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**LETTER**

FROM THE

**REV. WILLIAM ADAM,**

A BAPTIST MISSIONARY

IN INDIA,

TO HIS BROTHER IN GREAT BRITAIN,

IN DEFENCE OF HIS OWN

**Conversion to Unitarianism.**



**CHARLESTON, S. C.**

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE Author of the following affecting Letter, is a native of Scotland, and was sent out by the Baptist Missionary Society of England, a few years since, to India, as one of their agents, for the conversion of the inhabitants of that country to Christianity. After the celebrated Ram-mohun Roy had declared his belief in some of the principal articles of Unitarian Christianity, Mr. Adam procured an introduction to him, for the purpose of converting him to the doctrines of Trinitarianism. The result was very different from what he had anticipated. Instead of converting the learned and pious Brahman to his own faith, he himself in the course of a few months became a warm advocate of the strict Unity of God, and has continued ever since to preach and disseminate it at every opportunity.— Subscriptions have been procured in India, England and America to build for him a chapel in Calcutta, and to secure him a competent salary. As was to be expected, he has incurred the bitter reproaches of his former associates and friends, but with what spirit he has met them will be seen in the following admirable letter.

*Charleston, Oct. 1826.*

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**LETTER.**

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*Calcutta, Oct. 9, 1822.*

**MY DEAR BROTHER,**

I have this day received your letter of the 11th of March, and proceed without delay, to answer it. The contents have grieved, but not surprised me. If a change had taken place in your sentiments, similar to that which has taken place in mine, I know the feelings with which I should formerly have regarded you, and remembering that, I am the more disposed to make every allowance for the very harsh expressions you apply to me, and for the unjustifiable charges you bring against me. I am not therefore surprised, but I am grieved, that one whom I love so much, should write to me in a manner so little consistent with the affection which I know he entertains for me as a brother, and the regard due to his own character as a Christian! Ah! my brother, we may be assured of this, that whatever we may

think of the person of Christ, the inspired Apostle is correct, when he says that, unless we have his spirit, we are none of his. I some time ago received a letter from Mr. Dyer, written in the same style; and if I did not recollect the higher claims which my dear parents, and my other brothers and sisters, with yourself, have on my duty and regard, yours would remain unanswered as his has done. How different from both, is the manner of the good Dr. Ryland! He writes with all the affection of a father to his son, and with all the earnestness and conviction of an aged Christian; but he does not judge my heart; he does not arraign my motives; he does not pour on me opprobrious epithets, or direct against me unfounded charges, which tend only to irritate! He employs reasoning and argument to convince me of my error, without conceiving that this object would be promoted, by the use of such language as that to which Mr. Dyer and yourself had recourse.

Your letter is short, but it would furnish me with matter for a volume, if I had time and inclination. You first accuse me of an "awful defection from the truth of the gospel;" and of "degrading the blessed Jesus." However strange these terms sound in my ears, however foreign to all my thoughts and intentions, however des-

titute of all foundation in truth, yet I perfectly understand them ; they are just such as I should have employed with respect to another, at a former period of my life. What can I say or do, consistently with the sacred dictates of conscience, in order to convince you of the contrary ? It will not be enough to assure you, that the gospel is dear to my heart, and that it is the source of my highest and purest joys. It will not be enough to assure you, that to extend its benign influence among the ignorant and idolatrous inhabitants of this country, is the first desire of my heart, and as far as my circumstances enable me, will be the constant endeavour of my life ; it will not be enough to assure you, that although I cannot, and dare not consider the blessed Jesus to be the eternal God, yet I believe that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, head over all things to the Church, and the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him : all this will not satisfy you, even if I were to seal my sincerity with my blood ; for I well know, that among Trinitarians in general, all a Unitarian can say, will not procure him credence when he professes his regard to the authority of Christ, and the value he places on his gospel. Yet I can do nothing more, than assure you, that all this is true, and that in my future life I

will endeavour to prove my sincerity, by labouring according to my opportunities, to establish the truth, and to extend the knowledge and influence of the gospel.

Let me entreat you, my dear brother, further to consider, that in rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, as unscriptural, I could be influenced by nothing but a regard to truth and conscience; by no other motives but such as you must approve, even if you condemn the conduct to which they have led me. Here I was in the midst of numerous and affectionate Christian friends and Missionary fellow-labourers, and surrounded by a vast population of idolatrous Hindoos. In such circumstances, what, but the imperious voice of conscience, could induce me, alone and unsupported by a single European, to avow my disbelief of a doctrine which I had hitherto considered essential to the Christian system; when I knew, as I have since experienced, that such an avowal would estrange from me all my Christian friends and fellow-labourers, and occasion numerous reports among all classes of people, contrary to my real sentiments, and even injurious to my personal character? I knew also, that this estrangement and these reports would be extended to my friends in England and Scotland, and that such letters would be sent me as I

am now beginning to receive. I felt it necessary to relinquish the support which I had hitherto drawn from the funds of the society; and as my friends here, (I mean my former friends,) compelled me, whether I would or not, to an open and public profession of my sentiments, I thereby excited against myself a host of prejudices, which shut me out from almost every prospect of earning my livelihood, and supporting myself and family in an honest way. These are the prospects I had before me, and the trials I have met with; and you will surely admit that they are of such a nature, that nothing but a good conscience could enable me to encounter them. It is true that my circumstances are somewhat improved, and the number of my friends increasing, and that I have the prospect of forming a stable connexion with, and receiving the warmest support from the friends of religion, both in England and America; but for upward of a twelve-month, I have had to suffer public reproach and private afflictions—the illness of Mrs. Adam, and the death of our only child, with scarcely a friend to cheer my spirits, or a hand stretched out to my assistance. That God, whose glory I seek, has enabled me to bear up under those trials to the present time. From all my troubles he

hath delivered, and doth deliver, in whom I trust that he will yet deliver me.

These circumstances will also serve to explain the interruption in my correspondence, of which you complain, and might have complained, but without having recourse to the cruel supposition, that a change in my sentiments, upon a controverted point in religion, had alienated my affections from you. You say, "we now see the cause of your long silence. It is no proof that your present views have had a happy influence upon you, that you have neglected to write your friends."— And again; "as I do not know if my writing you will prove acceptable, I have been purposely short; your answer will show if you wish the correspondence."— This from my brother, a brother whom I have always loved, and who never before wrote to me but in the language of affection! But I forgive you, and would fain hope that your letter was not twenty-four hours out of your hands, before you repented that you had written with such bitter brevity to one who had done nothing to offend you, or any other, except by faithfully following the dictates, as he thinks, of sound reason, and the word of God. And if this adherence to truth and conscience, placed me in such circumstances as to fill my mind with worldly

cares, anxieties and troubles, is it to be wondered, that my correspondence with my friends should lay for a while, when there was so much nearer home pressing on my mind, and demanding all my thoughts? Yet when I examine my letter-book, I do not find myself in fault in this respect, as you represent. The last nine months, Mrs. Adam and myself have written at least, four letters to our friends in Dunfermline, one to yourself, two to Helen and two to George. With respect to the influence my views have on me, it rests with others to say that they have, or have not made me a better Christian; but I can assure you from the overflowing gratitude of my heart, that they have made me a far happier man, and of this I am much more competent to judge than any one else can be. I have far more powerful motives than ever I had before, to love and fear, and serve the God and Father of all; and far better reasons than ever I had before, to value the gospel of Christ, by which life and immortality have been fully and clearly made known to us. All this may, and perhaps does sound in your ears as a tale that is told, but it is to me, solid, substantial, life-giving truth.

Again; you say, "I understand your change of sentiment does not exhibit any symptoms of humility and a teachable

spirit. Alas, how unlike William Adam, who was once distinguished for these graces." It is evident from this, that you have not yourself seen the letter, and it is probable that you have derived your information from those who have not. I therefore feel myself justified in taking the more explicit language of Mr. Dyer, as explanatory of yours. He says, "I should feel very different on your account, if your letter exhibited any traces of hesitating diffidence, scrupulous caution, of humble jealousy, lest you should be in danger of forsaking the right path, and exchanging truth for error." Now, to me the meaning of this is exceedingly obvious. If I had professed myself dissatisfied with evidence by which I am perfectly convinced, and satisfied with explanations which appear to me altogether unscriptural and unreasonable, i. e. if I had written quite a different letter from that which I did write, Mr. Dyer and yourself would have been well pleased. And why? just because in that case there would have been a probability of my agreeing with him and you, instead of differing from you both; so that, in fact, from these very sentiments there appears a great deal of that pride in yourselves, which, if I have given any proof of it, you so justly condemned in me. But let me ask you, what pleasure could it give either to him or you, if you

are what I believe you both to be, (honest and pious men,) if I had professed doubts which I did not feel, and avowed a conviction of truth, or even a degree of hesitation, where there was a full persuasion of error? The only difference would have been this; that now if I am mistaken, I am at least, honest in my error; then I should have been equally mistaken, and withal, a hypocrite. Having kept a copy of the letter which I sent to the Society, I have perused it lately several times, and as far as the spirit of it is concerned, there is not a single expression which on the maturest reflection I would wish to alter. Indeed, I consider it impossible for me in such circumstances, and on such a subject, to have written a letter to the Directors of the Society, without causing them a great deal of chagrin and mortification, and consequently, leading them and their friends to say a great many hard things both to me, and of me. My sole object in writing it, was to communicate to them information of my change of sentiments, not to irritate or insult them, to which I assure you, I felt no disposition whatever; on the contrary, as it was my wish and request that they should publish the letter to prevent misconception, I endeavoured to avoid every expression which would increase the prejudice against me.



I have no doubt you will be very sorry for the way in which you have written to me, especially when you learn the death of our dear and only child Eliza, whose lovely form and engaging manners, George will be able to describe to you. You say nothing of her, nor of my dear wife, whose health also has been in a very declining state, for a long time past. She does not entirely coincide with me in opinion, but still in a great measure, adheres to the popular doctrines; and she will not on this account, be the less dear to me, so long as she fears God, and follows the light which she possesses. Yet she unequivocally expresses her surprise at the tone of your letter, so different from what I have always received and have a right still to expect. She joins me in kind love to yourself, your dear wife and children, our beloved parents, our brothers and sisters, and all their children. May the God of love and peace be with you all, and may you all grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the constant prayer of your ever affectionate friend and brother,

W. ADAM.

P. S. I have said nothing of the reasons of my present belief. To explain them, I think I cannot do better than send you a copy of my letter to Dr. Ryland, which I will do in the course of a week or two, probably by the next ship that sails. W. A.