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STRICTURES

ON

WESLEY'S

Pretended Roman Catechism,

POINTING OUT

ITS NUMEROUS MISREPRESENTATIONS,
FALSE GLOSSES,
AND GROSS FALSEHOODS.

ADDRESSED TO

The Methodists

OF STOURBRIDGE AND ITS VICINITY.

By the Rev. J. A. MASON,

Catholic Priest of All Saints, Stourbridge.

PART FIRST.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds." 2 Cor. x. 4.

"Forgery—I blush for the honour of Protestantism while I write it, seems to have been peculiar to the Reformed: and I look in vain for one of those accursed outrages of imposition among the disciples of Popery."—*The Protestant Whitaker's Vindication of Mary Queen of Scots*, vol. iii. chap. i. section 1.

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ADDRESS.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

It is the peculiar misfortune, I had almost said happiness, of the Catholic Church seldom to find a generous adversary. The motives of her enemies are frequently bad, generally impure, and the weapons of their warfare, carnal, unjust, and dishonourable. Were their cause a good one, they would not need the aid of such auxiliaries, nor would their counsels so often prove abortive, their efforts inefficient, and their labours vain.

“Why have the heathens raged, and the people imagined a vain thing against the Lord and against his Church? He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them, the Almighty shall have them in derision. He hath placed his King upon his holy hill of Sion. Preaching the commandments, he hath said to him, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee, and I will give to thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession; thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of thy government there shall be no end.” It is impossible to read the magnificent promises made to the Christian Church, *i. e.* to the Church which was originally established by Jesus Christ, the faith, the laws, the government, and ministry of which are of the same divine origin. I say, it is impossible to read the magnificent promises made to this Church, and not discover the imperishable foundation, the universal extent, perpetual visibility, and unalterable truth of this divine fabric. “The mountains shall be moved,” says the eternal and unchangeable God; “the hills shall tremble, but my mercy shall not depart from thee; and the covenant of my peace shall not be moved, saith the Lord, who hath mercy on thee. O poor little one, tossed with tempest without all comfort. Behold I will place thy stones in order, and lay thy foundation with sapphires. And I will make thy bulwarks of jasper, and all thy gates of graven stones. No weapon formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that resisteth thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that the strength of the Gentiles may be brought to thee, and their Kings may be brought, for the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish. The glory of Libanus shall come to thee, and the children of them that afflicted thee shall come bowing down to thee; and all that slandered thee shall worship the steps of thy feet, and shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Sion of the Holy One of Israel.”

Our Divine Redeemer, knowing the counsels of his Father, and the promises made to him in his mediatorial office, proclaims the eternal duration and unalterable truth of his Church. “I will build my Church upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will send you another Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, and he shall guide you into all truth, and shall remain with you for ever.” Such, my Christian brethren, is the character of the Catholic Church; that Church which

was planted at the beginning by the divine hand of Jesus Christ, redeemed by his death, confirmed by his resurrection and the descent of the Holy Ghost, instructed by the labours and teaching of the Apostles, watered with the blood of innumerable martyrs, and producing in every age a noble company of holy confessors, virgins and saints. Though small indeed its origin as the mustard seed—a poor and despicable little one in the eyes of the world, tossed with tempest, without all comfort—humble as were the agents of its propagation, and weak and contemptible as were the weapons of their warfare, yet they were mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds, both of the Jewish ceremonial and of the Gentile idolatry and wickedness. The islands of the sea heard her voice; the gods of the nations felt her power; the name of Jesus resounded from pole to pole, and extended itself from sea to sea, and from shore to shore. And as widely as Catholic truth prevailed, so widely did the Catholic Church extend her boundaries. Kings became her nursing fathers, and Queens her nursing mothers. The Cross, the instrument of the disgrace and suffering of her divine Spouse, became the boast and glory of her children, the standard of her armies, and the ensigns of her triumphs; warriors fought under its protection, nations crouched at its feet, wise men flocked to its light, and learned men to the brightness of its rising; every heart bounded with gladness, and every tongue sung the praises of God. Well might the Psalmist sing in transports of holy rapture, “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Go round about Sion, count her towers, mark well her bulwarks, tell it to the generations to come, God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” But what was it that caused twelve poor fishermen, without money, without arms, without interest or patronage, or even the credit of a common mendicant, to meditate such strange designs, and accomplish such mighty deeds? Their commission was divine, their cause was just, their words were true, their plans and the execution of them were sanctioned and supported by the arm of Omnipotence. And why, O ye Methodists and Ranters, and Protestants of every name and hue! why cannot you scale the walls of Catholicity and storm her citadel? Why are the strong holds of this *sinful harlot* so impregnable? I will tell you why—your weapons are carnal, your cause is unjust, your devices are false and visionary, your forgeries, your misrepresentations, your deceitful and malicious machinations, cause the wiser, the more sincere and honourable of yourselves, to blush. It leads hundreds of honest Protestants to become Catholics. Well may it fail of producing conviction in the breasts of the children of the Church, and excite the sigh of pity or the smile of contempt. I would give you the advice of Gamaliel: “Let this cause alone, for if it be of men it will come to naught, notwithstanding its ancient date and intricate ramifications, but if it be of God you cannot withstand it.” Your cause is quite hopeless. The foams of your rage dash an eternal rock; your impotent arms are lifted against an imperishable city. Look down at its foundations, they are laid at the centre; examine its height, it lifts its head to Heaven—its walls are made of jasper, its gates of graven

stones; he that tilts against it tilts against adamant, and his spear in the concussion will become pointless.

These remarks, my Christian Brethren, have been drawn from me by a small pamphlet split into smaller parts, and circulated in this neighbourhood by your preachers, for the purpose of preventing you from knowing the true doctrines of the Catholic Church, and consequently becoming convinced of your error, and embracing this much-calumniated but ancient Church of Jesus Christ. These men know, that if you become Catholics, you will no longer pay them to teach you falsehood, and they know also, that if the Catholic Church be seen in her true colours you will eventually abandon them, and therefore they labour with all their might to prejudice your minds by the most atrocious calumnies and misrepresentations. They dress up a figure of their own and call it Popery, and then pretend to be frightened, and run away from the work of their own hands. Truly I do not know which is the most foolish act, whether to make a wooden god and adore it, or a straw devil and fly away from it! The former is foolishly and impiously charged upon us, the latter is daily realized in the imaginary charges and groundless terrors of our adversaries. But notwithstanding all their machinations, truth must and does prevail, yes, even in Stourbridge, where prejudice has held her empire, and, like the narrow and muddy stream that washes her banks, rolling along its little eddies, has left a sediment behind which emits effluvia as offensive to the purer mind, as it is pervasive of the moral and social atmosphere. Even here does truth advance, and the Catholic Church begins to lift the veil which hitherto has hidden her beautiful countenance from their sight. "I am blackened but beautiful," does she say to all—and many here, charmed with her amiable aspect, seek her favour, patronage, and support. Instantly the haggard monster Error, sets up a frightful yell, and flies from before her face as the darkness flies before the rising sun, and in her hidden and dark retreats collects her thunderbolts, marshals her forces, forges her implements of war, and tries with all her power to crush the heavenly form which she inwardly fears, cordially hates, but cannot love. Were the factots of error possessed of common prudence, they would give up an opposition which has so long and so frequently been proved a hopeless task. They would at least cease to carry on an offensive war which must in the end cover them with confusion and defeat, and administer laurels to deck the triumph of the Catholic Church. Roll back the ponderous scroll of ages past—explore the annals of the mighty dead, and you will find that her goings forth are of old, her councils are guided by faithfulness and truth. Many a battle has she fought—many triumphs has she celebrated—many conquests won—and, although at present hoary with the frost of time, she is still as young and beautiful as Judith. Though covered with the scars and blood of a long campaign, she is still as strong and active and heroic as the warlike Sampson just entering the field of contest. Though an angel from Heaven, like the visitant of Joshua, she is an angel clad in armour, the captain of the hosts of the Lord is she come. Earth and hell have combined to destroy her—the floods from beneath, and

the cataracts from above, have united to overwhelm her ; but, like the ark of Noah, she carries her children in her bosom, and rides above the mighty surge, higher and safer in proportion to the impetuosity of the torrent. Whosoever is wise, and will understand these things, even they shall know the loving kindness of the Lord.

The little book to which I am about to refer, is called "A Roman Catechism," written by Mr. John Wesley, as companion to another little book called "Popery Calmly Considered," thinking, I suppose, that two little books would make a great one, and that the lesser the object the swifter the velocity, and consequently the greater the momentum. With Mr. Wesley's philosophy I have nothing to do, nor indeed with his private motives—he is gone to the bar of that God whose wisdom no man can deceive, and whose justice no man can shun ; but with his public motives I have to do, and with the avowed designs of the circulators. It is circulated on my mission, its influence is directed against my labours, and its contents are fraught with misrepresentations and mischievous falsehoods. It has been said that I have falsified the pamphlet called "Popery Calmly Considered" in my "Triumph of Truth." I can only say, if this be proved, I will publicly retract it ; and therefore, as both pamphlets treat upon the same subjects, I will advert to both and prove the contrary. It is my intention to be as short as the subject will permit, only to notice what is false or misrepresented, and expound, as far as appears necessary, the Catholic faith upon the points under consideration.

My whole design is not so much to vindicate my religion, which is above all vindication, and for which, were it necessary, many of my brethren are more able and better qualified ; but my design is to check the poison, to guard my flock, to save the unwary from the paths of error and the gulph of perdition, and guide their feet into the way of peace.

STRICTURES.

THE first thing which strikes the mind of a Catholic, in examining this production of Mr. Wesley's profound lucubrations, is the novelty of the title—"A Roman Catechism;" or, in other words, a Catechism for the Romans. Thus leaving us to guess at two alternatives, viz. whether the Romans made it for themselves, or whether he has made it for them; or secondly, whether it be designed for the Romans alone, or for the Catholic Church in general, whose faith the Romans hold. As for the first alternative, the Romans never made this Catechism; they do not hold many of its doctrines, some of which are false and calumnious, and no less disgraceful, if not to the heart, at least to the head of its author. Mr. Wesley has made this Catechism for the Romans. He, good man, in the fecundity of his imagination and profusion of his zeal, was not contented with making a religion for Methodists, but he must make a religion for the Romans too. This is often the case with others, besides Mr. Wesley. All are fond of making a religion for the Romans, and then refuting it. Like children, they build a man of snow, and then exert their skill and prowess to try which of them shall first knock off its head.

Such is the Catechism fabricated for the Romans by Mr. Wesley, and such the employment of this same divine. But who are these Romans who have had the temerity to provoke, or the grace to merit, a Catechism at the hands of Mr. Wesley? Are they the descendants of the famous Romulus, the children of those invincible bands of ancient conquerors, who now inhabit the Roman territory? But why make a Catechism for them? And why, above all, circulate it in Stourbridge? O, the cause is this.—The Romans are Catholics, and there are Catholics in Stourbridge. But does this make the Stourbridge Catholics Romans? As well might you say, the Romans are human beings—the inhabitants of Great Britain are human beings—therefore the inhabitants of Great Britain are Romans. If our being of the same religion as the

Romans makes us Romans, by the same rule, our being of the same religion as the Spaniards makes us Spaniards, and so *ad infinitum*. And on the supposition that this Catechism gives the true Catholic faith, it might as well be called a Spanish Catechism, or the Catechism of any other Catholic country; for it would contain the faith of all these nations, and of the far greater part of the Christian world, as well as the faith of Rome. But Mr. Wesley, perhaps, would explain himself were he alive; and he would tell us, that the head of our religion lives at Rome, and therefore we are Romans. As well might he say to the Stourbridge Protestants—Your head Bishop lives at Canterbury, and your Supreme Head on earth lives at Windsor, therefore you are all Canterburians or Winsorians. What admirable logic!—what a wise man to write Catechisms!! But a Methodist will tell me—you are called Romans, and therefore Mr. Wesley did right to call you so. Wonderful! The Methodists are called Jumpers, Ranters, Swaddlers, Deceivers, therefore all men would do right to call them so. It is thus that these men throw dust in the eyes of the people, to prevent them from seeing the Catholicity of the Christian Faith and Church. What I have said of the Roman Catechism, equally applies to the Roman Church or Church of Rome. The Church of Rome, properly so called, is that part of the Catholic Church residing at Rome. But the Catholic Church throughout the world, is in no other sense the Church of Rome, than as the principal head, centre of unity, and executive authority of the Catholic Church, resides at that place. As well might he call the Protestant church of Stourbride, the Church of Canterbury or Windsor Castle. As to Mr. Wesley's reply, that "Christ is the head of the Church," we know this as well as he. But the question is not about the invisible head and authority, but the visible economy established by Christ for the government of his Church in her militant state. We might as well say Christ is the head of his church, therefore there needs no Conference. Christ is the invisible Minister of his Church, therefore there needs no Ministers. But this will not suit the Methodist Preachers. They would not like to be unministered, and if we could strip St. Peter's successor of this

office, and give it to the Conference, they would become as great sticklers for a Pope as the Catholic Church is. And historians agree, that Henry the Eighth was a more absolute Pope among Protestants in his day, and John Wesley a more absolute Pope among Methodists in his, than ever the Pope of Rome pretended to be, or ever attempted to assume. And the Conference inherit all the spirit of their father in this regard. But, Mr. Wesley, says, "There is no evidence in scripture or antiquity for a visible head." We might have asked him, how he durst pretend to be one. However, this assertion is false and ignorant. We learn from scripture, that Christ gave to St. Peter powers which he did not give to any other Apostle. In the first instance he changed his name, or gave him the name of Cephas, in the Syro-Chaldaic language, which word signifies Peter, in the Latin and Greek languages, and means a rock. Now, Almighty God never changes a person's name, without an essential cause. Abraham was originally named Abram, a high father. But when he became the covenant father of the faithful, God changed his name to Abraham, which signifies the father of a great multitude. So when Jacob had the covenant confirmed to him, his name was changed to Israel. Our Divine Redeemer no sooner saw Simon, than knowing his heart and finding there fit principles for precedency, viz. faith, charity, zeal, and fidelity, he said to him, "Thou art Simon, thou shalt be called Cephas, a rock." From this time he assumes the most prominent character and office among his brethren. Although he was not the eldest, nor the first called to the Apostleship, yet he is always named in primary order, which is a singular and an unaccountable circumstance on any other supposition than his primacy of office. When St. Matthew relates the names and first mission of the twelve, St. Peter is declared to be the first, *Matt. x. 2*. When three were selected to witness the transfiguration, Peter was the first; and on every other occasion you find the primacy given to St. Peter: Peter and the rest, Peter and those that were with him, Peter and the eleven. If the naming of Michael at the head of the good angels, and the devil at the head of the bad angels, denotes principality in the hierarchy of heaven and hell—and

if the same order is constantly adopted in the petty societies of mortals, why not this order exist among the Apostles and their successors in the Christian Church? The holy Fathers take notice that if our divine Redeemer teaches out of a ship, that ship is Peter's. If any disciple is favoured with a miraculous draught of fishes, which was evidently figurative of the miraculous conversion of souls, and the increase of the church, even till the net break by schism, it is Peter. If any one is permitted to walk with Christ on the waves of the boisterous sea, and supported from sinking, it is Peter. If any one is prayed for that his faith may not fail, it is Peter. He alone was commanded to confirm his brethren. He alone to follow his Master after his resurrection. To him alone were given the Keys, which denote a primacy of that power of opening and shutting, of binding and loosing, which was given to the rest of his brethren. To him alone was it said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven; and I say to thee, thou art Peter, (reminding him of its name and import) and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." Accordingly, when many disciples left our Redeemer, on his propounding to them the doctrine of the real Presence, (*St. John*, chap. vi.) and a public expression of the fidelity of the twelve was required, St. Peter speaks for all his brethren. When Christ was regulating the affairs of his Fold or Church, St. Peter is appointed universal Shepherd over both sheep and lambs, i. e. over the whole flock. He first opened the mission of the Apostles, and preached the first sermon to the world. He first revealed to the Jews their vocation, first opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, first resisted the Synagogue, first confirmed the Gospel by miracles, first amplified the Church by the addition of 3000 souls. He was the first to publish the deposition of Judas and the election of Matthias. The first to call the council of the Apostles at Jerusalem. The very person of whom St. Paul tells us, "he appeared to be the chief;" and he tells us he went up to Jerusalem on purpose to see him, which visit the holy Fathers say, was not merely to see him as a friend, but as a person

of superior eminence in the Church. Finally, to *him* alone was said, "Whatsoever." To all the Apostles was given the power of forgiving or retaining sin, of binding or loosing the sinner, but to none was it said, "whatsoever thou shalt bind or loose shall be bound or loosed," except to this great Apostle. This Protestant authors have acknowledged in spite of themselves. Calvin tells us, "the Apostles had one to preside over the rest."—Musculus, says, "the Apostles were not equal, there was one chief that schisms might be compounded; Peter is found in many places to have been chief, which we do not deny." Whitgift, Fulke, and many others, say the same thing. So much for scripture—now for antiquity.

St. Clement, one of the successors of St. Peter, and his disciple, writes thus: "Simon Peter, for the reward of his true faith and preaching sound doctrine, is defined to be the foundation of the Church, for which reason he is named by the divine mouth of our Lord, Peter; who was by our Lord's first election the chief of the Apostles, to whom as chief, God the Father revealed the Son." He also calls him, "the father of all the apostles, who received the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

St. Polycarp, a disciple of St. John, went from Smyrna, in Asia, to Rome, in order to gain the decision of the successor of St. Peter, upon the time of keeping Easter. St. Irenæus says, "It is necessary for every church to have recourse to Rome, because of its more powerful principality." St. Dionysius calls him, "the stay-pillar and chief of the Divines." Epiphanius, "the Captain of the Disciples." St. Ambrose, "the Rock or immoveable Stone, which upheld the fabric of the Christian work." Tertullian calls the Bishop of Rome, "the greatest Bishop and the blessed and Apostolical Pope." Origen says, "Behold that great foundation of the Church, and that most solid Rock on which Christ founded his Church;" and again, "Peter upon whom the Church of Christ is built, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail."

St. Hyppolitus calls him "Peter the prince and rock of faith, who has the keys of the kingdom of Heaven."

St. Cyprian says, "God is one, Christ is one, one church and one chair, founded upon Peter by the word of Christ."

St. Jerom wrote to Pope Damasus for counsel against the Arians, and says, "I thought it best to ask counsel of the chair of Peter; I speak to the successor of the fisherman; I join myself in communion to your Holiness, that is, to the chair of Peter; upon this rock I know the church is built."

St. Augustine writes to Pettilian, "What fault hath the chair of the Roman Church done to thee, in which St. Peter sat, and in which, at this day, Anastasius sitteth. The whole Christian world in the transmarine and most distant parts of the earth is subject to him who sits in the chair of the Roman Church. The succession of Bishops, from the very seat of St. Peter to the present Bishop, retains and keeps me in the Catholic Church." He then names every Bishop from St. Peter down to Anastasius, and tells the Donatist, "In this number no Donatist Bishop can be found." A multitude of other quotations might be made, but these are sufficient to shew how false and ignorant is the assertion, that there is no evidence for any visible head of the Church, either in Scripture or antiquity.

Mr. Wesley asserts, in his "Popery calmly Considered," that Christ never gave St. Peter any pre-eminence above the rest of the Apostles, and he wishes his readers to believe that St. Peter never was Bishop of Rome, and, indeed, that he never was there. Such assertions are easily made by men who are either without knowledge, or honour, or conscience, and who know that their readers in general cannot contradict them. But when they come to be tried in the balances of truth they are found lighter than vanity. Let the candid reader of these pages consider that there is a host of historians, and other writers of antiquity, some of whom I have quoted above, whose united voice is against Mr. Wesley. As far as the question regards the primacy of St. Peter, a Divine of the Established Church, whose words I have before me, positively contradicts Mr. Wesley; he has these words, "A key is an emblem of power, the giving of the keys therefore was clearly symbolical of the au-

thority of the receiver to open and shut, to admit and exclude, and, in general, to manage and superintend the spiritual interests of the church." The same author assures us, that the whole of St. Peter's character denotes a "primacy of order;" and he shews us how this primacy was realized, "When the Lord was risen from the dead, who of the Apostles was favoured with his first appearance? St. Peter. Who proposed and managed the filling of the vacancy in the number of the Apostles made by the teacher of Judas? St. Peter." This author goes on to shew, that the supremacy was exercised in laying the foundation of the Gentile Church, dissolving the Mosaic economy, and calling the council at Jerusalem, &c. It is true, the Rev. Divine believes this authority ceased with St. Peter. This is for him and me to settle, but as far as he goes he is opposed to Mr. Wesley. As far as the question regards the fact of St. Peter ever being at Rome I will give you the opinion of your own preacher, Dr. Clark, and leave you and these authors to settle the point with Mr. Wesley. Dr. Clarke says, "St. Jerom concludes his articles on St. Peter saying he was buried at Rome, in the Vatican, near the triumphal way, and is in veneration all over the world." The Doctor proceeds—"It is not necessary to make any remarks upon this tradition; but it is easy to observe, that it is the general uncontradicted disinterested testimony of ancient writers in the several parts of the world, Greeks, Latins, and Syrians. About the place there is no difference among Christians of ancient times. Never was any other place named besides Rome, nor did any other city ever glory in the martyrdom of St. Peter. There have been many disputes between the Bishop of Rome and other Bishops and Churches, yet none denied the Bishop of Rome the chair of Peter. It is not for our honour or interests, either as Christians or as Protestants, to deny the truth of events ascertained by early and well-attested tradition." So far the Doctor, both for the succession of St. Peter in the chair of Rome and for the validity of tradition.—*Preface to the 1st and 2d Epistles of St. Peter, page 4.*

Mr. Wesley's next position appeared to him, no doubt, to be a strong one, equally impregnable to literary tactics or logical accuracy. I will state the

objection, and leave my readers to judge. "There were at one time three Popes." Very well, and what then? Why this of course proves that there is no Pope divinely appointed to be the head of the Church. I appeal to any man of common sense, whether this be a rational conclusion. No man need go to Oxford to be able to disprove this. We might just as well say, that if three persons contend for the crown of this realm there is therefore no legitimate heir. I would not falsify an historical fact as Mr. Wesley has done, to avoid a difficulty, much less will I do it where no difficulty exists. There have been three at one time who assumed the title of Pope, but there never were three legitimate Popes at the same time. Ambitious men, whether in church or state, will often set up claims which are as unjust as they are destructive of peace and unity, but the Church always knew the lawful successor of St. Peter from every other intruder, with the same certainty as the Methodists know the old Conference from that established by Mr. Kilham. But Mr. Wesley cites St. Cyprian to prove that all the Apostles were equal in honour and jurisdiction. I have already cited the same saint of the Catholic Church, to prove, that as God is one and Christ is one, so there is one Church and one Chair, founded upon St. Peter by the authority of Christ. Now this is an instance in which they say, "A father may be cited not only against a father but against himself." It is easy, however, to reconcile St. Cyprian with St. Cyprian, and to shew Mr. Wesley's dishonesty. When the saint says, "all the Apostles were endued with the like partnership of honour and power," he only intended to shew the truth of the truism, that all the Apostles were equally Apostles, and had equal ministerial honour and power. So we say all the Bishops of the Catholic Church are equally Bishops, but they are not all equal in jurisdiction. And why did not Mr. Wesley give the next words of the saint, "*Sed exordium ab unitate proficiscitur ut Ecclesia una monstretur,*" "But the beginning arises from an unity that the Church may be shewed to be one," i. e. the Apostles had equal ministerial power and authority over all Christians, but Christ appointed one as the spring or centre of unity to the rest, that the

Church might be shewn in all ages to be one. And why did not Mr. Wesley refer to his own mother church which he had abandoned? he would have found her economy the same. Her Bishops are all equal in ministerial honour and power, for the highest can give no other orders than the lowest, and yet one is called Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of all England, and another is Archbishop of York and Primate of England; and the rest are Bishops without these titles of honour and jurisdiction. How plain are these things when a man intends to be honest!!!

Mr. Wesley goes on, "The Church of Rome styles herself the mother and mistress of all Churches." Here again the reader must understand it to be the Catholic Church, united to the See and Church of Rome, and in this sense she truly is so. For by the Catholic Church is meant the universal Church, believing and teaching one universal body of divine truth, as taught by Christ and his Apostles. And as the Church was founded at first by the teaching of this truth, and became one universal body, united in one faith and bond of Christian communion, the ministers and economy of which were exclusively of divine authority, consequently all individual churches owe their birth to this divine authority, and are bound to submit to the laws and maxims of the same; and no good Christian will disclaim the authority of the church which gave him birth. But should any individual man or church dare to do so, this does not annul her authority, she is still their mother although they are become rebellious children. As to his wishing the church of Jerusalem or Constantinople to be the mother and mistress of all churches, it might suffice for us to prefer St. Peter's opinion to that of John Wesley. Wherever St. Peter's chair is, there is the rock upon which we know the unity, stability, and truth of the Church is built, and the authority of St. Peter rests upon his legitimate successors in his chair. Now St. Peter placed it at Rome, and, no doubt, for wise purposes; for I suppose Mr. Wesley would acknowledge that he had the spirit of God. Even we can see sufficient reason why he could not place it either at Jerusalem or Constantinople; first, because the former was devoted to destruction, and Christ had warned his followers

to fly from it; secondly, Constantinople did not exist in the days of St. Peter, nor for three hundred years afterwards; and thirdly, because the empire of Rome was comparatively universal, and consequently gave great facility to the universal spread of the Gospel of Christ.

So much for Mr. Wesley's vision of Jerusalem and Constantinople. His next charge is, that the Church of Rome requires all persons to believe the doctrines which she proposes. Here again he guilefully hides from your view the first and necessary definition of the Church: if by the Church of Rome he mean the Church *at* Rome, the assertion is false, himself being the witness, as I shall hereafter shew; for we are not obliged to believe the Pope and his Cardinals, or the church at Rome, on their sole unsupported authority; any doctrine to be of faith must be that of the universal Church as before defined. But if he mean this universal Catholic Church, then I ask why should we not believe her? Was she not established by Christ and his Apostles? Was not the commission to teach given to this Church? Were not the promises of indefectibility and continual guidance given to her? Did not Christ command all to hear her? "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me; he that believeth what you teach shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned; he that will not hear the church let him be to you as a heathen and a publican." Do we not profess to believe her in the Apostles' Creed? "I believe the holy Catholic Church;" and in the Nicene Creed, "I believe one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." Whether my readers believe these creeds or not, Mr. Wesley had solemnly declared that he believed them, and would teach them. St. Paul also calls the Church the pillar and ground of the truth: now, if so, it is impossible to see why we ought not to hear her as the teaching authority of God. O, but she has erred! Has she? I know Mr. Wesley will assert it, but her Divine Founder tells us very differently: "I will give to you another comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and he shall guide you into all truth, and shall remain with you all days, even till the end of the world." I cannot omit this opportunity of shewing what little

confidence is to be placed in Mr. Wesley's veracity, and how awfully he has perverted the very letter of the word of God in his translation of the above quoted passage from St. Paul to Timothy, "The church of God is the pillar and ground of the truth." (*Timothy* iii. 15.) Now let any one open his Protestant Bible and turn to this text, and he will find it thus; "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (verse 16.) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh," &c. It is the same in the Greek text, the Latin Vulgate, and Beza's Latin translation of the Greek: nor is there any difference in the punctuation or division of verses. Now let the same person open Mr. Wesley's translation of the New Testament with notes, and he will find it thus translated, contrary to the Greek, to the Latin, to the Protestant Testament, and to Beza, who was also a Protestant—"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave in the house of God which is the church of the living God." Here is the period and end of verse the 15th. He goes on—verse 16, "The mystery of godliness is the pillar and ground of the truth, and without controversy a great thing." Will not every good man be amazed and tremble at the liberties thus taken with the word of God? Here is not only an alteration of the punctuation, for the purpose of changing the sense, but there is actually a transposition of the words, for the open purpose of corrupting this divine fountain of knowledge and salvation. O, John! thou wast a bold and an adventurous child of thy daring father Luther, and, like him, well adapted to be the reformer of the word and church of God. But to proceed—"The Church of Rome does not acknowledge holy Scripture to be a sufficient rule of faith and manners." I answer, this is true, she does not, and she can assign sufficient reasons for it too. In the first place, they cannot be a sufficient rule of faith and manners, if they do not contain all that Christ did and taught, and we are assured by St. John that they do not. "If all were written which Jesus did, the world would not contain the books," *St. John*, xxi. 25. He spent forty days

after his resurrection, teaching his Apostles the things concerning his kingdom, and yet we are nowhere told in scripture what these things were. St. Paul required the Church to observe all things which he had taught them, whether by word or by epistle. Secondly, Protestants themselves believe and practice many things not written in the scripture, as infant baptism, sponsors, sprinkling instead of pouring or immersion, the change of the Jewish sabbath, eating blood and things strangled and swine's flesh, going more than three miles from home on a Sunday, and a hundred other things which belong to faith and manners. Thirdly, that cannot be a sufficient rule which cannot settle disputes but leads to false religions and false manners, and yet none of the different sects which make the scripture their only rule, can settle their disputes—all appeal to it—all are right, and all are wrong. Fourthly, that cannot be the only sufficient rule, which any man, like Mr. Wesley, can corrupt at pleasure; for the common people can never detect such corruptions without a guide. We need, therefore, besides the scriptures, the Church of Jesus Christ to be our guide, and the guardian and interpreter of the scriptures. "We read," says Mr. Wesley, "of the faith once delivered to the saints." So do we, and a curse against them who corrupt it; and this is precisely the reason why the Catholic Church teaches and maintains the necessity of one faith, and condemns a multitude of dissentient creeds. Mr. Wesley does not like our doctrines of "Transubstantiation, the seven Sacraments, Purgatory, Half-communion, worshipping of Saints and Images, Indulgences, Service in an unknown Tongue," &c. I add, "neither does he like the Church to be the pillar and ground of the truth." It appears Mr. Wesley's likes and dislikes are very capricious. He does not like one thing in the scripture, and he alters it. He does not like other things taught by the Church, and he wishes to reform it. But there are some things neither commanded to Christians by the scripture, nor by the church, viz. tithes and ticket-money, and many other such like things; these he likes for an obvious reason. However, I must inform my readers, that the Catholic Church knows nothing of half-communions or wor-

shipping of saints and images, in Mr. Wesley's sense, neither does she pray in an unknown tongue. It is but partially known, I grant, but it is the most generally known of any other language. Well, but these doctrines are not in the scripture—*distinguo*, Mr. Wesley; some of these points are not doctrines at all, they are only points of discipline, changeable at the pleasure of the Church. But some are doctrines, and you say they are not to be found in the scripture. This I deny, as I have proved in the "Shaver," a second edition of which is now on sale, for the comfort of Mr. Jewitt, and which I am ready to prove to those who desire to know the truth, and who choose to visit me.

The next charge is, that the Catholic Church holds Tradition. And so did Mr. Wesley, or he could never tell what books were holy scripture, or whether there was any holy scripture at all. But he brings forward several fathers, doctors, and saints of the Catholic Church, as witnesses against the wickedness of their own church in holding traditions; and yet they lived and died in this Church, and were enrolled by her in the calendar of saints. Just as if saints would live and die in a false church, or the Catholic Church would honour men who openly condemned her. Bravo! we shall have Mr. Wesley in the calendar some day. On the subject of tradition, the Catholic Church distinguishes four kinds—divine, apostolical, ecclesiastical, and merely human traditions, or false and visionary legends. Against the latter kind of tradition, not only the holy Fathers, but the Pastors of the church with one voice warn and guard us, with much greater scrupulosity than Mr. Wesley has done his followers. Witness the curious tales circulated by himself in different parts of his writings, some of which are related with all the *sang froid* of true narration, in "Letters from the Dead to the Living," and in the "News from the Invisible World;" and that bibliotique of cant and deception, the "Methodist Magazine." But these things do not invalidate true tradition. Divine traditions, are those which come from God and Christ. Apostolical traditions, are those which take their rise in the teaching of the Apostles. Ecclesiastical traditions, are those which regard the prin-

ciples and practices of the ancient Pastors of the Church, the successors of the Apostles. The first regards such doctrines of faith or ordinances of Christ, as he taught to his Apostles, and by them delivered to the Church, but which were never written in the scriptures. The second regard those counsels, commands or ordinances, which the Apostles established by the direction of the Holy Ghost, for the well-being of the Church. Thus, St. Paul says, at one time, "I command, yet not I, but the Lord." At another time, "I say, not the Lord. If any brother have a wife that believeth not, and she consent to dwell with him, let him not put her away." To this kind of tradition is attributed the practice of receiving communion fasting, and I have seen Methodists attribute the abolition of love-feasts to the same source. The third kind of tradition regards facts, discipline, and ceremonies of the Church. We have only ecclesiastical tradition for the authenticity and authority of the books of the New Testament, and we have the same for the ceremonies of the Mass and the Sacraments. Nor do we mean, by these traditions, reports handed down merely, but the concurrent testimony of the Church, corroborated by facts and monuments and the writings of the Fathers and ecclesiastical historians. These kinds of tradition are necessary. It is commanded in scripture to observe them. Many essential points could not be decided without them, as the baptism of infants, the impropriety of re-baptizing converts to Catholicity, who have been properly baptized in false religions. This subject was agitated in the days of Pope Stephen, and he decided that it was not lawful to re-baptize them, if it was ascertained that the person had been properly baptized. On this occasion, St. Cyprian opposed the Pope, and St. Augustine remarks, we durst not affirm with St. Stephen the validity of such baptism, had it not been for the most perfect agreement of the Catholic Church, to whose authority St. Cyprian would have submitted, if in his time a General Council had decided the question.

Here are three things worthy of notice. 1. That this point was cleared up by tradition. 2. St. Cyprian opposed the Pope as long as he thought he acted by private authority and private judgment; and this com-

pletely disproves Mr. Wesley's assertion, that "the Church of Rome, in its proper and confined sense, requires all persons to receive her doctrines on her own private authority." 3. We see what is the authority of the Church which these two doctors and saints considered definite in matters of faith and morals—or, as Mr. Wesley calls them, manners—viz. the voice of the Catholic Church; and hence St. Augustin declared, "I should not believe the Gospel itself, did not the authority of the Catholic Church oblige me to do so." But all this is known by the concurrent tradition of the Church, and indeed no man can distinguish truth from error by any other tests than the constant uniform teaching of the Church in all ages, which is tradition.

We can produce a great number of most luminous and conclusive passages from the Fathers upon this subject, but I conceive they are not necessary. But as Mr. Wesley has enlisted St. Basil on his side, I will shew the sentiments of this saint upon the subject.—"The day would not suffice, (he says) were I to attempt to relate to you all the mysteries transmitted to the Church without writing." That Saint Basil, therefore, or any other saint, rejected human traditions, is nothing to the purpose.

Methodist Preachers frequently cry out, "To the law and to the testimony," without knowing of what they speak. For the Gospel, whether written or unwritten, is nevertheless the testimony of God and of his Church. They also often ask, Why go back to the Fathers only, and to the testimony of the Church? Why not go to the Scriptures, as of higher antiquity and authority? I answer, the unwritten word is of higher antiquity than the written word, and of equal authority, it being delivered by Jesus Christ to his Apostles by word of mouth, long before the New Testament was written; and the Apostles delivered the same to the Church by verbal instructions, as is shewn in the "Triumph of Truth." And the constant chain of tradition in the Church is a surer guide than any written document, whether of the Scriptures or the Fathers; for a written document without an infallible interpreter, is subject to the ignorance, the caprice, and imaginary inspirations of every reader. But this constant universal tradition is

the book of the whole world, open to the whole world, and known and practised by the universal Church, so that the whole world must be deceived before tradition can fail.

Mr. Wesley says many odd things about holy water, incensings, salt, and spittle; and I could ask Mr. Wesley as many odd questions about his gown and surplice and trencher cap, his crossing and sprinkling, and turning to the East, and a hundred other things, objected to by De Laurie, in his "Plea for the Nonconformists," none of which he can find in the Bible, and therefore, if the Bible is the only rule of faith and manners, the whole of Mr. Wesley's religion would need remodelling. We can always give a solid answer for every ceremony of our Church, and this is what he never could do.

His objection to the Canon of Scripture, as held by the Catholic Church, is not only still more unreasonable, but exceedingly dangerous. The ceremonies of the Catholic Church are not articles of faith, or necessary to salvation, although I should be very sorry to undervalue these ancient and significant rites of the Church. But the Canon of Scripture is an article of faith, and necessary to salvation. But upon what ground does he object to our Canon of Scripture? Because, forsooth; it was not received by the Jews as such. And he asserts—for he is very fond of asserting, without shadow of proof—that the parts, which he calls apocryphal, were written after divine inspiration had ceased. But who told him all this? We know, indeed, that these parts were not in the Canon formed by Esdras, but this does not prove that divine inspiration ceased with that doctor of the Jewish law, and we know it did not. If the Jews did not place them in the Canon, this might be a neglect among their other numerous neglects. Will any Methodist tell me why, if inspiration had ceased, the Jews should be infallible in rejecting these books? Perhaps they were infallible in rejecting Christ? But I should rather conclude, that their want of the spirit of God was the cause of both. However, these parts were held very sacred among them, and called Agiography, or holy books, and were read in their Synagogues. It is true, St. Paul says, that to them were committed the oracles of God, but he nowhere says that all the ora-

cles of God were contained in the Canon of Esdras.— After all, what good Christian would think of going to the Jewish Synagogue to be told what is the true Canon of Scripture, while he has Jesus Christ and his Apostles and their successors, to whom he has promised the perpetual guidance of his Holy Spirit?— And even if we pass over this promise, the primitive Church is the best judge of the opinion of the Jews, and of the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles upon this point.

But Mr. Wesley meets me here with another objection. “The Christian Church (he says) did not receive them,” and for proof cites the Council of Laodicea. I answer, this was a mere provincial Council, and by no means spoke the sense of the whole Church upon this point. She numbers such as she was acquainted with, and that was all she could do. The Church had not spoken to the Canon at that time in her collective capacity, and hence several Fathers doubted of certain books, and parts of books, till the Church in the Council of Carthage decided the question. However, to close quarters with Mr. Wesley. Does he mean to say, that no books are true Scripture but such as were never doubted of in the Church? I know the Church of England says so. But I ask them, Why then do you receive the last chapter of St. Mark's Gospel? That part of St. Luke's history concerning the bloody sweat of Christ, and the part of St. John which relates the case of the woman taken in adultery? Why not reject the Epistle to the Hebrews; that of St. James; the second Epistle of St. Peter; the second and third of St. John, and that of St. Jude, and the Revelations? Now all these have been doubted of by different persons, before the whole Church had determined the Canon, according to the evidence of universal tradition.

To be consistent, therefore, our author must throw away all these parts as apocryphal, or receive the decree of the Catholic Church in regard of all. Nay, farther than this, he must either throw all the Scriptures overboard as uninspired legends, or believe the inspiration of these parts also, because he has no other testimony for either than that of the Catholic Church, and it is the height of absurdity to believe the Church for one part, and disbelieve her for the

other. Moreover part of these books which Mr. Wesley rejects, are found in the apostolical constitutions, which are 300 years earlier than the council of Laodicea. Notwithstanding the cavils of the enemies of the church, they are forced to pay homage to her in the end, as a firm and solid foundation, as a constant and faithful witness, as a sure and safe guide in the paths of truth and salvation. "With her," says Luther, "is the word of God, which we have received from her, otherwise we should have known nothing about it." All agree that with her is tradition. With her, says Mr. Wesley, is the source of spiritual power and jurisdiction. "It would not be right for us to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper, unless we had a commission from those Bishops so to do whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the Apostles, and yet we allow these Bishops are successors of those who are dependant on the Bishop of Rome. There is an outward priesthood, and consequently an outward sacrifice offered by the Bishop of Rome and his successors and dependants. This papal hierarchy is of apostolical institution, and authorized by the written word." Thus far Wesley, and yet in his Catechism he denies it all. Melancthon confesses "the Bishop of Rome is president over all Bishops and this canonical policy no wise man ought to disallow. The monarchy of the Bishop of Rome is profitable to this end, that consent of doctrine may be retained." King James the First acknowledged her for the mother of the English Church. With her is the power of the keys, says Luther again, and many of the reformers. With her is acknowledged to be unity of faith and communion. With her, says Dr. Clark, is the pillar and bulwark of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Finally, with her, said the faculty of theology at Helmstadt, is the foundation of religion and the safe way to salvation. The same Melancthon told his mother when she asked him which religion was the best, "The Lutheran," said he, "is most plausible, but the Catholic is most safe." Thus it is that the enemies of truth seal their own condemnation. What more can be necessary for present peace and eternal happiness than these men own the Catholic Church possesses?

But, as a set-off against these poble and exclusive

qualities, Mr. Wesley endeavours to fix upon her the stigma of not allowing her children to read the scriptures in the vulgar tongue—"no, nor so much as any summary or historical compendium of it." Now, to be fully assured of the barefaced falsehood of this assertion, the reader has only to look at the Catalogues issued by the Catholic Booksellers, and he will find all these books for sale, and the more purchasers the better they will say. He will also find copies of the Bible in the houses of most Catholics, and the Missal in the vulgar tongue, with epistles and gospels for every day in the year. It is true the Catholic church does prohibit versions which she knows to be corrupted, a lamentable instance of which we have seen in Mr. Wesley's Testament; and she does guard her children against that unrestrained liberty which Protestants claim of putting a sense upon the word of God, which the Holy Ghost never intended, and thus wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction. But how are the people to avoid the danger if God has left every one to himself? Evidently there can be no standard without a Church guided by the Spirit of Truth. This promise every Catholic knows was made to the ancient Catholic Apostolic Church of Christ, and in following her guidance he knows he cannot err.

All the catechisms, sermons, books of instruction and devotion, are the truths of the word of God adapted to the capacity and necessities of her children. This is a pasture in which they may feed without fear, drink without danger, range at leisure with perfect liberty, and enjoy the pleasures of repose and tranquillity, safe from the sting of the adder and the basilisk. I have now gone through every thing deserving of notice in the first part of the pretended Roman Catechism. It is a huddled heap of indigested and indigestible matter. What is positive and substantial about it, is falsehood and misrepresentation, and all the rest is what he himself has elsewhere aptly defined, *Bombalis stridor clangor taratantara murmur.*

J. A. MASON.

Stourbridge, May 20, 1828.