

**THE LETTERS OF A CONSERVATIVE:
IN WHICH ARE SHOWN THE ONLY
MEANS OF SAVING WHAT IS LEFT
OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH. ADDRESS
TO LORD MELBOURNE. PP. 1-97**

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The Letters of a Conservative: In Which Are Shown the Only Means of Saving What Is Left of the English Church. Address to Lord Melbourne. pp. 1-97 by Walter Savage Landor

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WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

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ADDRESS TO LORD MELBOURNE.

BY

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

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L E T T E R S.

LETTER I.

MY LORD,

I never should have written to your Lordship this letter or any other, were I not confident that it is your fixt determination to abolish all the remaining grievances of the United Kingdom. Already have you and your colleagues very much reduced them both in number and intensity. The most prominent have but few and feeble supports. Some of these, however, are in their nature so cumbersome, that, if they are left to be thrown down by the people, it is impossible to calculate how far the ruin may extend.

It is known to many distinguished men, literary and political, of both parties, that I have long been occupied in writing a work, which I thought to entitle *The Letters of a Conservative*. In these I attempted to trace and to expose the faults and fallacies of every administration, from the beginning of the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. I was born at the opening of that year; and many have been my opportunities of conversing, at home and abroad, with those who partook in the events that followed it. On looking over the large quantity of materials I had collected, and of the papers I had composed out of them, I found, among the latest, no mild reprehension of some living statesmen. This followed as the corollary of their recorded words and actions. But the mischief they did is now in part removed, though not by them nor indeed with their consent; and the exposure of it could only serve for the indulgence of ill-humour and the excitement of malignity. This alone would have

been a sufficient reason with me for suppressing my manuscript. There was one yet stronger. Among the ministers whose speeches and plans appeared to me detrimental to the interests of the nation, some had been benevolent to modest worth, and others friendly to useful literature. I would do nothing to grieve the patronized or to offend the patron, when the good was yet active and when the evil had ceased. I threw these papers into the fire; no record of them is existing. But the second part, which I scarcely had begun, must be continued. This relates to the abuses of the Church Establishment, such as, unless they are totally done away with, will involve our country *for the third time* in all the miseries of popular discord, and in all the immoralities of arbitrary spoliation. With permission, I shall continue my remarks in the form of Letters, that a small portion may be taken up and examined at a time.

LETTER II.

It is usual for those who write or speak on politicks to declare that they are impartial: I know not whether I am; I only know that I would wish to be. Certainly I have no interest in throwing things into confusion, as all are accused of doing who would correct what they can clearly prove to be abuses. I am too old to benefit personally by any changes, even for the better: I have always avoided the society of the powerful, and hope never to see the face or hear the voice of a prime minister, lest I should lose my own calm on the borders of an abyss where there is none. I never had a quarrel or disagreement with any clergyman on any occasion. I owe my education, such as it is, to virtuous men of that profession. Two of them are dead, whom I remember with love and reverence; the gentle and saintly Benwell, my private tutor at Oxford, and the good old fatherly

Langley, who received me previously. The patient instructor and the gentlemanly scholar, Doctor Sleath of Saint Paul's, will accept the gratitude, while he discountenances the politicks, of his unruly pupil at Rugby.

The spirit of those pious men, who composed the ordinances of the Church of England, was so conciliating, that any one surely would wish it to continue and prevail. And certain I am that such would have been the case, if the power of the higher clergy had not engendered arrogance, and their riches an indifference to their duties. It would be unfair and false to assert that all of them are under this predicament: nor were all when the church was catholick; nor is there any reason to believe that the number of those who abused their trust was greater then. Enormous wealth, both then and now, was granted to clergymen for inadequate services. This was the complaint: this is the complaint: this must cease to be the complaint. The nation will not wait until those who