

RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTS A NATION

BY

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RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION.

A

LECTURE

ON

CHURCH EXTENSION,

(Partly in Reply to Mr. M'Neile),

DELIVERED IN THE

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BY

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LECTURE.

PROVERBS XIV. 31.

RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION.

I have selected this passage as the basis of a few remarks on one of the most important subjects to which the minds of Christians can be directed;—a subject, in name, occupying, at present, very much of the public attention,—and which, in fact, is destined, ultimately, to change the world: I mean the subject of CHURCH EXTENSION. I have not chosen this subject lightly. I enter upon it with a deep feeling of its solemnity and greatness. I am quite sensible of my own inadequacy to present it to you in a manner in harmony with its magnitude, or becoming the topics and results it involves. I shall advance nothing but what I solemnly believe to be sanctioned alike by reason and religion. Receive, I beseech you, with candid attention, whatever I may state,—sift and examine it by the light of Scripture, in the exercise of a prayerful and purified judgment, and admit or reject it according as *such* an examination may suggest.

It may be thought by some that subjects of this sort had better be let alone;—that “preaching the Gospel,” or seeking to save “perishing sinners,” is the exclusive business of the Christian minister, and that no theme, therefore, should ever engage him, but that which he should “determine” *alone* “to know”—“Christ Jesus and him crucified.” The feeling that lies at the bottom of this objection is frequently entitled to great respect. Oftentimes, however, it is quite otherwise. The objection occasionally is the offspring of ignorance;—sometimes of narrow religious views;—sometimes of selfishness, appearing in the garb of spirituality;—and sometimes of ecclesiastical prejudice and assumption, condemning in the ministers of other communions what the individual is perpetually practising himself. For my part, I am quite convinced that in many respects, the pulpit among us is far too exclusive and limited in its subjects;—it

ought to take a sweep of greater compass than it usually does, and to include many things on which it becomes

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Christians *to be instructed*,—things which may not appear, at first sight, to have much to do with “preaching the Gospel,” or to be *directly* concerned with the salvation of “the lost,”—things, however, on the thorough and manly understanding of which, *by the Church*, may greatly depend both the preservation of the Gospel within itself, and the conversion of the world by its instrumentality. *Church Extension* is of this class. It is of more importance, indeed, than some topics to which the preceding remarks might apply; for next to “the Truth” “by which a man is to be saved,” certainly come those matters which belong to his great Christian duty of seeking to promote the salvation of others. It is in this light that the subject I have mentioned appears to me; and I regard it, therefore, as eminently entitled to be illustrated and enforced by the Christian minister;—discussed, if he choose, on the most sacred of days, and in connexion with the discharge of the most solemn of his services. The passage before us leads our minds immediately to the topic:—*“Righteousness exalteth a nation.”*

In addressing you from these words, I propose to attempt the following things. First, briefly to evince the *truth* of the statement,—Then

Shew what is *necessary* to realize it to its fullest extent. And finally explain *why* we object to some things which are thought to secure this realization.

Let us, then, in the first place, briefly evince the truth of the statement,—“Righteousness exalteth a nation.”

The word “righteousness” we take in the highest and most comprehensive sense. We include in it ALL *the personal and social virtues*.—Not only rectitude, in the sense of justice, or the principle and operations of strict integrity between man and man; but purity, kindness, and beneficence; sobriety and industry; fidelity to engagements, promises, oaths; honour, truthfulness, patriotism; conjugal fidelity, filial piety, parental tender-

ness; the cultivation of benevolence and brotherly sympathy towards all mankind,—with *every other thing*, whatever it be, included, as Saint Paul says, in this saying, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is *the fulfilling of the law.*” THIS is “righteousness.”

This righteousness to “exalt” a nation must pervade it. It must be a substance and a reality, and not merely a profession and pretence. It must be, too, a universal, or at least a general, thing, as well as a real one. It

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must distinguish all classes and all ranks; and it must be seen in all, living and fruitful. It is not to be acknowledged if it exist only in the names of institutions, the letter of laws, empty formalities, hypocritical scrupulosity in language and manners, or other things, which in various nations, have often been put in the place of virtue. It is not to be confined to the acts of a government, or the character of governors, separate from the people—nor to the people, separate from *them*:—it is the righteousness *of the nation*,—the great whole, including alike the rulers and the subjects;—it is the aggregate, or sum, of the actual excellence, which exists and acts in every individual, and which will alike be seen, in what each does in his own sphere, in intercourse with his fellows, and what the nation does, in the wide world, in intercourse with hers.

That this “righteousness”—righteousness so real, general, and manifest—would “*exalt*” a nation, appears so obvious, as to render it almost unnecessary to assert it—*proving* the matter is certainly superfluous. Such a people would be made up of a number of persons, each possessing in himself an “exalted” character—a character free from personal vices, and adorned with the fruits of all the social and public virtues. Every family would be a group of such individuals, or of others training to be like them. Neighbourhoods, villages, towns, cities;—the marts of commerce, the courts of law, the halls of legislation, the theatres of science, the abodes of learning;—

the palaces of princes, the seats of the nobility, the dwellings of the citizen, the mechanic, and the peasant;—squares and market places,—the broad streets, factories, fields,—every place where the people of this “nation” were to be found, would be found filled with happy humanity, because crowded with a pure and righteous population. Glance, for a moment, at some of the aspects in which it would be exalted. It would be “exalted” *above all that is gross and degrading in the indulgence of the mere animal propensities*. Drunkenness and debauchery—brutal sports—brawls and violence—would be unknown. It would be “exalted” *in its general comfort and happiness*: revelry and rags,—squalor and filth,—the luxury of the great, and the hunger of the masses,—would alike depart; all giving place to home enjoyments and cheap pleasures, the more delicious and satisfying to each, from the consciousness that all, in sufficient measure, were sharing them with himself. It would be “exalted”

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in its pursuits: skill and labour, capital and commerce, would be concerned in nothing but what was in itself perfectly equitable; while the modes and principles of conducting business would be in accordance with the demands of a resolute integrity: there would be no over-reaching, forgery, or fraud; no tricks to impose on the ignorant;—no recklessness that might ruin the confiding;—no pretences to procure credit;—no severity and hardness of heart to crush the unfortunate but honourable man. It would be “exalted” *in its general intellectual condition*. The great body of working men, easy in their circumstances, possessed of leisure from sobriety and industry, and freedom from the pressure of unmitigated toil, would improve their minds by the acquisition of knowledge, and participate in the enjoyments of the more directly educated classes. Children would be trained, not only to habits of moral excellence, but to the exercise of those capacities and tastes which leisure and literature are intended to gratify. Literature itself, in a “righteous” nation, would be robust and vigorous, and be adapted

at once to administer to enjoyment and to improve the character:—nothing trifling, nothing low, effeminate, or impure, would ever be produced, or find purchasers if it were— It would be “exalted” *in its social state*. Politics would be studied, not under the prejudices, and with the view of promoting the objects of a party, but with the “righteous” intention of serving and securing the interests of the commonwealth. Measures would be regarded, not men. Principle would be obeyed, not faction. No class would “look only upon its own things;” but would look “also upon the things of others;” whether rich or poor, agrarian or commercial, educational or religious, whether serfs or nobles, masters or men, none would seek to aggrandize itself by the commission of injustice towards all the rest. Differences would be discussed without passion: mutual respect for the understanding, character, and intentions, of each other, would produce reciprocal forbearance in controversy; no scurrility would disgrace the press, no rancour distinguish the publications of opposite parties. It would be “exalted” *in its character and influence in the world*. The absence of “righteousness” has always been the precursor of the fall of states. When luxury and excess, breeding effeminacy, have led to personal and public corruption, the mightiest nations have hastened to decay; they have speedily seen their empire diminished, their people

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in revolt, their resources gone, and have sunk ingloriously at the foot of the invader, perhaps an ignorant, but to *such* a people, an *invincible*, barbarian. “Righteousness exalteth a nation;” its temporance and industry, its invigorating habits, its intelligence and skill—these, and kindred things, will at once augment its resources at home, and excite enterprize for distant achievements. These achievements, however, will not be connected with the lust of dominion, the appetite for conquest, or war, *as a profession*; they will not consist of marauding expeditions, contraband trade, traffic in man; they will not involve shameless violations of the decencies of humanity, of national

faith, or common justice. They will be connected with colonization, at once peaceful, equitable, and benignant; with the promotion of commerce,—and of honourable intercourse with other states; they will tend, in their results, to bring all men, as a vast brotherhood, into contact with each other; and they will “exalt” the nation by the mode and principles on which they proceed, not only in the view of civilized communities, with whom it might be impolitic or impossible to be unjust; but also in the view of the savage of the wilderness—the aboriginal tribes among whom its commercial settlements might be gained, and whom it might be easy to crush and to consume, without fear of censure or punishment, or of loosing caste and character among nations. These particulars, thus rapidly sketched, and imperfectly filled up, exhibit some, and some only, of the many ways in which a real and substantial morality—a thorough, deep, and universal “righteousness,” must tend to “exalt” the people it pervades.

We proceed, now, to shew what is necessary to realize this righteousness to its fullest extent.

It is not my intention to go formally, or at any length, into the proofs of what I shall advance; I wish rather merely to state my own views, and to do this in very few words, or at least without any thing like protracted explanation. I am going to advance, I believe, what no Christian of any community, or none of Protestant or evangelical principles, will hesitate to admit. I shall merely state, therefore, as I have said, the views themselves, and then, in the remaining part of the lecture, explain to you the consequences which appear to me, necessarily to flow from their being admitted.

In illustrating the nature and operations of that “right-

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teousness which exalteth a nation,” you might observe that I said nothing of religion. I did not describe it, as if it were an essential part of the thing; and for this reason, *because I think it a great deal more,*—I estimate it far more highly than such a representation

would have conveyed. It is this, in fact, which I regard as *necessary* to the realization of the "righteousness" in its fullest extent. The following observations will comprehend what appears to me to be the truth on this matter.

1st Religion is necessary to morality. Ideas of God, of his moral government, of his knowledge of our thoughts, motives, and actions; the admission of responsibility, the expectation of judgment, and so on; these, or some notions of them, of some kind, I regard as essential to the very existence of "righteousness" at all. They are not so much *a part* of it, as the very source from which it springs—the parent that produces—the nurse that feeds, strengthens, and sustains it. It has ever been from the prevalence of these ideas, (which ideas belong to *religion*) shattered and broken as they have existed in the mind—imperfect in themselves—injured by intermixtures foreign to their nature—it has ever been from *them*, and *because* of them, that we have had any morality or virtue in the world. I am not insensible to the many reasons for "righteousness" which may be found in its present secular advantages; I know, that whether in fact there be a God or not, rectitude and beneficence, temperance and purity, and the other virtues "*have* their reward:" I know this, but I am quite persuaded, that if absolute atheism were to get a firm and universal hold of mankind—if it were really to be *believed*, by every man and woman in the world, that there was no God, we should soon see that the very existence of morality was impossible; that every thing which adorns individual character, and which cements and preserves the order of society, would ultimately disappear; and that, amid the clangour and confusion—the carnage and lawlessness of violence and wrong—selfishness and lust—"righteousness" would flee *from* and forsake the earth, and not a print of her footstep remain as a remembrance. Without the existence of religious ideas, there can, then, be no morality. Men may not be *religious* even *with* these,—destitute of them they cannot be moral.

2nd. Of all religions, the true one must, necessarily, be most productive of “righteousness” of life—*that* religion

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is Christianity—therefore, Christianity is to be hailed and revered as the true mother of a nation’s “righteousness.”

With Christians this should admit of no dispute; nor am I aware that it *is* disputed. False religions, framed by men,—necessarily by bad, or deluded, or ignorant men—have always tended to injure morality, rather than to advance it. They have been brought down, not only to soothe the conscience by superstitious observances, and to excite the belief, that through the aid of these it was possible to be religious, and religiously safe, without “departing from,” or “ceasing to do, evil;” but they have gone further—have directly ministered to cruelty and lust—and have thus exerted an *antagonist* influence against the elementary ideas of religion—ideas which, in ancient nations, were kept alive by the philosopher rather, than the priest, and learnt better at the school than the temple. The “righteousness” of idolaters, so far as they have any, really exists *in spite* of their religion; the morality of Christians, is the *offspring* of theirs: for “the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” “Blessed,” then, “is the nation that is in *this* state—yea, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.”

3rd. Christianity, to produce “righteousness” to “its fullest extent,” must be known and felt in that form of it which we denominate emphatically “*evangelical*.”

The Christian religion, in its very worst state,—its most corrupt or most attenuated—is more favourable to the virtue of a people, than either absolute atheism or gross

idolatry. Popery, however, on the one side, and the mere inculcation of morality on the other, have been shewn, by facts, to have utterly failed, as instruments for producing national "righteousness." Under the first, idolatry returns, and with it much of its ancient accompaniments; dependence is placed upon fasts and penances—payments to a priest—the instrumental virtue of official acts—prayers after death, and other things which tend to divorce, and which do divorce, *religion from righteousness*, and which tend also, by this, to maim and

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mutilate, perhaps I should say to destroy, both. The inculcation of morality by the Christian priesthood, as if *that* were the "one thing" they had to do,—the attempt to produce "good works" by merely, and for ever, descanting on their beauty or enforcing their obligation—this is to separate *righteousness from religion*, and this, too, tends to the injury of both. It is our honest conviction, that facts are abundant, in the history of our own country itself, unanswerably to demonstrate, that if a nation is really to be "exalted" by "righteousness," in the fullest extent of the meaning of the word, this can only be secured by the great principles of *evangelical Christianity* being brought into contact with the individual minds of its whole population; so that, that Truth, "which is according to godliness," and that "grace, which bringeth salvation," and which teacheth to walk "righteously" in the world, may produce their legitimate and glorious fruits, realizing the description we have already given of what righteousness is, and of the many ways in which it may "exalt" the people that have it.

From these principles, which I have rather at present stated than argued, but each of which I hold to be capable of rigid proof; from these principles, then, it appears, as we have said, that to realize, to its fullest extent, "the righteousness that exalteth a nation," it is *necessary* that EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY, the exclusive mother of it in its highest forms, should come into

contact with all the minds of which the nation is composed, and act upon each as a quickening, renewing, and sanctifying power. But the Christian Church, with its appointed message and its living messengers, is ordained of God expressly to accomplish this very thing; hence, the direct and obvious inference, that CHURCH EXTENSION *is essential to the prevalence of universal virtue.* To secure *this*, the world must *really* become the church. In a given locality, the latter must stretch and extend its arms till it clasps the entire "nation" to its bosom; there, "sucking the breasts of her consolations," and imbibing "the sincere milk of the word," every individual of the mighty aggregate, will "grow up into Christ in all things;" and each, displaying in his own sphere the lustre and radiance of the "children of the day," "clothed with the light of purity as a garment," and "clad with zeal" and "righteousness" as "a cloak," the great mass, in its united and national aspect, will

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stand forth eminent and "exalted,"—"clear as the moon, bright as the sun, and beautiful as an army with banners."

This *literal* "extension" of the church,—the real, spiritual, and vital connexion of all men with it,—is essential, in my opinion, to the "righteousness" of a nation,—to the virtue of the world. The exclusive mode of securing this connexion, is for the life-giving word of the truth of the Gospel—the message and the ministry of reconciliation—in the purity of the one and the persuasiveness of the other—it is for this instrumentality, to be so sent and circulated through a land, as that all its inhabitants may be brought within the compass of its saving announcements and sanctifying influence. Nothing but this can produce the result. By this only,—by this, in connection with Divine aid—can men be brought and united to Him "who is a living stone," so that they also, "as living stones," built up into a *spiritual* house, "may be a holy temple, or a habitation of God through the Spirit." It is doubtless to be admitted, that

the Gospel ministry, with its sanctifying truth and its "sore travail," may be brought into contact with a whole nation, and yet many of its inhabitants, by rejecting the council of God against themselves, may remain beyond the pale of the church, and be destitute, therefore, both of righteousness and religion. This may be; for many who do hear the Gospel, and hear it habitually, live in the neglect of it. We admit, then, that *with* the instrumentality—or the evangelical message, in the ministry of the church, brought home to every man's heart, or to every man's hearing,—the "righteousness" that "exalteth" *might* yet *not* be universally produced;—still, it must be remembered, that *without* the instrumentality *being* thus extended, it never could really be produced *at all*;—and hence it is, that while the living power of evangelical religion is necessary to produce a nation's righteousness—the living presence of the evangelical minister is equally necessary to the excitement and sustenance of that power;—and hence also, for the one to be universal it behoves that the other be universal too.

The question then comes, as to the best method of securing, throughout a nation, *this secondary, or instrumental, universality*? It has been said, and is thought, that the quickest and shortest way of doing this, is for the government of a country to take the matter into its own hands, to "arm" itself with "the principle of an establish-

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intent,""which principle, it is explained, "is, that every man, whether he care for religion or not, shall be compelled to build her churches and pay her ministers."—"On this principle," it is further added, "even the avowed enemy of religion, is constrained to sacrifice his objections to the common interest, and to lend his aid to the public maintenance of the religion he despises or hates*." How far "compelling" men to "support and maintain" what "they despise and hate," may be the likeliest method of getting them to love it, I do not enquire. I am simply giving, in the words of its advocates, what *some* regard as not merely the best, but the only, means

of filling a land with the ministrations of religion. *This* way of effecting the thing is strongly urged at the present time. Eloquent orators are employed to enforce it. Parliament is solicited to vote the money and do the work. On all sides, writers and preachers are aiding the agitation—men *and women* are signing the petitions! *I find no fault with this.* Believing that their *plan* is in itself right, the individuals are justified in doing all they possibly can to secure it. The plan, in itself, we believe to be wrong. We should deem it to be wrong, if it contemplated the extension of *all* the Christian communities in the land, and not merely of the machinery of one of them:—we should deem it to be wrong, if it was proposed to aid by it nothing whatever but the best and purest of evangelical ministrations. There are some objections to the principle of parliamentary grants in general—there are other objections to their application to the present establishment in particular. Now, what is sought from us—(for being sought from Parliament, it is sought from ourselves—sought from the general taxation of the people)—what is sought from us, *is* the extension of *this Establishment.* Even, therefore, if we should think that, as a nation, acting in its representatives, our money would be well and wisely spent, in being voted for the extension of Christian institutions;—even if we should think that, in this way, that “righteousness that exalteth a people,” would be best secured and soonest realized; still it would be right,—it would be merely the dictate of ordinary prudence and common sense,—to examine *the qualifications for the work required of any who solicit to be employed to do it.* We should do this if it were only a menial for our private families.

* Mr. Cunningham of Harrow:—Sermon on Establishments.

We should wish to know if he understood his business; and, if he had served in the capacity before, we should be glad of his character from his last place. Had he done his duty, and done it well? Did he give satis-

faction? Could he be depended on? Would his work really be worth his wages?—If a groom or gardener is not to be employed without caution, how much less the Regenerator of a people?—If we require a fitness for the thing to be done, when that thing is some brute toil of the back or hand, how much more should we demand this fitness when the thing to be done is the highest of all spiritual functions—the bringing to bear on the minds and hearts of living men that great and gracious evangelical message, by which must be produced, if produced at all, the universal prevalence of that “righteousness that exalteth a nation”? To inquire into this fitness, before we agree to give employment and pay, is obviously right;—*it is more than this*—it is eminently RELIGIOUS:—it is a matter of moral and spiritual obligation lying on every individual Christian,—pre-eminently on those who make any peculiar profession of piety;—who value what is vital in *Evangelical truth*;—who understand the Gospel, and expect “righteousness” from nothing else;—who trust that they have received the Holy Spirit, and are therefore able to judge things that “are spiritually discerned.”—This class is solemnly called to a great duty at the present crisis. If, in their conscience, and before God, they can truly say that, with their views, they believe the compulsory extension of the Establishment to be likely to promote evangelical religion, let them act in consistency with that, and join their names to the petitioners for it; but if they cannot do this,—if they are solemnly convinced that what some view merely as politically unjust, is, in their apprehension, spiritually hazardous—that instead of hastening the reign of “righteousness;” it will rather tend indefinitely to retard it—if *this* be their conviction—then it is their duty to use their influence to prevent the appropriation of the public money—their own money—to such a purpose, and for such an end.

Right or wrong, this *is* the solemn conviction of many; and this brines me to the third topic I proposed to touch.

I have explained to you how "righteousness exalteth a nation." I have further explained what I think *necessary* to realize it in its fullest extent,—namely, true religion, and that religion truly national; in other words,

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CHURCH EXTENSION, *properly so called*. I am *maw* to explain why it is that we object to some things which are thought to secure this realization,—meaning by that, church extension improperly so called, or the enlargement of the existing ecclesiastical establishment by Parliamentary grants of the public money;—by thus sending it forth, to use the language of a clergyman, so "armed," as to enable it "to compel every man, whether he cures for religion or not, to build its churches and pay its ministers."

II.

Before we proceed to the discussion in question, it may be well to remind you of the precise principles upon which we are proceeding, and the specific abject we undertake to accomplish. Our principles are, that the righteousness of a nation depends upon its religion;—that for this righteousness, to be universally produced, sustained, and perpetuated, requires that Christianity, *in what is well understood to be the EVANGELICAL FORM OF IT*, be brought into universal contact with the people;—and that this again depends on *the extension throughout the land, of a spiritually living, evangelical ministry*. These are our principles. In themselves they may be right or wrong; wise or foolish; fanatical or the contrary;—this, at the present, is not the question. We believe them. We believe that by a spiritual, evangelical ministry alone can a nation be transformed into a spiritual, evangelical church;—that only in this way can the "righteousness that exalteth," be secured universally in its highest manifestations;—and that the extent and degree of it which is at any time produced at all, will be in proportion to the existence among a people of such a ministry and of such a church. Now, let it be observed,

that our present business is neither to argue the accuracy of these opinions,—nor to inquire in what way they may be best carried out; but merely to show how the admission and belief of them compel us to resist the Parliamentary extension of the English Establishment as *not* the way of securing what is sought.

There are many by whom our principles are denied; who think and speak of evangelical religion as the veriest drivelling—as much more likely to make a nation mad

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and immoral than “righteous”—and who would advocate, therefore, any institution that would keep it down. With such men we have no argument; or at least not the same kind of argument that we have with those by whom our views are admitted. Our principles may be false,—but they are our’s. As we have already said, *we* believe them; and we demand, therefore, that if our conduct flow necessarily from that belief, even they who account as mistaken shall admit us to be justified *on the ground of consistency*. From them, however, who agree with us in the principles, we expect something more. Holding, as we do, the principles in common, *if* these principles really shut us up to a certain conclusion and a certain conduct,—which at present we neither affirm nor deny,—but *if* they do so, then we demand that they will honestly go to the conclusion along with us—or cease to censure our conduct if they do not—or repudiate and abandon our common principles, that they may at least be consistent if they will not be just. These remarks admit of a fair and legitimate application to many in both the ecclesiastical parties—to some dissenters and to some churchmen.

I. In proceeding to state our reasons for resistance to further grants of the public money to the English Establishment, we specify, first, our painful apprehension that, according to the shewing of its own advocates, what is contemplated would not amount to the extension of anything like a church at all.

I am not going to imitate the Bishop of London in his printed books—nor the Bishop of Exeter in his spoken speeches—nor the Church herself in her written canons—nor multitudes of the clergy in their Sunday discourses, their magazines, and pamphlets,—I am not going to imitate any or all of them, in refusing to acknowledge the claims of societies to be called “churches,” which are not constituted after a particular form and order. A Presbyterian or Episcopal community, simply considered as such, I hold to be a church. I can conceive of them existing as spiritual institutions—regulated by spiritual government and discipline—retaining and cultivating a spiritual character—extending their influence by spiritual instrumentality—and exhibiting in their doctrine, proceedings, results, the signs of a vital and vivifying churchhood. In such a case, to refuse to denominate the communities “churches,” and to deny their teachers to be ministers or “clergymen,” I should just deem as

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great a libel against our common Christianity, as for any in either of the bodies themselves to act thus in rotation to the other.

I do not deny, then, that an-episcopal community may be a true church; but I do deny that an episcopal community, or any other, can be permitted scripturally to retain the title in all circumstances, whatever it does and whatever it becomes—to say nothing at present of its exclusively claiming it. I do hold, that it, or any church, of any order, may come to conduct itself in such a way as utterly to cease to be a spiritual thing. It may retain the name, and profess to be “a congregation of faithful men,” and yet it may have sunk, in the language of scripture, into “a synagogue of Satan.” Were this change not hypothetically possible—(and I am speaking at present only hypothetically)—were this change not hypothetically possible, it would have been impossible for that which we regard as the grand apostacy, either to have been predicted by God or realized by man;—it would have been impossible for that which was at first the fel-

lowship of the faithful, the bride of Christ, satisfied and delighted with her divine Head; and with her simple raiment, “washed white in the blood of the Lamb,”—it would have been impossible for this church ever to have changed;—to have become *Anti-Christ*;—to have corn-emitted “fornication and adultery with kings;”—to have covered herself with “scarlet, purple, and pearls;”—to have become “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth; and to have made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” But all this was done; done by what was originally a true church, and done in connexion with an episcopal form of it

This instance is sufficient to prove that a community, which, from its constitution, we should not hesitate to recognize as a church, may yet come to act in such a manner as to mar its pretensions. It may go so far as to leave no doubt about what it has become; or it may be beguiled into such ambiguous and equivocal circumstances, as to create a most painful suspicion respecting it. Now that this last is just the position of the English church—of that church, remember, which you and I are to consent, by our representatives, not only to strengthen but extend—I will undertake to shew, from the recent lectures of its own eloquent advocate. I refer, of course, to Mr. M’Neile.

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The object of Mr. M’Neile, and of all the thorough-going advocates of church extension, in their sense of the phrase, is to obtain from Parliament the legal division of the whole land into small manageable ecclesiastical districts;—in each district for a church to be built, and a minister of the episcopal communion maintained, by the public money,—the minister and the inhabitants being invested respectively with *parochial* rights. What these parochial rights are Mr. M’Neile shall himself explain;—how they can scripturally be created and conferred by acts of Parliament, it may perhaps be necessary for us to inquire.

After frequently exposing what Chalmers would call the “heathenism” of the masses, and advocating the necessity for the enlargement of the church, till it should literally be “national in extent”—every individual having his episcopal place of worship, and his episcopal pastor, and after finding fault with the present system of district churches as not calculated to meet the emergency, from the want of legally conferred powers, Mr. M’Neile goes on to observe, “the remedy is to be found only in *parochial* subdivision, giving a *right* to the inhabitants of certain specified districts to go for baptism to a certain church; and a consequent right to the ministers of every other church to refuse to receive them.”* In another place (p. 224), he says, “To be effectual as a national blessing each clergyman must be authorised, without interference, to enter the houses, and sit and talk by the fire-sides, and in the midst of the families of the people, within certain boundaries; not on sufferance, and with the feeling of intruders, but as spiritual persons, whose *duty* to visit from house to house is still acknowledged (nay, and the performance of it sometimes demanded), even by those who never enter our churches. They, in return, most feel that they have a *claim* upon our services, in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity; irrespective altogether of voluntary attendance on our ministry.” In another place (p. 130) he explains the *present practical working of this system* in one of its aspects, when accounting for the fact that “dissenting

* Mr. M’Neile’s Lectures, p. 245. The *italics* in the above quotation are Mr M’Neile’s. His idea of the *extent* to which he would have Parliament carry this multiplication of ministers and churches, is indicated by his immediately speaking of “such parochial subdivisions being sufficiently multiplied as to reduce the population in each within practicable limits?”—“*practicable* limits,” that is, for one man to be able to instruct, visit, baptize, marry, and bury them all.

minister* do not amass wealth and consolidate power,” “The National church,” he says, “stands in their way; *fox* any or all of their people, upon the slightest misunderstanding, or *painful experience of their attempted dis-*

cipline, may leave the chapel, and find themselves *invested with a right equal to any of their neighbours*, to a seat in the parish church, and a place at the parish font, *and access to the parish communion-table.*”

I shall probably have occasion to refer again, and perhaps more than once, to some of the principles involved in these quotations; but I wish at present to confine my remarks to *the one point* of the identity of what they describe, with what any serious, spiritual man, of evangelical sentiments, would expect to find in a Christian church. The idea *here* is, that by the enactments of a Parliament—it may be by a liberal, popish, infidel Parliament—the inhabitants of a nation are all “invested” with the character of church members; have all conferred on them, by law, a *right* and *claim*, each in his respective district, to “a place at the font,” and a seat at “the communion;” and that each clergyman, by the same power, is authorised to dispense the Christian sacraments in his own district, and to refuse them to those that may come to him from others. We say nothing at present about the utter impossibility of compelling a people, that are free to think, and who, diversified in their tastes, education, and habits, cannot but contract, in relation to clergymen, peculiar attachments—we say nothing of the impossibility of compelling such a people to receive and attend whoever may happen to be legally assigned them;—we say nothing at present about the results of the system, if it could be realized, supposing some of the clergy to give bread, and some “poison;”—we say nothing at present of its necessary effect on the clergy themselves, with all its apparent shew of power and authority really impeding and restraining their operations—he who is omnipotent in his own district, being incapable of acting in any other—so that however he might be besought to visit the dying who might be perishing in their sins, through the error or neglect of a fellow clergyman, having no right “to enter their houses,” not being *legally* empowered to save them, he would be bound to decline the unauthorized intrusion;—we say

nothing at present of the spirit it displays in any church, to rid itself of the presence of every other community, by modestly requesting that the governors of the land would

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legislate for it, as if there was nothing ecclesiastical in-existence but itself;—nor do we advert to what would be the consequence, supposing it to succeed, so that the fact should come to harmonize with the theory, and this one church be able to say, “I sit as a Queen;”—“I have *settled* the bounds of the people; I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man; I found as a nest the riches of the nation; and as one gathereth eggs that are left, so have I gathered all the land, and now there is none to open the mouth, peep, mutter, or move the wing.” I inquire, I say, at present, into none of these things. I do put it, however, to the conscience of any serious and godly man, to say, if he be able, whether he can recognize any thing like a church in the picture which Mr. M’Neile has presented of his? What! are the prerogatives of the ministers of Jesus Christ, and the rights and claims of people upon them, to be given or withheld—extended or limited, by law? Are inhabitants of districts, because such, to become invested with *legal rights* in relation to that for which are required spiritual qualifications? Is a secular assembly the proper place for these things to be discussed?—by the acts of such assemblies are they to be interfered with? Can that be a church which submits either *to* receive Or to recognize “rights,” as to such matters, in obedience to the decisions of any Parliament? Can that be a church which consists of a mixed multitude of families;—anything or nothing as to religious sentiment—as to moral character many of them infamous;—and yet all *alike and “equally invested”*—invested by law—with a “right” and “claim” to stand at the font and to approach the sacrament?

Flagrant, however, as this representation of Mr. M’Neile’s is, the absurdity becomes perfectly atrocious, when we connect with it the account he gives of *the services*

prepared for this mixed multitude. “*They are constructed,*” be says, (p. 76) *for true Christian believers!* and the prayers offered in them are treated as prayers of faith, that is, prayers *answered*. According to that saying of the Lord—“whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” On this principle, if regeneration be prayed for, the person is stated to have become regenerate;—if pardon be asked, he is pronounced absolved;—and in the same way, “prayers for the Holy Ghost upon the candidate for the priesthood, *to replenish him with the truth of God’s doctrine, being offered in faith* AND ANSWERED, *he is*

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addressed asunder that divine guidance and teaching which will cause his word of doctrine to be conformable to the mind of God as stated by the apostles, and therefore binding and loosing upon earth, as it is bound and loosed in heaven!” when we consider what that church is composed of, by Mr. M’Neile’s own shewing, the services of which “are all constructed for true Christians,” and the prayers of which are all regarded as “offered in faith,” and instantly “answered;” when we consider what the *majority* of those are, who surround the font—to say nothing of those who officiate at it—it is difficult to say, in the picture presented by Mr. M’Neile, *which* of the following things predominate—the imposition attempted upon the people, or the impiety committed towards God.*

Both are there. A promiscuous population are made to believe that they have a “right” to partake of the ordinances of Christ’s church, and the prayers of this multitude are offered to heaven as “prayers of faith,” and God and man are alike addressed as if they were “answered.” The prayers of *a church*, I am well aware, must always be supposed to be those of “true Christians;” and a *visible* church never can be free from a mixture of the profane; but this is no reason for going to the extreme on both sides,—constituting all, without exception, members of the church, and then treating what is thus constituted, as if it were the purest of spiritual frater-

nities! Either of these extremes, by whomsoever attempted, is in itself bad; when they are combined the result is disastrous. For the product of their union to be held up, not only as a church, but as the church, it what cannot be listened to, especially from some men, without giving rise, really, to something like indignation.

Mr. M'Neile, I suppose, would reply, that the people, previous to any legislation about them, are all Christians

* The following is Mr. M'Neile's own picture of what at present frequently takes place. "Crowds of sponsors with infants are collected, at stated hours on week days, into the parish church, where, with much Inevitable confusion, and consequent want of reverence and solemnity, the baptismal service degenerates, from the highest exercise of the church's faith, into a lifeless and superstitious form. Instead of awakened sympathies and believing prayer, calling down blessings from heaven, and entering with tender, holy confidence, into the thanksgivings of the church, we hate, at best, no more than the cold correctness of official repetition, the essential and fervent spirituality of the service itself, tending but to exhibit, in more gloomy and painful contrast, the unimpressive, and to all appearance the unbelieving, manner of its administration." p. 244.

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because they are baptised—that they have *thus* the spiritual qualification for church privileges, and have it from the church—and that acts of parliament, in conferring a legal claim, only confer a right to require at a specified place, and from a specified person, what they are otherwise ecclesiastically entitled to. I should then ask if Mr. M'Neile never heard of sin *after* baptism? And whether the *character* of Christians may not be such, *although baptized*, as *spiritually* to debar them from access to the altar? and whether it be not the proper business of a church, as such, to look into these matters, and to execute respecting them "the law of Christ," whatever may have been given of local rights by the law of the land? I ask these questions; and what is the reply? you have already had it—had it from Mr. M'Neile, He not only acknowledges the utter neglect of spiritual discipline in his own church, but graphically describes the asylum she offers to those who experience the discipline of others. Like an Absalom or a Cataline, among Christian communities, she stands ready to welcome to

her confidence “every one that is in distress, or that is in debt, or discontented,”—whoever is ill at ease beneath the salutary operations of law and government. She opens her bosom to all that come to her,—it may be to the filth and feculence purged away from other societies—for “*any*” among Dissenters “on painful *experience of their attempted discipline*, may leave the chapel and find themselves *invested with a right equal to any of their neighbours*, to a seat in the parish church, and a place at the parish font, and access to the parish communion-table!” “Invested with a right equal to any of their neighbours,” to spiritual privileges, *not*, you observe, on the ground of any spiritual qualifications whatever, but fleeing; it may be, from those that had detected and would have reprovèd their want of them! And *this* is a church!*

* As I was in the act of writing the above paragraph, I received a printed paper, purporting to be a “*Copy of a circular Letter addressed by the Curate of the Parish of Hungerford, Berks, to the Parishioners,*” and signed EDWARD OTTO TREVELYAN. It is a strong protest against the unauthorised intrusion into the parish of two other clergymen for the purpose of advocating the BIBLE SOCIETY, on the ground that “the distribution of the Word of God is committed, in that parish, *to him alone.*” I refer to it, however, for the sake of the following passage which pointedly illustrates the matter in the text.

“The Bible Society is a league of all sects and shapes of misbelief, for the sake of distributing the letter of the Bible, without insisting

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Some, I know, would pat the matter differently,—differently I mean from Mr. M’Neile. Instead of exposing the shamelessness of the establishment, they would either refer to the directions of the “rubric” which gires clergymen power to prevent the abuse of sacred ordinances by the prophane, and thus oppose the theory of the church to her practice; or they would profess greatly to lament that practice, and to wish that godly discipline could be restored, as the church herself does every Ash Wednesday. To either or both of which it is enough to reply, that when secular men hare settled, by law, their own and others “parochial rights”—when acts

of parliament have conferred upon the people “claims” which they can urge at the parish church; it is idle to suppose that rubrics will be either submitted to or enforced, or that in such circumstances, “godly discipline” ever *can* be restored. The clergy, in fact; are taught annually to acknowledge this in the service referred to. The church is herself conscious of her criminality—confesses she does nothing—and until something can be done, (any approach to which, however, she never makes, and gives no intimation that she either intends or dares to attempt it)—but until something *can* be done, or, to use her own words, “until primitive, godly discipline may be restored again, *which is much to be wished,*” she directs that her children shall once a-year assemble to weep with her, as the Hebrew maids assembled to weep with the daughter of Jephth.*

I have thus shewn, from Mr. M’Neile’s own representations, that we have reasons for doubting whether iris church be a church at all; and this, too, without referring to the sale of livings or secular patronage; or to the political appointment of bishops to their sees, (which Mr.

on the belief of its spirit. Baptists, Independents, Methodists, Quakers, Ranters, Socinians, Presbyterians, belong to it, and there is no law of the Society to forbid Infidels. Is this a CHRISTIAN SOCIETY?”

But all these are not only not forbidden by any law to belong to the church, but are every one of them, *by law*, “*invested with a right, equal to any of their neighbours, to a place at the parish font, and access to the parish communion-table!*” What sort of society, them, is the church?

* An “*attempt,*” to realize what the church says is “*much to be wished,*” Mr. M’Neile, one would think, might respect. At present, “*discipline,*” in the Establishment, is carried on by the spiritual courts, and *they*, can put a man into jail. By the Church’s own confession that is not “*godly discipline,*” for it is a thing that *is*. What business, indeed, has *a church* with a jail, except to be in it? “*Remember my bonds.*”

M’Neile openly advocates) a thing which, vitiating the priesthood in its primary pastors, the fountain of office, might seem to invalidate and corrupt it from the first. Without touching on these things, we have seen enough, in another direction, to compel us to pause, before recog-

nizing, in the established episcopal community, a *church of Christ*. What it might be, if it existed purely as a spiritual society, we have not to determine; what it *is* is determined for us. Its own advocate has said enough to decide serious and spiritual men to resist the extension of the thing that he describes.

II.—But supposing what is sought was the extension of a church, and that church, in doctrine and order, pure and apostolic, we should feel bound to resist the measure, even then, believing that it would prove as pernicious in practice as it is unjust in principle.

We are not insensible to the picture that might be drawn of the advantages of a parochial division of a country—for the whole population to be locally divided into little flocks, and for every shepherd to have his peculiar charge penned together in one place—clustered in a small manageable district, where, without the feiigue of long journeys, or loss of time, he could move among the people from house to house, and live like a father in the midst of his family, as well as address it in the desk and at a distance. The thing, as a theory, is confessedly beautiful; but it never can be realized by political arrangements. The *machinery* might be got; money might be voted, and be, honestly spent; every one or two thousand persons might be furnished with a church,—and every church furnished with a minister,—and *every* minister with a sufficient maintenance. All this, government could do. It would not cost what we have spent in war, or continue to spend on certain superfluities. When done, church extension would seem to be complete;—an adequate apparatus for irrigating the land with the water of life, would thus be prepared, and nothing would be wanting, but for the workers of the machinery to be the right men, and for the work to be done by them in the right manner.

This would be wanting—and this is what government and government-money never could secure. Without this, the whole machinery might become nothing but an

instrument of mischief. The waters might be poisoned, and diffuse death; or the people might be so satisfied by

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the mere existence and beauty of the apparatus, as to think every thing done because that was set up, and the workmen themselves might "love to have it so." This latter result is the one we exclusively refer to now. It would unquestionably follow, if the thing were to be so completely and so successfully accomplished, as to extinguish the efforts of every other company; but this consummation is the very object aimed at by the Church Extensionists.

These remarks are illustrated by Mr. M'Neile himself. The following passage (p. 259), though it is intended to describe what he regards as the consequence of an inadequate provision—the setting up of a machinery not equal to the whole of the work, depicts, in our opinion, what would be the effect of any merely political arrangement whatever. "The injurious consequences are manifold. The stated public indispensable services of the church being regularly performed, there is the *appearance* of church cultivation, and the consequent expectation of church fruits in the district; while, *in fact, the cultivation is nothing more than apparent*, and, of course, the fruits are not produced. The real living presence of an ambassador for Christ is not felt; the salt is without pungent aggressive sorrow; and that which should have been for the sweetening of the whole mass, by continual contact, remains insulated and unapplied. *Better to have no present provision for such parishes, that the destitution might be fully and intolerably felt, and, in the end, effectually remedied, than to have a species of provision which serves to hide the nakedness without communicating warmth, and thus operates, however unintentionally, to the permanent prejudice of those whom it seems partially to benefit.*" This description, which Mr. M'Neile gives of the delusive appearance and injurious operation of an insufficient ecclesiastical apparatus, would, as we think, be disastrously realized over the entire territory of the kingdom, if it

were to be filled with a parliamentary machinery. It would be soon realized thus extensively, even if at first it were begun to be worked by the best ministers of the best church; and the sooner it succeeded in gaining for itself the entire field, to the exclusion of all voluntary labourers, the more rapid would be the degeneracy. We found this opinion on what we all know to be the principles of human nature; on the facts and testimony of universal history, as to the obvious influence of state-establishments on the actings of that nature; on the suc-

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cessive acknowledgments of many of the members of the English church, from its rise at the Reformation to the present day, of the effect of the establishment on *its* spirituality; and on the judgment and declaration of Dr. Chalmers, who asserts that an active and “unshackled dissenterism” is as necessary to the religion and righteousness of a nation, as, in his opinion, is an end-downed church; and that, if in any country “the arm of intolerance were to be lifted up,” and the energy of non-conformists crushed, “that would be the country whose the purest establishment on earth were sure to languish into indolence, or to gather upon it the mould of spiritual decay.”*

Now this, which the Doctor says would be the inevitable parent of ruin to the church—ruin spiritually and religiously, though there might be all the external, delusive appearances of activity and health, so justly depicted by Mr. M’Neile,—this is precisely the thing which our brethren of the establishment are struggling to realize,—only they are seeking to realize it, not by “lifting up the arm of intolerance,” in the form of brute physical force,—but by the employment against “nonconformists” of their own money. They would “crush” them beneath the edifices they want them to build. The churches to be raised are to be the sanctuaries for themselves and sepulchres for dissent. If Methodists and Sectaries are ever got rid of by such a process, the prediction of Chalmers; I fear, would be fulfilled; the church would sink into

formality and indolence; mould and mildew would settle on her tabernacles; alone in the land, she would sense to be sensible of the “wholesome reaction to which she has been stimulated;”† darkness would follow from the absence of the collision of a salutary rivalry; and, surrounded by the darkness, “she would draw the curtains and retire to rest.”‡ Church extension, in such circumstances, would be “like the extension which a body gains by death;”‡ of if not here actually gained by it, would be the infallible symptom of its speedy approach.

But the injustice of *the principle*, as well as the practical danger of the scheme merits attention. The dissenters at England are yet in existence;—they have churches and ministers not a few;—they build and repair

* Civic Economy, chap. vi.

† Clalmers. ‡ Hall

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their own edifices;—they sustain their institutions with their own money;—their ministers and flocks have souls and hearts in them made by God;—many of them hope that these have been regenerated too by his Spirit, so that natural affections and religious sympathies are alike theirs. Of these they live in the reciprocal interchange, and they wish to retain the power to exercise and perpetuate both. All are menaced by the project in question. The dissenter’s *money* is of course required; but the success of the scheme, to the full extent of some of its advocates, would go to the annihilation of what is far more valuable. I shall briefly illustrate both these statements, and evince the injustice of what they involve, by Mr. M’Neile’s own acknowledgments.

In pleading against an incumbent, whose parish has become too large for his cultivation, Mr. M’Neile, in a strain of something like indignant eloquence, exclaims (p. 228),—“I take my stand in such a parish, and plead for the birth-right of fifty thousand Englishmen.” “Have these no vested rights? Are these ecclesiastical

outlaws, in virtue of an arrangement made before they were born? Nay, *worse than outlaws*, for *on the side of payment they are still within the law*—all bound to minister to the vested rights of the incumbent, as incumbent, although it has become physically impossible for him to minister to their vested rights as Englishmen.” Mr. M’Neile, then, can feel the injustice of money being received when nothing is obtained from the receiver in return. There is warm, hearty, and honest earnestness in his indignant denunciations. He is shocked at the demand when a *physical* obstacle lies in the way of its purchasing a benefit. Has he no feeling when there are added to that, obstacles of a far higher kind? when spiritual principles, conscientious conclusions, religious faith, have rendered it morally and *spiritually* impossible for the incumbent to minister to those that have them! When, too, they expensively minister to themselves, and to many besides, the world over, and are “still held to be within the law, on the side of payment,” to him whom they reject—has he no sensibility to spare for *them*? And in addition to all that they do already, is it nothing for them to be required to agree, by their representatives, to extend an institution, from which, in their opinion, whether right or wrong, God and Truth compel them to dissent?

In other passages, the eloquent lecturer embodies prin-

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tuples which expose the *injustice* of what he advocates. His idea of “the only adequate and consistent basis for an established church” is, that “it is for the common good of the whole.” “On this ground alone,” he continues, “can it be justified.” “*If it cease to be for the good of the whole*, it cannot consistently continue to be at all.” “If it be but a sect, which never could be for the good of the whole, why favour it more than any other sect in the nation? But if it be *the Christian church*, an ordinance of God in all ages, and good indeed for the whole, then why not keep it national in its extent, whatever objections individuals may urge

against it?" I wonder how Mr. M'Neile would like his own language, if he heard it from the lips of the Presbyterian, the Independent, or the Papist, either of their communions being the dominant majority, and they reasoning thus with a practical intention—an intention of compelling him to aid, by his money, to terminate his own and his beloved church's ecclesiastical existence! We utterly deny his church to be *the* Christian church, even though we should admit that it were a true branch of it. We deny that it promotes the good of the whole *tit fact*;—it has "ceased" to do that—numbers instead of being benefited are oppressed by it. Such numbers will always exist, while mind is free, and the pulpit vocal, and the press unfettered, and the Bible abroad and visible among us. I, too, plead "for fifty thousand Englishmen," and for fifties and hundreds of thousands more—men with "rights" "vested" in them direct from Almighty God. I take my stand, not on the narrow precincts of a "parish," but on the broad realm of England—beneath the canopy of its free sky, and in front of that which professes to be its church; and I ask that the eternal principles of justice, and the "Golden rule" of the Great Master be applied, by those who profess to be his followers, to their demands upon others who love and serve them at least equally with themselves. But Mr. M'Neile, with his warm Irish heart, his healthy and exuberant feeling, could not help giving us another ground for fraternal expostulation. "The district system," he says, "is *unjust*." (p. 225). "Privileges and emoluments are tenaciously held by the parish church * * * and the district clergy continue the unprivileged and unrequited labourers. If it be asked, what privileges are referred to? the answer is, *Every right-minded clergyman considers it a privilege to be able to die*

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charge every part of his ministry—to baptize, to solemnise holy matrimony; and not only in the private chamber, but also in the burial service of the church, to cheer the hearts of morning relations and friends, while he points to our

glorious resurrection in the likeness of our returning Lord.
 * * * * After all a clergyman's labours, and watchings, and cares, and anxieties, this system deprives him of the sympathising privileges, while it lays upon him the burthens and responsibilities of a parochial minister."

And dissenting ministers, have *they* no hearts in them—English or Irish hearts—formed by Him who frameth our souls alike? Have they no deep sympathies and strong affections? Are they not "right minded?" Watching over flocks whom they intimately know, are they utterly insensible to the "privileges referred to?" Are they ignorant of the longing to baptise and marry, and to sooth the sick, and bury the dead, and comfort the bereaved with the words of Him who is "the Resurrection of the Life?" And are they in silence, and without resentment or tears, to submit to have their baptisms spurned as invalid, and their marriages denounced as legalized fornication—and the whole empire so possessed and appropriated as not so much shall be left "as to set their foot on;" nor room be accorded them to "bury their dead out of their sight?" Yet all this would unquestionably come, if the church extensionists could realize their "idea." And all this, too, with the dissenter's money, taken from him by those "the weapons of whose warfare" *ought not* to be "carnal but spiritual;" but who, "going forth *armed*" after another fashion, "would compel all men to build their churches and pay their ministers!" It surely is not in the heart of man, either to endure or to perpetrate this wrong? If there really be a God in Heaven, let the one confide in and the other fear Him. Neither will then either suffer injustice, or dare to inflict it. Each will reverence the others manhood, and feel that they have rights to be mutually respected.

This language may seem beyond the occasion; but the aspect of the subject at present before us, is far more serious than many suppose. Large unendowed communities exist:—PRESBYTERIANS, METHODISTS, BAPTISTS,

INDEPENDENTS. They have of course many ministers, and consist of many congregations. They have spent, and are spending, immense sums on the erection of places

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for public worship; and they raise hundreds of thousands of pounds every year for the support of religion; not merely for their own spiritual benefit, but for the purpose of direct, benevolent aggression on the perishing multitudes around them and abroad. Yet with all this, *their very existence is unrecognized as religious bodies or religious men*; nay, they go, in the estimates and calculations of the church extensionists, only as so much of the national heathenism. Their buildings, worship, knowledge, zeal,—their personal piety and pastoral relationships, are “nothing accounted of.” *They have none of these things*, and must be taught to provide them by act of parliament! They are *not known* in their religious character;—in that view they have no rights to be held sacred, and no feelings worthy of respect. Clergymen can feel when other clergymen possess privileges which they think should be theirs; but they have no scruple about investing themselves with what belong to the ministers of other churches. They do this by the principles they maintain and the plans they advocate. They would take the kingdom, and cut it into so many manageable sections, and partition the entire people among themselves,—making no more account of the flocks they would divide, and the feelings they would lacerate, than the buyers and sellers in a slave-market of the families they dismember and the hearts they break. In short, the Parliamentary extension of the Establishment, fully and fairly carried out, would come ultimately to this—the ecclesiastical ascendancy of *one* church secured by the forcible treatment of every other—and of the work of God in it,—as if the very existence of either, without permission, were an impertinence. Such a scheme we think uncharitable and unjust, if not impious, and therefore we resist it.

3rd. A further reason for resisting the extension of the English Establishment arises, with us, from the con-

viction we entertain, that it never has been, and is never likely to be, as an institution, greatly instrumental in diffusing that truth on which depends “the righteousness that exalteth a nation.”

This conviction springs from the importance which we attach to the principles of *evangelical religion*. These principles may be true or false; we are not arguing their correctness at present. We *assume* them to be correct. We have laid it down as one of our first and fundamental positions, not only that evangelical religion is true, but that it is *the* truth, on the utterance of which from

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the pulpits of the land, and on the contact of which with the hearts of the people, “the righteousness that exalteth” can alone be produced, or produced in its best and highest manifestations.

It is not my purpose, either to explain what the principles of evangelical religion are, nor to show that they constitute God’s great instrument, in connexion with the agency of the Holy Spirit, for filling the world with “the fruits of righteousness.” We take for granted your knowledge of the first; and the second we have already said that we assume. With this understanding our observations proceed.

Mr. M’Neile closes his last lecture with some stirring passages, in which he describes many of the forms of physical disease common among mankind; depicts the horrible scenes of a battle-field—and of a city filled with sickness and suffering;—shews the importance of surgeons and hospitals,—and then, passing from the bodies to the souls of men, runs the parallel between the two cases, and fervently urges the extension of the Church, that, in a spiritual sense, surgeons and hospitals may be provided, that the wounded may be healed and the dying live. The passages are far too long to be quoted here; but two or three sentences may be given as bearing upon our present purpose.

“If,” says he, “passing from ward to ward, I could say to you, behold! here the loathsome wound is

closely and carefully inspected: here the fractured bones and torn tendons, and lacerated flesh are laid in their respective places with precision; here the tortures of the frightful operation are soothed by the voice of kindness; here the infectious effluvia is patiently and heroically endured—and all this with the affectionate tenderness of a nurse, combined with the scientific skill of a master; then, then, when I asked for funds to multiply hospitals and remunerate officiating surgeons, should I not see the warm undeliberating Christian profusion which does justice to the emotions of the heart!”

“And now, when, instead of the perishing bodies, I consider the never dying souls of our fellow creatures, * * and when I consider the glorious all-sufficient remedy for fallen man provided in the Gospel,—the redeeming love of God in Jesus Christ, affecting at once the divine government and the human character; the atonement *made* that God might be just, and *manifested* that man might be sanctified; the commandment of the Most High

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that this should be preached to every creature; the mission of the accredited surgeons, the ambassadors for Christ, the heralds of peace and mercy beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God; *the happy effects produced wherever this mission is faithfully fulfilled* * * * O that my voice could penetrate England’s Commons, * * * Peers * * * Royal Council * * * and reach the throne itself, while I plead for determined measures on behalf of England’s Church!”

These pictures are very striking. With Mr. M’Neile, *we* believe that men are dying under a spiritual disease, just as the Israelites were perishing in the wilderness from the venom of the serpent;—and we believe that their case can be met only by the pupils and servants of “the Great Physician,” each with “the tenderness of a nurse and the skill of a master,” directing them “to the Lamb of God that taketh away sin;” for, “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so hath the son of man been lifted up, that whosoever believeth on

Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In our views, then, of the disease and the remedy, Mr. M'Neile, and we are agreed; and I have no hesitation in adding here, that if we were convinced that the extension of the Establishment *would really be* the extension of *the Gospel*;—if we were convinced that the ecclesiastical machinery would really multiply "heralds of peace and mercy," who would "beseech sinners to be reconciled to God;"—if we were convinced that thus would be brought to pass "those happy effects which are always produced whenever this mission is *faithfully fulfilled*,"—if we were convinced that by the plan proposed, *sooner and better than by any other*, what we hold to be requisite to the righteousness of a nation would actually be realized—that thus, in our own words, "*Evangelical Christianity* would come into contact with the national mind, and act upon it as a quickening, renewing, and sanctifying power"—that thus "the life-giving word of the truth of the Gospel—the message and the ministry of reconciliation—in the purity of the one and the persuasiveness of the other—would be so sent and circulated through the land, as that all its inhabitants might be brought within the compass of its saving announcements and sanctifying influence;"*—if, I say, we were convinced that *this* would be the result of the proposed measure, and *that the proposed*

* See pages 10 and 11.

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measure was necessary to this result—I, for one, would not hesitate to assert, that it would become us all, however we might differ from the church in some things, to bury these differences—to throw to the winds all abstract and microscopic objections about having to pay in the taxation of the country in addition to our own voluntary donations,—or about the interference of the legalized clergyman with our flocks, or feelings, or ecclesiastical existence;—we should be willing to be absorbed or annihilated by the Establishment;—we should nobly rise above all personal, professional, or sectarian sensitive-

ness, and cordially co-operate in securing the Parliamentary extension of an instrument, which would produce in the nation the righteousness that would exalt it, by producing first, in the hearts of the people, the religion that would humble them.

If, however, it should happen that the sacred principles of evangelical religion—sacred alike to Mr. M’Neile and ourselves,—if it should happen that these are *not* likely to be forwarded by the movement;—that history proves, and that churchmen testify, that they never *have been* promoted by the church *as an institution*,—that there is no ground to hope or to believe that they ever will,—and that thus the thing we are invited to do or to permit, would really be the sending into society a set of “surgeons,” a majority of whom, however pompously “accredited” by man, would be “disowned of God;”—who, from ignorance alike of the malady and the medicine, would mistake symptoms, and err in their treatment; who might have no “tenderness,” or what was *worse* than none—no “skill,” but skill to do mischief; who would open where they should bind, and fracture where they should unite, and inflame where they should sooth, and sooth where they should blister; who would “heal the hurt” of the patients “lightly;” would neglect their “wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores,” and neither “close” them, nor “bind” them, nor “mollify them with ointment;”—who would refuse bread and prescribe poison;—and who, finally, might fill up the measure of their guilt by resisting the introduction into the national “hospitals,” and ridiculing the practitioners by whom it was employed, of the exclusive and infallible process of recovery:—if, I say, it should happen that *this* is the system we are solicited to aid, or that we solemnly and religiously *believe* that it is,—what, I would ask, are we to do then? Could Mr. M’Neile, or any reasonable or

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religious man, expect any thing from us, in consistency with our convictions, but resistance to a measure so pregnant with mischief?

Now this *is* our conviction; and we arrive at it in consequence of the principles which we hold in common with Mr. Neile, Dr. Chalmers, and Evangelical Christians of every community; and, besides this, the *conviction* is one to which *churchmen themselves* have often given broad and burning utterance. It is not our intention, at this time, either to discuss the grounds of our opinion, or to fortify it extensively by the accordant testimonies of ecclesiastical writers; we shall merely *state* what those grounds are, and close, perhaps, with two or three of the testimonies in question.

We believe it to be a fact, that the official services of the English Church, and the views which she sanctions of the priestly function, and of the nature of the sacraments, are at variance with scripture; and that they operate most injuriously, on both ministers and people, in relation to evangelical religion. *We believe it to be another fact*, that an overwhelming majority of the English clergy, are not now, and never have been, evangelical, either in their sentiments or spirit, however it may be accounted for,—whether from the direct influence of the church, or from the many evils, connected with private and official patronage, which belong to the Establishment. *We believe it to be another fact*, that this majority has always included the greater number of prelates and dignitaries and higher ecclesiastics, and that thus, the great bulk of the national property, set apart for religion, has constantly gone to a class of persons who could not but be an incumbrance, rather than an aid, to the piety of the people. *We believe it to be another fact*, that the spirit of this majority has presided over the issue of publications for the poor, by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and has been productive thus of most disastrous effects, deluding them by error, and fostering their prejudices against the truth. *We believe it to be another fact*, that the same spirit, in the same vast and influential body, has always and everywhere set itself in opposition to evangelical religion; that, in consequence of the number and rank of its adherents—filling the

cathedrals, constituting chapters, appearing in Parliament, forming the taste and guiding the hand of the royal and noble dispensers of patronage—by these means it has come to pass that the church, as an institution, has

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rather systematically opposed the progress of evangelical religion, than originated the movement, or welcomed its advances, or wished it success; and that that form of preaching and piety, which alone can produce the “righteousness that exalteth,” has thus had to make its way in the country, *not* in consequence of the Establishment, but in spite of it. *We believe it to be another fact*, that there is not a single cathedral at this moment in which a pious evangelical churchman would recognize the majority of the ecclesiastics as evangelical; or in which he believes that they ever meet, in deep, serious, anxious conference, with a view to promote what *he* regards as spiritual religion. *We believe it to be another fact*, that Oxford Puseyism is very much the offspring of Anglican Christianity; that some of its attributes always have belonged and will always adhere to the English priesthood;—that the *animus* of it is in deadly hostility to the evangelical system; and that its hold upon the clergy, present and prospective, is at this time such, that if we were to consent to vote our money for the erection of churches, we could have no assurance that they would not be filled with a modified Romanism, instead of by Mr. M’Neile’s “ambassadors for Christ”—his “heralds of peace and mercy, beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, and producing the happy effects which ever flow from *this* mission when *faithfully fulfilled*.”

These convictions belong to us as Evangelical Dissenters; but we hold many of them in common with Evangelical Churchmen. They and we agree in the facts,—however we may differ in our modes of accounting for them, or as to the measures we would adopt to prevent their recurrence. The circumstances connected with the rise of Methodism in the middle of last century shew what was the *animus* of the Establishment then. The complaints

and lamentations of the evangelical clergy which arose within it, proved, towards the close of that period, what its spirit and condition continued to be. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge so deliberately set itself against the revival of evangelical religion, that it more than once, in balloting for those proposed to it as members, refused to receive Mr. Simeon of Cambridge, exclusively on the ground of his evangelicism. Some of the members of that society assert that evangelical sentiments are *not* those “which it considers itself engaged either to adopt or circulate;” that to these “the great bulk of its publications have been directly opposed from

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the origin of the Society to the present day;” and one states that the entire “twelve volumes of its tracts are so unfit for circulation,—so full of unsound and delusory sentiments of the Gospel,—that he studiously conceals them from the eyes of his family;”—all this, observe, and far more, is said by churchmen, of an institution, which, more than any thing else, is a visible, corporate embodiment of the church,—the representation of what it is, as it at any time exists as a living thing, and as distinct from the personal views of individuals who may be of or in it as a clerical minority. The late revival of Anglicanism, in opposition to the Evangelical system, has led the clergy to rally round this institution. “The spirit they are of” is evinced by that to which it is attracted. As to the settled and systematic opposition of the great mass of church-patrons—chancellors—bishops—chapters—colleges—corporations—or individuals,—their opposition to any exercise of their power that would in the least favour evangelical religion—this has been notorious ever since evangelical clergymen existed. Dr. Chalmers charges government and political patrons with having thus arrayed their whole force against the only instrument fitted to exalt “the righteousness of the nation,”—but then he charges *churchmen* with being the active originators of this prejudice in the laity,—and especially states, that the corporate bodies fixed in the

cathedrals—(another visible impersonation of *the system*)—have always, in an especial manner, scowled upon pure and spiritual religion, and spurned from among them the only form of it, from which could proceed either the regeneration preparatory for heaven, or the greatest sum of “righteousness” upon earth. So manifestly true are these charges of Dr. Chalmers that a work, professing to represent the views of the evangelical clergy of England, has not hesitated to say, that he “has clearly shewn” that the system pursued” (which *we* think the natural effect of the system established, and *of* its establishment), “has been most ruinous to the souls of men, as well as to the peace and order of the land”—opposing Christianity in those of its “doctrines which are pre-eminently suited to the wants of mankind, and calculated to promote the spiritual welfare of individuals and *the best interests of nations.*”

This view of the evangelical system, and of the various ways in which it has been opposed by the establishment, are precisely the views which dissenters take. The latter,

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however, that is, the various ways by which the national institution has proved itself to be either “not for,” or “against” the truth—an obstacle in its path, or an antagonist power—these, constitute some of the grounds on which we are solemnly compelled to say, that we have no hope that the extension of the establishment will really promote “the furtherance of the Gospel.” We see no reason for expecting to reap, from the enlargement of the system, different fruits from what it has hitherto and uniformly produced. It unfortunately appears that, whether the CHURCH or the ESTABLISHMENT predominates, evil is the result. *Last century the establishment was in the ascendent*, and was worked by prelates and prime ministers as a great secular and political machine, and the result was a clergy without religion, and a people without righteousness:—The “whole force” of the thing, Dr. Chalmers says, being intentionally “directed against those doctrines which can alone transform and moralize

a land;”—and the effect—the successful “combating of the growth of virtue and the withering up of the graces of religion.” A great improvement, however, took place in the course of the last forty or fifty years. That sort of preaching which, according to Chalmers, most ecclesiastics viewed as “a loathsome weed “ fit only for “the wilds and commons of sectarianism,” began to appear and was suffered to bloom “in the well smoothed garden of the establishment;” but long before anything like a quarter of the garden was thus beautified, another change has come over the spirit of its possessors; *the church is in the ascendant now*; she has become ashamed of the recent race of her children—refuses to acknowledge them—or schools them into those notions and proprieties which *she* regards as becoming their parentage; and this state of things is equally injurious to evangelical religion: it is even more so, perhaps, than the previous form of political opposition to it, for it is said to be not only “anti-evangelical,” but “anti-protestant.” It thus seems that *each part* of the mixed institution which we are invited to extend, is, in its genuine spirit and natural actings, from some cause or other, mimical to pure and undefiled religion! True; “burning and shining lights” have been in it; “ambassadors for Christ, and heralds of mercy “have proclaimed from its pulpits the way of salvation; some of the holiest of men have been its ministers, whose sacred mission has been “faithfully fulfilled”—“their doctrine has dropped as the

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rain, and their speech distilled as dew;” verdure and fruitfulness have been seen around them, “righteousness” and religion have flourished together. It is our painful persuasion, however,—a persuasion forced upon us by the facts to which we have just referred—that neither the Church, nor the Establishment, *as systems*, produced these men; that the spirit of both frowned on them at first, and frowns still; that the nation owes them to causes distinct from the actings of either, since they had to keep their standing and make their way in spite of

both Church and State opposition: and therefore we think that to extend the system is only to give scope and vigour to an apparatus the effects of which, judged by the light of evangelical religion, would almost appear to be bad by nature and good by accident.

At any rate, however it may be accounted for, the *fact* has always been, that what evangelical Christians regarded as evil *has predominated* in the establishment. Its own advocates, advocates for its enlargement! fully admit this astounding truth. They, of course, think *the evil to be the accident*; but even then, we do not consider that *we* ought to be asked by them to increase that, which, *though* its nature be to produce good, has, somehow or other, never produced it—never at least to the same extent that they say it has produced evil. It really strikes us as something like an insult,—a gratuitous mockery of the common sense, and the religious feeling of the great body of British evangelical Christians, for men to come forward, and ask or demand of us to extend a system, which they themselves acknowledge has always in *fact*, (whatever may be their many theories about it) been more distinguished for trying to obstruct, than for spreading and propagating, THE TRUTH THAT SUSTAINS “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF A NATION.”★

I had intended adverting to a variety of other consi-

* I am bound to say that for nearly all the passages marked as quotations in this part of the Lecture, I am indebted to a pamphlet entitled, “What? and who says it?” I have not taken, however, by any means the strongest of what it contains of the statements of churchmen relative to the church. It was quite impossible to avoid alluding to the fact of our views and apprehensions being confirmed by such authorities, and the more so, as some of the persons who are most forward in bringing Dr. Chalmers and Mr. M’Neile to London, appear to be the very men (the Dr. himself leading them on) who publish respecting the working of the Establishment, not merely *opinions*, but what some of them call “momentous truths,” which it is impossible to contemplate without questioning the utility of the institution itself.

derations. To the indelicacy of so rich an establishment—rich in its possessions and in the wealth of its members, all the aristocratic and opulent belonging to

it—the indelicacy of this august thing, which boasts of its having ninety-nine parts of the property of the nation, condescending to solicit, and, through the taxes, trying to obtain, the money of the poor and despised hundredth unit!—To the fact that dissenters not only have no wish to hinder the building of churches by churchmen, but that they believe their increase in this way might possibly come to re-act in its results most beneficially on the church herself, and, if so, that it would render her a great instrument of good, by purifying and directing her immense capacities for action and influence. I had thought, too, of shewing the grounds on which secular governments had better be advised to let religious bodies alone altogether, or at least so far as to have nothing to do with providing money either for one or for many of them: and the reasons which induce us to believe that this course will prove the best, in the end, both for churches and nations—for the religion of the one and the righteousness of the other. These matters, however, I at present leave. Some of them I may perhaps take up at a future opportunity. I may possibly, too, examine Mr. M’Neile’s views of subscription, for having happened to be present at his second lecture in which he tried to explain the forms of absolution, and having had my own mind recently directed to a fresh examination of the terms of clerical conformity,* I confess I not only felt that the matter was insufficiently met by Mr. M’Neile, but that there was something awful in the sight of hundreds of clergymen clapping and huzzaing when he confessed his inability to defend one of the forms referred to, evincing as it did their mental denial of that to which they had solemnly set their hands, and thus publicly proclaiming respecting their Order what I dare not express, but what cannot be suspected, much less proclaimed, without exciting scorn, terror, or tears.

The question, too, still remains, which must come to be looked at—looked at by dissenters as well as others.—what a *church* must do,—how it must proceed, or be constituted,—or what plans it must bring itself to adopt,

* Conscientious Clerical Nonconformity, a Discourse, delivered at Chadwell Street Chapel, Pentonville, on Monday, April 15, 1839, on occasion of its Re-opening for the use of Ridley H. Herschell, a converted Jew.

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in order to secure, or aid in securing, in the best and speediest manner, the extension throughout a land of an efficient ministry, and the transformation of the people, or the great mass of them, into "living stones" of "the living temple." It may be quite true that a proposed system is a manifest and proved inappropriate thing, and that *it*, therefore, should not be thought of;—the compulsory system may be that thing—the compulsory extension of the English church may be the same thing in a concrete form of it,—but after getting thus far, a grave inquiry may be to be entertained, as to finding out, if we may so express it, that concrete form of the voluntary system, in other words, those modes in which a church *must* really and practically work it out, in order to keep pace with, or to overtake, or universally to influence, the mighty masses of a dense and ever-increasing population, I may possibly, hereafter, go into this and kindred subjects. It may be quite clear that a certain thing is wrong, and yet the best form of that which is right, may not be clear, or we, peradventure, not in possession of it; and though it is nothing but our duty to resist the wrong, and especially so when actually required to countenance and support it, it is equally our duty honestly to see to it, whether we ourselves are carrying out, or are *able* to carry out, to the fullest extent and in the most efficient manner, the spirit of the thing believed to be right.

All this, however, I, at present, leave. What I have attempted has been a very limited view of the subject,—a view however, which has not been at all dwelt upon by others who have rather gone into the larger question, but which, let it be remembered, bears more directly than that on the object of the last course of Lectures delivered by the advocates of religious establishments. Dr. Chalmers appeared in London, two years ago, to support the

compulsory principle *in general*—the propriety of governments going forth “armed, to compel every man, whether he cares for religion or not, to build the churches, and pay the ministers,” of “*some one of the evangelical denominations.*” The Doctor came to do this. The thing that was in him he brought forth. We were ourselves present at the vocal delivery, and heard it hailed with obstreperous rapture. When made visible in a printed book, many, it is said, wondered greatly at what had enchanted them, and were half ashamed of their childish joy. But Mr. M’Neile came next. His object was something *in particular*—to prove, namely, that of all the

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things that a government could patronize, in the form of “evangelical denominations,” the Church of England was the very beet; nay, so far superior to every thing else, as not to be one denomination among many—not a church—but *the church*, whatever Chalmers had hinted to the contrary. The extension of *this* it is he urges on the government; would, if he might, urge it on the queen; and, of course, urges it upon *us*; for he says that our “pockets are assailed” by the project, through our “*consciences*” he thinks are not.* One of the members of the imperial parliament intends to move, in a few days, that Mr. M’Neile’s suggestion be entertained, and that the government go forth “armed” among the people, to “compel every man to build the churches, and pay the ministers” of this *one*,—the only true and Christian community. Now, my object has been to look at *the specific and particular thing* which Mr. M’Neile came to support, and which Sir Harry Inglis wishes that *we* should, and I have endeavoured to shew that, apart entirely from the general question, and on grounds exclusively spiritual and religious, there are strong, *specific, and particular reasons* for resisting the extension of *that thing*. If I have at all succeeded, the propriety of pious and evangelical dissenters petitioning against the proposed grant has been made apparent; their doing so has been justified, and justified, too, upon such grounds,—

Mr. M'Neile and Dr. Chalmers, and the party they represent, being judges,—as to make the omission of it something very like indifference to truth.

* Page 192, in the passage referred to, Mr. M'Neile is arguing against the idea that church-rates can be a grievance to the dissenter's conscience. He does so entirely on the ground of what is, I think, a just and important distinction, viz. that if a government, *when it gets the taxes*, appropriates a part to any thing to which the subject objects, *that* is the act of the government, and the subject's conscience has nothing to do with it. This he illustrates by the government grant to Maynooth college, which he denounces as “anti-English, anti-Christian—suicidal guilt,” &c. but in which he feels he takes no part, though he pays the taxes out of which it goes. He never, however, adverts to the question of a *direct tax*, or of church-rates, as such. Would Mr. M'Neile pay *a direct tax to Manooth college*? If he would, can he not yet conceive that some of his brethren *might*, perhaps, think that there was a difference between giving generally to the taxation of the country, and giving a certain specific sum, asked *for*, and paid by the individual *to*, what he regarded as anti-Christian and idolatrous? Why did not Mr. M'Neile touch this view of the question?

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