

licly abjured? If Mr. O'Leary has anything more to plead for this Council, I shall follow him step by step. But let him keep his word, and "give a serious answer to a serious charge." Drollery may come in when we are talking of roasting fowls; but not when we are talking of roasting men.

Would I then wish the Roman Catholics to be persecuted? I never said or hinted any such thing. I abhor the thought: It is foreign to all I have preached and wrote for these fifty years. But I would wish the Romanists in England (I had no others in view) to be treated still with the same lenity that they have been these sixty years; to be allowed both civil and religious liberty, but not permitted to undermine ours. I wish them to stand just as they did before the late Act was passed; not to be persecuted or hurt themselves; but gently restrained from hurting their neighbours.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

CHESTER,

March 31, 1780.

A DISAVOWAL

OF PERSECUTING PAPISTS.

I HAVE read a Tract lately sent me, and will now give my free thoughts upon the subject.

I set out early in life with an utter abhorrence of persecution in every form, and a full conviction that every man has a right to worship God according to his own conscience. Accordingly, more than fifty years ago, I preached on those words, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And I preached on the same text, in London, the 5th of last November. And this I extend to members of the Church of Rome, as well as to all other men.

I agree not only that many of these in former ages were good men, (as Thomas à Kempis, Francis Sales, and the Mar-

quis de Renty,) but that many of them are so at this day. I believe, I know some Roman Catholics who sincerely love both God and their neighbour, and who steadily endeavour to do unto every one as they wish him to do unto them.

But I cannot say this is a general case; nay, I am fully convinced it is not. The generality of Roman Catholics, wherever I have been, are of the same principles, and the same spirit, with their forefathers. And, indeed, if they had the same principles, it could not be doubted but they would be of the same practice too, if opportunity should serve.

These principles openly avowed by their forefathers of priestly absolution, Papal indulgences, and no faith to be kept with heretics, have never been openly and authoritatively disavowed even unto this day. And until they are, a Roman Catholic, consistent with his principles, cannot be trusted by a Protestant.

For the same principles naturally tend to produce the same spirit and the same practice. Very lately, a person seeing many flocking to a place, which she did not know was a Romish chapel, innocently said, "What do all these people want?" and was answered by one of them, with great vehemence, "We want your blood. And we will have it soon."

On Friday last, I dined with a gentlewoman, whose father, living in Dublin, was very intimate with a Roman Catholic gentleman. Having invited him to dinner one day, in the course of conversation, Mrs. Grattan asked him, "Sir, would you really cut my husband's throat, if your Priest commanded you?" He answered honestly, "Madam, Mr. Grattan is my friend; and I love him well; but I must obey the Church." "Sir," said she, "I beg I may never more see you within my doors."

But still, be their principles what they will, I would not persecute them. So persecution is utterly out of the question. I know no one that pleads for it. Therefore the writing or talking against it is time lost; it is proving what no one denies.

And the Romanists never have been persecuted in England since I remember. They have enjoyed a full toleration. I wish them to enjoy the same toleration still; neither more nor less.

I would not hurt a hair of their head. Meantime, I would not put it into their power to hurt me, or any other persons

whom they believe to be heretics. I steer the middle way. I would neither kill nor be killed. I would not use the sword against them, nor put it into their hands, lest they should use it against me; I wish them well, but I dare not trust them.

But still I say, persecution is out of the question. And I look on all vague declamations upon it, which have been lately poured out, as either mere flourishes of persons who think they talk prettily, or artful endeavours to puzzle the cause, and to throw dust into the eyes of honest Englishmen.

JOHN WESLEY.

BRISTOL, *March 18, 1782.*

THE ORIGIN

OF

IMAGE-WORSHIP AMONG CHRISTIANS.

WHEN Christianity was first preached in the world, it was supported by such miraculous assistance of the divine power, that there was need of little or no human aid to the propagation of it. Not only the Apostles, who first preached it, but even the lay-believers were sufficiently instructed in all the articles of faith, and were inspired with the power of working miracles, and the gift of speaking in languages unknown to them before.

But when the gospel was spread, and had taken root through the world; when Kings and Princes became Christians, and when temples were built and magnificently adorned for Christian worship; then the zeal of some well-disposed Christians brought pictures into the churches, not only as ornaments, but as instructors of the ignorant; and from thence they were called *libri laicorum*,—"the books of the people." Thus the walls of the churches were beset with pictures, representing all the particular transactions mentioned. And they who did not understand a letter of a book knew how to give a very good account of the gospel, being taught to understand the