

THE ULTIMATE OBJECT OF THE
EVANGELICAL DISSENTERS

AVOWED AND ADVOCATED

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THE
ULTIMATE OBJECT
OF THE
EVANGELICAL DISSENTERS

AVOWED AND ADVOCATED,

A SERMON

PREACHED

AT THE KING'S WEIGH-HOUSE, LONDON,
PREVIOUS TO NOTICE BEING GIVEN THAT
PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT FOR THE REMOVAL OF DISSENTERS'
GRIEVANCES WOULD LIE FOR SIGNATURE IN THE VESTRY
DURING THE WEEK.

BY T. BINNEY.

“*Opinionum varietas, et opinantium unitas non sunt ἀσύζτατα.*”
“Variety of opinions, and the unity of those who hold them, are not
incompatible.”

“I can as willingly be a martyr for love as for any article of the creed.”
BAXTER.

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A SERMON.

JOHN XVII. 21.

“That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

THE valedictory addresses and the intercessory prayer of the Son of God, are distinguished by extraordinary elevation of thought—by sublimity and pathos of expression. His mind, just before his departure, would seem to have imbibed, in a more than usual degree, the purity and the grandeur of that world into which he was about to pass. As he approaches the cross, he approaches the crown too;—as he advances towards the scene of his deepest degradation, he is also advancing towards the seat of his highest magnificence;—and the brightness and splendour of that divine abode appear, as it

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were, to fall upon his spirit, and to invest it with glory. In his pre-existent state, while reposing “in the bosom of the Father,” and “thinking it no robbery to be equal with God,” he “clothed himself with light as with a garment;”—in his transfiguration on the mount, he was visibly the subject of surpassing magnificence, for “his countenance shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;”—and now, in his last interview with his disciples, though the “earthly tabernacle” undergoes no change, and puts on no new or luminous appearance, the spirit within, by the greatness and grandeur of its views, appears as if it were wrapped in the mantle which it wore before

all worlds, and had resumed its position at the summit of the universe.

If the heavens were to open, and God, "who dwelleth in light," were to display his glory in the sight of mortals; or, if Christ were to appear, and to be "transfigured" before us, *two* effects, we imagine, would follow; all who beheld the wonder would be irresistibly convinced of the existence of God and the mission of his Son; and all would confess, that there was a mysterious magnificence about both, on which it was impossible steadily to gaze. Consequences, very similar, seem to result from the contemplation of that *mental* magnificence

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—that august and incomparable display of divine and holy thought—which appeared in the Messiah previous to his passion, and is embodied and retained in his discourses and prayer. They seem irresistibly to impel the exclamation, "Surely this *was* the Son of God"—"these sentiments are not of earth—this religion cannot be from men:"—but, at the same time, they leave upon the heart an oppressive sense of all that is deep, indefinite, and dazzling—thoughts, impossible to be justly apprehended; and words which it will require the instruction of heaven to explain.

On this account, I am not backward to acknowledge, that there are many things in the chapters referred to, which require to be classed with such as are "hard to be understood." Even in the text itself, it may not be easy to ascertain the exact import of every expression, though the general sense may be sufficiently evident for all practical purposes. The Lord prays for a union and harmony among his followers, and this with a view to the universal admission of his character and claims:

it follows, therefore, that there *is* a sense in which the christian church may and ought to be one, and, that this oneness, whenever it appears, will have a powerful effect on the conversion of the world.

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Warning you, that I pretend not, in this discourse, either to attempt a minute exposition of the text, or to enter into elaborate argument on the subject suggested; permit me to request your attention to a few observations, on the nature and the desirableness of that unity of the church, which Scripture requires us to preserve; which it warrants us to expect ultimately to prevail; and which, therefore, ought ever to be pursued as the happy conclusion of all controversy, and the end and aim of all agitation.

We shall first mention some things in which this unity does *not* consist; second, those in which it does; and then conclude with appropriate general observations.

I.—1. When our Lord prayed that all his followers might be one, he did not mean that a system of perfect equality was to be established among them; that there were to be no official distinctions; and that whatever was proper for one was to be proper for all. He could not mean any thing like this—any thing like a universal identity or sameness—so that all believers were to possess equal endowments, and to sustain and discharge the same functions. It would not be possible to contend for this, even if the clause in the text, “*as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,*” were to be pushed to the utmost limit of interpre-

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tation; for, however mysterious and intimate may be the union between the Father and the

Son; however it may involve an entire equality when they are abstractly regarded as joint-participants of the divine nature; yet, in the work of redemption, they sustain distinct offices, they discharge separate functions, and are *economically* related as superior and subordinate; and, it is in *this* view, unquestionably, that they are spoken of in the text, and in kindred passages. Hence, that Christ meant a oneness arising from the union of persons absolutely equal—equal in every respect—is not only absurd and impossible in itself, and contrary to the nature of things, but it is inconsistent with the proper view of the analogy to which he refers, as well as with other and plainer scriptural declarations. In the 12th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the 12th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul discourses largely upon the unity of the church. He shews that it may consist with the greatest diversity of official distinctions and of spiritual gifts; that it is the union of many members in one body; members differing from each other as the ear from the hand, and the eye from the foot; that there are certain officers, both extraordinary and ordinary, temporary and perpetual, to whom official superiority belongs

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without entrenching upon the principle which makes them one with the most obscure and undistinguished of the faithful: and, indeed, in the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, he represents such individuals as not only not interfering with the principle in question, but as given for the very purpose of carrying it out; given “for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the building up of the body of Christ; that all might come, in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of

the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The whole scripture, in fact, is against such an interpretation of these words as would deprive the church of those officers by whom, under Christ, it is to be regulated and ruled;—deprive it, under the plea that any superiority of some over others is subversive of a union in which all are emphatically declared to be one. This principle, if fully acted upon, instead of cementing and uniting, would separate and disperse: if oneness were impossible wherever official distinctions are permitted, the church would be reduced to a number of units, capable of no vital or visible connexion, and agreeing in nothing but in repelling each other.

2. Our Lord did not mean the opposite to this. He did not mean that the Church uni-

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 versal was to form one vast and visible society; its base diffused throughout all nations,—its officers innumerable—distinguished by all degrees and gradations of authority—and terminating at length in a supreme and infallible head, his own vicegerent and vicar upon earth.

Such was the oneness advocated and enforced by the Popish Church. The establishment of a universal spiritual monarchy, by which the whole world was to be governed; the subjects of which were to be "*all* tongues, and nations, and people;" of which kings and emperors were to be the vassals—bowing before it, and receiving the sceptre as the gift of a priest:—this was the most stupendous and the most arrogant form which human ambition ever assumed. Audacious, however, as it was, there was something sublime about it,—sublime, both from the magnitude and the nature of the conception. It was the idea of universal dominion—and domi-

nion of the highest order;—an empire, not over matter, but over mind;—the government, not merely of the body, but the soul;—the subjugation, not only of brute force, but of spiritual faculty—by which the whole mass of intellect and power, at any time existing upon earth, might be chained to the footstool of one man. The ground-work of this mighty fabric was laid in the presumed obligation of preserving among

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the faithful ostensible unity. It was assumed and advocated that the whole christian world was to form one body—every part and portion connected with the rest—and all subordinated to the visible head, proudly seated at the top. In this head all was to centre; with it every thing was to be united; and this union was declared to be the oneness which was deemed a necessary attribute of the true church.

That Christ did not mean a unity like this, we gather from the fact, that his inspired apostles, who were commissioned by him to lay the foundation of the church, never attempted to realize any such conception. Had it been Christ's idea, it would have been theirs; had it been theirs, they would have given it vocal expression and visible existence;—they would have enforced it upon others, and have followed it themselves. But they never did this. Wherever they went they formed *separate churches*, not parts of one universal and connected community. They did not join the church of one country with that of another—that of every other country with these—and then fix upon a certain spot, and a certain individual, where all were to find their common centre and their visible head. Not only so, but they did not even make their churches the churches of nations, countries, and provinces; they were those of cities, villages, and towns.

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There might be more than one in the same place. There were many in districts of very limited extent. There were several in Judea—several in Galatia. Each church—however, in faith and feeling, connected with others—preserved in itself, and exercised with perfect freedom, the functions of a distinct and separate society.

It is easy to perceive that this procedure of the apostles is opposed to *both* those notions of oneness to which we have referred;—both the ultra—democratic, and the ultra—monarchical. They did not, in the places they visited, merely convert a mass of the people, and then leave them, without officers and without order, lest they should entrench on the perfect equality of each with all. Nor did they connect these several societies, and constitute them one church, under the guidance or government of a visible head, *for the sake* of securing the unity of the whole. They took a middle path. They established distinct churches in different places, leaving them independent of the control of each other; but, according to circumstances, they moulded and modified each, in consistency with certain general principles, that all might be able to secure the ends and purposes for which they were instituted.

3. Our Lord did not mean that the universal Church, throughout all its innumerable branches

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and in all its separate societies, was to exhibit an entire uniformity, in every minute particular, as to constitution and government, and ceremonies of worship.

This is obvious from the fact, that so extremely little is expressly enjoined upon these subjects in the New Testament. Here, indeed, is one of

the great distinctions between Moses and Christ. With the first, every thing is minutely particularized and strictly commanded; with the second, every thing is general, and is to be learnt from facts rather than precepts—from practice and example rather than law. This difference perfectly accords with the opposite character of the two dispensations. The one was intended to separate a nation from the rest of the world: it raised, therefore, around them, a wall of partition in its ordinances and ceremonies. The other was intended to unite all nations in a common faith, and as a common family,—and therefore it avoided minute and multiplied observances, so as to adapt itself to the condition of every people. Although in every church founded by the apostles, there would be the recognition of certain great common principles, yet, I doubt not, there were many local peculiarities as to the *mode* in which they were carried out. There were diffused throughout the primitive church the two great bodies of the

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Circumcision and the Uncircumcision; and, though in Christ Jesus there was to be neither the one nor the other, yet, for a long time, the apostles themselves permitted and countenanced both. It is unquestionable that a church composed exclusively of converted Jews, and a church composed exclusively of converted Gentiles, while they would have all essential things in common, would differ in many circumstantial particulars. Their former customs and their former opinions, might both, to a certain extent, influence and modify their christian procedure: they might occasion them to take different views of the propriety or obligation of certain observances; and, while holding and recognizing the same general apostolical principle, they

might lead them to act upon it in a different way, adopted respectively, from the habits of the school, or the habits of the synagogue. When Paul visited Jerusalem he was told of many thousands who believed,—who were Christians,—members of the church,—but all “zealous for the law;” he was advised to condescend to their ceremonial predilections, and his notions of christian liberty permitted him to do it. The very same men, however, who recommended this leaning to the feeling of the Jew at Jerusalem, advised very differently in the case of another church, and leaned to the

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feeling of the Gentile at Antioch; they interfered there in an opposite direction, and relieved the brethren from rites and ceremonies, which others would have imposed and which others practised. It is obvious, from these facts, that the primitive churches might differ from each other in certain customs and observances, and that, therefore, the oneness of the whole was not intended to consist in any thing like an exact and unbroken uniformity.

4. Our Lord did not mean, that the unity of the whole church, or even of any one particular church, was to include a perfect coincidence of opinion upon all points of doctrine and practice.

This is evident from what has already been said. As a church may differ from other churches, without forfeiting its character as a christian community; so a Christian may differ from other Christians, without forfeiting *his* character as a christian man. The one involves the other, as the greater includes the less;—the differences between two churches being the aggregate of the differences between two separate clusters of individuals. Presuming that there is some-

thing essential, without which a society cannot be a church; and that there is something essential, without which an individual cannot be a Christian;—yet, these being possessed, there is

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room left for great diversity of individual opinion, and the absence of that diversity, we mean to assert, is *not* essential to the unity of the church.

It might easily be evinced, from the constitution of nature and the arrangements of providence, that a perfect and universal coincidence of opinion is neither to be expected nor desired. It is not possible to beings situated as we are; nor, probably, to any others in any world. It is not likely that it would contribute, if it were possible, either to the glory of God, or to the happiness of the universe. It is not, however, our present purpose to seek the proof of our position in general argument. Whatever may be possible, or whatever may prevail, in other departments of God's great family, we contend, that entire identity of sentiment is not demanded in the christian church. We rest this assertion on the 14th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. The apostle distinctly refers to two classes of persons in that place, who held directly opposite opinions; and the point to be remarked is, that, instead of interposing his own opinion, and setting the matter at rest, by an act of information or an act of authority, he recommends both to keep their opinions,—approves the conscientiousness with which they were actuated,—and only denounces their want

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of charity in mutually despising and condemning each other. Both these classes of persons, thus differing in certain views of religious duty, were

in the church,—both were in the same church—both are described as having been “received by Christ,”—and both are exhorted to continue united, and, in spite of their differences, “to receive each other as Christ had received them.” The weak were forbidden to judge the strong; and the strong were commanded to respect the conscience, and to avoid compelling the conformity of the weak. In the 3d chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, the apostle addresses the members of that church in a manner demonstrative of the prevalence of a diversity of sentiment among them. “Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded”—thus resolved; “and, if in any thing ye be otherwise minded”—if in any thing ye have different opinions,—“God will reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, *whereto we have already attained*, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” This exhortation proceeds on the presumption both of agreement and diversity. They agreed up to a certain point, but they differed beyond it. They were commanded to walk together as far as they could, for the very purpose of learning to walk together farther. The language thus takes for granted the exist-

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ence of differences, and therefore it establishes the position, that, an entire coincidence of sentiment, on all points, is not essential to the oneness or unity of the church.

II.—1. Having thus attempted to point out some things in which the unity of the church does not consist, we shall now endeavour, very briefly, to mention others in which it does:—others necessary, either to its actual existence or its visible development. We observe, first, that its foundation must be laid in an agreement

as to the reception and profession of fundamental truth.

That there are some things fundamental to Christianity, few, we suppose, will have the hardihood to deny; and that these consist in its moral injunctions, still fewer, we imagine, will have the folly to assert. Whatever is fundamental, if found any where, must be found among the doctrinal discoveries peculiar to the system. For myself, I confess that I always endeavour to reduce these to the fewest possible points that Scripture, in my view of it, will permit. And I do this, because, in proportion as we lessen the number of essential doctrines, we enlarge the sphere of christian charity, and widen the ground of christian comprehension. The smaller the number of those things which

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the gospel will warrant us to regard as requisite to the Christianity of churches and men, the more of both can we conscientiously embrace with the feelings of cordial and unmitigated brotherhood. I am accustomed, in meditating upon this matter, to take my stand where, as it seems to my apprehension, the Apostle Paul took his. Paul, who, for the sake of usefulness or the promotion of peace, could become all things to all men; who could be a Jew with the Jew, or a Gentile with the Gentile; who could appear and act either as under the law or as free from it; who could shave his head, and circumcise Timothy, and keep fasts, and yet write against "the weak and the beggarly elements," denouncing their weight and their imposition as a bondage:—Paul, who could do all this—who, in fellowship and affection, was the yielding universalist where prejudice rather than principle was in question;—he, with all his accommodating versatility—with all his looks and with all his language of

love, was as firm as a rock and as terrible as thunder, when an important principle itself was assailed. If ever he referred to what is to be considered fundamental, he referred to it when he said, "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed*." As we said before, so say I now again,

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If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, *let him be accursed*." Whatever that gospel was, to which the apostle thus solemnly referred, it is obvious that no man and no church that rejects it can properly be christian. On a subject, involving consequences so momentous, it would be presumptuous to speak but with caution and candour. Honesty and faithfulness, however, equally demand that what we *do* think should be declared with explicitness. It is very possible that our opinion upon this subject, in connexion with our view of its bearing on the business of the discourse, would be branded, by opposite parties, as chargeable at once with vagueness and bigotry—with illiberality and with latitudinarianism. "It is a small matter to be judged of *them* or of men's judgment." "To the law and to the testimony;" guided, we trust, by that, we do not hesitate to say, that we consider the apostle to refer, as the whole tenor of the epistle shews, to the doctrine of *justification*,—justification on the exclusive ground of faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. The whole argument of the apostle is directed, not, perhaps, against a verbal and actual, but against an implied and virtual, denial of this doctrine, by a primitive perversion of it, which seduced the Galatians from the simplicity of Christ; and this circumstance

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imparts an additional importance to the truth itself, and additional force to the apostolic anathema. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Whoever, therefore, denies this doctrine, and seeks, in whole or in part, to be justified by law, "Christ can profit him nothing." He preaches or believes "another gospel, which is not another," and, in the language of the apostle, "Christ," in regard to that man, "*has died in vain.*" The awful consequence inevitably results—awful to contemplate—awful to express—that, whatever else he may believe or disbelieve, he is not united to "the Head of the body," and therefore he cannot be included in the unity of that body itself. If a society denies this doctrine, whatever may be its external form,—whatever it may have, or whatever it may not have, as to other things,—however simple or however splendid its ritual and ceremonies,—it, also, has abandoned the faith for "another gospel," and has put itself in a position, in which it is impossible to recognize it as an integral part of the christian community. This grand fundamental doctrine involves in it, as it seems to us, the divinity of Christ, and the necessity of renewal and sanctification by the Spirit; but, it does not involve either of the classes of opinion which

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distinguish Calvinists and Arminians; nor has it any thing to do with a particular form of church government. It may be held in connexion with great variety of sentiment on subordinate points; and it may be preached, as fully and as Scripturally, by the ennobled episcopal bishop of a *place*, as by the plain congregational bishop of a *people*.

We lay the basis, then, of the unity of the church in the unity of the faith; and that faith we find in the reception of the atoning sacrifice and the sanctifying Spirit. Whatever individual has this faith, experimentally and spiritually—whatever else he has, or whatever else he has not—is one with Christ as a vital member of his mystical body; whatever individual clearly and credibly professes this faith—whatever else he professes or denies—is a proper subject for admission into any particular church; and whatever church explicitly retains and teaches this faith, without corrupting and destroying it by superadded perversions—is a true church, and ought to be recognized as a part of the visible christian community. This faith may consist with every possible form of discipline and order, and therefore no particular form of order and discipline, in connexion with which it *does* exist, can be properly considered as subversive of a character derived from something distinct from both and superior to either.

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2. We observe, secondly, that the union of the church, thus founded on a oneness of faith, ought to be manifested by the recognition of each other, by Christians and christian churches thus harmonizing.

By every individual, who, in the language of Scripture, “holds the Head,” every other individual who does the same, ought to be cheerfully recognized as a christian brother;—he ought to be cordially regarded and greeted as such, and ought to share in that love of the fraternity,—that family-affection,—which is peculiar to the genius and spirit of the gospel. This feeling, properly cultivated, will produce a readiness to co-operate, in all benevolent and useful confederacies, for the glory of God and the benefit of

man. This, however, is but the union and fellowship of individual and private members of the church,—their union, as such, in their individual and private capacity, which, though undoubtedly included in the prayer of Christ, is by no means its largest and most emphatic fulfilment. The text, to be realized in its sublimest sense, would unquestionably require, not merely the recognition of Christian by Christian, but the recognition of Church by Church,—not merely the union of individual believers, in works of general benevolence, piety, and mercy,—but the communion and fellowship of ministers and

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churches in the spiritual services and sacraments of the faithful. Every christian society ought to possess the power, whether it avail itself of the exercise of the privilege or not, of accepting the services of the ministers of every other. A difference of discipline ought not to be a barrier between those who equally hold and inculcate the same essential, saving, and sanctifying truths; it ought not to keep communities, similarly circumstanced, from meeting and mingling together in the most blessed and binding of religious solemnities. All, who expect to unite in the services of heaven, ought to endeavour to unite in the services of earth. Nothing should be a term of communion but what is mutually admitted to be a term of salvation. Upon this principle, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Methodists, Moravians—as ministers, might occasionally occupy the pulpits of each other;—as churches, might join with each other in listening to the doctrines and lessons of their common Christianity;—and, as mutually recognized portions of the universal church, might meet, at the table or the altar, and par-

take together of the same bread and of the same cup.

3. I observe, lastly, that, if this mutual recognition, and universal communion of separate visible churches, were admitted and practised,

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little would be wanting either to the complete fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer for his people, or to the ultimate accomplishment of that result to the world with which it is connected.

If ministers and churches felt and acted as we have endeavoured to describe, there would not only be a spiritual union, (which there is now,) between all, in every church, who "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" but there would be an obvious and acknowledged demonstration of the fact. There would not only exist, but there would be *seen* to exist, in essentials—unity; and in every thing else—liberty and charity: and this unity and this charity would be the more remarkable, splendid, and impressive, from the very differences that would distinguish, without dividing, the various sections of the blended and harmonizing whole. The consequences of this sort of visible oneness, would be beneficial alike to the church and to the world. Separate denominations would soon lose their hold of whatever partakes of the nature of sectarian attachments; they would imbibe an enlarged and accommodating spirit; they would mutually cease to contend about trifles; and they would come perhaps, in the end, fused and melted by the fire of love, to take some new form, as one great consolidated community; and thus, amid, the glory and the lustre of the latter days, might

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exhibit a *literal* fulfilment of the Saviour's supplication. In relation to the world, the anni-

hilation of party distinctions,—the removal of sectarian barriers,—the drying up of the wells and fountains whence have issued for ages the waters of jealousy,—the extinction of former contentions, schisms, and strifes,—the taking in, into “the garden of the Lord,” of every large and of every little enclosure,—the passing away of all humiliating and painful recollections, in the hallowed and harmonizing engagements of Sabbath intercourse and sacramental communion;—all this, would be such a plain and such a palpable demonstration of the presence and the power of truth and love, that men of the world would gaze—admire—*believe*. The church would become externally victorious, by ceasing to be internally conflicting and militant; she would advance and conquer by presenting an aspect attractive for its peacefulness; *that* would be easy to consolidated love, which is now difficult to divided and dissipated zeal.

III. We conclude with two or three general observations.

I. We remark, first, that the prayer in the text is actually fulfilled to a much greater extent, than would at first sight be supposed, by

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looking at the present aspect and condition of the church.

We have seen that the existence of separate churches,—the want of uniformity among them in government and ceremonies,—and the profession of different opinions on subordinate and secondary points,—do not necessarily militate against an actual agreement in fundamental truth, or the maintenance of fraternal and affectionate feeling. How much soever, therefore, there may be to lament, as still wanting to the

complete fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer, there is much—very much, in which it is permitted us cordially to rejoice. The great saving principles of our common faith are exhibited with equal explicitness, and urged and advocated with equal zeal, by ministers of various denominations; and individual members of different churches are to be found, side by side, in every enterprise of christian philanthropy. There is here, as far as it goes, a union and a fellowship impressive and visible;—one, which ought to arrest the attention and to affect the mind of serious observers; and which, if impartially considered, might read to the infidel and the heretic, a solemn lesson in favour of those truths, which men, who differ in every thing else, agree in regarding as of paramount importance. It is like the evidence to the ancient

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records of Revelation, derived from the united testimony of the Jew and the Samaritan; they differed from each other in many articles of their creed, but they gloried with equal exultation in Moses, and clung with equal pertinacity to the Pentateuch.

2. The prayer of Christ can never be fully accomplished, but by the removal of all that interferes with the mutual recognition and the universal communion of christian churches.

If Christians wait till every church is modelled according to any supposed apostolical pattern;—that is, if they wait till some one existing community has drawn and absorbed all others into itself;—if they wait far this, before they dare to open the heart and to hold out the hand of fellowship to each other, I much fear that they will have to wait far longer than any of them calculate. This consummation—the triumph of some particular form of church

order—if it ever take place, (which I deem very problematical,) is much more likely to *follow* the practice of universal communion than to precede and to prepare for it. It *might* come, however, if love began to light the way, and, by enlarging and purifying the heart, to assist the general judgment to discover and to welcome the favoured economy;—but whether it ever come or not, the obligation remains the same,

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and is imperative and pressing, of seeking the commencement of universal visible fellowship, as the proof of present fundamental agreement,—even if it should *not* prove the prelude to universal uniformity. The one is an unquestionable duty, the other is probably a dream. “They that dream, dream in the night,”—if I may be permitted to modify a scriptural quotation—“they that dream, dream in the night;” and, supposing myself to be addressing the members of all evangelical communions, I would say to them—“The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth;—ye, brethren, are not in darkness;—ye are all the children of the light and the children of the day;—ye are not of the night, nor of darkness;—ye, therefore, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and LOVE; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. Whereto ye have attained, *walk by the same rule*, mind the same thing; by reciprocal communion, keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; and, if in any thing ye have different opinions, God will reveal even this unto you.”

Deeply as I feel, and fondly as I cherish, the truth and excellence of the principle which I have endeavoured to establish, I am compelled to confess, that, though I entertain no doubt of its ultimate triumph, I fear it will be long

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before it be generally acknowledged, and longer still before it come into any thing like practical operation. In the meantime, many obstacles must be removed, which, while they continue, will retard and prevent its recognition and adoption. The most important of these obstacles are, sectarian partialities, ecclesiastical assumption, and political ascendancy. The first leads the thorough-going Independent to dogmatize on the particulars of the apostolical pattern, and to demand that every church upon earth, to be worthy of the name, should be moulded and fashioned according to *his* notions of primitive law. The second, prompts the advocate of Episcopacy to utter "great swelling words;" to look upon the minister of every minor communion as a clerical intruder; to deny the validity of his orders, his right to rule, and his commission to teach; to brand *him* as a schismatic and his people as a sect. And the third, Political Ascendancy, elevating one party to the injury of others, inflames and exasperates the animosities of all. These things, however, cannot be eternal. So long as they exist, indeed, the fulfilment of the prayer of Christ is impossible; but, as that prayer *must* be fulfilled as certainly as it was offered, it follows, that whatever obstructs it will one day be entirely removed. Secular governments will cease

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to be partial and learn to be just. Ministers and churches of different orders,—one class no longer encumbered by privilege, another no longer mortified by insult,—will learn to abandon their respective follies, and to draw towards each other when there is no positive legal barrier to forbid. As secular jealousies

are extinguished, sectarian and ecclesiastical will subside. One man will cease to exult in his "succession,"—his neighbour will dismiss the conceit of his little republic embracing the world,—both will come at length to embrace each other,—the Saviour will see his supplications answered,—“men will be blessed in him, yea all nations shall call him blessed.” “That they all maybe one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me!”

3. Finally. We learn, from this subject, how to possess our souls in peace, amid the alarm and agitation—the tumult and the terror, of the present times. It becomes us to keep our eye and our heart steadily and constantly on the prayer of Christ. It becomes us to interpret by it the language of all surrounding appearances. It becomes us to engage in every religious movement, which the present position of the church may demand, with a simple desire

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to promote its accomplishment, and a humble hope of being permitted to do so. This will at once sanctify and ennoble uncongenial duties, and sustain under the injustice of calumny and insult. The day *must* dawn when your object will be attained, for it is identified with the Redeemer's predicted satisfaction. Every thing around us is hastening its appearance. Events, in the estimation of many to be deplored and deprecated, are, to minds of stronger faith and holier feeling, either necessary to precede it, or are already advancing and accelerating its approach. None but these views—mistaken or pretended as they are deemed by some—could make it tolerable to touch various of the topics of present excitement. Nothing but their connexion

with the ultimate triumph of christian union, could confer any thing like importance on some of the complaints—the questions and the controversies, of the troubled day that is passing over us. For myself, I would not lift my finger—if lifting it would satisfy the demands of my own denomination—I would not lift my finger for the purpose, if, in my serious judgment, it had nothing to do with the speedier fulfilment of the prayer of Christ. That it has to do with it, is my deep, solemn, and devotional conviction; and it is thus, that what is little in itself, may, from its bearing upon great results,

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come to catch from them something of relative sublimity. Nothing, however, can be really little which may influence the destinies of the universal church; which may lead ultimately to the prevalence of universal love; and which, by removing obstructions, may hasten the realization of a prayer, which our Lord uttered with peculiar anxiety on earth, and which, ever since, he may be considered as having been reiterating in heaven.—Thou art the Prince of Peace!—Thou art the King of glory, O Christ!—Take unto thyself thy great power and reign. Let thy prayer be heard,—let thy kingdom come,—let thy will be done;—speedily, speedily, appear, that there may be one fold under one Shepherd! Amen and amen.

APPENDIX.

SOON after the delivery of the preceding Discourse, I was urged to publish it by many of my friends; but, as I could very truly say, that I had written and preached it without the most distant idea of doing so, I for a long time resisted

their importunity, and when I at last consented to the publication, it was with a wish either to expand it very considerably, or to add much, in the form of general argument, or of quotation from other writers, in support of its principal object or its specific statements. The first I found to be impossible. To attempt to change a popular address into a regular dissertation is only to produce something different from and inferior to both; the Discourse, therefore, is given in its *original state*.—The second, I soon saw, would extend to so great a length, that it would be much easier to fill a volume than to furnish an Appendix. I have determined, therefore, to confine myself to a very few extracts, shewing that the obstacles to our “ultimate object” are not imaginary; and, that that object has been stated and advocated by us in former publications.

Page 29, line 7, “*Sectarian partialities.*”—The following passage both illustrates this particular topic, and harmonizes in spirit and aim with the preceding discourse.

“The adherents of each of the Christian sects interpret the Millennium to mean, the universal prevalence of all the opi-

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nions and habits of their own. I once heard a person say, ‘that, at that sublime era, all the world would be Baptists, and be formed into little Baptist societies; and that *this* would be its sublimity!’ He was, perhaps, hardly serious: yet, what is the language of the exclusive pretensions and the party zeal of every sectarian (whether Churchman or Dissenter) but just this? He virtually says, ‘Unless our views on points of secondary importance be received as the true, and our Church order and discipline adopted as the primitive,—the mass of mankind never can be saved, nor the light of the Millennium be expected to dawn.’ I cherish, my dear friend, a strong persuasion—one whose influence on my own mind I feel to be delightful, expansive, and purifying—that the Millennium will be introduced in another manner, and be preceded by indications of a different spirit. No exultation will be inspired by the mode of its approach, to the fierce partisans of any form of ecclesiastical polity. Either some new form, comprehending the

different elements of excellence at present separated and diffused, will suddenly arise, produced by such a donation to the Church of charity and wisdom as shall lead, almost by miracle, to universal combination and consolidated effort,—and in *this* all others shall merge and terminate;—or many of those at present existing may remain, but the spirit that distinguishes and divides them shall perish. There may be to the last, perhaps, Ephraim and Judah; but ‘Judah shall not vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim envy Judah.’ The rise and diffusion of a feeling like this, would be to me a proof that ‘God was coming forth from his place,’ ‘to visit his Church and to water it; greatly to enrich it with the river of God which is full of water;’ ‘to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, and a rejoicing to all people.’ I could imagine that the latter-day glory were begun, if I heard, on all sides and from many voices, a demand for UNION—not *uniformity*: for UNIVERSAL COMMUNION—not *sectarian exclusiveness*. This is the spirit which, in its perfect development, will raise every sect above its petty partialities, and at last fuse all into one great and consolidated whole. Deep, pure, unaffected love, penetrating and pervading

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the Church, uniting all its parts in actual fellowship, and making it visibly as well as spiritually one; this is the weapon for subduing the world. The virtue of love has been much lauded, but little felt; often inculcated, but seldom exemplified; talked of, but not understood. Men, judging from their conduct, have supposed it to signify love *to their own sect*—marvellous affection!—or love to all others *when they shall have joined theirs*,—magnanimous liberality! Love of this sort has *had* its Millennium. It has done nothing but mischief during the long lapse of far more than a thousand years. Another, and a more comprehensive principle, is required now. I cannot but hope that the day is approaching when the sublime experiment of its power shall be tried. The bigot of every denomination has taken for his text, ‘The wisdom that is from above is *first* pure, *then* peaceable;’ and on this he has rung his eternal changes, arguing for the subjugation of all to sympathy with himself, before he could unite with them in the communion of the Church. I should say to

all who agree in the profession of primary and fundamental truth, but who differ in secondary and inconsiderable matters, ‘Study *first* to be peaceable, *then* pure;’ ‘Receive ye one another, as Christ also received you, to the glory of God;’ ‘Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth;’ ‘Follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby ye may edify each other.’ In your separate condition you have all arrived at the same views as to saving truth: expect further agreement as the reward of fellowship. ‘Let as many as are perfect’—instructed in the fundamentals of Christian doctrine—‘be thus minded;’ and, ‘if in any thing ye be otherwise minded,’—if, on subordinate topics, you have different opinions—by proceeding together in brotherly communion, ‘God will reveal even this unto you.’ Love in the heart will become light in the intellect; you will feel yourselves perpetually approaching to greater uniformity; in proportion as you have more of that visible oneness which will for ever be seen in the Church in heaven, you will display less of that diversity of

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sentiment which hitherto has distinguished and often distracted the Church upon earth.”—*Two Letters by Fiat Justitia*, pp. 60–63.

Page 29, line 8, “*Ecclesiastical assumption.*”—Illustrations of this are innumerable. The canons of the Church of England are based upon it; the writings of orthodox Churchmen, and the publications of “The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,” are full of it. I have lying before me various extracts in which the Established Church is asserted to be the only true and real church in the land; our churches, of course, are denied the name;—our ministry is declared to be invalid, and our sacraments inefficient and nugatory. The consequence is obvious, and is stated by some of the writers in so many words, viz. that the condition of the members of all societies, falsely styled churches, is unquestionably dangerous;—*hope*, indeed, is expressed that, *possibly*, they may be accepted, but it is acknowledged that it must be through extraordinary and “uncovenanted” mercy. I pass over, how-

ever, these specimens of the principle in question, to introduce one of a much bolder character, in which I may naturally be supposed to feel peculiar interest, as it was sent to me lately by the courtesy of the author, and appears to have been written with a special view to my edification and *comfort*. It is contained in a pamphlet, entitled the “Sword Unsheathed,” consisting of an exposition of the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. The object of the writer is to prove, that the whole of that important passage, enforcing submission to government, refers to *ecclesiastical* rulers, not civil;—the conclusion is drawn, that “all Congregationalists,”—who, of course, do not submit to the “powers that be” in the Episcopal church,—are “resisters of God’s ordinance;” and then follows the subjoined statement:—

“The text throws its awful light over the state and prospects of the resisters, whatever their denomination may be, of God’s arrangements and God’s authorities. Do the mysteriously-expressed punishments appear disproportionate? Dis-

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proportionate they would be to any offence whatever against civil authorities. But civil authorities are not the subject. The offences are *spiritual*, and the punishments ETERNAL. The offence is resistance to the love, the wisdom, and the power of God, and the punishment is—THE WRATH OR GOD!”

Such are the words of the Rev. J. A. Stephenson, M.A., Rector of Lymsham, who, I am told, is a pious evangelical clergyman. If such a man can have his mind and heart so perverted by his ecclesiastical notions of apostolical succession and episcopal authority, we cannot wonder at the *exclusiveness* which they engender in others. The point to be observed in the above extract, is this, that Congregationalism destroys *all* its adherents, not because the majority of its ministers are “anti-evangelical,” subverting their hearers by “another gospel which is not another;”—not because societies identified with it, diffuse and foster pharisaism and self-righteousness;—not because the working of its corrupt parts and agents leads to false notions of personal safety, and encourages opposition to spiritual religion:—no—but simply

as Congregationalism, and *because* it is such,—however pure the faith, and holy the lives, of those who profess it!

Page 29, line 8, “*Political Ascendency.*”—The cause, above mentioned, would prevent the communion of Episcopal Churches with those of any other order, even if no “Establishment” existed in the world. Separation of Church and State, therefore, would not necessarily and immediately lead to this, though it would be one step towards it. Bishop Hobart, of America, though a non-endowed Episcopalian, and an enemy to Establishments, by his high ecclesiastical notions not only fostered an exclusive sentiment, in the American Episcopal Church, as to *communion* with others,—but opposed the American Bible Society, from the same feeling, objecting to unite with individual members of other bodies, even in an act so general as that. The following extracts will shew that, while “Ecclesiastical Assumption,” if fully carried out, naturally leads to this separation of the

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Episcopal Body from *all* union with every other;—“Political Ascendency” is purchased at the expense of separation between the different branches of the one true and apostolic church itself.

“The great objection to what is fallaciously called ‘the Church Missionary Society’ is, that those who never received any commission for the purpose—inferior clergy and even laymen—presume to send forth preachers of the gospel. The same objection also holds with respect to the Bible Society. By the laws of the Church, from the days of the apostles down to the present hour, all Societies for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge ought to be under the direction and control of the Bishops; and it is because the Bible Society acts upon a contrary principle, that so few sound divines are to be found among its members.”—*Notes to the Rev. W. F. Hooke’s Sermon at the Consecration of the Right Rev. Matthew Henry Luscombe, LL.D.*

“It is not to be concealed that by the present law—a law which was made in opposition to the wishes of the English Bishops—a law for which the STATE, not the CHURCH, is

answerable—no clergymen ordained by a Scotch or American Prelate can officiate in England, unless ordained, that is to say, *re-ordained*, by an English or Irish Bishop! By this law the English Bishops are reduced to a dilemma: if they refuse when required to re-ordain, they are liable to a civil prosecution: if they *do* re-ordain, they are guilty of schism;—the English Parliament has in this instance arrogated to itself as great a share of power as was ever usurped by the Pope of Rome.”—*Ibid.*

Thus the Church pays a high price for her Political Ascendency. She professes to *believe* “in the Communion of Saints,” but she cannot fully *act* upon it, *even in her own restricted and exclusive sense of the phrase*, without subjecting herself “to a civil prosecution!” This is one of the bitter fruits she reaps from her “alliance.” Christian love for her, and nothing else, prompts us to pray that she may soon cease to gather it. Another of these fruits is the converse of

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this. While she is legally forced to exclude from communion those who may be as holy as apostles, patronage, and other “usurpations,” of the worldly and the wicked, *in her or over her*, frame for her a regular “system” and a “general rule,” which force her *into* communion with those of whose character and influence *her own children* speak in terms terrible as these:—

“We have not a shadow of doubt, that the system which he (Lord Eldon), and others like-minded, pursued, was *most mischievous to the cause of true piety* and the spiritual interests of the Church of England. His Lordship, it is said, never failed to inquire, very carefully, whether the party recommended to him had the misfortune to be a Calvinist or Methodist, or any other strange animal; but did his Lordship and others always ask, all other things being to their mind, whether he was a careless shepherd, a clerical sportsman, a non-resident pluralist, or perhaps a man of no theological information whatever, except so far as to compose or copy a tirade against Bible Societies and Evangelicals?”—“Dr. Chalmers clearly shews that official patrons in particular, in opposing the popular taste in Christianity, have acted *most*

ruinously,—as concerns the cause of true religion and *the salvation of the souls of men.*”—*Christian Observer, March, 1834.* “It is a painful consideration, but most men who have attended to the subject will attest its truth, that *generally speaking*, so far from the spiritual qualifications and honourable zeal of a christian pastor being any recommendation either to his employment or his advancement, these qualities are too often considered as affixing a stigma on his name, and disqualifying him for service; while on the other hand, mere orthodoxy of sentiment, *especially if accompanied by opposition to the Bible Society*, is too commonly made the test of character, and the road to promotion. I DO NOT SAY THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE, BUT, ALAS! THEY ARE ONLY SUCH AS PROVE ITS EXISTENCE.”—*Friendly Suggestions to those in Authority, by John Poynder, Esq.,—P. 15.*

“The Bishops would be more in character if they were

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employed in rebuking and chastising some of their idle, drunken, and worthless clergy, than in *restraining the zealous efforts of the well disposed and active to promote the real benefit of their people’s souls*” “By the conduct of these” (careless and godless ministers) “the sacred office is brought into much contempt, and MILLIONS ARE LOST FOR EVER AND EVER!” “Fearful, indeed, must be their account at the last great day, who, living by the altar they hardly ever serve, and the gospel they never preach, leave their flocks in the hands of strangers, constantly exposed to the ravages of the enemy, and thousands perish for ever in their sins!”—*Acaster.*

One Church Publication exults in the fact that “anti-evangelical clergymen are *an overwhelming majority*,” another observes in relation to these, “We consider ourselves bound to say, that the differences existing between different bodies of clergymen are not minor but fundamental; *so much so*, that the preaching of one class is raising their hearers to the gates of heaven, and that of the other *leading them down to the chambers of death.*”—*Christian Remembrancer, and Record.*

Our brethren of the Establishment know, or *ought* to know, that it is no grateful task to evangelical Dissenters, who agree with them in doctrine, to have to peruse statements like these. Churchmen have *taught us* the tremendous operation *for evil* of what the *Episcopal* Church obtains by becoming the *Established*;—we never think of the awful truth, (which we have learnt from such instructors,) confirmed as it is by our own observation and reflection, but with deep and serious feeling; and we desire the transformation of the Established Church into the Episcopal,—the extinction of the *one* and the liberation of the *other*,—from a belief that it would render it a pre-eminent blessing to the nation and the world, and be an important step towards the *visible oneness* of all those, and of those only, who “preach the gospel,” and “hold the faith once delivered to the saints.”

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Page 27, line 11. “*If Christians wait till every church is modelled according to any supposed apostolical pattern,*” &c.—This is what all notions of a divinely-appointed mode of carrying out the general principles of church-government infallibly lead to; and if any sect keeps and clings to it, it will prevent every approach to union till the day of doom. On this principle a paper in a late number of the “Christian Observer” proceeded, in which a plan was proposed for ministers of dissenting churches to become “catechists” of the Establishment—their places licensed for Episcopal services—and thus, for the one body gradually to be united to and absorbed by the other! Any man who can thus feel and speak, about the relative position of *his* church and others—whether that church be Episcopal or Presbyterian—Methodist or Independent—*may* be a proud and narrow sectarist, but he is very far from a humble and loving Christian. The overture of the Bishop of Exeter to the followers of Wesley goes on this principle of appropriation and absorption. On this principle, too—sectarian and presumptuous as it seems to me—every project is built, which contemplates the mere “comprehension” of those who differ from it, by some one ambitious and boastful community.

Page 30, line 12. "*Both will come at last to embrace each other,*"—The union of different ministers and churches is often witnessed at missionary stations, where home estrangements and strifes are forgotten. The following is an account of something approaching the former, which occurred lately in our own land. Would to God that such scenes were general among us!—

"On Monday evening last, according to previous arrangement, we had a social meeting of all the Missionaries on the island (Isle of Wight), who were like ourselves detained from their destination by adverse winds. There were, we understood, twenty-six in all, twenty of whom were present, females included; seven Wesleyans, two Episcopalians, five Baptists, and six German Missionaries, I believe of the Lutheran church. Three Church Missionaries were with us, and two Friends."

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"Our interview, as maybe expected, was delightful; and, I trust, highly profitable. What contributed not a little to it was the presence of the ministers of the different religious denominations in the town. Mr. Sibthorp's prayer, in which he commended us to God, I shall never forget."—*Baptist Mag. March*, 1834, pp. 132, 133.

The above statement reminds me of a transaction which took place at Hereford, (as I was informed by an eye-witness,) and which I have often thought of as indicative at once of the *real* union of true Christians, and of their bunion, occasioned by legal and ecclesiastical usurpations. When Dr. Chalmers visited Hereford, the late Rev. Mr. Gipps, unable to admit him to his pulpit, and yet honourably anxious to do so, contrived that he should stand in the chancel of the church and address the Sunday-school children, which, I suppose, either a layman may do, or which, if done by an unauthorized teacher, might excite no animadversion. A few boys were placed in front of the preacher, and a few words delivered to them, but a number of *adults* really formed the congregation, and *they* had a regular sermon. Beautiful display of the christian oneness of the two men! Humiliating acknowledgment of the unchristian distance of their two churches!—From "the high esteem," which the

“Christian Observer” informs us, “Dr. Chalmers at the present moment enjoys in the Church of England, on account of his defence of National Establishments,” there can be no doubt that many clergymen would willingly welcome him to their pulpits—if they durst. How distressing, however, is it, to a pious mind—alive to and anxious for the true, universal communion of saints—to think, that an act of ministerial fellowship might thus be founded on the defence of what the parties themselves speak of “as a mere secondary point,” while it would never have been thought of had the Dr. *only* defended “the weightier matters of the Divine Law!”*—O Lord, hasten the period when thy people shall

* An allusion to the following remark in a late number of the *Christian Observer*.—“Dissenters would be tolerant to Episcopacy or Presbyte-

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no longer be “children in understanding,” but, “being children in malice,” shall “in understanding be men.”

Page 31, line 3. “*This will at once sanctify and ennoble uncongential duties,*” &c.—“To every Christian mind, it is unquestionably painful to mingle, in controversy, and engage in agitation. I can conceive of nothing sufficient to lead to the sacrifice, but such a sense of duty as shall make it imperative, and even *that* can never make it pleasant. To write, and speak, and act, in a manner that may give pain to many whom we respect; to disturb, perhaps, the freedom and harmony of private intercourse; to be misjudged, misrepresented, calumniated, shunned; all this must be expected, and should be prepared for, by any who engage, in however humble a capacity, in the coming conflict of great principles. Posterity will reap the benefit of their personal sacrifice. The clamour and the contest will be the prelude to a new state of harmony and order. The battle will end, at least ultimately, in the establishment of peace on such principles as shall render it permanent.”—*Appendix to An Address on Laying the First Stone of the New King’s Weigh-House*, pp. 59, 60.

rianism as sects, but they have no toleration, they say, for the churches of England and Scotland: thus making a mere secondary point—church

discipline—of greater importance than all the weightier matters of the divine law.”—Now, while Episcopacy and Presbyterianism *are* points of church discipline, which Dissenters, by the above acknowledgment, think less of than of fundamental truth; an Establishment is *not* a point of church discipline at all—it is the exercise of secular power in behalf of some form of it. The opposition of Dissenters towards *this*, therefore, is not intolerance towards others, but the resistance of intolerance towards themselves; they have no wish to impose any thing upon others, only to prevent others from imposing upon *them*.—I calmly and confidently leave every impartial reader of this book, to determine for himself, *who* they are whose “ultimate object” must necessarily be both intolerant and sectarian, being founded upon principles which, *politically*, lead them to desire, in the language of Mr. Cunningham, the exclusive privilege “of COMPELLING all men to build their churches and pay their ministers;” and which, *ecclesiastically*, force them to attach far more importance to “mere secondary points,” than to “all the weightier matters” of both Law and Gospel.

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Page 31, line 4 from the bottom. “*That it has to do with it, is my deep, solemn, and a votional conviction.*”—“—the separation of Church and State—obtained. Dissent and the Establishment will then die together—die on the same day. The terms and things are relative; the end of one will be the termination of both. The day that witnesses this, will be a bright and blessed one. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Methodists, may remain; but Churchmen and Dissenters will exist no more. All denominations, placed on a perfect equality, with a thousand sources of jealousy and animosity removed, each possessed of the power of advancing towards and admitting the approaches of the rest,—such movements would ultimately be seen; the spirit of peace, and love, and unity, would return; the *real* “communion of saints” would be practised; and God himself, on the throne of his glory, would rejoice over his once divided and broken, but then happy and harmonizing, ‘household.’”—*Ibid.* p. 54.

THE END.

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