



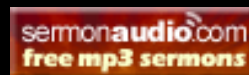
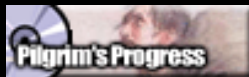
## Menu Items

[Home Page / Search](#)[What's New](#)[Answers \(Q&A\)](#)[Audio Sermons](#) [Photo Gallery](#) [Our Guestbook](#)

## Articles

[Errors of Rome](#) [Caustic Comments](#)[History Lessons](#) [Rome & Politics](#)[Contemporary](#) [Sword \(Bible\)](#) [How To Witness](#) [EIPS Lectures](#) 

## Other Interest



Sunday, March 31, 2002

Date Posted:  
11/9/2000[E-Mail Article](#)[Print Article](#)

## Contents

Caustic  
Comments in Brief

## Popery Not a Religion at All

*A warning issued by Rev. Joseph Irons during a sermon preached in Grove Chapel, Camberwell, London, on Guy Fawkes Day 5th November 1837. Guy Fawkes was a papist conspirator who tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament and kill King James I.*

Rev. Joseph Irons

In fact, Popery is not a religion at all; and it is a sad delusion to suppose, that a mere difference of creed is all that exists between Protestants and Papists. Popery is a political conspiracy to subjugate empires, kingdoms, thrones, and states, to one tyrant, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. ii. 4). To accomplish this political purpose, his agents assume a priestly authority, and arrogate to themselves the power to save or to damn souls. Thousands of their infatuated vassals believe this, and, consequently, dare not refuse to do and say anything and everything which these vested wretches command. They wear the name of Christianity, as Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, to deceive (2 Cor. ii. 14). They are **his** ministers, and not Christ's; and they are going out "to deceive the nations," in order to put all people, all power, and all property—yea, and every man's conscience and life, under their despotic sway; and will Englishmen—will Christians, submit to this monster?

### ***A House Divided.***

But this is not all. What is the present state of Protestantism? Oh, I sign at the very inquiry! If I look at it in the national hierarchy of England, I see it "a house dived against itself." Three distinct parties are found within its pale; one party is already become Popish, and openly advocates the old carnal heresy of baptismal regeneration, and couples it with the blasphemous pretension to priestly absolution. These have only to acknowledge the authority of the Roman pontiff to complete their apostasy! Another party, half evangelical, have set up the Popish idol of free-will on the dark mountain of **universal red3emption**, in the desert of carnal reason, like Nebuchadnezzar's image in the plain of Dura, expecting all men to worship it (Dan. lii. 1); and a third party, a despised few—against whom the door to preferment is shut—are "valiant for the truth upon the earth;" and yet, strange to tell, these

[The Hidden Years - 2](#)  
[The Hidden Years](#)  
[The Act of Settlement](#)  
[England Catholicism 3](#)  
[England Catholicism 2](#)  
[England Catholicism 1](#)  
[Rome's Crusade](#)  
[What Shall The End BE?](#)  
[Naive and Nefarious](#)  
[Paradise Failed](#)  
[Choi Carp or Cavil](#)  
[Biscuit Or The Mickey](#)  
[English are Fatherless](#)  
[Pope Asks Dead...](#)  
[Aids Cure Pope Claims](#)  
[Cardinal Double Speak](#)  
[Bones of Contention](#)  
[It's A Sex Mad World](#)  
[Card-Carrying Masses](#)  
[Rwandan Nuns Convicted](#)  
[Blair Tells Paisley](#)  
[All Hail Mary](#)  
[Purgatory All](#)  
[Wrong Without Shame](#)  
[Paedophile Priests](#)  
[Pope and 'Hellenics'](#)  
[Road to Damascus](#)  
[Wholly Rotten Bones](#)  
[Patron Saint of Web?](#)  
[Gore's Coup d'état](#)  
[Buckfast Abbey](#)  
[Pope Holds To The Lie](#)  
[Pope's Patience Peters](#)  
[Internet Intercession?](#)  
[Dance With the Devil](#)  
[Set To Die For Faith](#)  
[BBC or DDE](#)  
[Anglicans Help RC](#)  
[Without Portfolio](#)  
[Knights of the Vatican](#)  
[Kilo Kicks the Pound](#)  
[Promote Paedophiles?](#)  
[Single Eyed Virgin!](#)  
[Kennedy's Tune](#)  
'Grubby' Royal Act  
[Dr. Paisley Statement](#)  
[The Age Of Consent](#)  
[Sins of the Fathers](#)

[R.C. Chaplain Cover-Up](#)  
[Indecent Acts](#)  
[Paedophile Priests](#)  
[Pope's Forked Tongue](#)  
[Further Blow To Popery](#)  
[Scarcity of Priests](#)  
[Rome Beefs Up Politics](#)  
[Ex-Convent Girl Screen](#)  
[Forsake the Mass](#)  
[Top Priority Wrong](#)  
['Must Say Sorry'](#)  
[Outrage With Hospital](#)  
[Birmingham Brothel](#)  
[Rome and the Bible](#)  
[New Vatican Ambassador](#)  
[Sex Change Vicar](#)  
[Who's Next In Rome?](#)  
[Former Pope's Plans](#)  
[Catholics Become Kings](#)  
[MPs Vote For Catholic](#)  
[Pope Rebukes Cardinal](#)  
[Paedophile Priest](#)  
[Sir Thomas More](#)  
[The Curse of Apathy](#)  
[Popery Not a Religion](#)  
[Popery's Impious Head](#)  
[Queen's Apology: Pope](#)  
[The WCC Sheds Its Skin](#)  
[Global Christian Forum](#)  
[Infall. Sectarianism](#)  
[Ecumenical Farce!](#)  
[Papal Lie vs. Truth](#)  
[Christ or the Pope?](#)  
[Paedophile Priests](#)  
[Blair-faced Liars](#)  
[Book: Battle for God](#)  
[Antichrist Footsteps](#)  
[Purification of Memory](#)  
[The "Antichrist" Buck](#)  
[Church of Ireland](#)  
[Pope's "Apology"](#)  
[Blair and Clinton](#)  
[Blair, Haider, Hitler](#)  
[New-Fascism](#)  
[CITC](#)  
["Holy" Nun](#)  
[Bible and Romanism](#)  
[Massing and Wining](#)  
[Aitken and Rome](#)  
[Satan's Hold](#)  
[Romanist Attack](#)  
[Rip in Curtain](#)  
[Fires of Hell](#)  
[Carey](#)  
[Gates of Heaven](#)  
[Window-Dressing](#)

children all claim one mother, and each thinks himself most like his parent! Will not the enemy take advantage of this? Methinks I see him grin with pleasure in the anticipation of bringing to desolation the "kingdom which is thus divided against itself" (Matt. xii. 25).

Universal redemption—baptismal regeneration—apostolic succession—and priestly absolution, are four main pillars of Popery; and all these are now publicly advocated under the name of Protestantism. Is it not, then, too true, that there is not so much difference between them as there once was? But let it be remembered, that all the concession is on the side of nominal Protestants, and that Popery still maintains its obstinate adherence to all its obnoxious and soul-destroying doctrines; and it is to be feared, that the progressive defection of modern professors will soon glide them down into the lap of the mother of harlots; or, to change the figure, confederate them with the conspiracy of Rome to slay the witnesses of God.

If I turn to the body of Protestant Dissenters, I see no brighter shades in this gloomy picture, unless the unholy alliance of Arians, Socinians, Deists, and Evangelicals, can cheer a Christian's mind! The man who fears God shrinks back with horror, when he sees professing Christians absorbed in political intrigue—associated with Jesuits and Infidels in public clamour, and quitting the sanctity of the Church of God, for the company of profane rivals in worldly ambition. And what will a true Christian say, if he sees a professor of divinity wearing D. D. Attached to his name, occupying hustings, with the picture of a mermaid over his head, advocating the cause of infidelity? Oh, the dismal catalogue of crime perpetrated under the disguise of Christianity is appalling to every Christian mind. I sicken as I touch upon these things, and hasten away from them with disgust.

### ***Bending to Every Shape***

The wide-spreading contagion of Arminianism seems to me to be the prolific cause of almost every abomination; for I do not see men of truth who are taught of God the precious doctrines of sovereign grace, among the degenerate multitude, the amateurs of worldly policy. But Arminianism, like its mother at Rome, can yield to anything, can bend to any shape, and yet preserve its elasticity, so as to return constantly to its stubborn rebellion against the sovereignty of God. It suits the depravity of fallen man, and fosters the pride of his heart, by proclaiming the freedom and sovereignty of his will; so that it is sure to enlist every unregenerate man under its banner, and has all the weapons of carnal reason, human tradition, worldly influence, and Satanic art, at its command, in its warfare against the people of God—against the truth of God—and against the God of truth!

### ***Reproach***

I am prepared to meet the reproach which these statements will bring upon me; for such is the temporizing spirit of the times, that one will say, "How uncharitable!" Another will exclaim, "How censorious!" and a third will sneer and mutter, "He thinks nobody right but himself; Churchmen wrong! Dissenters wrong! All wrong!" I reply, all are wrong who are not born again! I do not censure a Churchman because he is a Churchman, but because he is **carnal**! I have no contention with a Dissenter

because he is a Dissenter, but because he is **carnal**! For I conceive the greatest curse upon earth is to be a carnal-minded professor of the religion of Jesus. "To be carnally-minded is death" (Rom. viii. 6). A carnal monarch may create carnal prelates—carnal prelates may ordain carnal priests—and carnal priests deceive carnal multitudes, to their eternal destruction. Moreover, a carnal Nonconformist may speculate in religious things, and employ his capital or his talent in chapel-building, and in amusing orations, while the object is carnal, the means carnal, and the end death! But the true Christian, whether he be an Episcopalian or a Nonconformist, is a spiritual man! Born of the Spirit, taught of the Spirit, and living under the anointing of the Spirit, in the enjoyment of "life and peace." With such I have no contention, but ardently desire to cultivate every feeling of brotherly kindness; but I cannot cease to expose and to oppose that carnal systematic mockery of God, which in every pale of profession, employs carnal agents, with carnal means, to deceive souls, by substituting the form of godliness for the power. And if this faithfulness offends, I glory in being an offender.



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Menu Items - [Home Page / Search](#) - [What's New](#) - [Answers \(Q&A\)](#) - [Audio Sermons](#) - [Photo Gallery](#) - [Our Guestbook](#)  
- [Errors of Rome](#) - [Caustic Comments](#) - [History Lessons](#) - [Rome & Politics](#) - [Contemporary](#) - [Sword \(Bible\)](#)  
- [How To Witness](#) - [EIPS Lectures](#)

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