

Neutrality

THE PROPER GROUND FOR PROTESTANT DISSENTERS

RESPECTING THE *ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS;* BEING

A VINDICATION of the Author's Conduct, at two Meetings of the General Body of PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS, of the three Denominations, in London and its Vicinity, held at the Library, Redcross Street, the 2nd of February & the 2nd of March, 1813.

CONTAINING

A REPLY to THE REMARKS of THE REV. JOHN EVANS, M. A.

ON WHAT HE HAS DESIGNATED

“AN EXTRAORDINARY CORRESPONDENCE,”

IN SIX LETTERS TO A FRIEND,

~~~~~  
BY JOSEPH IVIMEY.  
~~~~~

“And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called, and they went in their simplicity and they knew not any thing.” 2 SAMUEL. XV. 11

“Study to be quiet and do your own business.” PAUL.

LONDON.

Printed by T. Smith, 29, Winchester Row, Edgware Road.

Sold by Button and Son; Gale, Curtis, and Fenner, Paternoster Row;
Williams and Son, Stationer's Court, and Kent, Holborn.

Price one Shilling.

STATE OF NEW YORK

In SENATE,

January 10, 1891.

REPORT OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

FOR THE YEAR 1890.

ALBANY:

WHELAN & COMPANY, PRINTERS.

1891.

NEW YORK:

WHELAN & COMPANY, PRINTERS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

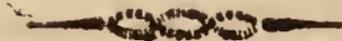
THE history of these letters is briefly as follows :—The Rev. J. Evans feels greatly offended on account of two letters which appeared in the Morning Chronicle Newspaper, of the 6th of March, 1813. The first of these, addressed to me by JOSEPH BUTTERWORTH, Esq. M. P. for Coventry, requesting me to give him a written confirmation of what I had related to him in conversation, of the particulars of a meeting held at Red Cross Street on the 2nd of February 1813, and the other, my reply, giving Mr. Butterworth the statement desired.

In consequence of this Mr. Evans comes forward as the Public Censor, at the request, he says, of “some Ministers as well as laymen of the three denominations of Protestant Dissenters upon whose judgment he places reliance,” to chastise me for the crimes of “ill-will” “illiberality,” “disingenuousness,” and shocking “degeneracy!” Heavy charges these, from which I feel myself defended by the impenetrable shield of a good conscience. That I have been influenced by evil passions is more than Mr. Evans has proved. By what authority is it that he has preferred such accusations? Is he qualified to search the heart? and is this the candour and liberality of which he boasts?

That I have been neither illiberal nor disingenuous I hope is satisfactorily proved in the subsequent pages. And as to my degeneracy—if *refusing assistance to a measure that I may not contribute towards the Roman Catholics obtaining POLITICAL POWER, be to render assistance to those who would deprive them of RELIGIOUS LIBERTY*, then I have certainly degenerated from the Principle, that it is the unalienable right of every man to worship God according to his own conscience, without being subject to pains and penalties, or disabilities for exercising “*that right.*” Of this, however, I am not yet convinced. When this distinction is proved to be of no importance, I shall either acknowledge my mistakes, or stand justly exposed to shame for my pride and pertinacity, in venturing to assert and endeavouring to defend it

JOSEPH IVIMEY.

*Red Lion Street,
April 16, 1813.*



NEUTRALITY,

&c.

LETTER I.

My dear Friend,

THE Pamphlet of which you speak would not have obtained a reply, but from the consideration that my silence may be construed by some as a conviction of having acted wrong in the matter to which it relates. Conscious of my integrity, I should certainly have left it to the impartial judgement of that small part of the public, who will think either Mr. Evans or myself worthy of their notice, to decide whether, even from the statement Mr. Evans has given, I have in any respect violated my professions as the friend of universal unrestricted religious liberty.

But as some importance has been attached to the opposition I have made to the presentation of a Petition to obtain "the repeal of all the penal statutes now in force *on the subject of religion.*" I feel no reluctance in giving you the history of this affair, hoping that however trifling the circumstances which have made this necessary, the cause of God and truth may in some way be promoted by it. As it is possible these letters may fall into the hands of persons not so well acquainted as we are with the Penal Statutes which have been, and still are in force against Protestant Dissenters, my first Letter will briefly state these particulars.

To enumerate all these Statutes is not my intention, even if I had the means of doing so; but you may recollect that Earl

Stanhope, on the debate respecting the Bill introduced by Lord Sidmouth, to abridge our liberties, mentioned that he had extracted from the statute books, the Titles and provisions of more than six hundred Penal laws punishing men for their religious sentiments.

The first I mention is *the 35th of Elizabeth*, which enacted that "If any person, above the age of sixteen years shall obstinately refuse attending some church, or chapel, or usual place of Common-prayer to hear divine service, for the space of a month, or to receive the communion; or be present at any unlawful assemblies, conventicles, or meetings under colour or pretence of any such exercise of religion; he shall be committed to prison until he shall conform, and go to Church, and make submission as hereafter expressed." This Statute was enforced by the Penalties of fines, imprisonments, banishment and death.

Soon after the Restoration of Charles II. *The Corporation Act* was passed. This incapacitated all persons from bearing office in any corporation who had not received the Lord's supper, according to the rites of the Church of England, within a year before his election; as well as taken the oaths of supremacy and allegiance.

In the year 1662, the *Act of Uniformity* was passed, which required "the unfeigned assent and consent" of every minister of the established church, "to every thing contained in the Book of Common Prayer." This was enforced by heavy penalties, and was the occasion of more than *two thousand* excellent ministers leaving the National Church, to the constitution of which, in general, they had no objection; though there were some things in her liturgy and ceremonies which they disapproved.

In 1664, the *Conventicle Act* enacted that "Any person who should be present where more than five persons above the age of sixteen years should be assembled, at any place, not of the Church of England, for the worship of God, should for the first offence be sent to gaol for three months, till he paid 5£, and for the second offence six months, till he paid £10.; and the third time, being convicted by a jury, should be banished the kingdom, or pay £100; and in case of return or escape, to suffer death without benefit of Clergy."

In 1665, the *Five Mile Act* passed, which restrained all dissenting ministers, on the penalty of £40. who would not take an

unreasonable oath from coming within any market or borough-town, or any place where they had exercised their ministry.

The *Test Act* passed in this reign required "all persons taking any office under the government, to receive the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the church of England, within three months after their appointment." The Design of the Commons in bringing in this bill was to exclude Papists from places of trust and profit, several of whom the Court had greatly promoted, and especially for the purpose of preventing a Popish Succession to the throne, as the King's brother, (afterwards James II.) publicly professed that religion, who, on its passing, immediately resigned all his Posts under Government. Though it was not perhaps intended, yet this act was so framed that all *Protestant Dissenters* were excluded from places of trust and profit in common with *Catholic Dissenters*.

In the latter part Queen of Anne's reign, Another act was passed entitled, *The Occasional Conformity Bill*. This enacted, "that if any persons in office who by the laws are obliged to qualify themselves by receiving the *sacrament, or Test*, shall ever resort to any conventicle, or meeting of Dissenters, for religious worship, during the time of their continuance in office, they shall forfeit £20. for every such offence, and be disqualified." &c,

Soon after another Act, entitled *An Act to prevent the growth of Schism*, enacted that no persons should be intrusted with the education of youth, who were not full and entire conformists; and if any schoolmaster or tutor should be willingly present at any conventicle of Dissenters for religious worship, he should suffer three months imprisonment, and be disqualified from teaching school in future.

All the above Statutes are still in force against those Dissenters who are *Anti-trinitarians*, who on this account, have just cause to complain; because *sentiments*, however erroneous, are not cognizable by the Magistrate, unless their prevalence can be proved to be incompatible with the stability of the Government, and the well being of civil Society. Respecting every other description of Dissenters the "*Test*" and "*Corporation*" Acts are the only Penal Statutes now in force upon the subject of religion. Mr. Evans has very properly reprobated in strong terms the first of these "as a picklock to a place," and he might have added as "trampling under foot the Son of God," both in his authority as the only King in his church,

and in his atoning Sacrifice for sin. This is certainly a foul blot in our fair and excellent constitution;—a reproach cast upon the whole body of Protestant Dissenters, as if their sentiments rendered them incapable of serving His Majesty in the lowest offices of trust; a snare even to serious members of the church of England, who in order to be invested with office, must take the Sacrament of the Lord's supper *for the purpose* of obtaining a legal qualification, to prove which they must receive from the officiating clergyman, a certificate that at such a time and place they have done so. It is moreover a horrid profanation of christianity, of which but few dissenters of any respectability have been guilty. Let it, however, be recollected, that even this evil, great as it undoubtedly is, may be overruled for good by HIM who makes even “the wrath of man to praise him.” It presents a powerful *test* by which to try the strength of attachment to the principles of Dissent from the established Church, and the reality of a profession of belief in Christianity, whose prominent and distinguishing feature is “self-denial.”

How happy, my dear friend, is the present condition of Protestant Dissenters in this kingdom, compared with that of their persecuted forefathers! With the exception of the Anti-trinitarians, who, it is hoped, will soon be relieved, they can meet when and where they please, without being exposed to pains and penalties, provided their ministers, if required by the Magistrate, take the oath of allegiance, and subscribe the declaration against Popish supremacy. Our oppressed ancestors would have rejoiced “to see the days which we see.” “The lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, yea, we have a goodly heritage.”

That you and I, my dear friend, may be deeply sensible of our mercies, be grateful for our privileges, and ever exemplify our christian character, is the prayer of

Your's, &c.

LETTER II.

My dear Friend,

IN proceeding with a Vindication of my conduct in the affair to which Mr. Evans alludes, it may be necessary first to mention, that a Meeting was held at the Library, in April 1812,

when it was voted by a small majority that a Petition should be presented to Parliament praying for the repeal of all the Penal Statutes now in force *on the subject of religion*. The Minority on this occasion opposed the measure, as His Majesty's Chancellor of the Exchequer, the late Mr. Perceval, had promised to bring in a Bill to amend the Act of Toleration, so far as to prevent any restrictions upon the rights of conscience, by forced constructions, which had lately been put upon it by the Magistrates. It was contended that it was improper to present a Petition for the repeal of *all* the Penal Statutes at a *time* when we had reason to expect that His Majesty's government were pledged to remove the principal causes of our complaint; nor were we disappointed, as the event afterwards proved.

The Resolutions that were then adopted I give you in a Note,* but as the Petition is only the counterpart to these, to copy it would be superfluous.

* "At a General Meeting of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations residing in and about the Cities of London and Westminster, holden by Adjournment at the Library in Redcross Street, on Tuesday, April 21, 1812.

RESOLVED, That it is the natural right of all men to worship God agreeably to the dictates of their own consciences.

That all human laws which serve to restrict them in the exercise of this right, are unjust in their principle, and in their tendency and operation highly injurious to the best interests of religion.

That this Body regard with deep concern the existence, on the Statute Book of their country, of several laws of this description, which, in whatever measure recommended at the several periods of their enactment by the plea of political necessity, are at present, from the change that has taken place in the circumstances of the times, and the more liberal spirit which prevails among all classes of the community, no less unwarranted by such plea, than they are repugnant to the principles of Christianity.

That, with the view of asserting their claim to the unrestricted freedom of divine worship, and to an equal participation with their fellow-subjects of the privileges of the constitution, from which they are excluded on account of their religious profession, a Petition be presented from this body to both Houses of Parliament, praying for a repeal of *all* the Penal Statutes now in force, whose operations extend to the province of Religion.

Another meeting was called with the same design, on the 2nd of February, 1813, *two months before our regular Annual Meeting*, which would have been probably *too late* to answer the end of those who signed the requisition, as the Catholic question was then agitated in Parliament, and might have terminated before the 13th of April; in which case the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the three Denominations, would not have had an opportunity to express their sense upon this great National Subject! It seems therefore probable that the report of Lord Holland's speech in the Morning Chronicle may be correct that the Petition was "accelerated" for this very purpose!

The Rev. Mr. Barrett being called to the Chair, the Rev. Dr. Rees opened the business in an eloquent and impressive speech. He concluded by moving that the Petition presented last year to both Houses of Parliament be again presented, as since that period a new Parliament had been convened, and therefore it was as though the former Petition had never existed. The resolutions passed at the former Meeting were then *unanimously* adopted. Impressed with a persuasion that it would be highly impolitic for Protestant Dissenting Ministers to present a petition on this subject, at a period when the Roman Catholics were zealously urging Parliament to concede their claims, and thinking this measure was intended to render them assistance, I had resolved to oppose it. I however waited till the Petition had been read, as I said, "Days should speak and the multitude of years should teach wisdom." When I found, however, that it was about to pass without opposition, I rose and said nearly as follows,

"MR. CHAIRMAN,

"Before the motion be put that the Petition now read be presented, I wish permission to deliver my sentiments upon the subject. I do not rise, Sir, to object to any thing in the Resolutions, or to the Petition founded upon them; but I have learned, sir, from high authority that there is "a *time* for every purpose under heaven;" and therefore I object to *the time* proposed for presenting this petition. It is well known that the public mind is now greatly agitated by the applications of the Roman Catholics to Parliament to procure what they call *emancipation*. For a Pe-

tion to be presented by us, *at this time*, praying for a "repeal of all the Penal Statutes now in force upon the subject of religion," will in my opinion be to amalgamate ourselves with the Roman Catholics. Surely, sir, it would not be wise for Protestant Dissenters to render them any assistance! For Protestant Dissenting Ministers to appear on the side of Roman Catholics, will be a new thing in the Earth. I am certain, sir, could the pictures hung round this room,* be animated by the spirits of the venerable men whom they represent, they would lift up their voice against this measure. So far, sir, from ever uniting with Roman Catholics, they voluntarily preferred submitting to the operation of all the oppressive and persecuting penal statutes passed against the Protestant Nonconformists in the reign of Charles II. and of former Monarchs. They knew what they were doing, sir, for they had felt the effects of papal political ascendancy; and therefore resolutely refused to afford them any assistance.

Were not these the sentiments also that prevailed at a period which Protestant Dissenters have always spoken of with rapture, I mean the glorious revolution of 1688?

None present, I am persuaded, will be ashamed to own their obligations to William Prince of Orange, of illustrious memory! Previous to this glorious event and the shameful abdication of James II; that Popish Tyrant was desirous of ascertaining the sentiments of the Prince and Princess of Orange, on the project of an universal toleration in religion, which involved the removal of all the tests and disqualifying statutes on account of religious sentiments. Mr. Stuart was employed to write to the Pensionary Fagel upon this subject. We have the answer of their Highnesses upon record. In this they declare that they were willing to consent that both the Protestant Dissenters and the Papists should have full *religious* liberty!† But it is added, "their Highnesses

* The most eminent Nonconformist Ministers of the seventeenth Century, Baxter, Howe, Flavell, Owen, &c.

† Protestants have been used to speak of the restraints on Roman Catholics as being on account of their *religion*; and considering their religion as ordinarily, if not universally, involving the persecution of heretics

could not consent to the repeal of those laws by which the Roman Catholics were excluded from both Houses of Parliament, and out of all public employments, ecclesiastical, civil, and military; and that they believed they should have much to answer to God for, if the consideration of any present advantage, should carry them to consent to things, which they believed would not only be dangerous, but mischievous to the Protestant Religion. The object, sir, of the Roman Catholics is not *religious liberty*, but *political power*. This is an object which it appears evident to me the Protestant Dissenters are not solicitous to obtain; for though they are eligi-

wherever it has gained the ascendancy, and this principle has been acted upon, the language is not surprising. Strictly speaking, however, the disabilities of Roman Catholics in Protestant countries are not on account of their *religious*, but of their *political* opinions. They may emanate from their religion; but it is their contrariety to the *well-being* of society that renders it expedient to keep back their abettors from posts of high authority. It was not superstition, but the *political heresy* of intolerance that made the Prince of Orange object as he did. He knew that wherever Popery obtained the ascendancy, the Protestant Religion would not long be endured. And as religious principles come under the cognizance of religious society, political principles must come under that of political society, and when found by universal experience to be incompatible with the peace and well-being of the state must be restrained. To call such restraints, persecution is a mis-nomer of the grossest kind; to plead for intolerant men being in power is to plead for intolerance. It is of the nature of love to any object to guard against those whose principles, whenever they have gained the ascendancy, have been known to destroy it. If the Protestant religion could be secure, whether owing to the number of its adherents, or any other cause, (of which let the Legislature judge) many who now demur, would gladly see the Catholics in possession of all they ask: but in this case it would not be owing to their attachment to a Protestant government, but to their incapacity to overturn it. It would, in this case, be *right* on our part, as it would be "doing to others as we would they should do unto us," but they have no *right* to claim this at our hands till they prove by *facts*, that they can, and do, in cases where they have the ascendancy, place those whom they consider as heretics, on equal footing with themselves, till this be done, they have no claim to such an equality in a Protestant country.

ble to have seats in the House of Commons, yet there was but one, I believe, found there in the last Parliament.*

For these reasons, sir, and thinking that presenting the Petition *at this time* may promote the cause of the Roman Catholics, I think it would be better not now to present it."

Dr. Rees, was called up by these remarks, and expressed his regret that the subject of the Roman Catholic claims had been introduced, which he had wished to prevent, and had studiously avoided. He had a sentiment upon that subject, but this was not the time to mention it, as he did not wish to prevent the harmony of the meeting. He recollected (he said) the year 1780, and they wanted no Lord George Gordons! He had no predilection for burning of Houses! He thought the plans adopted to get signatures to the Petitions against the Catholics were very improper, and that Dissenters should sign them was highly disgraceful! But this subject had nothing to do with the business of this meeting, and the gentleman who had introduced it might have been called to order, because his observations were not *ad rem*; "but I was willing," said the Doctor, "he should finish what he had to say."

The Chairman here interrupted the Doctor, and declared he would exercise impartiality. He remarked that "as the object of the meeting was to consider the propriety of presenting the Petition to Parliament, that it was quite in order for any one to offer his reasons against it." The Doctor bowed to the chair, made an apology to me for the remark, and I proceeded—

"Mr. Chairman,

"I am happy, sir, to find that in the remarks I made I was not out of order, though I should not have been surprized had that been the case, as I am but little acquainted with the manner in which such business is generally conducted. I can assure you, sir, and this meeting, that what I have said has been with no design to promote division or discord; but from the convictions of my own mind and the constraints of truth. I know not, sir, that there is another individual in this room who thinks as I do upon this sub-

* In this it appears, I was mistaken, as it was said, "more than *one*, three or four." This, however, is near enough for my argument.

ject ; so that however my wisdom may be questioned, my integrity need not be suspected. My fears are, sir, that the measure proposed will be considered by the Parliament and the Community, to be in favour of the Roman Catholic claims, and it must be acknowledged that the united wisdom of all the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of London will be of great weight ! I have not opposed the Roman Catholics, sir, by signing any petition against them ; lest I should recognize a principle which I do not believe, namely, that civil governments have a right to legislate on the subject of religion ! But while I have done nothing to oppose the Catholics, I most certainly will do nothing to promote their wishes.”*

After I had finished, the Rev. J. Townsend opposed the measure upon the principle that many things which were lawful, may nevertheless be inexpedient ; and that as he had objected to the Petition last year, on account of *the time*, his objections were from the circumstance of the Catholic Question being now before the House of Commons, greatly strengthened, as he would do nothing which was likely to embarrass His Majesty’s government, which had shewn a readiness on all occasions to serve the Protestant Dissenters. The Rev. J. Clayton, sen. also opposed the measure and

* The Catholic claims are *considered* by the Parliament as involving a religious question, and any decision upon the subject would be considered amongst those laws “ the operation of which extend to the Province of religion.” Those who think that the *religious principles* of the Roman Catholics are intolerant towards those they call Heretics, and destructive to the safety of Society ; and that their *political principles* make them subject to the ecclesiastical authority of the Pope, who is himself subject to the most powerful enemy of England, may certainly be excused for not petitioning for them ; nor would they act inconsistently with the most extensive regard to civil liberty were they to Petition against them. As, however, the Legislature only can decide whether the *ineligibility* to civil offices which the Roman Catholics have long been subject to shall continue, or be removed ; I am quite willing to leave the matter with the constituted authorities, without expressing my opinion by a Petition. As it relates to Petitioning the Legislature, I would observe the most strict NEUTRALITY, and “ neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.”

said he had a strong leaning on his mind to what had been advanced; he thought it was intended by a side wind to serve the Catholic cause. The Rev. T. Powell expressed his marked dissent upon the same principle. Dr. Lindsey replied in a speech more ludicrous than argumentative, and Dr. Rees repeatedly declared that they had no intention to amalgamate themselves with the Catholics, as there was nothing in the Petition nor the resolutions that even mentioned them!

I had hoped that one of my senior brethren would have proposed a motion of adjournment, but in this I was disappointed. My fortitude on this occasion forsook me, so that I declined proposing a resolution I had written for the purpose, namely, "That the further consideration of this question be deferred till the Petition can be presented without giving reason for it to be supposed that it is intended by Protestant Dissenting Ministers to make a common cause with the Roman Catholics." It was strongly suspected, by many of the Ministers, that this measure was *intended* to promote the cause of the Catholics, and subsequent events have strengthened, if not fully confirmed that opinion. If this were indeed the case, the Rev. Gentlemen who were of the Committee will find it difficult to convince the Public that they were free from *duplicity*! It has been said some of them think the Catholic claims ought to be conceded them. Let them then petition *expressly for that object*, and the Government and the world will understand them. But this is not the question at issue. Some were of opinion that presenting the Petition *then* would be construed as expressing the united sense of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers in favour of the Catholics. How do the promoters reply? By attempting to prove that such an opinion was chimerical?—that such fears were without foundation?—that it would have no such tendency? Not a word like it. Instead of replying by argument, they affect to treat it with a stoical apathy—and charge it with being altogether irrelevant. "It is not *ad rem*," said Dr. Rees! "Some people are terribly alarmed," says Dr. Lindsey, "but fear has never made a good Pilot; when did government ever do any thing to serve us but when they could not help it?" Why then had not the Movers of the Petition acknowledged that they thought the Protestant Dis-

senters too insignificant to obtain the repeal of the Test laws, unless they united with the Catholics, whom the government would not resist, as they could *fight* as well as *pray*? and by these means the Protestant Dissenters would come into power, unobserved in the crowd, or climb up the sides of the Catholics to a share in the government! Would it not have been more ingenuous, if the Movers of the Petition had acted as the *Lay Deputies* for defending the civil rights of Protestant Dissenters have since done? I am credibly informed that when the business of their public meeting, convened for confirming the minutes of a former meeting, which had agreed to present a similar Petition, was preparing, a gentleman said, "It is strongly suspected, though it is not avowed, that this measure is intended to serve the Catholics; if this be the case, let it be plainly declared, and let every one give a vote under that impression." With a frankness that did them honour, if their sentiments did not, the friends of the Catholics immediately said they would argue the question upon that principle; the consequence was that though the Motion was carried by a great Majority, yet 25 voted against it, out of less than 90 who were present. Does it not appear that the Ministers who deprecated introducing the Catholic question, were apprehensive that an avowal similar to the above, would have defeated their object? Had they done so, they would either have lost their motion, or if it had been carried, it would have been but by a small majority. As it is, they may boast loudly of an UNANIMOUS vote, but impartial persons will perceive that it was obtained under *false* pretences! I do not understand such manœuvres. Let integrity and uprightness ever preserve me.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

My dear Friend,

MR. Evans charges me twice in one Page of his Pamphlet with having "encouraged a member of Parliament to invalidate the object of the Petition by denying its *unanimity*," which was, he says, "to say the least, an act of disingenuousness and illiberality!" This is an accusation, "to say the least," which Mr. Evans has not

the means of proving. I may have been the occasion of Mr. Evans writing his very elaborate and argumentative letter on the Fast-day, and thus improving his valuable time, which it seems was not necessary to give him opportunity to lament the sins of the Nation—to implore the divine blessing on the government—nor to pray for the peace of the world! I do not deny that I may have been the innocent *occasion* of his writing the “Remarks on an extraordinary correspondence,” but who for this reason will believe that I *encouraged* him to do it? In order, however, that you may judge whether the charge be just, I will make you acquainted with all I know on the subject; and in this instance, I may without vanity conclude, that my knowledge exceeds that of Mr. Evans.

Mr. Butterworth, you know, is an active member of the “Protestant Union,” and consequently his feelings were alive to every public transaction which related to the Roman Catholic Petition then before the House of Commons. In the Morning Chronicle Newspaper of the 12th of February, a letter was published signed B. F. and dated Harlow, February the 3rd 1813, *the next day* after our Resolution was passed. A short extract from this letter will be sufficient for my present purpose. — “As a Friend to unrestricted religious liberty, and as a Protestant Dissenter, I read in your Paper of this day with peculiar pleasure the *unanimous* resolution of the London Ministers of the three denominations to petition Parliament for the repeal of all penal laws in matters of religion. The resolution does them honour, and proves that they do not consider the subject in a pitiful, selfish point of view, as affecting their own rights only; but as equally affecting the rights of Dissenters from the established church of every denomination whether Protestant or Catholic.”

On the 15th of February another letter appeared of a similar import, in the same Paper. This was signed E. H. Southwark. The writer says, “I have read with the highest satisfaction the letter of B. F. in your Paper of the 12th.

“Societies for public and general purposes ought to be brought before the world, and the friends of unrestricted religious liberty ought to be informed and cheered

“ B. F. feels as every good man must feel, on witnessing the noble stand made by that venerable body, the Dissenting Ministers of the three Denominations in London ; and sir, it is evident that in this act they are to be identified with the Dissenters in general.

“ B. F. may rejoice, sir, that thus the great cause is daily gaining strength—the Catholics have only to maintain a firm and temperate course, and they with all other Dissenters must obtain those rights of which no faction, no government can much longer deprive them, and which no *traitor* among themselves can effectually betray.”

On reading these letters Mr. Butterworth felt surprized and grieved. Being the Son, he said, of a Baptist Minister, he recollected how his Father used to speak of the errors and cruelties of Popery, and therefore he was shocked to find that the Protestant Dissenting Ministers had left their own standard to rally round that of Popery. Having some knowledge of my sentiments on such subjects, it struck him that if I had given my support to such a measure I must have been much altered, and therefore he determined to ask me the history of the transaction at the Library to which those letters referred.

On Tuesday Evening the 23rd of February Mr. Butterworth called at my house, when I related to him what I have informed you in my last letter ; but without any knowledge that it was his intention to take notice of what I said in the House of Commons : I conversed with Mr. Butterworth not as a Member of Parliament, but as a friend.

I heard no more of this matter, till I found by the Public Papers a few days after, that when Mr. W. Smith, M. P. for Norwich, presented the Petition, as the UNANIMOUS vote of *all* the Protestant Dissenting Ministers in London and its Environs for the repeal of all the Penal Statutes, &c. &c!! that Mr. Butterworth had contradicted him by saying the resolution to present the Petition was not UNANIMOUS ! I have since learned that Mr. Butterworth added, “ I know there was no division upon the subject, they had divided last year upon the same petition presented to the last Parliament. It was then found that

31 had voted for it; 25 against it, and 12 were neuter.* “What I mean to express is,” said Mr. Butterworth, “that several Ministers opposed the measure and therefore it cannot be said to have been UNANIMOUS!”

Mr. Evans acknowledges that Mr. Butterworth, “by printing my letter, has to a certain degree, exonerated himself.” When Mr. Evans exactly defines the degree of blame which still attaches to that gentleman, I am persuaded Mr. Butterworth, if he think it necessary, will be able to exonerate himself fully. The fact is Mr. Butterworth is one of those who say, as Mr. Evans conjectures, “That the passing this Petition was only *nemine contradicente*, and therefore this would have been a more accurate statement than UNANIMOUS.” Mr. Evans, however, thinks if this were admitted “there would be an end of all public business!” This logic is rather too profound for my comprehension, as I cannot perceive how public business would be affected by the term *nemine contradicente* being employed, which is never designed to indicate that the Resolution was not carried, though it may imply that it did not pass without having been opposed notwithstanding, that opposition was not persisted in so far as to divide the meeting. If Mr. Evans is correct in maintaining that it was an UNANIMOUS vote, it can only be so considered in the *technical* meaning of that term; as in point of *fact* the persons present were far enough from “BEING OF ONE MIND.”

Two days after Mr. Butterworth had thus endeavoured to remove the impression in the House of Commons, that the Petition was intended to express the united sense of the London Dissenting Ministers to be in favour of the Catholic claims, the following circular was sent by the Secretary:—

“Rev. Sir,

“AN *extraordinary* Meeting of the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the three Denominations, will be

* This statement was made on the authority of Mr. Evans' Pamphlet published last year. The Evangelical Magazine for May 1812, says that the numbers were, for the motion, 30, against it 26. This, I believe, is the more correct representation.

held at the Library, Red Cross Street, on Tuesday next, the 2nd of March, at twelve o'clock, to consider the propriety of taking further steps for promoting the object of their Petition to Parliament.—The chair will be taken at half-past Twelve.

February, 26, 1813.

I am,

Your humble Servant,

THOMAS MORGAN."

The events of this EXTRAORDINARY Meeting I must defer till a future letter, and till then, I remain,

Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

My dear Friend,

I PROMISED to give you an account of the EXTRAORDINARY General Meeting of the Ministers at the Library, on the 2nd of March, "to consider the propriety of taking further steps to promote the object of their Petition to Parliament."

When met, considerable curiosity was expressed to know for what purpose the Meeting was convened; as on a certain occasion, "the assembly was confused, the more part" not knowing "wherefore they were come together." At length the chair was taken by the Rev. Samuel Palmer, and the business commenced by the Secretary asking pardon of the Society for having forgotten to say in the Notice, "*and to receive the report of the Committee appointed to present it.*" This inadvertency being readily forgiven, the Rev. Dr. Rees rose, and mentioned that the Committee had been very graciously received by Lord Holland and Mr. Smith; who had declared their willingness to concur in the object of the Petition, and their readiness, if solicited, to found any proposition upon it the Society might wish: but who recommended that the Petition at present should lie on the table, &c.

The Doctor then animadverted in very severe and offensive terms on the conduct of Mr. Butterworth—I have drawn my pen across this part of the Reverend Gentleman's speech, having

no wish to expose the warmth of temper manifested on this occasion, nor to mention the reason which was urged in its vindication. The Doctor, however, concluded a very long, and on many accounts, a very interesting speech, by moving "that the Report of the Committee be received, &c."

Dr. John Pye Smith rising to second the resolution, said, he hoped after what had been said, that no Gentleman would be at a loss to know on what occasion we had been assembled, nor consider the business unimportant! I believe there were none by this time, but what saw clearly that though the *ostensible* reason was to take "further steps for promoting the Petition to Parliament," that the *real* design was to procure a vote of censure on the conduct of Mr. Butterworth.

Dr. Smith said he should take that opportunity of declaring his sentiments on a subject which he considered of importance, and which he had avoided the last meeting, lest he should interrupt its harmony; but he should be more happy after he had declared his opinion respecting the Roman Catholic claims, for he had learned that if he saw his enemy hunger, he should feed him; and if he heard even his enemy calumniated, he ought upon the same principle to defend him. He then attempted by many arguments, and by extracts from a printed book which had not yet been published, to prove that the obnoxious tenets imputed to the church of Rome by Protestants were calumnies cast upon her by her enemies, that it was very true that Catholics had persecuted, but Catholics had their martyrology as well as Protestants, &c. &c.

Mr. Clayton, sen. replied in a tone and in sentiments of marked disapprobation, and deprecated the Roman Catholics being entrusted with the affairs of government, &c. When Mr. Clayton had sat down, I addressed the Chair in nearly the following words—

"Mr. Chairman,

"Sir, I am convinced from what I have now heard that my conjectures at the last meeting of this body were not without foundation, and that the effect of the Petition, will be an impression that the Dissenters are making a common cause with the Catholics. I have been really surprised, sir, to hear a Rev. Gentleman avow

himself as the patron of Popery;* and cannot help feeling shocked that we should in any way give our support to a cause subversive both of civil and religious liberty. I consider, Sir, that every grain of *political power* a Roman Catholic may possess, is just so much thrown into the opposite scale to that of *liberty*. I ask, have not the Roman Catholics always supported despotism in the state and persecution in the church? When did Roman Catholics ever plead for general liberty, but when they have wished to obtain power to enable them to deprive others of it? † Nor does it appear to me that their principles have changed or can be changed! While they hold that there is no salvation without the pale of the Holy Catholic church, and that they may lawfully use the fire and faggot to ‘compel them to come in!’ What security can there be for Protestants where Papists have the supreme power? I know other churches are charged with holding similar sentiments; it may be true, I am no apologist for them. But it will be said, They will be bound by solemn oaths! Did not James II. take such oaths at his coronation?—but did oaths bind him? Was not every thing at this ceremony at the request of the King and Queen done in a Protestant manner? Bishop Burnet speaking of Sir Edward Hales at this period having violated the most solemn engagements,

* This expression gave offence to the Rev. Dr. Collyer, who made some remarks upon it. I by no means intended any thing disrespectful towards Dr. Smith, for whose character, especially as the successful opponent of the Socinians, or as the Rev. Dr. Rees once said in conversation with me, “Unitarians, *as they call themselves*,” I have always felt great veneration. But without charging Dr. Smith with designing to patronize Popery by the remarks he made, I am of opinion that the tendency of his arguments adopted on this, and on a former occasion in 1812, at the Library, were calculated to serve such a purpose:

† Here the Rev. Dr. Lindsey vociferated, “When the Barons compelled King John to grant Magna Charta!” To this it might have been replied, That the subject I was speaking of was *religious* liberty: Magna Charta relates solely to *civil* liberty, though the Parties who obtained it were Papists, yet in this case their church and religion were not concerned. The Doctor’s wit, however, produced a laugh from the company, instead of a reproof from the chair.

says, ' I was led to see that no credit was to be given to that sort of men where their church and religion were concerned!' But it is said, their spirit is altered. Yes, some of them are loud now in their professions of regard to the cause of religious liberty. If they had never fawned before, we might have believed them! Did not king James the Popish Tyrant in 1686 talk much; and constantly to his Nobles of the great benefits of an Universal Toleration? "Nothing, said he, can be more reasonable, more just, more politick!" Bishop Burnett says, speaking of the year after the insurrection in the West in favour of the Duke of Monmouth, "Now all was grace and favour to the Dissenters!" And why was this? Because the king wished them to assist in opening the door to admit the Papists to his councils and government! Because he wished them to lay their bodies at the ground, that the Papists may pass over them, as stepping stones to political power! But adds, Burnett, "the wiser men among them saw through all this." And who were these wiser men? Names we need not blush to own! Men in whose company I consider it an honour to be found! Our Baxters—our Meads—our Kiffins! Men who not only wrote but suffered in the cause of Protestantism! I much wish that some person of more consideration in this Society than myself, would propose a resolution by which those of us who object to affording any assistance to the Catholics may have an opportunity of publicly and unitedly avowing our opinion.

Let us not, sir, forsake the principles of our venerable forefathers. If, instead of treading in their steps, we do any thing to promote the cause of the Catholics, I consider that we shall trample upon the ashes and blood of our ancestors!"

These remarks called up the Rev. Dr. Collyer, who endeavoured to defend his friend Dr. Smith from my imputation that the Doctor had appeared as the Patron of Popery, and declared it to be his opinion that the Catholics should be granted all they demanded. And "that so far from acting inconsistently in giving them support, he thought those Protestant Dissenters who acted differently would trample upon the ashes and blood of their ancestors."

The Rev. Mr. Douglas endeavoured to prove the impropriety of the conduct of those Dissenters who did not oppose the Catholic claims, &c. He was proceeding at some length when Dr. Rees

rose and as at the former meeting, declared that, "he was sorry that the subject of the Roman Catholics should have been introduced as it was quite irrelevant from the object of the Meeting, and on this account he had interrupted the Gentleman in his very important observations which he had permitted him to bring forward, not doubting but observations as important would be made in reply. A Gentleman, said the Doctor, I have full in my eye (looking at me) a very respectable person I dare say, was the first in the transgression. And you sir (directing his speech to the Rev. Mr. Barrett, now at the bottom of the Table) were the second. You should not have suffered him to proceed, I said so then ; but I bowed to the chair, as the chair, sir, is always infallible!* And these gentlemen opposite (meaning Dr. Smith and Dr. Collyer,) with whom I always consider it an honour to act, they also have been wrong in adverting to the Catholic question. The Rev. Mr. Aspland here called to order, as he said, "If Gentlemen were prevented from speaking their sentiments who opposed the opinion of those who were friendly to the measure, while those who supported it were not interrupted, it would certainly have the appearance of unfairness." This procured Mr. Douglas an impatient hearing from many of the gentlemen present, who it is presumed would have found it difficult to answer many of his arguments.

After much discussion, the unjust conduct of Mr. Butterworth was again brought forward. Mr. Clayton, sen. spoke as follows in his vindication. "Sir, I know nothing of what Mr. Butterworth said in the House of Commons on this subject, and was at a loss to know who was the Bookseller alluded to by the Mover of the Resolu-

* As a proof however that the Rev. Mr. Barrett acted deliberately and from sentiment, the following little Anecdote is related. On February 12th, about ten days after the period alluded to, I met that gentleman at the Free Mason's Tavern on the Provisional Committee of the Bloomsbury and Pancras Auxiliary Society. Mr. B. said, "I fear you have not gone to the Library to sign our Petition." "I most certainly have not sir." "I am sorry for it," said Mr. B. "I assigned my reasons, sir, at the meeting." "You did, said he, and I was very solicitous you should obtain a hearing." "You were very polite, sir, I was greatly obliged to you."

tion till his name was mentioned. I have had no communication with that gentleman, directly or indirectly respecting our last Meeting ; but I have no doubt that his observations referred to the opposition which was made against the Petition being presented on account of the time proposed being improper. You know, sir, I particularly objected to it, and so did some others, and I had intended to propose that the Petition be presented this day three months ; but was prevented by the declarations made by those who supported the measure that it was not intended to render assistance to the Roman Catholics. I am persuaded it was to this opposition Mr. Butterworth alluded, if he has said that the Petition was not passed UNANIMOUS. I thought it right to say thus much sir, to vindicate the absent." Dr. Rees said "he could not suffer the construction of the Rev. gentleman to pass, certainly it had passed UNANIMOUS, as there were no hands held up against it!"

The Doctor's opinion of course prevailed, and the following resolution was adopted.

"That this Meeting has heard, with great surprise, of the statement publicly made by Mr. Butterworth in the House of Commons, that the Petition lately presented to Parliament by this Body, for the repeal of all the Penal Statutes now in force on the subject of Religion, *was not unanimous*, and that the Members of this Body feel themselves bound to declare, that the Representation sent by their Committee and Secretary, to the public papers, and communicated to LORD HOLLAND and Mr. SMITH, was *perfectly correct*."

Many of the Ministers had gone away before this, *one person only held up his hand against it!* This must have been overlooked by the excellent Chairman, or it could not have been declared to have passed UNANIMOUS! Surely even the hand of any member of the Body should not have been thought unworthy of regard ; but had it not so happened it would have excluded the expressive and favourite term *Unanimous!*

From the manner in which those were treated at this meeting who ventured to deliver their own opinions, it was apparent that they were more indebted to the laws of the Society which secured the right of free discussion, than to the forbearance of the Rev.

Doctor and his friends. The Doctor certainly proved he could be warni, and much too hot to be entrusted with the Magistrate's sword. But for the liberty of speech which is the unalienable right of every member of the Society, and which is secured to them *by law*, those of us who were in the Minority would not, I am persuaded, have been granted *toleration*—much less liberty!! It reminded me of the remark of an excellent Presbyterian Minister who opposed this measure in 1812, "While you are pleading the cause of universal liberty of conscience, I hope you will not persecute me!"

I am, Yours, &c.

LETTER V.

My dear Friend,

ON the Resolution of censure mentioned in my last letter appearing in the Public Papers, Mr. Butterworth sent me the following letter—

"Fleet Street, March 3, 1813.

"REV. SIR,

"I enclose a Copy of a Resolution passed yesterday at the Meeting of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers, at Redcross Street Library, signed Samuel Palmer, Chairman; and shall be much obliged by a written confirmation of what you stated to me, and which I accurately repeated in the House of Commons, respecting the Petition to Parliament adopted by the Dissenting Ministers, on the 2d of February last, for the Repeal of all the Penal Statutes now in force on the subject of Religion. I am, Rev. Sir,

Your faithful obedient Servant,

JOSEPH BUTTERWORTH."

Having no objection to avow myself as Mr. Butterworth's informant, I immediately sent him this answer—

"Red Lion Street, March 4, 1813.

"SIR,

I AM happy to explain the account I gave to you, at my House, of the Meeting of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of London and its environs, at Redcross Street, on the 2d of Febru-

ary, 1813, respecting the Petition to Parliament for "the Repeal of all the Penal Statutes now in force on the subject of Religion."

I was present at the Meeting, and, with three other Ministers, opposed the measure. I have since ascertained that several more were also decidedly against it; but we did not divide on the subject. A division had taken place at a former Meeting, respecting the same Petition, which was presented to the last Parliament. At that time it was found that 31 had voted for it; 25, among whom I was one, against it; and 12 were neuter.

I wish you, Sir, to understand, that we did not object to the Petition *itself*, but to *any* Petition being presented *at this time*, lest it should be considered as being in favour of the Claims of the Roman Catholics.* This was, however, expressly disavowed by the movers of the Petition; which, in my opinion, was the cause the motion for presenting the Petition was carried. I have since regretted that a motion of adjournment was not made, as I have no doubt it would have been supported.

This, Sir, is a plain statement of facts, which I have no doubt many who were present are ready to attest. I am, Sir,

With sentiments of respect,

Your obedient Servant,

JOSEPH IVIMEY.

* The Rev. Thomas Rees has charged me with having misrepresented the supporters of the Motion. What they disavowed, it seems, was an intention of making *a common cause* with them. Doubtless, there is a difference between this and the other. When a certain well-known character engaged to betray his Master, the chief priests, to accomplish their own ends, were very willing to *serve* him, and did *serve* him by furnishing silver and men, and swords, and staves, and lanthorns, and torches; but when those ends were answered, and the betrayer seized with remorse, they were far enough from making *common cause* with him: "What is that to us?" said they, "See thou to that." Whatever difference there is, however, it seems to have been overlooked. The Morning Chronicle, as we have seen, does not hesitate to put this construction upon their conduct, and it looks as if the Gentlemen of the Deputation were not sufficiently explicit in giving instructions to the Noble Lord and the Honourable Commoner who presented their Petitions.

As Mr. Evans has not ventured to contradict any part of the above statement, my communicating this information must be the only crime for which he has exhibited against me the charges of illiberality, disingenuousness, and degeneracy, intimating that I am an illegitimate son of the fathers of the English Baptists, mentioned in my History of that Denomination, &c. &c. &c. Perhaps Mr. E. acted upon the principle of Festus, who thought it "unreasonable" to send Paul a Prisoner to Cæsar "and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him." The sequel however shews that it was much more easy to *signify* the charges the Jews had exhibited against Paul, than it was to meet the Apostle's challenge, "Neither can they PROVE the things whereof they now accuse me."

Whether I have any just claim or not to the character of the English Baptists' legitimate son, Mr. Evans must be conscious that he resembles them neither in sentiments nor in spirit. By reading the History he professes to admire he must have ascertained that all the English Baptists, till towards the close of the 17th century, both Particular and General, were zealous supporters of the doctrines of the Trinity; the proper Divinity of Jesus Christ; the total depravity of man; the absolute necessity of the Divine influence of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the heart; the future eternal misery of impenitent sinners, &c. &c. Had Mr. Evans lived at that period, and had he preached and published his present sentiments, he would have found himself placed in company with Faustus Socinus and John Biddle. The English Baptists would not indeed have persecuted him, for they had maintained in an address presented to the Government many years before (1615) that persecution for conscience sake was unlawful even though that conscience was misled by ignorance and blinded by error. But neither would they have countenanced him. He would not have been admitted into their pulpits, nor into their churches. Had he published his "Sketch of all the Denominations in the religious world" at that time, instead of its reaching a twelfth edition, it would have been considered a sceptical performance calculated to promote a spirit of infidelity; and had the Author at the same time been zealous that a way should be opened

for Roman Catholics to come into stations of high authority, it would probably have been suspected that it was in this spirit that they felt to be near akin. But in the present age, fortunately for Mr. Evans, there are not a few, who are partial to productions of this tendency.

Mr. Evans charges me with having deserted the Principles of unrestricted universal religious liberty so well understood and propagated by the old English Baptists, by venturing to maintain *that it is inconsistent with the character and principles of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers to make a common cause with the Catholics in their struggle for political power?* Does he not know that in all the political conflicts between Protestantism and Popery in this kingdom, from the Revolution till 1645, the Dissenters always rallied round the standard of Protestantism? Can he produce an instance to the contrary? Does he not know that the Dissenters have always supported the *Whigs* against the *Tories* in the State, because the former supported *Protestantism* and a *limited Monarchy* against the attempts of the latter to bring back *Popery* and an *absolute despotism*? Let him read NEAL and BURNETT, and the History of the four last years of Queen Anne.

But he says "my best friends must feel astonished," and that even others "must lament my degeneracy." This is a proof that Mr. Evans is not acquainted with the men whom I consider my best friends: I can assure him they do not. Nor should I think much either of the good sense or the friendship of any persons who would pour out any lamentations on account of my conduct on this occasion. Have I degenerated from the spirit or the sentiments of the venerable *William Kiffin*, the founder, and for more than 50 years the Pastor, of the particular Baptist Church in Devonshire Square, and one of the Aldermen, after James II. that despotic Monarch had given to the City a new Charter? Mr. Evans must have forgotten this part of the History he has professed to have read with so much pleasure! It is as follows. "This great storm being over" (says Mr. Kiffin, alluding to the death of the two Hewlings his grandsons) "it did in a great measure effect that which was intended by them; for although now there appeared no difficulty in the way, but Popery might be set up, and that there

would be little or no stop to that design, means were used with the Members of the house of Commons to promise upon the sitting in Parliament, to take off the Parliament Tests, which was the only hinderance to Roman Catholics being chosen Parliament men. They did generally refuse the making any such promise, and the insolency of the Papists in their meetings, which now began to be more and more public, did so much alarm both the ministers of the church of England and also all *true* Protestants in general, that the interest of Popery rather abated, and dissatisfactions grew.

“Therefore a new project was set on foot to engage the Protestant Dissenters, by giving them the liberty of their meetings, and promising equal authority in the nation with other men; *but this was in the tail of it, to engage them thereby to promote the taking off the Test*, and to strengthen the Papist interest by setting the Protestant Dissenters against the Protestants of the Church of England, but indeed they were but few, and for the generality of the meaner sort, William Penn being indeed the head of the party. I thought it my duty (adds Mr. Kiffin) to do all I could to prevent those Dissenters of my acquaintance from having any hand therein. But from the sense they had of their former sufferings, and the hopes of finding all things as was promised, I could not prevail.”

Again, speaking of the honours and advantages promised him if he would use his interest to serve the king, Mr. Kiffin adds, “But I thank the Lord those proffers were no snare to me. Being fully possessed in my judgment that the design was the total ruin of the Protestant religion, which I hope I can say was, and is dearer to me than my life.”

Another of those whom I consider to be a Father of the English Baptists, was the celebrated Joseph Stennett, pastor of the Baptist Church in Little Wild Street, London. If Mr. Evans has ever read his Life, he must have forgotten some circumstances which took place in his history at the close of Queen Anne’s reign. I mention these to shew that I have not degenerated from the spirit and sentiments of this very superior man. The author of his life says, “When the scene of affairs altered towards the latter end of the reign of Queen Anne, it happened that a noble friend of Mr. Stennett fell in with the change: and as many addresses waited on her Majesty

with congratulations on the peace concluded with France, so great endeavours were used to engage the Dissenters to compliment the Queen and her Ministers on this occasion. And when they could not in their united circumstances be prevailed on, it was thought proper to try if any of the Denominations singly could be brought into those measures.

“That noble Lord, with the assistance of another Peer, was employed to try what could be done with the Baptists. Mr. Stennett was presently sent for; and it was presumed that if they gained him a considerable step would be made towards effecting their design. Some things were insinuated to him, which tended to create a diffidence between the Baptists and the other bodies of Dissenters, and he was assured at the same time, that such an acceptable compliance as this with the expectations of the court from him and his brethren, would bring them into the royal esteem, and secure them any favour they could reasonably expect. But he assured their Lordships, that neither himself nor his brethren could ever be brought to justify with their hands what their hearts disapproved; and that no particular advantages to themselves could ever counterbalance their regards to their country.

“Robert Harley, Esq. afterwards Earl of Oxford, attempted at the same time with powerful insinuations to influence Dr. Williams; but met with a brave and steady repulse. And the whig Lords deputed a noble Earl, who then bore a principal figure among them, but is since dead, to make due acknowledgements for this seasonable stand of the Dissenters.” p. p. 30, 31.

You will, my friend, be ready to exclaim, how different is the conduct of the present Protestant Dissenting Ministers of London, from that of these patriotic men! They saw through the design, that it was to pave the way for the return of the *Stuarts* and *Popery*; and the exclusion of the *illustrious house of Brunswick* and of *Protestantism*. Thus the ministers of that period escaped the snare which a corrupt court had laid to draw them into their insidious measures. Mr. Stennett was assailed by temptations which some ministers now could not have resisted! He too might have been honoured by the company of Honourable Commoners and Noble Peers—he might have sat at their table and enjoyed their smiles—he might have even basked in the sun-shine of earthly prosperity—

but he dared to refuse, and because he would not assist the Roman Catholics in their attempts to procure political ascendancy in the State. Let Mr. Evans look at this noble example of Puritanism and old English spirit, and if he cannot blush, while thinking of the degeneracy of himself and his friends—why then, we must blush for him.

Mr. Evans reiterates the charge of my having deserted my principles of *religious liberty*. I ask, Is a refusal to lend my aid to procure for the Catholics *political power*, a dereliction of the principle which would oppose all persecution for the sake of conscience? Is it a dereliction of this principle to state what were the sentiments of the illustrious Prince and Princess of Orange at the period of the Revolution? and of all the Protestant Dissenting ministers at that time? Is it any dereliction of this principle to be willing to leave it to the decision of the Legislature, whether there be any tenets held by the Roman Catholics which render them ineligible to hold the highest offices in His Majesty's government? Would it have been any dereliction of this principle, even if I had contended, that persons who hold principles subversive of the safety of civil society, were not to be intrusted with power to injure those who differed from them in opinion, merely because such persons call their sentiments *religious*, and *conscientiously* hold and maintain them? Would Mr. Evans undertake to prove that the Jacobites in the reign of William III. were not by their religious principles (maintained indeed very conscientiously) rendered ineligible to be Lord Chancellor? Till Mr. Evans has done this, and answered the questions proposed above, he will not have made good his charges against me.

If Mr. Evans had proved the inconsistency of advocating the cause of religious liberty, and refusing to concur in a measure which tended to invest with political authority those who have uniformly been its decided enemies, he had a right to apply the words of Milton as he has: but till this is proved, it is without point; and should those who have been so anxious to exalt the Roman Catholics, ever unite with them in opposing even toleration to the friends of religion, (and from the coldness with which a

recent question was entertained, this is far from being impossible,) it may prove that another passage from the same author would have been more appropriate,—

“ Faithful found among the faithless,
Nor number, nor example with him wrought—
To swerve from Truth.”

I am, Your's, &c.

LETTER VI.

My dear Friend,

YOU will recollect that I expressed my fears at the Library on the 2nd of February, that the impression made by the Petition on the minds of the Legislature and of the Public would be, that the Protestant Dissenting Ministers had made common cause with the Roman Catholics. This was considerably strengthened by the aspect which the debate assumed, and the tone employed by some of the supporters of the measure, *after it was too late* for those who would have opposed, had the same sentiments been avowed at the former meeting. Since this time, many events have taken place which have fully confirmed my opinion that the general sentiment on that measure is that the Protestant Dissenters and the Catholic Dissenters are now amalgamated into one mass, and that their applications to Parliament are one and the same. The two letters mentioned page 17, afforded evidence of the correctness of my fears, as these were written upon the principle of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers having made a “noble stand” in behalf of the Catholic Dissenters, and it appears were intended to make such an impression universal. It is a little singular also, that when Mr. W. Smith, M. P. presented the Petition in the House of Commons, the Clerk of the House, *attending to the common routine of business*, indorsed it, “Petition of the Dissenters in favor of the Catholic claims, read February 24th.” This was very inconsiderate, most certainly, but the Clerk seeing the Petition come into the House in a crowd, though in the company of foreigners,

yet hearing it speak the same language, naturally enough concluded it came from the same country. When the same Petition was presented in the House of Lords, by the Right Honourable Lord Holland, if the remarks of his Lordship were correctly stated in the News-Papers, his Lordship said, he “courted investigation respecting it;”—that “the Petitioners were Successors of the Ministers ejected by the Act of Uniformity in 1662—and of those who in the times of James II. voluntarily preferred suffering themselves the operation of the Tests, rather than contribute towards their being removed from the Roman Catholics.”—that “from its having been said by noble Peers on the opposite side that Protestant Dissenters and some Dissenting Ministers had signed Petitions against the Catholics, this Petition had been *accelerated*, to shew that these Petitioners were desirous of obtaining equal liberty for all.”

Whether this report be correct I have not the means of ascertaining; nor am I certain that the Deputation who waited upon his Lordship instructed him to say that they had *accelerated* the Petition on account of the conduct of some “traitors” among the Protestant Dissenters who had ventured to sign Petitions to the Legislature against the claims of their Dissenting brethren of the Catholic communion. Of this however I am quite certain, that no Meeting has been convened at the Library to complain of the misrepresentation given of his Lordship’s speech; nor has any deputation been appointed to wait on his Lordship to assure him that “this Meeting has heard with great surprize of a statement publicly made by his Lordship in the House of Lords, that the Petition lately presented to Parliament by this Body, for the repeal of all the penal statutes now in force on the subject of religion, *was accelerated for the purpose of expressing the sense of this Body in favour of the Roman Catholic claims*, and that the Members of this Body feel themselves bound to declare that this representation arose from his Lordship’s misapprehension of their design, as they had always *disavowed* all intention of presenting their Petition with any such object.” But, my friend, I ask you, and through you all who read this letter, whether “this Meeting of Ministers will do justice to themselves, to their Chairman, to their Secretary

and to the Deputation, till they have passed some such resolution, and have transmitted a copy to the Right Honourable Lord Holland and Mr. William Smith, and have inserted it in the public papers?" Till they have done this, some by-standers will think, after all, that the report of his Lordship's speech was tolerably correct; and that the Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers are less concerned in being considered as the public advocates of the Roman Catholics, than in having it even suspected that their Petition was not carried UNANIMOUS.

There are some parts of the History of this celebrated Petition, which Mr. Evans has not related to his country friend, which I shall take the liberty to supply. Be it known then to all men by these presents that the Petition of all the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of London and its Vicinity, after a request being sent round to many of the Members of the General Body to come and sign it, bears the signatures of 48 persons, including the chairman! Of these, 20 are of the Presbyterian—19 of the Independent—9 of the Anti-pædobaptist Denominations; 5 of the latter are of the Particular, and 4 of the General Baptists!

You will perhaps think that this is but a very inadequate representation of the sentiments of the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the three Denominations in London and its Vicinity, as this Body consists of above 100 Members; much less of the aggregate number of Dissenting Ministers, which including those of the Associated Calvinist Methodists amounts to about 200.

Some of these Ministers must be at a loss to know what was intended by the *Reporter* of the speech of the Right Honourable Lord Holland, when it was stated that they were the "successors" of the 2000 ejected ministers, and of the Nonconformists in the reign of James II. and at the period of the Revolution in 1668. Was this intended by the Reporter as a *sarcasm*? If so, it is as cutting and severe as if on receiving an account at the News-paper office that such an one had yesterday paddled himself round the fish-pond in his garden in a little boat, the Editor were to insert, that this gentleman was a "successor" of the immortal Cook, the circumnavigator of the globe! Who could believe it was intended

seriously ? all would conclude it was a satirical and caricature representation ! The Presbyterians and General Baptists "successors" of the ejected Ministers. In what ? In their orthodox Principles ? They are as remote from them in this as the Poles are from each other, in every sentiment by which these ejected Ministers were distinguished from Socinians from whom they were not less averse than from Papists. Do they succeed them in religious zeal ? Whoever hears of the present race even professing to imitate these pious confessors and intrepid sufferers in their anxious desire to maintain and propagate even their own sentiments, much less the sentiments of the Bible ? Is it in their precision, self-denial, separation from the world ? Who ever thought of calling a modern Presbyterian Minister a PURITAN ? Is it in their places of worship ?* A few of them, and but a very few indeed, are possessed by them ; most of them have passed into other hands on account of the cold system of Socinianism having driven away those who were pious worshippers of God, and engendered such a spirit of indifference respecting divine worship in persons of another description, that they were not able or willing to keep their Ministers and pay the expenses attending the public services of religion ! Is it to the *funds* provided through the influence of these pious and evangelical Ministers, for the purpose of maintaining a succession of men

* By referring to Maitland's History of London, pp. 516, 517, the reader will find that in 1739, the Presbyterians had 28 Meeting-houses in London and Westminster ; the Independants had 26, and the Baptists 33. Of the Presbyterian places 8 are now in possession of the evangelical Dissenters and Methodists, about 10 more have been removed. They have at present about 16 Meeting-houses ; 6 of which belong to the Scotch Presbyterians who are all evangelical. The Independants have about 45, the Baptists 43. Of these 5 are General Baptists, one of which is an Arian congregation where the Rev. J. Evans, M. A. presides, and the other is a congregation of Socinian Universalists, whose pastor is the Rev. Mr. Vidler. In comparing the present race of English Presbyterians and these two last congregations of Baptists with their zealous and puritanical forefathers, we cannot help exclaiming, "How is the gold become dim ! how is the most fine gold changed !"

to preach evangelical principles with pious fervor? If it be true in any sense, this must be its meaning; but this I will not absolutely determine—perhaps some one of these reverend Ministers will be so kind as to inform us in what sense it is to be understood that they are the “Successors” of the *ejected* Ministers.* In addition to the important information Mr. Evans has given his friend respecting the Petition, he has communicated some through the medium of the Press, with which we might have thought his friend had been previously acquainted. As that “the late Dr. George Campbell, of Aberdeen, was his venerable tutor”—that “Dr. Abraham Rees is his venerable friend” &c. &c. But without this letter the public would not have known that Mr. Evans was the “*Chairman*” of the Meeting at the Red Cross Library when this Petition was originally passed; and that as Chairman he “afterwards stepped forward to vindicate it from some misrepresentations that had gone abroad respecting it!” To this Mr. Evans adds, “I do indeed deem my having presided on this occasion the most honourable day of my life!”

You must know that it *happened* to fall to the turn of the Anti-pædobaptists to take the Chair, and it *chanced* that Mr. Evans was fixed upon for this purpose, after it was ascertained who were present. If this were indeed the day on which Mr. Evans arrived at the most distinguished honor he had ever enjoyed, what are we to think of his previous attainments? But I conclude, subscribing myself

Your faithful friend,

JOSEPH IVIMEY.

* The Rev. Gentlemen, who are the Trustees of Dr. Williams's Library, would confer an obligation on the writer, by stating the *tenure* by which they hold that valuable property? Is it not left to Persons *being Protestant Dissenters*, who hold the Doctrines put forth by “The Assembly of Divines” in their Catechisms? Is it not, at present, held by those who have given up those principles? Are they not conscious that the Will of the Donor is violated, and the property alienated? If one of the Societies “for defending the civil rights of Dissenters” would institute an enquiry of this kind, they would render an important service to the christian public.

POSTSCRIPT.

Since writing my Letters, two general meetings have been held at the Library, and as some events have taken place which have arisen out of the former measures, I am desirous that you should know them to prevent all missapprehensions on the subject.

The Annual Meeting of the 13th of April, was called that in addition to the usual business we might consider the propriety of presenting Petitions to the Legislature for the propagation of the gospel in India. I feel satisfaction in having written, and, with others signed, this requisition, as the object was quite in unison with the character of Protestant Dissenting Ministers.

We soon found however that business of greater importance than the conversion of 50 Millions of Pagan Idolaters was to occupy the attention of the Meeting. After a long speech from Dr. Rees, in which he alluded pointedly as possible to me, a motion was submitted, and seconded to this effect, "That it has been the invariable practice of this Body to have its transactions recorded in the Public Papers written by the Secretary, and signed by the Chairman; and any deviation from this rule is highly improper and ought as far as possible to be discouraged and restrained."

Knowing this measure was intended to be a recorded censure of my conduct in having written a letter to Mr. Butterworth who had printed it in a public paper, I requested the Rev. Doctor to name the person who had been guilty of this impropriety of conduct. This however he repeatedly declined. At length, after I had pressed the enquiry, my name was mentioned as having appeared in a public paper connected with an account of the business of a former meeting. I then entered upon a vindication of my conduct, and related the substance of the former letters. Most present, I believe, were satisfied that my conduct was not deserving of censure. As the motion was however pressed, I said that if my name was not disavowed as connected with it, I had

some thoughts of proposing another, viz. "That as it appears from the report of Lord Holland's speech, when he presented our Petition, that it was thought this Body had made a common cause with the Catholics, when no such thing was intended; resolved, that a deputation wait upon his Lordship to request him to take an early opportunity to set us right with the House of Peers and the Country at large." It was now said by many of the ministers that the motion did not allude to me,—that it was not retrospective, but prospective, &c. &c. Under these declarations it was put and carried by only six hands being held up against it.

As much of our time had been consumed by this important discussion, and the resolutions and Petitions relative to India prepared by Dr. Smith, contained many things exceptionable to the Anti-trinitarians, Dr. Rees moved an adjournment for a week, and a Committee was appointed, consisting of two ministers from each denomination, to expunge all the objectionable matter that if possible a body so heterogeneous might act in unison in a petition to the Legislature for the propagation of Christianity. On the 20th Instant we met again, our former Chairman, the Rev. W. Newman, took the Chair; and the Resolutions and Petitions were *unanimously* adopted. Our unanimity on this occasion as well as the signature of the Chairman was omitted by the Secretary in sending the account to the Public papers. "Peradventure it was an oversight"—"Charity hopeth all things and is kind."

When this business was nearly settled, I intimated my desire of bringing forward a question relating to privilege, and requested all the members to continue. Desirous of bringing those to the point who had as I thought acted with duplicity, upon the Catholic question, I said, "It will be recollected that I was charged at the last meeting with having misrepresented the movers of the Petition *for the repeal of all the penal statutes, &c.* in saying that they had disavowed all intentions of *servi*ng the Catholics—whereas what they disavowed was, according to their own declarations, an intention of *making common cause with the Catholics.* According to this statement, it appeared to me that this Body had been traduced in one of the Public Papers, and therefore I intended submitting

a motion upon the subject. Dr. Rees here interrupted me, and moved an *adjournment*, which was immediately seconded. I claimed my privilege as a member of the Body to propose my resolution. After great difficulty, I obtained a hearing, and read as follows, "That as two letters have appeared in the Morning Chronicle of the 12th and 15th of February which assert that this Body had made a *common cause* with the Roman Catholics; and as the Petition lately presented by this Body made no mention of the Penal Statutes which related to the Catholic Dissenters, nor was intended to make *common cause* with them—Resolved, that some effectual step be taken to counteract such injurious and reproachful insinuations." Mr. Morgan moved the previous question, which was immediately seconded. I said "Take care what you do, if you negative my resolution, it will be a proof that you have joined the Catholics heart and hand." The previous question was put and carried, not unanimously, but there were only two hands held up against it.

Having fully ascertained that however my brethren thought proper to act in continuing their connection at the Library, that both from the theological and political sentiments of the Antitrinitarians (*the Soul that animates that Body*) it was impossible I could act in union with them; I have since sent in my resignation as a Member of that Society, which at *present* deprives me of the *privilege* of meeting at the Library as a Protestant Dissenting Minister of the three Denominations.

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