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Transcribed from the 1855 Charles Westerton edition by David Price, email [ccx074@pglaf.org](mailto:ccx074@pglaf.org)

**IS THE  
VICAR OF BROMPTON  
A  
TRACTARIAN?**

A QUESTION FOR THE PARISHIONERS.

BY  
A LAYMAN.

"You call me a Tractarian, I am not so in any sense."—See the *Letter of Dr. Irons to the Editor of the Record*.

"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him".—*Proverbs* 18 chap. 17 verse.

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1855.

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*If any profits arise from the sale of this little publication, they will be given to the funds of the Chelsea, Brompton, and Belgrave Dispensary.* p. ii

**PREFATORY REMARKS.**

p. iii

IN placing before my fellow parishioners this publication, I think it necessary most distinctly to disavow any personal hostility to the Vicar, as an individual.

I feel it the more incumbent on me to say this, as my object is not so much to prove the errors and unscriptural teaching of the "Tractarians," as to make it plain (by his own words and actions) that Dr. Irons must be considered as altogether identified with the "Tractarian" party.

On a fitting occasion, however, I shall be ready (the Lord enabling me) to shew, that the principles and practices of those clergymen who have unhappily embraced "Tractarian" error, are as contrary to God's blessed Word as they are to the Articles of our Church; and that these principles (if honestly carried out) as necessarily lead to Rome, as a humble and prayerful study of the Bible, will assuredly lead the sincere enquirer into the light and liberty of Gospel truth.

It is the policy of the more wily amongst the "Tractarians" to keep aloof in some measure from the "Ultras" of their party, and to follow the Jesuitical advice given from a certain quarter, not to be over hasty in bringing in Anglican forms and observances amongst their congregations, but to win them over by little and little.

This policy will account for much that is going on in our parish, where we have a Vicar who *says* that he is not a Tractarian "in any sense."

I feel assured that the parishioners of Brompton are not prepared for that open and undisguised "Tractarianism" practised in some of our churches; but when I bear in mind the fact, that during the past year two or three of the most noted amongst the "Tractarian" Clergy have been preaching in the Parish Church, it shews the necessity of being on our guard to resist the insidious attempts made from within, as well as the endeavours now making from without, to bring us into the bondage of "Tractarianism," or into the more open and unadulterated principles and practices of Romanism. It may be well for us to remember that at the recent opening of the Popish Institution (the Oratory) in our Parish, there were reported as being present twelve Romish priests or laymen, who until the last few years were clergymen of the Established Church, and belonging to the "Tractarian" party.

p. iv

In making use of the word "Tractarian" a necessity has been laid upon me, for though I deprecate the use of party names, I know of no other term (not even Puseyism) that would so distinctly point out the principles which have led to such melancholy results to the Church of England.

We must not however suppose these principles are in themselves *new*; they are as old as the earliest ages of Christianity. The Galatian Converts were seduced from the simplicity of the Gospel by them; and coming down to the days of Charles the First, our own Church has great cause to lament the progress they made at that unhappy period.

I am the more solicitous that this should not be lost sight of, as Dr. Irons says his own views "were not obtained from the Oxford Tracts." This is very possible, but has nothing to do with the fact, that the Reverend Doctor holds substantially all the errors of the "Tractarians."

That the principles of sound Protestantism still prevailing in this neighbourhood, combined with the faithful preaching of the gospel in many of our churches and chapels, may by God's blessing be an effectual bulwark against the covert, as well as against the open, enemies of our time-honoured Church, is my earnest prayer.

A. E.

19, Alfred Place West, Brompton,  
11th December, 1854.

## IS THE VICAR OF BROMPTON A TRACTARIAN?

p. 5

IN a letter bearing the signature of the Reverend Dr. Irons, which appeared some time ago in the "Record," there is a distinct denial on the part of the Reverend Doctor as to his being a "Tractarian."

In making a few comments upon the letter alluded to, I feel that I am not overstepping my duty as a parishioner of Brompton, and much more my duty as a professed lover of Scriptural truth, in opposition to Romish and Romanizing error.

Dr. Irons says, in the letter alluded to, "I am not a Tractarian in any sense," and adds, "that he has always differed from the teaching of some of the Oxford Tracts."

If the English language is to be understood in its plain grammatical sense, *some* refers to a few, or the smaller portion, and, consequently, Doctor Irons *does not* differ from the teaching of the Tracts, generally.

I have never met a "Tractarian" who did not profess to be at issue with one or more of the ninety Tracts; and I have no doubt but Dr. Pusey himself would unhesitatingly affirm, that there was teaching in *some* of them from which even he dissented.

Could we have asked the reverend gentlemen who have lately apostatized to Rome from one of the churches at Stoke Newington, I can easily imagine that they too would have differed from the teaching of *some* of the Tracts, though their principles and practices, before they finally left the Church of England, were daily giving evidence how completely (as a whole) they were identified with the party.

It must be borne in mind that from the time this "Tractarian" blight came over our Church, it has been the practice of its clerical adherents to deny any affinity with Romish error, and to beguile their congregations with the assurance, that the holding of "Tractarian" principles was the best safeguard to the Church of England.

p. 6

Not only did their most talented men write and preach in this strain, but the literary organs of the party still say so; and when, from time to time, the more honest among them secede to Rome, their friends attribute their apostacy to any cause but the right one, sometimes laying the blame upon the evangelical party for protesting against their unsound and unscriptural teaching.

Dr. Irons, in the letter referred to, defends himself from the charge of refusing to sign the Anti-Papal Petition in 1850:—the charge, however, is neither (as the Doctor calls it) "practically unjust, or untrue."

Dr. Irons *did* refuse to sign the Petition, and the reason given at the time for this refusal was, <sup>[6]</sup>—that a "rider" was added to it (by a vote at the public meeting); "that the Romanizing principles and practices of a portion of the clergy had encouraged the Pope to act as he had done."

It is not here necessary to prove that the "rider" enunciated a fact; it is sufficient to shew that Dr. Irons refused to sign the Petition, and to state the reasons he gave for that refusal; and then to leave it to the unbiased judgment of his parishioners to decide between his actions, and the paragraph in the letter, which says, "I am not a Tractarian in any sense."

Dr. Irons refers to the '*Morning Post*' and other papers for his sentiments as expressed on the occasion of the meeting. I was present at the meeting, and paid some attention to the speech of the Reverend Doctor.

I do not deny but there was indignation expressed against the "aggression," but this indignation went very little beyond what might have been said, and what was actually said, by sincere Romanists, ere the glorious reformation of the sixteenth century had shone upon our country.

Our forefathers of that period felt the galling chain of ecclesiastical and civil oppression laid upon them by the Papacy, but the light of gospel truth had not penetrated their hearts, and, therefore, in their opposition to Rome they made no protest against her soul-destroying doctrines.

p. 7

The speech of Dr. Irons certainly amounted to something more than what took place in Scotland, where one of the Bishops of the *Scotch* Episcopal Church signed a protest against the aggression, "because it was contrary to Ecclesiastical order that one bishop should intrude into the diocese of another."

In referring to the '*Morning Post*,' as giving the speech of Dr. Irons at the public meeting, it must be remembered that the '*Post*' was then (if not now) an organ of the "Tractarians," and that the tactics of the party it represented were to hoodwink us, and under cover of a zeal for "Church principles" to disseminate Anti-Protestant views.

I respect the liberty of the Press, and would not willingly give up its great advantages, but I bear in mind that it would be about as preposterous to expect from the columns of a "Tractarian" periodical any thing favourable to sound Protestantism, as it would be to look for a true exposition of constitutional principles in civil government from the pen of the Russian Autocrat.

One of the most remarkable features in the Anti-Papal demonstration in the autumn of 1850, was the part acted by a portion of the "Tractarians."

Sensible that their party were more than suspected of being the origin of the "Aggression," they were generally very early in the field to hold meetings, and to display an *apparent* opposition to Rome; but if we take the trouble to look into their proceedings at these meetings, we shall find that their principal aim was to get credit for zeal against Popery, and thus to blind the people to their own Romish practices, and prevent (as far as they could) anything like a real expression of Protestant feeling on the occasion.

As to the fact that two of the most noted "Tractarian" clergymen in London were lately invited to preach in the Parish Church, Dr. Irons says, they were his friends; "one of them a very old one;" but if the Doctor is not a Tractarian "in any sense," he might have shewn hospitality and kindness under his own roof, rather than give these gentlemen the opportunity of propagating the errors of their principles and party in the pulpit of the Parish Church. More recently, a third well known "Tractarian" Clergyman was advertised to preach in Dr. Irons' pulpit.

p. 8

There is an old homely proverb, "Shew me the company a man keeps, and I will tell you what sort of a man he is."

Having thus commented upon the communication of Dr. Irons in the "Record," I would place before my fellow parishioners copies of some letters which passed between the Reverend Doctor and myself several years ago. My object in doing this is not to say harsh things against the individual, but to demonstrate that the Doctor is by his own admission a "Tractarian."

I do not presume to sit in judgment on Dr. Irons, though I should think more highly of his candour and consistency, if he did not deny the holding of those opinions which I am constrained to believe he does entertain.

I am no admirer of a certain bishop in the West of England, but we must do him the justice to acknowledge that he is an exception to many of his "Tractarian" brethren.

There is no faltering on his part as to what his principles really are, and though we differ from him entirely, we recognize that we have a plain-spoken Englishman to deal with, who would feel it beneath his dignity to deny that he does not heartily side with the "Tractarians," and endeavour by every means to advance their views and opinions.

Lamentable to the Church of England as are the proceedings of this dignitary, we should not think the more highly of him were he to assert that he is not a Tractarian "in any sense."

The four following letters passed between Dr. Irons and myself soon after the public meeting relative to the Papal Aggression in 1850. <sup>[8]</sup>

"19, Alfred Place West, Brompton, p. 9  
"2nd December, 1850.

"SIR,

"At the Meeting of the 15th November, one of the speakers alluded to the fact, that of the many clergymen, who had apostatized to Rome, all, or nearly all, were from the 'Tractarian,' or High Church party, whilst few or none were from that section of the Church, usually known as the Evangelical, or Low Church party. You replied (or remarked) to the statement, 'Six of one, and half-a-dozen of the other.'

"It would not, sir, become me to attribute to you, the Chairman of the Meeting, an intentional misrepresentation; but I may be permitted respectfully to remark that your assertion is entirely at variance with clear and well established facts.

"It is very possible that amongst the Perverts, some three or four once belonged to the Evangelical party, but in every case these clergymen had embraced High Church or Tractarian principles, before they finally joined the Church of Rome.

"Apologizing for troubling you with this communication.

"I am, Sir,

"Your very obedient Servant,  
(Signed) "ARTHUR ELLIS.

"The Rev. W. J. IRONS."

"Brompton,  
"December, 3rd, 1850.

"DEAR SIR,

"Your note needs no apology—I believe the facts of these unhappy secessions to Rome, to be far more fatal to the Evangelical party, than I at all implied. I am not able to give you a list of the ascertainable and presentable names of Converts, though I am anxious to get it. My belief is, that a very large majority had received a very unsound religious education among the Low Church people (and some among Dissenters), and embraced Popery, in consequence of having no thorough hold on the principles of their own Church.

"Whether in their progress towards Popery, they travelled through our territory as travellers, and not as dwellers, or natives, does not seem very important to me. p. 10

"I know that some have gone straight from a Dissenting Chapel to Popery; one case in particular has been brought to my notice; but I do not wish to cast stones at others, on account of these things. I only said what I did, in consequence of the accidental remark of the speaker, and if I annoyed you, I am sorry for it.

"Believe me,

"Faithfully yours,  
(Signed) "WILLIAM J. IRONS.

"To ARTHUR ELLIS, Esq., R.N.

"P.S. Mr. Sibthorp was a very low Churchman, Mr. Newman was brought up an Evangelical, and Mr. Pownall's son, and Mr. Capes. If I get a list I will send it to you. Mr. Capes preached very strongly in my former neighbourhood against High Churchmen, and I said at the time, it is he that is in danger of Popery, and not I."

"19, Alfred Place West,  
"12th December, 1850.

"SIR,

"I have been favoured with your note of the 3rd instant, to which I should have replied before this time, had I not waited for the list mentioned in your postscript.

"As this list does not appear to be forthcoming, I am the more confirmed in the conviction expressed in my former communication, that your statement at the Meeting is altogether at variance with clear and well established facts.

"Instead, however, of bringing forward proof as to the correctness of your remark, you are pleased to take a step in advance, and to express your belief, that a very large majority of the clergymen, (not a mere 'six of one and half-a-dozen of the other,') who have gone over to Rome, received their religious education 'among the Low Church people.'

"I do not, sir, presume to question what you believe: all I ask for, is something in the shape of satisfactory evidence, that your belief has any better foundation to rest upon, than that of Dr. Pusey, who believes that the Protestant Church of England, and the Apostate Church of Rome, 'are almost identical in their views on the doctrines of original sin and justification.'

p. 11

"If your opinion as to the effect of Evangelical teaching, had any foundation in fact, how comes it to pass, that the Perverts to Rome, whether from the clergy or laity, are in almost every case, from 'Tractarian' congregations.

"I have not, sir, received a University education, nor does it require the mathematical powers of a senior wrangler to discover, that if your premises are correct, the friends and apologists of Romish error would be found not in 'Tractarian' Churches, but in the congregations of St. Saviour's and Park Chapel, where from Sabbath to Sabbath, the blessed truths of the Gospel are preached, in all their Evangelical fulness.

"I may very well leave it to my Dissenting neighbours to answer for themselves, if they feel inclined to do so; but I may be permitted to remark, that if your belief has any foundation to rest upon, the principles you imbibed at Oxford, may not, in the opinion of your 'Tractarian' friends, be considered a sufficient guard to counteract that Evangelical teaching, which I believe it was your privilege to partake of in your earlier years <sup>[11]</sup> and that consequently (reasoning in your own belief), your present position is not free from danger: as you must be looked upon rather as a 'traveller' pursuing your onward course to Rome, than as a 'native' or 'dweller.'

"I beg leave to attach hereto the opinion of Cardinal Wiseman, as expressed several years ago, ere 'Tractarian' buds had in so many instances opened out into Romish flowers. The Cardinal does not say one word as to his expectations from the Evangelical party; his hopes are built on Oxford, and on those 'to whom our Saints, our Popes, are become very dear, and in whose eyes our rites, our ceremonies, nay our very Rubrics are precious.'

"You are kind enough to say you are sorry if you have annoyed me by your observation at the Meeting. I assure you I was not annoyed; I certainly felt pain and sorrow, similar to what I experienced when I read the statement of Dr. Pusey before referred to.

p. 12

"I believed there was no foundation for either of the statements, and I thought I saw in both of them the fatal effects of that teaching, and those principles which led the present Romish Priest at Islington, to claim the right, whilst officiating as a minister of the Protestant Church of England, 'to hold all Romish doctrine, so long as he did not teach it from the pulpit;' and which led another individual of the 'Tractarian' party to defend the lawfulness of subscribing to the articles and formularies of our Church, in a 'non-natural sense.'

"My paper reminds me I must draw this letter to a conclusion, and in doing so, I earnestly pray, sir, that Our Heavenly Father may enlighten your understanding, dispel from your mind all error and prejudice, and lead you by the teaching of His Holy Spirit, to retrace your steps from the perilous position you now occupy, amidst the shifting sands of 'Church Principles,' until you find yourself in safety in the impregnable fortress of Bible Truth, and of that article of our church, which so truly says, 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary for salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary for salvation.'

"I am  
"Reverend Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,  
(Signed) "ARTHUR ELLIS.

"The Rev. W. J. IRONS."

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The opinion of Cardinal Wiseman referred to in my letter.

"It seems impossible to read the works of the Oxford divines, and especially to follow them chronologically without discovering a daily approach towards our Holy Church, both in doctrine and in affectionate feeling. Our Saints, our Popes, have become dear to them by little and little; our rites and ceremonies, our offices, nay, our very rubrics are precious in their eyes, far alas, beyond what many of us consider them. Our monastic institutions, our charitable and educational provisions, have become more and more objects with them of earnest study; and every thing in fine, that concerns our religion, deeply interests their attention."

p. 13

*"Brompton,  
"December 13th, 1850.*

"DEAR SIR,

"If you really wish to believe that all Converts to Rome, or most of them, come from the ranks of 'the Tractarians' I cannot help it. I can only assure you it is contrary to all my experience. In every case which has come under my notice for the last ten years, there is proof of the truth of what I said in my former note; but I did not, and do not, like to bring a railing accusation against my Evangelical brethren, else I would, as you find, have said, that my experience was quite against the assertion now commonly made. I supposed, however, that other persons had had a different experience from my own, and I charitably allowed 'Six of one and half-a-dozen of the other.' For myself I can only say, that though I should like to know well enough how the case stands, I should attach no importance to the fact, if the balance of advantage were a trifle on one side or other; much less would I think of writing to you in an uncourteous or uncharitable tone about it. The extract from Wiseman which you kindly sent me, I easily understand. He, Jesuit like, wishes to damage High Churchmen, because he knows that ours is the only strong ground against Rome; <sup>[13]</sup> just as in the days of Queen Elizabeth, Jesuits preached Calvinism as Evangelical Ministers and Dissenters, on purpose to divide and destroy Churchmen and their principles. Dr. Wiseman never abuses Low Churchmen. But may I request, that as I have not time for letters on such small points, you rather would, (if you desire it,) call on me any morning you please, and in a Christian and gentle spirit, converse on any important topic which you may desire to discuss.

p. 14

"I am, faithfully yours,  
(Signed) "WILLIAM. J. IRONS.

"To ARTHUR ELLIS, ESQ., R.N."

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In the foregoing Correspondence between Dr. IRONS and myself it will be seen, that I addressed him under the conviction that he was one with the "Tractarian" party, and that his statement about "six of one and half-a-dozen of the other," was offered as a kind of defence of his friends.

In the answers of Dr. IRONS to my communications, it is quite evident, that he never thought of denying his identity with the "Tractarian" party; the tenor of his letters is not to shew that he is not a Tractarian "in any sense," but to defend "Tractarianism" from the charge of being the primary cause of the many secessions to Rome from amongst his clerical brethren.

Compare the letters of the Rev. Doctor with his more recent statement of not being a Tractarian "in any sense," and there can be no doubt as to what must be the verdict.

There are, however, some points in both the letters of Dr. IRONS to which I would allude more fully, and comment upon more at length.

The Rev. Doctor states that he is anxious to get a list of the "ascertainable and presentable names of the Converts."

If such a list would have given so formidable an array of Evangelical Churchmen and Dissenters, I can hardly suppose but Dr. IRONS (giving him all credit for not wishing to cast stones at others), would have procured it, from the desire to shew me and other of his parishioners, that the real cause of these perversions was in the "unsound religious education received amongst the 'Low Church People and Dissenters,'" and that "Tractarian" teaching and principles had nothing to do in the matter.

When Dr. IRONS can make good his position by an "ascertainable and presentable list," or by any other evidence equally convincing, I feel assured, that many who are now under the conviction that "Tractarianism" is the Broad Road to Rome, will acknowledge their error, and confess that they have done the "Tractarian" party much injustice.

In the second letter of Dr. IRONS I would especially draw attention to what he says in reference to the praise so lavishly bestowed upon the "Tractarian" party by Cardinal Wiseman.

p. 15

The question, be it remembered, is not as to the honesty of the motives which led the Cardinal to bestow such eulogiums on his Oxford friends.

It is a much more simple question and much more easy of satisfactory proof.

Is the Cardinal's opinion of "Tractarians" warranted by facts?

Let the names of Wilberforce, Manning, Thynne, Haskell, Allies, and a host of others, now Priests of the Church of Rome, give the answer.

We must not lose sight of the fact in dealing with "Tractarians," that just in proportion as they have received the commendation of Cardinal Wiseman and the Organs of the Romanists; in like proportion, have all true Protestants been energetic in the condemnation of their teaching and principles.

Dr. IRONS says that Cardinal Wiseman "never abuses Low Churchmen," but he omits to say (what

is much more to the point), that the Cardinal never *praises* them.

When Romanists shall praise Low Churchmen and Dissenters, we may be assured that serious errors are creeping in amongst them. If friends condemn, we may yet be right. But if enemies bestow their praises upon us, there can be little doubt but we are wrong.

I will not attempt to put my knowledge of Church History on a par with that of Dr. IRONS. A life spent on the watery element has precluded me from the opportunity of being deeply versant on such subjects; but I have always understood, that in the days of Queen Elizabeth, the Protestant Ministers of the Church of England were, with few exceptions, Calvinists: and the idea of a Jesuit pretending to be a Calvinist and preaching to *Dissenters* in such a character in Elizabeth's reign, appears to me altogether an imagination of the Reverend Doctor; and must have reference to a subsequent period, when principles (the exact counterpart of "Tractarian"), had crept into the Church and were bidding fair to lead the nation back to Rome.

The Puritans of Elizabeth's reign were not Dissenters, they had not then been driven out of the Church. If Elizabeth did carry a high hand towards them, her conduct was merciful and humane if put in contrast with the tyranny and oppression they suffered at a later period, when the Monarchs of the Stuart line were aided by the bigotry and persecuting principles of Archbishop Laud and others, whose memories are held in such high esteem by the "Tractarians" of the present day.

p. 16

In endeavouring to ignore the evidence of Cardinal Wiseman in favour of "Tractarianism," Dr. IRONS certainly has the example of high ecclesiastical authority. In a correspondence lately published between a Bishop of our Church (whose "Tractarian" leanings are but too evident) and an esteemed Clergyman; the Bishop takes nearly the same line of argument (if such tortuous reasoning can be called argument), in regard to "Tractarian" publications highly eulogized by the literary organs of the Romanists.

The Bishop, however, omits to mention, that these publications, so highly thought of by Papists, are altogether condemned by every sound Protestant.

In bringing this little publication to a close, I find it has run out to a length I did not look for when I took up my pen.

I would express a hope that in any thing I may have said of individuals, I have not given way to unkind or acrimonious expressions. It is foreign to my feelings to have done so; and I would desire to remember "that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Far abler pens than mine have already shown forth the true character of "Tractarianism," and unmasked its semi-popish principles and practices. If, in the object I had in view (as alluded to at the commencement of my prefatory remarks), I have said any thing to serve as a warning to my Protestant friends and neighbours, and to lead them to be more in earnest in contending for the faith "once delivered to the saints," I have an ample reward.

I now leave the question (Is the Vicar of Brompton a Tractarian?) to the judgment of those who may take the trouble to read this Pamphlet. I can truly say, I shall sincerely rejoice to have it made plain to me that what Dr. IRONS says of himself is a true picture, and that he is not a Tractarian "in any sense."

## FOOTNOTES.

[6] The official statement, with the names of the (then) Churchwardens attached to it, says, "that the Vicar has declined to be a party to the Memorial in consequence of the words in italics being added." These words were the "Rider."

[8] I asked for, and obtained, the sanction of Dr. IRONS to publish these letters (if I thought it worth while,) soon after the correspondence had taken place.

[11] DR. IRONS is the son of a respected Dissenting Minister, who was held in high esteem by many eminent Clergymen of the Evangelical party.

[13] "The nearer the candle the safer the moth." Such is Tractarian logic. I respectfully borrow this apt illustration from the "Heir of Montresor Abbey," a work published by Nisbet & Co., and written by the Protestant Authoress of "The Two Paths."

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