

**LETTER TO THE
BISHOP
OF LONDON**

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Letter to the bishop of London by J. M. Morgan

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57.1830

LETTER

TO

THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

BY

MR. J. M. MORGAN.

SECOND EDITION.



“Unlike your favorite Æschylus I live,
Careless to whom the flattering prize they give;
If Sophocles succeed, or high reward
To Blomfield's splendid talents they award—
Too happy, if those talents I engage,
To aid the people and their grief assuage.”

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TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

MY LORD,

It is scarcely possible for any impartial person to peruse your "Letter to the Inhabitants of London and Westminster, on the Profanation of the Sabbath," without feeling a strong impression of the warm interest manifested in the welfare of society at large, and of your firm conviction of the truth of the doctrines advocated, as well as the imperative nature of the obligations arising out of them. It is this impression of your sincere desire to improve the condition of mankind, together with a reliance upon that candour which I perceive you are disposed to extend to every conscientious individual, however widely he may differ in opinion from yourself, that I venture to address your Lordship; and I trust that I shall not

receive less attention because that difference of opinion may prevent me from admitting the principles upon which you have so ably and earnestly argued.

Born, and still residing in your Lordship's diocese, if I have ceased, upon insufficient grounds, to retain those doctrines instilled into my mind in youth, grateful shall I be to him who shall convince me of my error; for I believe that truth alone can be of any service to mankind, and whether it be revealed to us by a sacred volume, or reaches the understanding through any other medium, it must be a direct emanation from the creating power, and it is both our duty and our interest to obey its dictates.

I do not perceive how those who profess the same opinions as your Lordship, can, with consistency, object to this manifestation of your pastoral care. They may, perhaps, think you rather too strict, in prohibiting those who have been confined in unwholesome dwellings the whole week, from enjoying the fresh air on the only day they can consider their own.

It has been lately maintained, that all systems of religion and government, founded upon a notion that the character is formed *by* the individual, and that he can believe and feel as he pleases, are erroneous, and that rewards and punishments, being inconsistent with true princi-

ples, will be found ineffectual. It is to the counteraction of the evils arising from this error, that your strenuous efforts are directed, and it is to be apprehended that they will still be directed in vain, until the error, and its consequent practice, are removed, or other means are resorted to for their mitigation.

But the utility of one day in seven being set apart as a day of rest, in the present constitution of society, must be obvious to all, whether as affording leisure for pious exercises, or for moral and intellectual improvement; but to the believer in particular the sabbatical institution is, in every respect, entitled to his regard; and its observance has, in all ages of the church, been considered as a duty of indispensable and the highest obligation. You have gone so far, as to place almost the very existence of religion itself, upon a proper attention to the appointment:---“But admitting only,” you say, “that it is necessary to keep alive a sense of religion in any people, we may safely assume, that this cannot possibly be done without the observance of a Sabbath; and that the end will be answered, in proportion as that observance shall correspond with its intent.”

Let me examine under what circumstances you have found it necessary, by an extraordinary appeal, to enjoin the performance of a duty ad-

mitted by all Christians to be of the first importance.

Should I succeed in convincing you that it is futile to expect attention to religious ordinances, or to moral obligations, by the mere inculcation of precept, without at the same time removing those causes of neglect or obliquity, which are under the control of society, I shall not despair of your powerful influence in overcoming obstacles, although they may not lie within the province of ecclesiastical regulation.

You have remarked, that the evil has been deplored by good and pious men for the last hundred years; but its aggravations cannot be attributed to any remissness on their part, in endeavouring to awaken the attention of their Christian hearers; and you mention one bishop of the last generation, whose name revives the recollection of all that is benevolent in disposition, sincere in profession, and consistent in conduct. If exhortation alone could have availed, the mild but earnest remonstrances of the irreproachable Porteus must have succeeded; but, my Lord, there are circumstances of a more striking character, distinguishing the present period, and which render it still more remarkable that a necessity for your unusual and direct appeal to the inhabitants of the metropolis should exist.

Let us consider a few of these circumstances.

The diocese of London and Westminster was never intrusted to the care of a prelate of more indefatigable zeal than your Lordship. The appointment of bishops has at no former period been determined with so much regard to erudition and piety; nor has the conduct of the clergy, in general, been ever more respectable and exemplary.—“The clergy of the established church,” says the *Christian Guardian*, for January, 1830—“are thus, we trust, advancing in purity of faith and holiness of life. The number of ministers of other denominations has also been exceedingly enlarged; and though it has been said, that instances of deep-devoted personal piety are less common now than in some former periods, yet none can deny that religious knowledge and profession are more generally prevalent now, than in the days which are past.”

Although it must be known to all, that the efforts to extend religious knowledge have, for the last thirty years, been very considerable, yet I was not aware, previous to this inquiry, how much they have been lately increased, through the establishment of Sunday and other schools, and various societies, for the distribution of Tracts, Bibles, &c. nor how much the exertions of the old societies had been re-

animated by the rivalry of others more recently founded.

In a list of annual meetings of fifty-nine societies, to be held in London during the months of April, May, and June, in the present year, I find fifty-five are devoted exclusively to the advancement of religion.

By the last report of "The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," no less than one million six hundred and fifty-six thousand and sixty-six Bibles, Testaments, and Tracts, were sold and distributed in one year.

The issues of Bibles and Testaments, by the British and Foreign Bible Society, had rose to two hundred and ninety-four thousand and six, for one year, ending March 31, 1827; in the following year, the number was three hundred and thirty-six thousand two hundred and seventy; and in the year ending March 31, 1829, according to the last report published, three hundred and sixty-five thousand four hundred and twenty-four were distributed.

In Paternoster Row alone, are twelve establishments devoted almost exclusively to the sale of religious works; and in other parts of the town they have proportionally increased.

By the last report of "The Incorporated Society for Promoting the Enlargement, Build-