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AN  
ADDRESS

TO A

MEETING

HOLDEN AT

THE TOWN-HALL, IN THE CITY OF BATH,

UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE

HON. AND RT. REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER,

ON

MONDAY, THE 1ST. DAY OF DECEMBER, 1817;

FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORMING A

**Church Missionary Society**

IN THAT CITY;

WORD FOR WORD AS DELIVERED FROM WRITING;

WITH

**A PROTEST**

*Against the establishment of such a Society in Bath.*

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**BY THE REV. JOSIAH THOMAS, A. M.**

ARCHDEACON OF BATH.

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FIFTH EDITION.

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## ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.



THE First Edition of this Address was published, according to the Title-page, as delivered from writing. It has been suggested, that, in justice to myself, I ought to say something about my threatening to call in the Mayor's Officers. The Address, as delivered from writing, could take in *nothing incidental*; and I could not calculate on being hooted, hissed, and insulted in the grossest manner, by a CHURCH SOCIETY, for executing my office! On being so treated, I used, to the best of my recollection, these words:—"I stand here, as Archdeacon of Bath, in the execution of my duty. Not all the hisses and clamour that you can utter shall prevent me from performing that duty; nor shall the business of your Society proceed, till I have said what I intend to say; and if you proceed to further outrage, I shall call in the Mayor's Officers."

I take leave also to observe, that the most violent clamour took place, when I repeated the words at page 218:—"BUT THIS IS A CHURCH OF ENGLAND SOCIETY!!!" I then spoke thus—"Is this a Church of England Society, or is it NOT?" No answer was given. I then demanded again emphatically—"Is *this a Church of England Society or is it NOT? WHAT is it?*" No answer again. I then said—"Well then, I will take it for a Church of England Society;" and proceeded in reading my Address.

I am also informed, that my quitting the room, without waiting for reply, gave offence. To which I answer, that I did not go to that meeting for debate—but to PROTEST against the purpose of that meeting. And, I apprehend, it is not usual for a person to wait for an answer to his own PROTEST.

J. T.

## ADDRESS, &c.

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MY LORD VICE-PATRON, AND PRESIDENT OF THIS  
MEETING—

A CHURCH-SOCIETY holding a meeting within this city, and presided over by a Bishop of the Church of England, will, I presume, allow the right of the Archdeacon of Bath, to declare his sentiments on the subject of their Meeting. As I am not in the habit of attending such meetings, and do not chuse “to talk without book,” I beg leave to deliver my opinions from this paper; to which I can hereafter resort, if I see occasion.

I desire, however, before I proceed, that it be understood, that my attendance on this meeting is altogether *official*: and, therefore, as I conclude that I am addressing a Church Assembly, I shall speak as a Churchman to Churchmen; and if I should bring some strange things to the ears of many, they will be such as the Hon. and Right Rev. Vice-Patron, who presides over this meeting, cannot, as a Bishop, disallow; however obsolete they may have become through disuse.

However I may and do revere the piety and well-intending zeal of some individuals, whom I know to be members of this Missionary Society, I scruple not to express my convictions:

I. That this Church Missionary Society was originally unnecessary; because the Incorporated Society for the Pro-

pagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, was, and is, in existence, and in action.

II. That several of the rules and regulations of this Church Missionary Society, and especially the means which it employs to increase its funds, are utterly unworthy of the name which it *would assume*—that of a Church-of-England Society.

III. That this Church Missionary Society tends to the subversion of ecclesiastical order; and to promote and augment divisions among the members, and especially the clergy of the Church of England; being plainly supported in conformity to the views of a NEW SECT in the Church: a sect, of which the adherents distinguish themselves by the names of serious Christians, and evangelical ministers.

IV. That the formation of a branch of this Church Missionary Society, in this city, will be pernicious; because it will promote religious feuds *here*, as similar speculations have done in other places.—Of each of these in their order.

1. I said that this institution was originally unnecessary:—The Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts has been in existence and in usefulness, but, though a Church-of-England Society, little encouraged, more than a hundred years. It is probable that many of this auditory, in all respects qualified to be members of that Society, never heard of its name. To them I take leave to recommend it, not as a new project, but as an established and orderly system. And certainly the zeal and the liberality of members of the Church of England, would be more consistently employed in the support of that, than in the formation of any new Society.

2. I said that I considered some of the rules and regulations of this Church Missionary Society, and especially the means which it employs to increase its funds, to be utterly unworthy of the name which it would assume; viz. that of

a Church of England Society. For example—Is it worthy of the Church of England, is it worthy of the members of the Church of England, to authorise persons to go about, collecting pence and farthings from servants, school boys, and apprentices, in order that the collectors of one shilling *per* week, or five shillings *per* month, may be elevated into members—of a Church of England Society? And, moreover, be tempted to the additional honor of voting at meetings, of receiving copies of the Annual Report and Sermon, and one number of the Missionary Register? This is the statement in Rule VI. of your Report: but I proceed to other matter.

3. I said that this Society tends to the subversion of ecclesiastical order; and to promote and augment divisions among the members, and especially the Clergy of the Church of England. Can a stronger proof of this assertion be offered than is, at this moment, exhibited before your eyes? Here you have the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester presiding in the chief city of the diocese of Bath and Wells, over the formation of a Society, which the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells **DISCLAIMS**. Does the Honorable and Right Reverend Vice Patron of this Church-of-England Missionary Society know this fact? If not, by what rule, not of Apostolical authority, but of common propriety, does he invade the province of his venerable brother? By what right does he come hither, thrusting his sickle into another man's harvest? Perhaps he thought the husbandmen asleep! I trust that he will find us waking and watchful.—But if his Lordship *did* know the sentiments of *his* venerable Diocesan as well as mine, (for the Dean of Wells is as much under canonical rule as any other clergyman) I ask, if his Lordship *did* know the sentiments of his venerable Diocesan as well as mine, could he give a more decisive proof of his indifference to the dignity of

the high office, to which he has been but a few years consecrated, as well as of his contempt of ecclesiastical order?

BUT THIS IS A CHURCH OF ENGLAND SOCIETY!! Where are the majority of the Established Clergy of this city, and of the neighbourhood, that they attend not to support a meeting, convened under that assumption? Did they not hear of it? Was it possible for them not to hear of it? Did not the newspapers announce, not only the public meeting of this Society, but that, *to promote the views of this Institution a Sermon would be preached by the Hon. and Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester, at the Octagon Chapel?* (I quote the very words of the advertisement.) I ask again, where are the majority of the Established Clergy of this city and neighbourhood, that they attend not to support this Church-of-England Society? Perhaps it may be said that the Archdeacon influenced their minds. The Archdeacon solemnly declares, that he has not communicated, nor authorised any person to communicate, to any one of them his intention to be here.

But I have said, that this Church Missionary Society is plainly supported in conformity to the views of a NEW SECT in the Church; a sect, of which the adherents distinguish themselves by the names of Serious Christians, and Evangelical Ministers. I go further. That this Society is in any respect calculated to promote the sober, orderly, manly, intelligent, and intelligible piety of the Church of England, I do utterly deny. I look at the names of the prime and principal promoters of this project; names, I allow, of the highest respectability on many accounts, but certainly of very little weight in the balance of the Church of England; since some of the parties, to whom those names belong, have not scrupled to communicate with those, who renounce her doctrines and discipline.

Do not imagine that I mean to speak with disrespect



of Conscientious Dissenters. I quarrel with no man for his religious creed. I love honesty, though I may think it perverse. I venerate Piety, though I may think it erroneous. But those respectable dissenters do not halt between two opinions; they are not of the Church to-day, and of the Meeting-house to-morrow; and we know their meaning. But do the ministers of any dissenting community go about proclaiming the insufficiency, the worldly-mindedness, and the want of gospel-zeal in their own brethren? Does any party of ministers, in any communion among them, assume to itself all the piety and all the virtues of their common function? or look down with supercilious horror on their less assuming brethren? Does any minister among the dissenters, intrude upon the charge of a brother minister, not only without leave, but in defiance of all denial? No.—These are perfections of religious zeal, peculiar to certain elect persons, who have set up this, and some other institutions, calling themselves Serious Christians, and Evangelical Ministers.

Serious Christians! What? Is no man in earnest respecting the mercies of God in the redemption of mankind? is no man serious in his faith, and earnest in his religious and moral duties? has no man a regard for the salvation of souls, except this PARTY?

Evangelical Ministers too! Why more evangelical than their brethren—who have received the same Apostolical ordination; profess the same faith; have taken the same oaths; use the same form of sound words in the services of the same Church; and exercise the same priesthood at the same altar? I speak to members of the Church of England, (for such by the title of the meeting I may fairly conclude all present to be :) and I ask, in what sense, but as the Shibboleth of a Party, this exclusive title of *Evangelical* can be assumed by ministers of the Church of Eng-

land over their brethren? over men, in every respect, whether of piety, of morals, or of learning, *at least*, their equals? I ask, why I cease to be a true minister of the gospel, because I disdain to join a Sect, whose disorderly proceedings I disapprove.

Respecting this Church-of-England Missionary Society, I beg leave to call the attention of the meeting, to two extraordinary circumstances:—*First*, that on looking over the list of vice-patrons, I see the names of *only two Bishops*: one, The Hon. and Right Rev. prelate here present; the other, The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Norwich! Now, if this Society were founded on principles so firm and so evangelical, by what fatality did it happen that the other bishops did not join it at first? Nay, how comes it to pass, that they have not *come in* on conviction? I can readily account for the reluctance of a man to tread back the hollow and rotten ground over which he has travelled: *but this reluctance to set foot on firm ground*; on the ground of the Church of England! this is a mystery too deep for me to fathom.

*Secondly*, The next extraordinary circumstance is, that among the list of High Persons on THE REPORT of this Church-of-England Missionary Society for THE EAST, I see not the name of the only person, who can give either order or consistency to their proceedings in that quarter of the globe. I mean the truly learned and sound BISHOP OF CALCUTTA.—What! was that great man solicited to take under his care and controul—which, as the Hon. and Right Rev. Vice-Patron knows, the Church of England would demand—was that great man solicited to take under his care and controul the pious missionaries, who should be sent into his diocese from this Society;—and did he refuse to receive them? Or, did the steady adherents to the Church of England, who projected this Society, never

apply to his Lordship for that purpose? I profess myself utterly ignorant on both these questions. But of this I am certain, viz.—that “the concerns of the society in the north of India” are stated in the report under the article MISSIONS, to be under no other authority or controul, than “the management of a Corresponding Committee.” A Church of England Missionary Society, under the MANAGEMENT (that is the word) of a CORRESPONDING COMMITTEE! I have indeed heard, but I will not assert it as a fact, a circumstance that would solve these difficulties; to wit, that the leading persons of the London Missionary Society, which consists of persons of *all kinds of religious persuasions*, are on the best of terms with the leading persons of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East. This circumstance, if true, would also account for other circumstances in the history of restless and disorderly pietists, compassing sea and land to gain proselytes; and disturbing their own country with religious contention.

4. I now proceed to the last consideration, viz.—That the formation of a Branch Society in this place, would be pernicious.

The peace of the city is hardly yet restored, from the confusion occasioned by a religious feud; in which (where the blame lay is no question at present) but in which, the Rector was not only insulted, grossly insulted, in the performance of his duty, in his own parish-church; but was compelled to resort to the police-officers to protect him from personal outrage. For my part, I declare my opinion, that if you proceed to gratify the same PARTY, who generated that feud, with the triumph of a Church Missionary Society, in the futherance of which that party is chiefly interested, *and they too are members of the Church*, you will renew the feuds, which may otherwise sink into oblivion; and will render Bath, like a neighbouring city, a hot-bed of Heresy

and Schism. And sure I am, that the mischiefs which you will occasion at home, will never be compensated by any good that a Society, so formed and managed, can do abroad.

Permit me here to observe, that if any person supposes me to be hostile to the *professed* object of this Church Missionary Society, viz. the universal diffusion of the knowledge of the mercies of God in Christ Jesus; he totally mistakes both my principles and my character. The *professed* object of this Society is, I trust, as dear to my heart, as it is to the most zealous of your members; as it is to the Honorable and Right Reverend Vice-patron himself. But that grand purpose will never be furthered, much less accomplished, by such means, as are offered or afforded, by an irregular association like this: an association of a character so equivocal, that had not the Lords Bishops of Gloucester and of Norwich honored it with their exemplary names, it might as well be supposed a Church-of-Rome Society, or a Scottish Kirk-Society, or a Swedenborgian Church Society, as to pertain to the Church of England. No—The conversion of the heathen to the faith of the Son of God, must be founded, as at the beginning, on a system of ORDER and of UNION; ministered by men duly qualified, and orderly consecrated to their holy office. On such a system, and on such men *alone*, can the Grace of the Eternal Spirit, the God of ORDER and of UNITY, and not of confusion, be reasonably expected to descend. The ground-work, and little more than the ground-work, of such a system is now laid in the East, founded on a regular apostolical commission, under the superintendance of a sound apostolical Bishop. But with neither of these, it seems, does this Church Missionary Society hold communion! But, whether that be the fact or not, I call on you,

as members of the Church of England, to look to that Church.

You are summoned hither to discuss the propriety of establishing a Branch of this Church Missionary Society in this city; under the patronage, not of the Lord Bishop of this diocese, but of the Lord Bishop of Gloucester; who, himself, as Dean of Wells, owes canonical obedience to the Bishop of Bath and Wells; and who, moreover, has no manner of jurisdiction in this city, nor in this diocese, beyond his deanery.

As Archdeacon of Bath,—

In the name of the Lord Bishop of this diocese—in my own name—in the name of the Rectors of Bath—and in the name of nineteen twentieths of the Clergy in my jurisdiction—

I PROTEST against the formation of such Society in this city.

Whether, or in what manner, the Hon. and Right Rev. Vice-Patron and his friends will condescend to notice this PROTEST,—I shall not stay to see.















