

Reasons against Popery IN A LETTER

FROM

Mr. WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH,

To his Friend

Mr. LEWGER,

Perswading him to Return to his Mother,
The CHURCH of ENGLAND.

From the Corrupt

CHURCH of ROME.

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N,

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Reasons against Popery, in a Letter from Mr. William Chillingworth to his friend Mr. Lewger, &c.

Good Mr. Lewger,

THough I am resolved not to be much afflicted at that which is not in my power to Help; yet I cannot deny but the *loss of a Friend* goes very near to my heart, and by this name of a *Friend*, I did presume, till of late, that I might have called you; because though perhaps for want of power and opportunity I have done you no good office, yet I have always been willing and ready to do you the best Service I could, and therefore I cannot but admire at your affected strangeness which in your *last Letter* to me you seem to take upon you; renouncing in a manner all Relation to me, and tacitly *Excommunicating* me from all Interest in you. The *Superscription* of your Letter is to Mr. *William Chillingworth*, and the Subscription *John Lewger*, as if you either disdained, or made a Conscience of styling me your *Friend*, or your self mine. If this proceed from *passion* and *weakness* pray mend it; if from *reason* pray shew it: If you think me one of those to whom St. *John* forbids you to say (*God save you*) then you are to think and prove me one of those Deceivers, which *deny Christ Jesus to be come in the flesh*: If you think me an *Heretick*, and therefore to be avoided, you must

prove me to be ~~dunghed~~, condemned by mine own judgment, which I know I am not, and therefore think you cannot. If you say I do not *hear the Church*, and therefore am to be esteemed an *Heathen or Publican*, you are to prove then that by the *Church* is meant the *Church of Rome*, and yet when you have done so, I hope *Christians* are not forbidden to shew *humanity and civility* even to *Pagans*?

For God's sake Mr. *Lewger* free your self from this *blind Zeal*, at least for a little space, and consider with reason and moderation, what strange Crime you can charge me with that should deserve this strange usage, especially from you: Is it a Crime with all my understanding to endeavour to find your *Religion* true, and to make my self a believer of it, and not to be able to do so? Is it a crime to employ all my reason upon the Justification of the *Infallibility* of the *Roman-Church*; and to find it impossible to be justified? I will call God to witness, who knows my heart better than you do, that I have *evened the Scale of my Judgment*, as much as possibly. I could, and have not willingly allowed one grain of worldly motives on either side, but have *weighed the reasons for your Religion*, and against it, with such *indifference*, as if there were nothing in the world but God and my self; and is it my fault that the *Scale* goes down which hath the most weight in it? that the *Building* falls that hath a false foundation? Have you such power over your understanding, that you can believe what you please, though you see no Reason? Or that you can suspend your belief, when you see Reason? If you have, I pray for old *Friendship's* sake, teach me this trick, and until I have learned it, I pray blame me not for going the

the ordinary way, I mean for believing, or not believing as I see reason. If you can convince me of *wilful opposition* against the *known Truth*; of *negligence* in seeking it, of *unwillingness* to find it, of preferring temporal respects before it, or of any other fault which is in my power to amend, that is indeed a fault, if I mend it not; be as angry with me as you please; but to impute to me *involuntary Errors*, or that I do not see that which I would see, but cannot; or that I will not profess that which I do not believe; certainly this is a far more *unreasonable error*, then any you can justly charge me with; for let me tell you, the imputing *Socinianisme* to me (whosoever was the Author of it) was a wicked and groundless Slander. Perhaps you will say (for this is the usual Song of that side) *Pride is a voluntary fault*, and with this I am justly chargeable, for forsaking the *Guide* that God hath appointed me to follow: but what if I forsook it, because I thought I had reason to fear it was one of those *blind Guides*, which whosoever blindly follows, is threatened by our Saviour, that both *he* and his *Guide* shall fall into the *Ditch*? then I hope you will grant it was not *Pride*, but *Conscience*, that moved me to do so; for as it is wise humility to obey those whom God hath set over me, so is it sinful credulity to follow every man, or every Church, that without warrant will take upon them to guide me: shew then some good and evident title which your *Church of Rome* hath to this Office; produce but one reason for it, which upon trial will not finally be resolved and vanished into uncertainty, and if I yield not unto it, say, if you please, I am as proud as *Lucifer*.

In the mean time give me leave to think it strange, and not far from a Prodigy, that this Doctrine of the *Roman Churches* being the *Guide of Faith* (if it be true Doctrine) should either not be known to the *Evangelists*, or if it were known to them, yet being Wise and Good Men, they should either be so envious of the Churches Happiness, or so forgetful of the Work they took in hand, which was to write the *Whole Gospel of Christ*, as that not so much as one of them should mention so much as once this so necessary part of the Gospel, without the belief whereof there is no Salvation, and with the belief whereof, unless men be snatched away by sudden death, there is hardly any damnation. It is evident they do all of them with one consent speak very plainly of many things of no importance in comparison hereof, and is it credible or indeed possible that with one consent or rather conspiracy, they should be so deeply silent concerning this *Unum Necessarium*? You may believe it if you can, for my part I cannot, unless I see demonstration for it: And if you say they send us to the *Church*, and consequently to the *Church of Rome*, this is to suppose that which can never be proved, that the *Church of Rome* is the *only Church*, and without this supposal upon the Division of the Church, I am as far to seek for a Guide of my Faith as ever.

As for Example: In that *Great Division of the Church* when the whole World wonder'd, said St. *Jerom*, that it was become *Arrian*, when *Liberius* Pope of *Rome* (as St. *Athanasius*, St. *Jerom*, and St. *Hilary* testify, subscribed their Heresie; and joyned in communion with them: or in the Division betwixt the *Greek and Roman Church*, about the *Procession of the Holy Ghost*, when either side was the Church to it self, and each part *Schismatical* and

Here.

Heretical to the other: what direction could I then, an ignorant man, have found from the Text of Scripture, *Unless he hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an Heathen or a Publican: Upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

Again, Give me leave to wonder that neither S. *Paul* writing to the *Romans*, should so much as intimate this their privilege of *Infallibility*, but rather on the contrary put them in fear in the 11 Chapter, that they, as well as the *Jews*, were in danger of *falling away*!

That St. *Peter*, the pretended Bishop of *Rome*, writing two *Catholic Epistles*, mentioning his departure, should not once acquaint the *Christians* whom he writes to, what Guide they were to follow after he was taken from them!

That the Writers of the *New Testament* should so frequently warn men of *Hereticks*, *false Christs*, *false Prophets*, and not once arm them against them, with letting them know this onely sure means of avoiding their danger!

That so great a part of the *New Testament* should be employed about *Antichrist*, and so little, and indeed none at all, about the *Vicar of Christ*, and the Guide of the Faithful!

That our Saviour should leave this only means for the *Ending of Controversies*, and yet speak so obscurely and ambiguously of it, that now our Judge is the greatest *Controversie*, and the greatest hindrance of ending of them!

That there should be better evidence in the Scripture to justify the *King* to this Office, who disclaims it, than the *Pope*, who pretends to it!

That

That *St. Peter* should never exercise over the *Apostles* any one *Act of Jurisdiction*; nor they ever give him any one Title of Authority over them !

That if the *Apostles* did know that *St. Peter* was made *Head* of them, when our Saviour said, *Thou art Peter*, they should still contend who should be the First, and that our Saviour should never tell them that *St. Peter* was the man !

That *St. Paul* should say he was nothing inferiour to the very chief *Apostles* !

That the *Catechumeni* in the *Primitive Church* should never be taught this Foundation of their Faith, that the *Church of Rome* was the Guide of their Faith !

That the Fathers, *Tertullian*, *St. Jerom* and *Optatus*, when they flew highest in recommendation of the *Roman Church*, should attribute no more unto her than to all *Apostolical Churches* !

That in the Controversie about *Easter*, the Bishops and Churches of *Asia* should be so ill Catechised as not to know this Principle of Christian Religion, The necessity of Conformity of Doctrine with the Church of *Rome* !

That they should never be pressed with any such Conformity in all things, but only with the particular Tradition of the Western Churches in that point !

That *Irenaeus* and many other Bishops notwithstanding, *Ad hanc Ecclesiam necesse est omnem convenire Ecclesiam*, should not yet think that a necessary Doctrine, nor a sufficient ground of Excommunication, which the Church of *Rome* thought to be so !

That *St. Cyprian* and the Bishops of *Africa* should be so ill-instructed in their Faith, as not to know this Foundation of it !

That

That they likewise were never urged with any such necessity of Conformity with the Church of *Rome*, nor ever charged with Heresie or Errour for denying of it !

That when *Liberius* joyned in Communion with the *Arrians*, and subscribed their Heresie, the *Arrians* then should not be the Church, and the Guide of the Faith.

That never any Hereticks for five Ages after Christ were pressed with this Argument of the Infallibility of the present Church of *Rome*, or charged with the denial of it as a distinct Heresie, so that *Enen Sylvestrum* should have cause to say, *Ante tempora Concilii Nicensis quisque suae vivebat, & parvus respectus habebatur ad Ecclesiam Romanam* !

That the Ecclesiastical Story of these times, mentions no *Act of Authority* of the Church of *Rome* over other Churches; as if there should be a Monarchy, and the King for some Ages together should exercise no *Act of Jurisdiction* in it !

That to supply this defect, the *Decretal Epistles* should be so impudently forged, which in a manner speak nothing else but *Reges & Monarchas*, I mean the Popes making Laws to exercise Authority over all other Churches !

That the *African Churches* in *Saint Austin's* time should be ignorant that the Pope was *Head* of the Church, and Judge of Appeals *Jure Divino*, and that there was a necessity of Conformity with the Church in this and all other points of Doctrine !

Nay that the Popes themselves should be so ignorant of the ground of this their Authority, as to pretend to it; not upon Scripture or Universal Tradition; but upon an imaginary pretended *Non-such Canon* of the Council of *Nice*.

That *Vincentius Lirinensis* seeking for a Guide of his Faith and a Preservation from Heresie, should be ignorance

rant of this so ready an one, the *Infallibility of the Church of Rome*!

All these things, and many more, are very strange to me, if the *Infallibility of the Roman Church* be indeed, and were always by Christians acknowledged the Foundation of our Faith: and therefore I beseech you pardon me, if I chose mine upon one that is much firmer and safer, and lies open to none of these Objections, which is *Scripture and Universal Tradition*.

And if one that is of *this Faith* may have leave so to do, I will subscribe with hand and heart,

Your very Loving and True Friend,

W. Chillingworth.

F I N I S.

A Catalogue of some Books Printed for, and sold by Robert Pawlet, at the Bible in Chancery-lane, near Fleet-street.

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