, Bloody butcheries like this, which would have roused even a Turkish populace to resistance, could be perpetrated without the smallest danger to the perpetrator. Hume, in his remarks upon the state of the people in this reign, pretends, that the people never hated the King, and that he seems even, in some degree, to have possessed to the last, their love and affection. He adds, that it may be said with truth, that the English, in that age, were so thoroughly subdued, that, like Eastern slaves, they were inclined to admire even those acts of violence and tyranny, which were exercised over themselves, and at their own expense. This lying historian every where endeavours to gloss over the deeds of those who destroyed the Catholic Church, both in England and Scotland. Too cunning, however, to applaud the bloody Henry himself, he would have us believe, that, after all, there was something amiable in him, and this belief he would have us found on the fact of his having been to the last, seemingly beloved by his people.

**117.** Nothing can be more false than this assertion, if repeated insurrections against him, accompanied with the most bitter complaints and reproaches, be not to be taken at marks of popular affection. And, as to the remark, that the English, in that age were so thoroughly subdued while it seems to refute the assertion as to their affection for the tyrant, it is a slander, which the envious Scotch writers delight to put forth and repeat. One object, always uppermost with Hume, is to malign the Catholic religion; it therefore, did not occur to him, that this sanguinary tyrant was not effectually resisted, as King John and other bad Kings had been, because this tyrant had the means of bribing the natural leaders of the people to take part against them; or, at the least, to neutralize those leaders. It did not occur to him to tell us, that Henry VIII. found the English as gallant and just a people as his ancestors had found them; but that, having divided them, having by holding out to the great an enormous mass of plunder as a reward for abandoning the rights of the people, the people became, as every people without leaders must become, a mere flock, or herd, to be dealt with at pleasure. The malignity and envy of the Scotchman blinded him to this view of the matter, and induced him to ascribe to the people's admiration of tyranny that submission, which, after repeated struggles, they yielded merely from the want of those leaders, of whom they were now, for the first time, wholly deprived. What? have we never known any country, consisting of several millions of people, oppressed and insulted, even for ages, by mere handful of men, and, are we to conclude, that such a country submits from admiration, of the tyranny- under which they groan? Did the English submit to Cromwell from admiration; and, was it from admiration that the French submitted to Robespierre? The latter was punished, but Cromwell was not: he, like Heavy, died in his bed; but, to what mind, except to that of the most malignant and perverse, would it occur, that Cromwell's impunity arose from the willing submission and the admiration of the people?

**118.** Of the means by which the natural leaders of the people were seduced from them; of the kind and the amount of the prize of plunder, we are now going to take a view, In paragraph 4 I have said, that the "Reformation" was cherished and fed by plunder and devastation. In paragraph 37 I have said, that it was not a Reformation, but a Devastation of England; and that this devastation impoverished and degraded the main body of the people. These statements I am now about to prove to be true.

**119.** In paragraphs from 55 to 60 inclusive, we have seen, how monasteries arose, and what sort of institutions they were. There were, in England, at the time we are speaking of, 645 of these institutions; besides 90 colleges, 110 Hospitals, and 2374 Chantries and Free-Chapels. The whole were seized on, first and last, taken into the hands of the King, and by him granted to those who aided and abetted him in the work of plunder.

**120.** I pray you, my friends, sensible and just Englishmen to observe here, that this was a great mass of landed property; that this property was not by any means used for the, sole benefit of monks, friars, and nuns; that, for the far greater part, its rents flowed immediately back. amongst the people at large; and, that, if it had never been an object of plunder, England never would, and never could, have heard the hideous sound of the words pauper and poor-rate. You have seen, in paragraph 52, in what manner the tithes arose and how they were disposed of; and you are, by-and-by, to see how the rents of the monasteries were distributed.

**121.** You have, without doubt, fresh in your recollection, all the censures, sarcasms, and ridicule, which we have, from our very infancy, heard against the monastic life. What drones the monks and friars and nuns were; how uselessly they lived; how much they consumed to no good purpose whatever; and particularly how ridiculous, and even how wicked, it was to compel men and women to live unmarried and lead a life of celibacy, and, thus, either to deprive them of a great natural pleasure, or to expose them to the double sin of breach of chastity and breach of oath.

**122.** Now, this is a very important matter. It is a great moral question; and, therefore; we ought to endeavour to settle this question; to make up our minds completely upon it, before we proceed any further. The monastic state increasingly was accompanied with vows of celibacy; and, it is therefore we give an account of the putting down of these institutions in England, necessary to speak of the tendency, and, indeed, of- the natural and inevitable consequences of those vows.

**123.** It has been represented as "unnatural" to compel men and women to live in the unmarried state, and as tending to produce propensities, to which it is hardly proper to allude. Now, in the first place, have we heard, of late days, of any propensities of this sort? Have they made their odious appearance - amongst clergymen and bishops? And, if they have, have those clergymen and bishops been Catholics, or have they been Protestants? The answer, which every one now living in England and Ireland, can instantly give to these questions, disposes of this objection to vows of celibacy. In the next place, the Catholic Church compels nobody to make such vow. It only says, that it will admit no one to be a priest, monk, friar, or nun, who rejects such vow. **SAINT PAUL** strongly recommends to all Christian teachers an unmarried life. The Church has founded a rule on this recommendation; and that, too, for the same reason that the recommendation was given; namely, that those, who have flocks to watch over, or, in the language of our own Protestant Church, who have the care of souls, should have as few as possible of other cares, and should, by all means, be free from those incessant, and, sometimes, racking cares, which are inseparable from a wife and family. What priest, who has a wife and family, will not think more about them than about his flock? Will he, when any part of that family is in distress, from illness or other cause, be wholly devoted, body and mind, to his flock? Will he be as ready to give alms, or aid of any sort, to the poor, as he would be if he had no family to provide for? Will he never be tempted to swerve from his duty, in order to provide patronage for sons, and for the husbands of daughters? Will he always as boldly stand up and reprove the Lord or the Squire for their oppressions and vices, as he would do if he had no one for whom to get a benefice, a commission, or a commission. Will his wife never have her partialities, her tattling and bickering, amongst his flock, and never, on any account, induce him to act towards any part of that flock contrary to the strict dictates of his sacred duty? And, to omit hundreds, yes, hundreds, of reasons that must, in addition, be suggested, will the married priest be as ready as the unmarried one to appear at the bed-side of sickness and contagion? Here it is that the calls on him are most imperative, and here it is that the married priest will, and with nature on his side, be deaf to those calls. From amongst many instances that I could cite, let me take one. During the war of 1776, the King's house at Winchester was used as a prison for French prisoners

of war. A dreadfully contagious fever broke out amongst them. Many of them died. They were chiefly Catholics, and were attended in their last moments by two or three Catholic Priests residing in that city. But, amongst the sick prisoners, there were many Protestants? and these requested the attendance of Protestant Parsons. They were the parsons of all the parishes at Winchester. Then were the Dean and all the Prebendaries. But, not a man of them went to console the dying Protestants, in consequence of which several of them desired the assistance of the priests, and, of course, died Catholics. Doctor Milker, in his Letters to Doctor Sturges (page 56), mentions this matter, and he says, the answer of (the Protestant parsons) I understand to have been this: We are not more afraid, as individuals, to face death than the priests are; but, we must not carry poisonous contagion into the bosoms of our families, No, to be sure! But, then, not to call this the cassock's taking shelter behind the petticoat, in what a dilemma does this place the Dean and Chapter? Either they neglected their most sacred duty, and left Protestants to flee, in their last moments, into the arms of popery; or, that clerical celibacy, against which they have declaimed all their lives, and still declaim, and still hold up to us, their flocks, as something both contemptible and wicked, is, after all, necessary to that care of souls to which they profess themselves to have been called, and for which they receive such munificent reward.

124. But, conclusive perfectly satisfactory as, these reasons are, we should not, if we were to stop here, do any thing like justice to our subject; for, as to the parochial clergy, do we not see, aye, and see too, that they, if with families, or intending to have families, find little to spare to the poor of their flocks? In short, do we not know that a married priesthood and pauperism and poor-rates, all came upon this country at, one and the same moment? And, what was the effect of clerical celibacy, with regard to the higher orders of the clergy? A bishop, for instance, having neither wife nor child, naturally expended his revenues amongst the people in his diocese. He expended a part of them on his Cathedral Church, or in some other way sent his revenues back to the people. If William of Wykham had been a married man, the parsons would not now have had a College at Winchester, nor would there have been a College either at Eton, Westminster, Oxford, or Cambridge, if the bishops, in those days, had been married men. Besides, who is to expect of human nature, that a bishop with a wife and family will, in his distribution of church preferment, consider nothing but the interest of religion? We are not to expect of man more than that, of which we, from experience, know that man is capable. It is for the lawgiver to interpose, and to take care that the community suffer not from the frailty of the nature of individuals, whose private virtues even may, in some cases, and those not a few, not have a tendency to produce public good. I do not say, that married bishops ever do wrong, because I am not acquainted with them well enough to ascertain the fact; but, in speaking of the diocese, in which I was born, and with which I am best acquainted, I may say, that it is certain, that, if the late Bishop of Winchester had lived in Catholic times, he could not have had a wife, and that he could not have had a wife's sister, to marry Mr. **EDMUND POULTER**, in which case, I may be allowed to think it possible, that Mr. **POULTER** would not have quitted the bar for the pulpit, and that he would not have had the two livings of Meon-Stoke and Seberton and a Prebend besides; that his son **BROWNLOW POULTER** would not have had the two livings of Buriton and Petersfield; that his son **CHARLES POULTER** would not have had the three livings of Alton, Binstead and Kingsley; that his son-in-law **OGLE** would not have had the living of Bishop's Waltham; and that his son-in-law **HAYGARTH** would not have had the two livings of Upham and Durlay. If the Bishop had lived in Catholic times, he could not have had a son, Charles Augustus North, to have the two livings of Alverstoke and Havant and to be a Prebend; that he could not have had another son, Francis North, to have the four livings of Old Alresford, Medstead, New Alresford, and St. Mary's Southampton, and to be, moreover, a Prebend and Master of Saint Cross; that he could not have had a daughter to marry Mr. William Garnier, to have the two livings of Droxford and Brightwell Baldwin, and to be a Prebend and a Chancellor besides that he could not have had Mr. William Garnier's brother Thomas Garnier for a relation, and this latter might not, then, have had the two livings of Aldingbourn and Bishop's Stoke; that he could not have had another daughter to marry Mr. Thomas de Grey, to have the four livings of Calbourne, Fawley, Merton, and Rounton, and to be a Prebend and also an Archdeacon besides! In short, if the late Bishop had lived in Catholic times, it is a little too much to believe, that these twenty-four livings, five

Prebends, one Chancellorship, one Archdeaconship, and one Mastership, worth, perhaps, all together, more than twenty thousand pounds a year, would have fallen to the ten persons above named. And, may we not reasonably suppose, that the Bishop, instead of leaving behind him (as the newspapers told us he did) savings to nearly the amount of three hundred thousand pounds in money, would, if he had had no children nor grand-children, have expended a part of this money on that ancient and magnificent Cathedral, the roof of which has recently been in danger of falling in, or, would have been the founder of something for the public good and national honour, or would have been a most munificent friend and protector of the poor, and would never, at any rate, have suffered **SMALL BEER TO BE SOLD OUT OF HIS EPISCOPAL PALACE AT FARNHAM?** With an excise licence, mind you! I do not say, or insinuate, that there was any smuggling carried on at the Palace. Nor do I pretend to censure, the act. A man who has a large family to provide for, must be allowed to be the best judge of means; and, if he happen to have an overstock of small beer, it is natural enough for him to sell it, in order to get money to buy meat, bread, groceries, or other necessaries. What I say is, that I do not think, that William of Wykham ever sold small beer, either by wholesale or retail and I most distinctly assert, that this was done during late Bishop's life-time, from his Episcopal Palace of Farnham! William of Wykham (who took his surname from a little village in Hampshire) was not Bishop of Winchester half so long as the late Bishop; but, out of his revenues he built and endowed one of the Colleges at Oxford, the College of Winchester, and did numerous other most munificent things, in some of which, however, he was not without examples in his predecessors, nor without imitators in his successors as long as the Catholic Church remained; but, when a married clergy came, then ended all that was munificent in the Bishops of this once famous city.

**125.** It is impossible to talk of the small beer and of the Master of Saint Cross, without thinking of the melancholy change which the "Reformation" has produced in this ancient establishment. Saint Cross, or Holy Cross, situated in a meadow about half a mile from Winchester, is an hospital, or place for hospitality, founded and endowed by a Bishop of Winchester, about seven hundred years ago, Succeeding Bishops added to its endowments, till at last, it provided a residence and suitable maintenance for forty-eight decayed gentlemen, with priests, nurses, and other servants and attendants; and, besides this, it made provision for a dinner every day for a hundred of the most indigent men in the city. These met daily in a hallowed, "the hundred men's hall" Each had a loaf of bread, three quarts of small beer, and "two messes," for his dinner; and they were allowed to carry home that which they did not consume upon the spot. What is seen at the hospital of Holy Cross now? Alas! TEN poor creatures creeping about in this noble building, and THREE out-pensioners; and to those an attorney from Winchester carries, or sends, weekly, the few pence, whatever they may be, that are allowed them! But, the place of the Master is, as I have heard, worth a round sum annually. I do not know exactly what it is; but, the post being a thing given to a son of the Bishop, the reader will easily imagine, that it is not a trifle. There exists, however, here, that which, as Dr. Milner observes, is probably, the last remaining vestige of old English hospitality; for here, any traveller who goes and knocks at the gate, and asks for relief, receives gratis a pint of good beer and a lunch of good bread. The late Lord Henry Stuart told me, that he once went and that he received both.

**126.** But (and I had really nearly forgotten it) there is a Bishop of Winchester now! And, what is he doing? I have not heard, that he has founded, or is about to found, any colleges or hospitals. All that I have heard of him in the EDUCATION way, is, that, in his first charge to his Clergy (which he published) he urged them to circulate amongst their flocks the pamphlets of a Society in London, at the head of which is Mr. Joshua Watson, wine and spirit merchant, of Mincing-lane; and, all I have heard of him in the CHARITY way, is, that he is VICE-PATRON of a self-created body, called the "Hampshire Friendly Society," the object of which is, to raise subscriptions amongst the poor, for "their mutual relief and maintenance; or, in other words, to induce the poor labourers to save out of their earnings the means of supporting themselves, in sickness or in old age, without coming for relief to the poor-rate! Good God! Why, William of Wykham, Bishop Fox, Bishop Wynefleet, Cardinal Beaufort, Henry de Blois, and, if you take in all the Bishops of Winchester, even back to. Saint Swithin. himself; never would they have thought; of a scheme

like that for relieving the, poor! Their way of promoting learning was to, found and endow colleges and schools; their way of teaching religion was, to build and endow churches and chapels; their way of relieving the poor and the ailing was, to found and endow hospitals and all these at their own expense; out of their own revenues. Never did one of them, in order to obtain as interpretation of Evangelical truth for their flocks, dream of referring their Clergy to a Society, having a wine and brandy merchant at its head. Never did there come into the head of any one of them a thought so bright as that of causing the necessitous to relieve themselves. Ah! But, they alas! lived in the "dark ages of monkish ignorance and superstition". No wonder, that they could not see, that the poor were the fittest persons in the world to relieve the poor! And, besides, they had no wives and children. No sweet babes to smile on, to soften their hearts. If they had their conjugal and paternal feelings would have taught them, that true charity begins at home; and that it teaches men to sell small beer and not give, it away.

127. Enough now about the celibacy of the Clergy; but, it is impossible to quit. the subject without one word to **PARSON MALTHUS**. That man is not only a Protestant, but a parson of our Church Now he wants to compel the labouring classes to refrain, to a great extent, from marriage; and **MR. SCARLETT** actually brought a Bill into Parliament having in one part of it, this object avowedly in view; the great end proposed by both, being to cause a diminution of the poor-rate **PARSON MALTHUS** does not call this recommending celibacy; but moral restraint, and what is celibacy but moral restraint? So that here, are these people reviling the Catholic Church for insisting on vows of celibacy on the part of those who choose to be priests, or nuns; and, at the same time, proposing to compel the labouring classes to live in a state of celibacy, or to run the manifest risk of perishing (they and their children) from starvation! Is all this sheer impudence or is it sheer folly? One or the other it is greater than ever was before heard from the lips of mortal man? They affect to believe, that the clerical vow of celibacy must be mandatory, because nature is constantly at work to overcome it. This is what **DR. STURGES** asserts. Now, if this be the case with men of education; men on whom their religion imposes abstinence, fasting, almost constant prayer, and an endless number of austerities; if that be the case with regard to such men, bound by a most solemn vow, a known breach of which exposes them to indelible infamy; if such be the case with such men, and if it be, therefore, contemptible and wicked, not to compel them, mind, to make such vows, but to permit them voluntarily to do it, what must it be to compel young men women labourers to live in a state of celibacy, or be exposed to absolute starvation? Why, the answer is, that it is the grossest of inconsistency, or of premeditated wickedness; but that, like all the other wild schemes and cruel projects relative to the poor, we trace it at once back to the "Reformation," that great source of the poverty and misery and degradation of the main body of the people of this kingdom. The "Reformation" despoiled the working classes of their patrimony; it tore from them that which nature and reason had assigned them; it robbed them of that relief for the necessitous, which was theirs by right imprescriptable, and which had been confirmed to them by the law of God and the law of the land. It brought a compulsory, a grudging, an unnatural mode of relief, calculated to make the poor and which hate each other, instead of binding them together, as the Catholic mode did, by the bonds of Christian charity. It, of all its consequences that of introducing a married clergy has, perhaps, been the most prolific in mischief. This has absolutely created an order for the procreation of dependants on the state; for the procreation of thousands of persons annually, who have no fortunes of their own, and must be, some how or other, maintained by burdens upon the people. Places, commissions, sinecures and positions; something or other must be found for them; some sort of living out of the fruit of the rents of the rich and the of labour. If no excuse can be found; no pretence or service; no corner of the pension list open; then must come as a direct burden upon the people; and, it is that we have, within the last twenty years, seen sixteen-hundred thousand pounds, voted by the parliament, that of the taxes, for the relief of the poor clergy of the Church of England; and, at the very time that this policy on the procreation of idlers was annually being incurred, the parliament was pestered with projects for compelling the working part of the community to lead a life of celibacy! What that is evil, what that is monstrous, has grown out of this Protestant "Reformation"!

123. Thus, then, my friends, we have, I think, settled this question; and, after all that we have, during our own lives, heard against that rule of the Catholic Church, which imposed a vow of celibacy on those who chose the clerical or the monastic life, we find, whether we look at this in a religious, in a moral, in a civil, or in a political point of view, that it was founded in wisdom, that it was a great blessing to the people at large, and that its abolition is a thing to be deeply deplored.

129. So much, then, for this topic of everlasting railing against the Catholic Church. We must, before we come to account of the deeds of the ruffian, **THOMAS CROMWELL**, who conducted the work of plunder, say something in answer to the general charge, which Protestant writers, and particularly the malignant Scotch historians, have inferred against the monasteries; for, if what they say is true, we might be disposed to think (as, indeed, we have been taught to think), that there was not so much heard about the plundering that we are about to witness. We will in this general charge from the pen of Hume, who (Volume 1, p. 160) speaking of the reports made by **THOMAS CROMWELL** and his myrmidons, says, it is safest to credit existence of vices naturally connected with the very institution of the monastic life. The cruel and invective factions and quarrels, therefore, which the commissions mentioned, are **VERY CREDIBLE** among men, being confined together within the same walls, can they forget their mutual animosities, and who, being called from all the most endearing connexions of nature, commonly cursed with hearts more selfish and more unrelenting, than fall to the share of others. The pious frauds, practised to increase the devotion and liberality of the people, may be regarded **AS CERTAIN** in an order founded on illusion, lies and superstition The **SUPINE IDLENESS** also, and its attendant, **FOUND IGNORANCE**, with which the convents reproached, **ADMIT OF NO QUESTION**. No moral or elegant knowledge could be expected among those whose life, condemned to a tedious uniformity, and all emulation, afforded nothing to raise the intelligent or cultivate the genius.

130. I question whether monks ever wrote sentences containing worse grammar than these contain: but, as to theft these very credible, these certain, these unquestionable facts, are almost upon the face of them, are of malignant lies. Why should there be factions and quarrels about, amongst men living so idle un-ambitious a life? How much harder are the bishops of unmarried than those of married ecclesiastics we have in the contrast between the charities of Catholic to those of Protestant bishops. It is quite credible it has been, lost in "supine idleness" should practice frauds with money, which their very state prevented them from keeping or bequeathing, and who were totally dead of all "emulation". The malignity of this liar existing in his cunning, and made, him not perceive, that he in one sentence, furnishing strong presumptive proof, it is the truth of another sentence. Yet, as his history has written, and is, much read, and as it has deceived me with so many thousands of others, I shall, upon, this last appeal to several authorities, all Protestants, mind, contradiction to these has. false and base assertions, just stating, by the way, that he himself never had a family, and that he was a great, fat fellow, fed, in part out of public money, without having merited it by any real public services.

In his History of England he refers; not less than an hundred times to **BISHOP TANNER** who Bishop Asaph in the reign of George the Second; Let us then what **BISHOP TANNER** and then let us hear what this extant Bishop says of the character and effect of the monasteries which the savages under Henry VIII destroyed. Let us see how this high authority of **HUME** agrees with this, one of the most interesting and important points in history. We are about to witness a greater act of slaughter, a more daring contempt of law and justice and dignity, than ever was, in any other case, witnessed in the whole world. We are going to see thousand upon thousand of persons stripped in an instant, of all their possessions torn from their dwellings, and turned out into the world to beg or starve; and all this too, in violation, not of natural justice, but of every law of the country, written or unwritten. Let us, then see what was the character of the persons, thus treated, and what was the effects of the institutions to which they belonged. And let us see this, not in the description given by an avaricious enemy, not only of the Catholic, but of the Christian religion; but, in that description which has been given us a Protestant Bishop, and in a book

written expressly to give an account of all the abbeys, priories, and friaries formerly existing in England and Wales; bearing in mind, as we go along, that **HUME** has, in his *History of England*, referred to this very work upwards of two hundred times, taking care, however, not to refer to a word relating to the important question now before us.

**132. BISHOP TANNER**, before entering on his laborious account of the several monastic institutions, gives us, in pages; 19, 20 and 21 of his preface, the following general description of the character and pursuits of the monasteries, and effects of their establishments. I beg you, my friend keep, as you read Bishop Tanner's description, the description of Hume constantly in your minds. Remember to look, now and then, back at his charges of supineness, profound ignorance, want of all emulation and all manly and elegant knowledge; and, above all things remember his charge of selfishness, his character, his frauds to get money from the people. The Bishop speaks, thus, upon the subject.

**133.** "In every great abbey there was a large room .the Scriptorium, where several writers made it their whole business to transcribe books for the use of the library. They sometimes, indeed, wrote the books of the house, and the missals, and other books in divine service, but they were generally upon works, viz: the Fathers, Classics, Histories &c, **JOHN WHETHAMSTED**, abbot of St. Alban's, above eighty books to be thus transcribed (then there was no printing) during his abbacy. Fifty-eight transcribed by the care of one Abbot at Glaston, so zealous were the Monks in general for this work, they often got lands given and churches appropriated for the carrying of it on. In all the greater abbies, there were also persons appointed to take notice of the principal occurrences of the kingdom, and at the end of every year the largest them into annals. In these records they particularly preserved the memoirs of their founders and benefactors, the years and days of their births and deaths, by marriages, children and successors; so that recourse I sometimes had to them for proving persons ages and genealogies; though it is to be feared that some of those genealogies were drawn up from tradition only; and that in some of their accounts they were favourable to their friends, severe upon their enemies. The constitutions of the clergy in their national and provincial synods, and (after Conquest) even Acts of Parliament, were sent to the abbies to be recorded; which leads me to opinion of the use and advantage of these religious houses.

**FIRST**, the choicest records and treasures in the kingdom were preserved in them. An exemplification of charter of liberties granted by King Henry I. (Magna Charta) was sent to some abbey in every county to be preserved. Charters and Inquisitions relating to the county of Cornwall were deposited in the Priory of Bodmin, a great many rolls were lodged in the Abbey of Leicester and Priory of Kenilworth, till taken from thence by Henry III. King Edward I. sent to the religious houses, to search for his title to the kingdom of Scotland in their ledgers and chronicles, as the most authentic records for proof of his right to that Crown. When his sovereignty was acknowledged in Scotland, he sent to have it inserted in the chronicles of the Abbey Winchomb, and the Priory of Norwich, and probably many other; such like places. And when he decided controversy relating to the crown of Scotland, between Robert Bruce and John Baliol, he wrote to the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, London, requiring them to put into their chronicles the exemplification therewith for that decision. The learned Mr. **SELDEN** hath his great evidences for the dominion of the narrow seas to the King of Great Britain, from Monastic records. The evidences and money of private families were at times sent to these houses to be preserved. The seals of the Noblemen were deposited there upon their deaths. And even the King's money was sometime lodged in them.

**SECONDLY**, they were schools of learning and education; for every convent had one person or more for this purpose; and all the neighbours, that deserved might have their children taught grammar and music without any expense to them. In the Nunnery, also young women were taught to work and to read English, and sometimes. Latin also. So that not only the lower ranks of people who could not pay for their learning but most of the noblemen's and gentlemen's daughters were educated in those places.

**THIRDLY**, all the Monasteries were, in effect, great hospitals. And were most of them obliged to relieve many poor people every day. There were likewise houses of -entertainment for almost all travellers. Even the nobility and gentry, when they were upon the road, lodged at one religious house, and dined at another, and seldom or never went to inns, in short their hospitality was such that in the Priory of Norwich, one thousand five hundred quarters of malt, above eight hundred quarters of beef, and all other things in proportion were generally spent every year.

**FOURTHLY**, the nobility and gentry provided not only for their old servants in these houses but also for their younger children and impoverished friends, by making them first monks and nuns and in time prioresses, abbots and abbesses.

**FIFTHLY**, those of considerable advantage to the Crown:

1. By the amount received from the death of one Abbot or Prior to the election, or rather confirmation of another.
2. By great fines paid for the confirmation of their liberties.
3. By many corrodes granted to old servants of the crown, and pensions to the king's clerks and chaplains, till they get preferment.

**SIXTHLY**, they were likewise of considerable advantage to the places where they had their sites and estates:

1. By causing great resort to them, and getting grants of fairs and markets for them.
2. By freeing them from the forest laws.
3. By letting their lands at easy rates.

**LASTLY**, they were great ornaments to the country; many of them were really noble buildings; and though not actually so grand and neat, yet, perhaps, as much admired in their times, as Chelsea and Greenwich Hospitals are now. Many of the abbey-churches were equal, if not superior, to our present Cathedrals; and they must have been as much an ornament to the country, and employed as many workmen in building and keeping them in repair, as noblemen's and gentlemen's seats now do.

**134.** Now, then, malignant Hume, come up, and face this protestant bishop, whose work you have quoted more than two hundred times, and who here gives the lie direct to all, and to every part, of your description. Instead of your "supine idleness" we have industry the most patient and persevering; instead of your "profound ignorance" we have, in every convent, a school for teaching, gratis, all usual sciences; instead of your want of all manly and elegant knowledge. We have the study, the teaching, the transcribing, the preserving, of the Classics; instead of your selfishness and your impious frauds to get money from the people, we have hospitals for the sick, doctors and nurses to attend them, and the most disinterested, the most kind, the most noble hospitality; instead of that "slavery," which, in fifty parts of your history, you assert to have been taught by the monks, we have the freeing of people from forest laws and the preservation of the Great Charter of English liberty, and you know as well as I, that, when Charter was renewed by **KING JOHN**, the renewal was fact, the work of **ARCHBISHOP LANGTON**, who roused Barons to demand it, he having, as **TANNER** observes, found the Charter deposited in an abbey! Back then the malignant liar, and tell the devil that the Protestant Bishop Tanner has sent thee!

**135.** Want of room compels me to stop; but, here, in one authority, we have ten thousand times more than enough to answer the malignant liar, **HUME**, and all the revilers of the monastic life, which lies and reviling it was necessary to silence before proceeding, as I shall in the next letter

to describe the base, the cruel, the bloody means by which these institutions were devastated and destroyed.

## **The End - Letter 4**



## **Fort Augustus Abbey Monastery**



**THE NEW CHRISTIAN CRUSADE  
CHURCH**

**CALLING THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN**

**At last the bible makes sense!**

**At last we know its meaning.**

**Its the book of the RACE**

**"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the  
Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"  
(Isaiah 2:3)."**

